

Berkeley's

PATHS

Berkeley Path Wanderers Association is a grassroots volunteer group of community members who have come together to increase public awareness of the City of Berkeley's pathways. BPWA hopes to accomplish this goal through volunteer-led path walks; identification and accurate mapping of Berkeley's complete path network; and eventual restoration of paths that have been blocked or obscured. We hope the final outcome of the community effort will be the preservation and on-going maintenance of all the paths, lanes and steps throughout Berkeley.

A Newsletter of the Berkeley Path Wanderers Association, Summer 1999 Vol. 2 No. 3

Meetings

7-9 pm Live Oak Park Recreation Center

Aug. 26 Board Meeting

Sept. 16 General Meeting

Panoramic Way talk
by Ron Sires.

Oct. 21 Board Meeting

Nov. 18 General Meeting

Path Walks

Saturdays at 10:00 am

August 7 Solano to Tilden
Janet Byron, leader 848-4008
Meet at Peet's on Solano Avenue

September 25 North Berkeley Paths
Erika St. John, leader 548-0129
Meet at Keith & Shasta

October 9 Eastshore Park &
East Bay Trail (*level Paths*)
Susan Schwartz, leader 848-9358
Meet at Seabreeze market at University and
Frontage Road.

November 6 Kensington Paths
Paul Grunland, leader 526-8001
Summit Reservoir, Grizzly Peak & Spruce

December 4 Peoples Park
& Clark Kerr Campus
Allen Stross, leader 841-2359
Haste & Telegraph

Billy Jean Walk

Hot and tired from the bike ride up Euclid, I passed right by Billy Jean Walk and the huge Sycamore lofting up to the sun which marks the entrance to her stairs. At the curb under the Sycamore sits a black Chrysler DeLuxe, with its front split windshield, gearshift on the wheel, bench seats (the weave frayed considerably with cotton peering out to the world)—from 1952. And next to Billy Jean Walk, in a garage, sleeps a gray-coral 1962 Chrysler New Yorker polished like a race horse and covered with yellow and mint green blankets.

Billy Jean is the grand entrance to

three homes and inside one dwells the owner of these two cars (it's also a public path). Of the '52 he said "It's a reliable car, use it for all my local errands." The '62 New Yorker is a bit of Berkeley history and is part of the reason he bought it. The original owner, Mrs. Kristine Grosfemay lived near the Marin Circle, and for years taught typing at Berkeley High School.

Then he went on to tell me about other historical notes: in his house, built around 1935 he discovered a beautiful scripted signature under the original wallpaper hanging in the kitchen; the tramway at the top of the path was built in 1969. And of Billy Jean Walk he said, "The path is kind: it helps hold the land in place and allows the water to pour down the steps, keeping it away from the houses." He showed me a 7" gap where the lower stairs are pulling away from themselves, evidence of how the bottom of the hillside wants to slide down to the shore, while the high side just wants to stay put. He truly loves living on the path.

The path was built sometime before 1931. That year a beautiful article appeared in the San Francisco Examiner dedicating the path to a baby girl, Billy Jean Harris. "A little girl who has a street of her own. A street of steps reaching up from Euclid to Hilldale." Her father, Joe Harris, who owned



the House of Harris Haberdashery, was a very successful merchant and very active in Berkeley politics. He said Billy Jean was adopted and “brought sunshine into the lives of myself and my wife, that we’d like to spread a little of our happiness by having this path named as a tribute to babyhood.”

Walking the path itself is like walking through sunshine. Upon arriving at the top of the first flight, a sloping pathway veers under light shade from Pittosporum and Bottlebrush which lean toward each other and peer over the cool cinder block wall. A pocket of sun waits at the end of this pass, moths and butterflies dancing in the bright green as Billy Jean jogs to the right and hides away behind the last of the trees. A hummingbird scratches out her tune.

Here the ivy bank glides upward under more canopies. And from under the apple tree and potato vine, alongside a beautifully woven, tawny fence, you can look up at the quietly, confident last rise of steps. It is held aloft toward the blue sky by the Nasturtium and



Vinca Major, and crowned by what in its day must have been a golden gondola, with swiss-like painted patterns on its curved sidewalls and suspended by

a red cable. Don and his wife built the tramway to cart groceries from the top of the hill to their home midway on the path. She now lives a few houses down the road.

Billy Jean Walk was named long before the '62 Chrysler New Yorker was purchased by the Berkeley High school teacher, long ago when the hillside was bare to the sun. And it has been a long time since Billy Jean has lived in Berkeley. But occasionally she comes back for a visit and sometimes she is caught having her photograph taken under her sign. She said “People ask me, ““Why are you taking that picture?”” —everyone of course thinks it’s named after Billy Jean King—and so the path makes me feel really happy, because I wouldn’t be known otherwise.”

Story & painting by Karen Kemp

Special Events

- Sept. 12 Solano Stroll**
Sue Fernstrom, BPWA coordinator
215-0873
- Sept. 26 How Berkeley Can You Be**
Join BPWA in the parade. Call early
September for more information
Ruth Moskovitz 524-0713

Berkeley Parks Mini-Grants program

The application was submitted before June 21, and we'll be notified August or early September whether we'll receive a grant which we'll use to repair three or more paths. New porous surfacing, landscape-timber single steps, and wood edging will improve these paths: Acacia; Keeler; Mosswood, Oak Street; Sterling; and Twin Path. BPWA is very hopeful.

www.InternetTime.com/path

Read more about the Berkeley Path Wanderer's Association. Read details such as path upkeep status, see maps and learn more history at our new website.

Codornices Creek Trail & Greenway

The Berkeley City Council and mayor unanimously endorsed a proposal to create a low-cost greenway and trail along a two-block length of Codornices Creek which will eventually connect to future ballfields and skateboard park in West Berkeley.

Lead a Walk

If you would like to lead a walk for the month of January '00 or beyond please call Jacque at 524-4715.

Adopt a Path

Call Tom for details at 525-4064.

Ten Easy Fixes

These paths have hazards or serious deficiencies which could be fixed at relatively low cost, giving the city and citizens of Berkeley the best possible cost-benefit ratio.

#27 Alta Vista Path's lower flight of steps is cracked and badly encroached by ivy. A rotten and splintery handrail on the south side should be replaced by metal.

#9 Black Path's crumbling edges have created a dangerous drop-off between the path and fence at the south end, a hazard pointed out in the 1993 LMA consultants' study.

#127 Crossways (North), part of the beautiful and historic set of paths designed by Duncan McDuffie in the Claremont area, has breaks and potholes as pointed out in the 1993 LMA study.

#36 Easter Way, Euclid-Cragmont segment, a portion along one of Berkeley's loveliest and most popular walks has upheaved concrete, and vegetation in cracks is

worsening conditions. As the 1993 LMA study points out, a handrail would increase safety.

#22 Florida Walk's 25 concrete steps and walkway leading to Dorothy Bolte Park have minor cracks, but some steps have tilted. A handrail would increase safety.

#52 Martinez Path is badly deteriorated on the upper path; encroaching vegetation worsens conditions. A few of the 89 steps have tilted forward or to the side, making walking hazardous.

#132 Oakridge Path between Oakridge and Domingo, has small breaks in the concrete which could be easily patched. In the lower segment. Leading onto John Muir Elementary School grounds, the asphalt's heaves and rolls are more than 6 inches high. And on school grounds asphalt is crumbling. Both sections could be fixed at the same time, with the City and School District sharing costs.

#11 Tunbridge Lane gives access to John Hinkel Park and is the only way down to Arlington between Southhampton and San Antonio. The lower flight of

stairs are badly cracked, and a handrail would add safety on both these steps and the upper flight, which slants slightly.

#13 Upton Lane gives access to John Hinkel Park. The concrete is upheaved almost 12 inches just below the top flight of stairs. A metal handrail on one side would make this hill path easier and safer.

#16 Visalia Walk/Steps in the Thousand Oaks District, with gnarled oaks, picturesque boulders, and bay views has one badly cracked and heaved spot in the concrete near the top. A handrail on the north side (not the south, with its picturesque boulders) would add safety.

Obviously, any such list is somewhat subjective. Other paths that have serious but easily remedied deficiencies include Yosemite Steps, El Paseo, and Tanglewood. One path, Redwood, needs repairs whose high cost may be counter-balanced by the path's importance as an emergency access route.

Annual membership in Berkeley Path Wanderers Association is \$5.00 due January 1st of each year. Benefits include Path Inventory Index, maps of pathways, quarterly newsletter, and BPWA mailings. Mail form with check or money order, payable to:

BPWA, Berkeley Partners for Parks
2371 Eunice St., Berkeley, CA 94708.

(BPWA is a member of Berkeley Partners for Parks, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.)

BPWA Membership Form **Please print**

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