

Preserving a Community Gem - The Legend of Sleepy Hollow Continues

By Laurie Snyder



"It was, as I have said, a fine autumnal day," wrote Irving, "the sky was clear and serene, and nature wore that rich and golden livery which we always associate with the idea of abundance." Ohlen Alexander's 2012 photos illustrate how successfully SHSTC members continue to foster harmony between the natural and built worlds. His shot of the Sleepy Hollow pool, mid-demolition, was taken from a similar angle to the one used by Sunset Magazine when it captured the newly completed pool in 1958. Photos Ohlen Alexander

"Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little valley, or rather lap of land, among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world." – Washington Irving, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820)

It is tough to picture Washington Irving's headless horseman racing through 21st century Lamorinda on even its spookiest, barely-moonlit streets, but far easier to time warp back to the upstate Early American hamlet described above when visiting the Sleepy Hollow Swim and Tennis Club (SHSTC) – odd as this mixture of eras and settings may seem.

SHSTC's Sunnyside Lane atmosphere feels more like a nature preserve than a competitive sports complex. Old growth trees – silent sentinels to the area's rich history – blanket the land as far as the eye can see, dampening most noise. Its genesis was captured by Sunset Magazine in 1958:

"Behind the Berkeley ridge that screens them from San Francisco Bay lie the gentle hills and valleys of the Orinda-Lafayette-Moraga region, etched here and there by small streams and shaded by oak groves and walnut orchards. Since World War II this region, like many other parts of the Bay Area, has absorbed hundreds of new homes. Watching



this process continue, one group of residents has taken an unusual step to reserve a piece of the countryside as a green belt and outdoor recreation center."

How It All Began

Orindans, wrote *Sunset*, formed a non-profit to "sell membership shares, buy some property, and ... build the facilities the members wanted.... One of the area's largest land owners and subdividers offered them 54½ acres, close by, at a price well below market value, with the stipulation the land was to be used for recreational purposes only."

R.L. Kocher, former resident of 69 Lombardy Lane, was membership chairman of the Sleepy Hollow Recreational Association on March 24, 1955 when he wrote:

"Recently 54.7 acres were purchased within Sleepy Hollow for a generous pool, a wading pool for the younger children, change rooms, canteen, picnic area, sports areas, cabana-type club house and a parking area on the grounds. A competent landscape architect (C. Mason Whitney) has been retained...."

Kocher's fellow founders were: C.E. Cantrill, R.B. Dozier, R.A. Fayram, T.S. Ferguson, F.A. Gillespie, G.G. Hall, R.H. Hartsough, L.C. Lemire, H.E. Peck, C.J. Schuler, S.S. Sorem, E.S. Starkman, M.B. Sutcliffe, and H.J. Caldwell. Ernie Starkman, Bob Dozier, Hal Caldwell, and Dode Hall served as the group's president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary, respectively.

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