

History

Fair Oaks—once home to the Maidu and later part of the 1844 Rancho San Juan Mexican land grant—was subdivided in 1895 and promoted as an agricultural community. Within a few years the community was well populated with families from midwestern and eastern states. Citrus, olives and other tree crops were established on parcels of five to twenty acres, and roads, bridges, schools and other improvements were steadily added to the community. A major freeze in 1932 devastated the citrus groves, and the community languished through the remainder of the depression and war years.

After World War II there was a resurgence of growth, fueled in part by the establishment of nearby Aerojet Corporation, and the growth of local military bases and state government. Regional infrastructure improvements—Folsom Dam, Interstate 80, Sunrise Boulevard and Bridge, State Route 50, Hazel Avenue Bridge, the Madison Avenue extension and Sunrise Mall—eventually transformed the distinct community into a suburb of metropolitan Sacramento.

Despite being engulfed in urban growth, Fair Oaks has retained a special charm and many of its unique



Credit Photo courtesy of the Fair Oaks Historical Society

features, including rolling terrain, oak trees, historic buildings, narrow and winding streets and a central business district—the Fair Oaks Village. The Village, the heart of Fair Oaks, includes [Plaza Park](#), [Village Park](#), [Community Clubhouse](#), the old Fair Oaks Library and the [Veteran's Memorial Amphitheatre](#).

In 1901, Frederick Cox, a notable figure in the community, donated 2 1/2 acres of his land to the Fair Oaks School District for a new elementary school—one that would eventually become today's [Community Clubhouse](#). The school was constructed in 1902 by local builder Joseph Broadley.

In 1909, property west of the school was purchased



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by Robinson-Buffum, a water distribution company, whose building—a center of significant commerce—was constructed on the northeast corner of their property where today's [Veteran's Memorial Amphitheatre](#) is located.

[Plaza Park](#), to the west of the Robinson-Buffum building, was an undeveloped lot for many years. However, Mrs. Buffum—a civic minded lady—saw to the planting of palm trees around the property and along Bridge Street. In 1922, a proposal was floated to build a used auto parts business on the lot. Fond of the open space, citizens formed a group called the Fair Oaks Civic Club to save this piece of ground. The club collected \$1,000 to buy the property and give it to the school district.

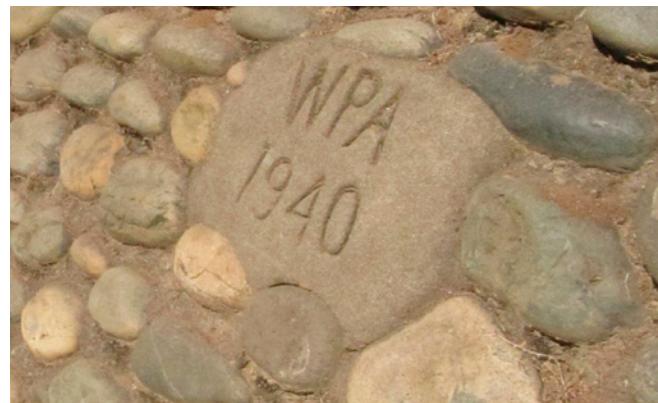


In 1929—after a new brick school was completed at the intersection of Fair Oaks Boulevard and Winding Way—the old school building was converted into a community center. In the 1930s a major renovation of the building was completed by the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). The building's cupola was removed and the structure was reduced to a single story and its basement. Ownership remained with the Fair Oaks School District.

In 1945 members of the community were successful in establishing the Fair Oaks Park District. The new



District immediately sought to acquire the Plaza and the old school building. It obtained a ten-year lease on the building from the school district for \$1 a year. In 1949, the Park District bought the [Clubhouse](#) and [Plaza Park](#) from the school district for a nominal sum under \$500.



Today, the [Community Clubhouse](#) remains the venue for many public and private events including meetings of the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club of Fair Oaks and the Fair Oaks Historical Society, as well as many District activities. The Fair Oaks History Center is located in the Clubhouse's Fireside Room and the Sierra Chapter of the American Theater Organ Society tends to the facility's grand old theater organ. In 1983 the Rotary Club raised funds and contributed labor to upgrade the basement to habitable space.



In 1969 the board budgeted \$7,000 to construct the **Veteran's Memorial Amphitheatre**. Park employees and contractors completed the facility in 1971. The Fair Oaks Theatre Festival—founded in 1982 by local citizens—offers theatrical performances each summer. In the late 1990s the Festival obtained funding to construct major improvements to the facility including restrooms, snack bars, ticket gate and entry garden.



Today, **Plaza Park** is central to the community's "Fiesta" (first begun in 1928, then reestablished in 1947) and the autumn "Chicken Festival" (begun in 2006), which tips a feather to the flocks of feral chickens that inhabit the Village. In 1993 a picnic area and arbor were constructed to the west of the amphitheatre by the Rotary Club. In 1995—Fair Oaks centennial year—this area was the location for burial of a time capsule to be opened in 2095.



Village Park, once the grounds of the old Fair Oaks Elementary School, today hosts summer "Concerts in the Park", as well as many informal recreation activities.



