

Larry Lane Trail

This 2.16 kilometer (1.75 mile) trail climbs into the Sierra Morena Mountains, from the floor of Portola Valley half-way to Skyline Boulevard.

The trail begins along Hayfields Road near Portola Road and winds up along the Portola Valley/Woodside town border. A series of switchbacks in the lower portion of the trail maintains privacy for both homes and the trail. The trail then makes a long traverse, crossing Hayfields Road at a redwood grove and emerging into the hayfields near Russell Avenue in Woodside Highlands. The trail crosses the emergency access road, where pedestrian access to Russell Avenue is provided and then crosses a barranca (ravine) before emerging in open fields at Hayfork (named for the haying equipment still present there) where there is trailside picnic area and hitching rack.

At the Hayfork the trail divides, with the right fork leading to Hayfields View where there is a sweeping vista of the Peninsula. The trail traverses the mountain westward, past one giant old oak and then descends along another major barranca before crossing over to the junction at Hayfork.

History of the trail

This area and, in fact, all of what is now Portola Valley was part of the Mexican Rancho el Corte de Madera granted in 1833 to Maximo Martinez. The hillside has long been open grassland; mission cattle and Martinez' cattle must have grazed at will across the slopes on native grasses.

In the 1860s, after the area was denuded of redwoods suitable for lumber and shingles, Hugh Kelly began to acquire a ranch. His ranch eventually stretched from Bull Run Gulch on the east to Old La Honda Road on the west and from Sausal Creek in the valley to halfway up the Sierra Morena slopes.

For the next fifty years such property was routinely harvested for firewood. Kelly also raised horses and cattle, being very proud of his red Durham breeding stock. After Kelly's death in 1900 his son attempted to expand the ranch's economic possibilities by cultivating the valley land to raise strawberries and by raising hay on open slopes.

In 1919 Kelly's heirs sold 204 acres of the hillside to James A. Talbot. Within a month he sold 97.5 acres on the east side to Joseph J. Tynan, a friend and fellow member of The Family, a San Francisco men's social organization. Tynan's share is now known as the Woodside Highlands.

The geological instability of the slopes produced a sag pond, which became the focus for the 1920s development. The Talbots built an attractive house above the sag pond. There were workhorses, a milk cow, turkeys, and chickens. The open spaces were cultivated and planted in oats and hay. The men sowed the seed by hand from bags carried over their shoulders. Someone gave Mrs. Talbot hundreds of daffodil bulbs. Each spring

there was a vivid repetition of their glory in a field at the height of the Old Gulch Road, now Wayside Road – keep your eyes open for them.

Talbot's tenancy was brief. In 1926 the land was sold to The Family. In the 1940s it was sold to Herbert E. Clayburg and later to Cornish and Carey. In about 1937 the Talbot house was destroyed by fire. The foreman's bungalow was moved in the early 1920s up Santa Maria Avenue where it is now a home.

In 1976 two families, the Targs and the Kieslings, purchased the 78 acres we call the Hayfields on which they planned to live; two small clusters of homes have subsequently been built in the same area.

The Larry Lane Trail was the first dedicated and named trail in town and was constructed in 1979. Laurence William Lane, the founder of Sunset magazine, for whom the trail was named, was a rancher and horseman committed to supporting the riding community as well as the rural atmosphere of our town. He served on the original incorporation committee of the town. Funds to construct the trail came from the town, owners of the Hayfields and donations from the Lane family and others.

From A History of the Talbot Property, by Dorothy F. Regnery