

A Brief (and approximate) History of the Albany Bulb

- **Pre-1800** Beginning in about AD 500, the area was inhabited by native peoples, the Costanoans (also known as the Ohlone). They were sedentary hunters and gatherers, who exploited rich shellfish populations on the bay mudflats. Their shellmounds and grinding mortars are still visible in areas near Albany Hill. The introduction of the Mission system to the San Francisco Bay region in the 1770's and the expansion of European settlements led to a rapid and devastating decline in their populations. The last Costanoan tribelets living an aboriginal existence had disappeared by 1810.
- **1769-1849 (Gold Rush)** Area was owned by Luis Peralta, as a Spanish land grant.
- **1853** John Fleming bought 50 acres on what became known as Fleming Point (present site of the Golden Gate horse racing track and parking lot) for a cattle ranch.
- **Late 1800's** The US Congress and State of California granted the tidelands and adjacent shorelines to railroad companies for development. The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad became the main property owner of the Albany waterfront, and remained so until the 1990's.
- **1879** A plant opened on Fleming Point to produce explosives for use in gold mining. The operation was notorious for numerous accidental explosions. The Eucalyptus trees growing behind Albany beach and on Albany Hill were planted to help muffle the blasts. The explosives plant was closed in 1905. A train depot named Nobel Depot was located near Albany Hill and provided rail access to the plant; the depot was named after Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite and the namesake of the Nobel Peace Prize!
- **1908/09** What remained of the original Spanish land grant (Oceanview) was incorporated and named Albany.
- **1919** The State Lands Commission granted the city of Albany a 100-year tidelands lease to develop a harbor to promote commerce and navigation.
- **1920-1940** The shoreline remained relatively undeveloped and was used as a recreational area by local residents.
- **Late 1930's** A horsetrack operator was granted a lease from the State to build a track on Fleming Point. The Point's bedrock hill was blasted away during construction of the track and the northern parking lot. The lot was created by filling marsh with rock and soil removed from the Point. Fleming Point is one of the only remaining segments of San Francisco Bay's original shoreline. Golden Gate Fields opened in 1947.
- **1950's** Albany zoned its waterfront for industry. A small dump, established at the base of Buchanan street in the early 1900's, expanded greatly in size after 1961 when the State relaxed its harbor requirement for Albany's tideland lease.
- **1963-1984** Much of Albany's present shoreline was created by filling the mudflats with debris from construction and highway projects, creating the "plateau, neck, and bulb." As a result of racetrack construction and the landfill operation, Albany's shoreline grew from 50 to 160 acres. Illegal dumping of plant material in the 1970's led to high levels of methane emission and fires.
- **1984** Litigation between the city of Albany and the landfill operator lead to the landfill's closure.
- **1986** The State declared the tidelands part of the "public trust", preventing further filling of the Bay.

- **1990's** A sizeable community of homeless people became established on the Albany Bulb, and it became a mecca for artists who created numerous pieces of outdoor "folk art" from found natural objects and human debris. A team of artists named Sniff have been responsible for much of the artwork. In 1999, the homeless community was evicted by the City of Albany, but the public art remains. The Albany Beach and Bulb became a popular site for off-leash dog walking.
- **1992** The State began purchasing land for a future park, encompassing the shorelines of Emeryville, Berkeley, Albany, and Richmond. When completed, the park will encompass 1,817 acres with 5 miles of public access to the bay shoreline.
- **1997** Catellus Corp., the real estate branch of the Santa Fe Railroad sold the racetrack to its operators and the rest of its shoreline property to the State for the proposed Eastshore park. It will pay up to \$3.5 million for environmental remediation.
- **2002** The proposed plan for the bayside Eastshore State Park was released for public comment. The plan was hotly debated by various stakeholders (user groups) including environmentalists, sports field advocates, dog walkers, and artists. On December 6, 2002, the general plan for the park was approved by the State Parks Commission, and it was designated a State Seashore. The final version of the plan contained several last minute concessions to environmentalist groups lead by the Sierra Club and Save the Bay. The Albany "Let It Be" organization formed to protest plans for developing the Bulb for water sports and sports fields, at the expense of off-leash dog walking, public art, and wildlife habitat. Construction of sports field on the Plateau is reconsidered.
- **2003-present** Albany Bulb remains unchanged. Status of the project is unknown.