

EL CERRITO HISTORICAL TRAIL



Cub Scout Pack 104

El Cerrito, California

www.elcerritoscouting.org

Hike Information

Total Trail Length: 8.0 Miles

Western Segment - Del Norte Station to EC Plaza Station: 3.8 Miles

Eastern Segment - EC Plaza Station to Del Norte Station: 4.2 Miles

Hike Instructions

- The following pages include step-by-step hiking directions, denoted by underlined text.
- Major points of interest are highlighted in **BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS**.
- Informational text is presented in the indented sections.
- There are **Numbered Questions** for you to answer along the way. You may write in answers next to the questions or use the optional answer sheet at the back of the booklet.
- Cub Scouts are encouraged to hike as much of the trail as they can, but they are not required to complete the whole 8 miles. Do your best!
- Older Scouts are expected to complete the entire trail in order to earn the patch.
- The hike is designed as a loop, starting and ending at the Del Norte BART Station, but you may jump in anywhere along the route.
- The trail may be hiked over multiple days; there is no time limit.
- If you have difficulty finding a point of interest or the answer to a question, it's ok to skip it and move on to the next one. What you're looking for may no longer be there.

A Brief History of El Cerrito

The area around present-day El Cerrito was once home to the Ohlone Indians. The first Spanish explorers, led by Pedro Fages, arrived in 1772 and set up camp alongside the “cerrito” known today as Albany Hill. Another expedition, led by Juan Bautista de Anza, came through the area in 1776. In 1823, the governor of California granted approximately 18,000 acres of grazing land to Francisco Castro, who had come here as a child with de Anza’s expedition. The area granted to Castro was named Rancho San Pablo. In 1839, Francisco Castro’s son, Victor Ramon Castro, built a home next to Cerrito Creek at the southern end of Rancho San Pablo. In the 1880’s William Rust, an immigrant from Germany, settled here and built a blacksmith shop along what is now San Pablo Avenue. The population grew dramatically following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, and in 1909, Rust established a post office in his store. In 1917, local citizens voted to incorporate the area into the City of El Cerrito. As the city grew, it developed a wild reputation for its numerous gambling halls and night clubs, and at one time El Cerrito even had a dog racing track! In the 1940’s, around the end of World War II, a group of citizens formed the Good Government League, with the goal of cleaning up the city and making it a nice family town. By the 1950’s, El Cerrito’s population had reached 20,000, and it was well on its way to becoming the city we know today.

BEGIN THE HIKE at the south end of EL CERRITO DEL NORTE BART STATION, where the OHLONE GREENWAY crosses Hill Street.

El Cerrito Del Norte Station is one of two BART stations in El Cerrito. It opened in January 1973, shortly after the BART system began operations. In El Cerrito, the elevated BART tracks and adjacent Ohlone Greenway were built on the former **SANTA FE RAILROAD** right of way. The Santa Fe tracks remained in use until 1979, and for a short time, it was possible to see a BART train travelling overhead at the same time a Santa Fe train was rolling on the tracks below. The Greenway was created after the Santa Fe tracks were retired.

Using the crosswalk, cross over Hill Street and turn right. Head to the corner of Hill Street and San Pablo Avenue. Look for the diamond-shaped “SUMMERTIME FUN IN EL CERRITO” historical marker in the sidewalk.

1. What was the name of the bowling alley that once stood here?

This sidewalk marker, and many others like it, have been placed along San Pablo Avenue by the El Cerrito Historical Society, a civic organization dedicated to preserving local history. Some of these markers will be noted in this guide, but there are also several others - keep an eye out for them as you hike.

Staying on this side of the road, head southeast on San Pablo Avenue. As you walk along this block, pause to notice the **HISTORIC BUNGALOWS** across the street at 11471, 11457 and 11453 San Pablo Avenue.

These houses, which are more than 100 years old, represent some of the oldest homes still standing in El Cerrito. The brown shingle house at 11453 was built by the Regalia family in 1905.

Continue on San Pablo Ave until you cross over Blake Street.

The brick building at 11382 San Pablo Avenue is now home to a liquor store, but it was originally the site of the **VISTA THEATER**, El Cerrito’s second movie theater. The theater opened in 1943 and closed in 1956. Later, the building was used by the Contra Costa Civic Theater, before it moved to its current location on Pomona Avenue.

Turn left here onto Blake Street and head northeast. Cross over the Ohlone Greenway as you make your way to Liberty Street. Turn right onto Liberty Street and proceed down the block to Portrero Avenue.

In the early part of the 20th Century, this neighborhood was known as “Little Italy”. The building across from you at 1600 Liberty Street that now houses **GIOVANNI’S PRODUCE** was originally the home of **BARONI BAKERY** and then, later, **POLONI’S MARKET**. Although they have mostly disappeared over the years, El Cerrito was once dotted with small neighborhood grocery stores. You may want to take this opportunity to stop in and stock up on snacks or drinks for the hike.

Turn right onto Portreo Avenue and start back toward the Ohlone Greenway.

Just before you cross under the BART tracks you will see the Bruce King Memorial Dog Park on the right. It is El Cerrito’s only dedicated off-leash dog park. The park is named in memory of Bruce King, a dog lover and city employee for over 20 years.

Continue to the corner of Portrero Ave and Kearny Street.

The one-story building at 1600 Kearney was originally the location of the **CERRITO CITY CLUB**, a civic organization started by local businessmen in 1942. It is now home to a printing company and other business offices.

Continue to the corner of Portrero Avenue and San Pablo Avenue. Using the crosswalks, cross over Potrero Avenue and then cross San Pablo Avenue to the southwest corner.

Start southeast on San Pablo Ave, looking for the “**STREETCARS IN EL CERRITO**” historical marker as you go.

2. In the early 1900’s, streetcars ran the length of _____.

As you continue along, you’ll pass by the **USPS CARRIER ANNEX** at 11245 San Pablo Avenue, where El Cerrito’s mail is processed and sorted prior to being delivered. Continue to 11225 San Pablo Avenue.

Today this building is a music store, but it was once the **CENTRAL MEAT MARKET AND GROCERY**, which was also run by the Poloni family.

Proceed next door to 11201 San Pablo Ave.

Known as the **ROSSI BUILDING**, this building included the Rossi family's home in back, commercial space in the front, and an upstairs meeting/banquet hall that could be rented out by the public. Note the interesting tile inlays in the brickwork on both sides of the building.

Continue along to the **UNITED STATES POST OFFICE** at 11135 San Pablo Ave.

This is El Cerrito's main Post Office. Look for the plaque on the wall near the entrance.

3. Who was President of the United States in 1958 when this Post Office opened?

Head over to the crosswalk, taking time to read the "**QUARRIES**" historical marker as you pass. Use the crosswalk to cross back over San Pablo Avenue and continue southeast on the other side of the street. Continue on to 10900 San Pablo Ave.

El Cerrito's **PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING** is home to both the El Cerrito Fire Department and the El Cerrito Police Department.

4. Look on the wall by the big garage doors. What is the number of this Fire Station?

This stretch of San Pablo Avenue is part of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. Stop to read the "**CORRIDORS OF CHANGE**" sign by the corner of the Building.

5. The painting on the sign depicts a view of El Cerrito in what year?

Look for the "**CITY HALL**" historical marker in the sidewalk at the corner.

6. Where did the Fire Chief live?

Use the crosswalk to cross Manila Avenue and make your way to the main entrance of **CITY HALL**. Look for the plaque on the wall by the entrance.

7. This building was "Proudly dedicated to the _____ and _____ of El Cerrito – October 2008".

The landscaping around the building is designed to resemble a natural creek.

Head over to the flagpoles by the corner of Manila Avenue and San Pablo Avenue, where you will find two memorials honoring Veterans and the Armed Forces.

8. The “Blue Star Memorial By-Way” plaque was placed by the El Cerrito_____ Club, a civic organization founded in 1956.

From City Hall, continue to the Hana Gardens Senior Apartments, right next door on San Pablo Avenue.

The panels in the courtyard provide an overview of local Japanese American history.

After viewing the panels, follow the timeline markers in the sidewalk to the former site of the Mabuchi family’s **CONTRA COSTA FLORIST**, and stop to read the sign in front of the building.

Continue along San Pablo Avenue, and as you approach the corner of Schmidt Lane, stop to look at the large building across from you on San Pablo Avenue.

The building you are looking at was once the home of **EL CERRITO MILL AND LUMBER**, and it was originally located right behind you at 10812 San Pablo Avenue. It was moved across the street to make way for the apartment building and shops that were built in its place.

Continue southeast on San Pablo Avenue. After crossing Portola Drive you will pass by a couple of commercial buildings. Pause to look across the street to the apartments at the corner of San Pablo Avenue and Burlingame Avenue.

With its unique staircase leading up from the street corner, **THE STAG HOUSE** was built in 1912 and operated as an inn, under various names, for many years.

Continue along to 10504 San Pablo Avenue, at the corner of Waldo Avenue.

Built in the 1930’s, this building was home to Judge Joe Martyn Turner’s courtroom. Judicial functions later moved to City Hall and were eventually combined with other local communities in the early 1970’s, so El Cerrito does not have a city courthouse today.

Continue on San Pablo Avenue toward Stockton Avenue. As you pass by Bank of America (which opened here in 1948), look across to the vacant lot on the corner of San Pablo Avenue and Panama Ave.

Although it was most recently a fast food restaurant, in the early 1900's this was the site of another neighborhood store called **ANNEX GROCERY**. It was owned by the Chiovaro family, who came here from San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake.

Proceed to the corner of Stockton Avenue, and look for the “**EL CERRITO PUBLIC LIBRARY**” historical marker.

9. The El Cerrito Public Library moved to Stockton Avenue in what year?

Turn left and head up Stockton Avenue. After crossing Kearny Street, you'll come to the **VETERAN'S MEMORIAL BUILDING** at 6401 Stockton Avenue.

This building is home to Post 340 of the American Legion, a civic organization serving veterans and communities. It is also the meeting place for BSA Troop 104.

10. The American Legion meets here on 2nd Saturdays at what time?

Continue on Stockton Avenue to Lexington Avenue, use the crosswalk to cross to the other side of Stockton Avenue and then head over to the **EL CERRITO PUBLIC LIBRARY**. Look for a plaque on the wall across from the entry doors.

11. In what year was the library's remodeling and new construction completed?

Staying on this side of Stockton Avenue, head back down to Kearny Street. Turn left onto Kearny and stop in front of the entrance to **FAIRMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**.

First established in 1905, Fairmont is the oldest school in El Cerrito. The school has been rebuilt twice, and the current building was constructed in 1957.

12. Fairmont's school mascot is the Cougar. What symbol appears on the large sign by the entrance?

Head southeast on Kearny Street to Eureka Avenue. Use the crosswalk to cross to the other side of Kearney Street and continue to the **Pierre Allinio House** at 609 Kearny Street.

Pierre Allinio, an accomplished ornamental plasterer, built this house for his family in 1907. He wanted their home to be special, so he designed it in a style similar to houses in his native France. Due to its unique architectural details, including battlements, it is sometimes referred to as “The Castle”. As a plasterer, Allinio worked on several notable projects, including Hearst Castle and the “Bear Fountain” on Marin Circle in Berkeley. He was also an early aviation pioneer - he designed and built planes here in his home workshop and flew them from a landing strip just south of where Harding Elementary School now stands.

Continue down the block to Lincoln Avenue and then turn right toward San Pablo Avenue. Turn left when you reach San Pablo Avenue. Watch for the “VIOLET’S” historical marker in the sidewalk shortly after you cross over Lincoln Avenue.

13. What was the name of the restaurant Violet Wong opened here with her husband in 1945?

As you walk along this block of San Pablo Avenue, pause to view the **HISTORIC BUNGALOWS** at 10152 and 10116 San Pablo Avenue.

Built in 1916, these are among the oldest houses still standing along San Pablo Avenue.

Proceed to the corner of San Pablo Avenue and Central Avenue, where you will find the “**THE ‘IT’ CLUB**” historical marker in the sidewalk.

14. Who was the IT Club named for?

Turn right onto Central Avenue, using the crosswalk to cross over San Pablo Avenue. Continue on to Carlson Boulevard. Using the crosswalks, cross over Central Avenue and then cross again to the west side of Carlson Boulevard. Head southeast to the large white and brown building at 3223 Carlson Avenue.

For many years, this building was home to one of El Cerrito’s many popular gambling halls, **THE WAGON WHEEL**, which was run by a powerful boss known as “Big Bill” Pechart. Today the building is home to the Fraternal Order of Eagles, a civic organization dedicated to helping communities.

15. According to the sign, what is the “Aerie” number of the Bayview Eagles?

Continue on Carlson Boulevard to the **OLD WEST GUN ROOM** at 3509 Carlson Boulevard.

While the current business has operated here for over 50 years, this building was originally the site of Clarence Miller's **SAMPAN ANTIQUES**. Miller built the structure itself and its impressive fence from stones he collected around the area of Albany Hill. The fence and gates also feature real wagon wheels supported with chains.

16. What feature is built into the fence on the 2nd stone pillar from the right?

Continue along to the corner of Carlson Boulevard and San Pablo Avenue. Turn left and use the crosswalk to cross over Carlson Avenue.

Head north to "**BIG BILL**" **PECHART'S FORTRESS** at 9943-9951 San Pablo Avenue.

Fortified with reinforced concrete and triple doors, this building, also known as "The Citadel", was the personal residence of gambling boss "Big Bill" Pechart. Note the defensive metal spikes on the wall to the right of the building.

Step next door to 9955 San Pablo Avenue.

This small brick building, built in the 1930's, was home to **COUNTY LINE CLEANERS**, a laundry business run by the Nawata Family for over 65 years.

Continue on toward Fairmount Avenue, taking time to read the "**EL CERRITO'S NIGHTLIFE**" historical marker as you pass. When you reach Fairmount Avenue, use the crosswalk to cross over Fairmount Avenue to the northwest corner. Look for the "**RUST**" historical marker in the sidewalk.

17. This area of El Cerrito was originally named for whom?

Before it officially became the city we know today, the smaller areas that make up El Cerrito were known by names such as "Schmidtville", "Stege Junction" and "Rust". In 1917, citizens voted to incorporate these areas and form El Cerrito. The name "El Cerrito", meaning "The Little Hill" in Spanish, is a reference to Albany Hill, which is actually located just outside of El Cerrito's city limits.

The top corner of the "**RUST**" historical marker points toward a plaque set into bricks by the sidewalk.

18. What lies beneath this plaque?

Head northward on San Pablo Avenue toward Central Avenue. As you pass by, search on the wall by the hardware store entrance for a plaque commemorating **WILLIAM RUST'S BLACKSMITH SHOP.**

19. In 1909, Rust was named the first _____ of Rust, California.

After it was Rust's Blacksmith Shop, this was the site of another one of El Cerrito's popular hangouts, **THE PASTIME CLUB**. The name of the store that operates here today, **ACE PASTIME HARDWARE**, is a reference to that history.

Proceed along San Pablo Avenue to Central Avenue. Using the crosswalk, cross over to the east side of San Pablo Avenue. Turn right and start out toward the theater, looking for the "**CERRITO THEATER**" historical marker in the sidewalk.

20. On what day did the Cerrito Theater open?

Continue on to the Cerrito Theater.

Built in the Art Deco style, which was very popular at the time, the Cerrito Theater operated for almost three decades before shutting down in the 1960's. The building was then home to a furniture store. In 2002, Friends of the Cerrito Theater, a civic group dedicated to preserving the theater, convinced the El Cerrito City Council to purchase the building and raise money for its renovation. Stars in the sidewalk honor major donors to the project, and a plaque on the wall commemorates the renovation.

21. In what year was the Theater renovation completed?

From the theater, continue along this side of San Pablo Avenue to the northeast corner of Fairmount Street and look for the "**EL CERRITO'S FIRST MAYOR**" historical marker in the sidewalk.

22. What was the name of El Cerrito's first mayor?

Continue on San Pablo Avenue, past the entrance to **EL CERRITO PLAZA**, and make your way to the monument marking the boundaries of **RANCHO SAN PABLO** and **RANCHO SAN ANTONIO**, just beyond the El Cerrito city limit sign.

About 4 years before Rancho San Pablo was granted to Francisco Castro, Rancho San Antonio was granted to Louis Peralta by the last Spanish governor of California. At more than double the size of Rancho San Pablo, its vast territory stretched from

here to as far south as present-day San Leandro. Plaques on either side of this monument mark the northern boundary of Rancho San Antonio and the southern boundary of Rancho San Pablo.

These markers were first erected in 1937 by the Oakland Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Boys Scouts of America Explorers Troop 26. They were dedicated again in 1997 by Soroptimist International of El Cerrito, a civic organization dedicated to helping women and girls achieve economic empowerment.

Turn back and head northward on San Pablo Avenue. As you make your way back toward the entrance to **EL CERRITO PLAZA**, look in the shrubs to your right for placards representing many of the civic organizations that are active in El Cerrito.

The site of modern-day El Cerrito Plaza has a long and interesting history. Victor Ramon Castro built the first of his adobe houses on the southwestern end of the property in 1839. In 1932, The **EL CERRITO KENNEL CLUB**, a dog racing track, was built on the northern side. The track was shut down in 1939, and part of the grounds became the **EL CERRITO TRAILER COURT**, which housed workers who flocked to the area during World War II. The track's grandstand was eventually demolished in 1948, and **EL CERRITO MOTOR MOVIES**, a drive-in movie theater operated there until 1956. As plans were being made to develop a shopping center on the site, a debate raged about whether or not to preserve the historic Castro Adobe. In April 1956, the Adobe structure burned to the ground under mysterious circumstances, and construction of El Cerrito Plaza began shortly thereafter. Most of the original shopping center was demolished in 2000, and the current El Cerrito Plaza, which was rebuilt in its place, opened for business in 2001.

Turn into El Cerrito Plaza and look for the **ADOBE HOUSES OF VICTOR CASTRO** plaque, on the right about halfway between San Pablo Avenue and the retail stores.

23. How many Adobe dwellings did Victor Castro build at this site?

As you are facing the plaque, the Castro Adobe would have been directly in front of you, in what is now a parking lot. Read the plaque again carefully. Do you think it may have been moved here from a different part of the Plaza?

Continue along to the traffic circle. At the flagpole on the south side of the traffic circle, find the plaque placed in memory of **SUNDAR SHADI**.

Originally from India, Sundar Shadi lived in El Cerrito for more than 65 years until his death in 2002 at the age of 102. He created the elaborate Christmas display that is showcased on Moeser Lane each year during the holiday season. This memorial was placed by the Rotary Club of El Cerrito, a civic organization dedicated to community service.

From the southwest corner of the traffic circle, follow the crosswalk to the opposite sidewalk, and then head northward to the Fairmount Avenue entrance to El Cerrito Plaza. Turn right at Fairmount Avenue and proceed past the **EL CERRITO PLAZA BART STATION**.

El Cerrito Plaza Station, the city's other BART station, also opened in January 1973.

Continue up Fairmount Avenue to **HARDING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** at the corner of Fairmount Avenue and Ashbury Avenue.

Harding Elementary School was built in the 1920's and renovated in 2004. BSA Troop 104 was founded in 1939 by parents from the Harding Dad's Club.

24. According to the sign by the corner, what animal is Harding's Mascot?

Continue east on Fairmount Avenue toward Colusa Avenue.

As you approach Colusa Avenue you will pass through one of the small business districts that have served El Cerrito's local neighborhoods since the city's early days.

When you reach Colusa Ave, use the crosswalks to cross over to Sunset View Cemetery.

Sunset View Cemetery was founded in 1908, but the striking building in front, with its cascading pools, wasn't built until 1962. The cemetery grounds are open to the public. Please be sure to practice reverence if you visit.

Each year on Veteran's Day in November, local Scouts from El Cerrito and surrounding communities come together to place flags on the graves of veterans with the help of the El Cerrito Lions Club, a civic organization dedicated to community service.

Exit the cemetery parking lot and use the crosswalk to cross to the northwest corner of Colusa Avenue. Turn right and head northward on Colusa Avenue. You'll be treated to

excellent views of the **EL CERRITO HIGH SCHOOL** sports fields as you walk. Turn left at Eureka Avenue and head down the hill toward Ashbury Avenue. Take a left at Ashbury and walk to the entrance of the ECHS Performing Arts Theater.

The original El Cerrito High School opened in January 1941, and it evolved into a campus of several buildings over the years as the student population grew.

Construction of a new campus began in 2005, and the new school opened to students in January 2009. A low wall near the entrance to the theater includes customized bricks honoring people who have donated money to the school. Some of the bricks have clever inscriptions. See if you can find the brick to fill in the blanks below:

25. “Dear Christina, _____ ? Love, Saku”

Some notable ECHS alumni include Major League Baseball players Pumpsie Green and Ernie Broglio, Olympian Roddy Lee, Phil Lesh of the band Grateful Dead, John Fogerty, Stu Cook and Doug Clifford of the band Creedence Clearwater Revival, Tesla Motors co-founder Martin Eberhard and author/law professor Amy Chua.

Head back northward on Ashbury Avenue. When you come to the first driveway after crossing Eureka Avenue, look across the street to the southwest corner of Ashbury Avenue and Eureka Avenue. The house with the large garage doors was once El Cerrito’s **FIRE STATION #2**. Continuing on, you’ll pass by another small commercial district to the left as you cross over Stockton Avenue. Keep walking on Ashbury Avenue until you reach Moeser Lane. Using the crosswalks, cross Ashbury Avenue and Moeser Lane, and visit the **EL CERRITO COMMUNITY CENTER**.

This building is home to the city’s Recreation Department. It includes offices, a childcare center and multiple community rooms that host a wide variety of events and classes. Look for the plaque by the entrance to the main room.

26. In what year did this building open?

This complex also includes the **EL CERRITO SWIM CENTER**. In 2015, the Swim Center’s competition pool was renamed in memory of Emery Weed, who worked here for 25 years as a lifeguard and instructor. Look for two plaques on the wall by the Swim Center gate.

27. In what year did the Swim Center first open?

28. In what year was the Swim Center reconstruction completed?

Head back to Moeser Lane and cross back over to the other side, using the crosswalks. Turn left and begin walking uphill to the **CONTRA COSTA CIVIC THEATER** at the corner of Moeser Lane and Pomona Avenue.

29. How many musical notes are included in the mural on the side of the building?

30. Find the plaque by the entrance doors. What is the name of this building?

Using the crosswalk to cross Pomona Avenue, head over to the entrance to **CERRITO VISTA PARK**, on the opposite corner.

For many years, Cerrito Vista Park has been a central gathering place for community activities, including the city's Fourth of July Festival. But at one time, the park's athletic fields, playgrounds and picnic areas and the residential blocks to the south were all part of the Bates and Borland Quarry's rock crushing operation. A tramway brought rocks down from the quarry itself (at the site of present-day Camp Herms) to be sorted, crushed, and hauled off for use in construction projects around the local area.

Look for a small L-shaped brick monument, installed in 1956 by the Rotary Club, just inside the park entrance.

31. "HAVE FAITH IN OUR _____"

Another plaque, in the shape of home plate, honors Tony Santarelli, an El Cerrito native and UC Berkeley athletics groundskeeper, who for many years, also took care of the turf at Cerrito Vista Park. See if you can find the plaque on the dugout wall.

Head back to Moeser Lane and continue uphill to Avis Drive. Turn left and use the crosswalk to cross over Moeser Lane. Continue northwest on Avis Drive, which becomes Navellier Street on this side of Moeser Lane.

The large, grassy lot on the downhill side of Navellier Street is the former site of **PORTOLA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**. Due to earthquake safety concerns, the school was demolished in 2012 and rebuilt as Korematsu Middle School on Donal Avenue.

Continue to Schmidt Lane then turn right and proceed to the **EL CERRITO RECYCLING CENTER**. If the Recycling Center is open, head inside and take a look around.

This area at the end of Schmidt Lane was the site of El Cerrito's other quarry, the Hutchinson Quarry, from 1906 to 1944. After the quarry closed, its abandoned structures were used for training by the El Cerrito Fire Department.

The El Cerrito Recycling Center was started by a group of volunteers in 1971 and operations were taken over by the city in 1977. It was among the first recycling centers of its kind and became a model for recycling centers nationwide. After four decades of operation, the City of El Cerrito invested nearly \$3 million to redesign and rebuild the Recycling Center in its current form. The new Recycling Center opened in 2012.

32. According to the round plaque on the office building, the Recycling Center has earned _ _ _ _ Platinum certification. [initials]

After visiting the Recycling Center, head back on Schmidt Lane toward Navellier Street. To your right you'll pass by the **EL CERRITO FOUNDATION MEMORIAL GROVE** at one of the entrances to the **HILLSIDE NATURAL AREA**.

The Memorial Grove is an approximately 1-acre area where individuals or groups can have trees planted in memory of family and friends. Many notable El Cerrito residents have been memorialized here. Their names can be found on the back of the wooden Memorial Grove sign. The Foundation no longer exists, but the El Cerrito Garden Club has taken over responsibility for the Memorial Grove.

The Hillside Natural Area consists of over 100 acres of open space that has been either donated to the city, purchased by the city or purchased through the fundraising efforts of private groups. There are miles of hiking trails to be explored within the Hillside Natural Area.

Continue to Navellier Street and turn right. Head northwest and stop when you get to the **NAVELLIER HOUSE** at 1332 Navellier Street.

This farmhouse, built by Ernest Navellier for his family in 1898, is the fourth oldest building in El Cerrito.

Continue up Navellier Street until you reach the intersection with Donal Avenue. After the gated driveway, cross over to the northwest corner and start out down Donal Avenue. As you walk past **KOREMATSU MIDDLE SCHOOL**, look for the tile mural on the wall.

33. The tiles to the bottom right explain that the mural was created by “The French Artist: Isabelle Delloye and the Children of _____.”

This site was once the home of **CASTRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**, which closed in 2010. When the campus was rebuilt as Korematsu Middle School, portions of the original buildings, including this one, were incorporated into the new

construction. The name “Castro School” is still visible in the wall to the upper left of the mural.

Make your way down to the main entrance to the Middle School and search for the plaque near the doorway.

34. In what month and year did the new school building open?

Korematsu Middle School was named in honor of Fred T. Korematsu, a Japanese American who refused to be relocated to an internment camp during World War II. He was eventually awarded the presidential Medal of Freedom for his lifetime of work advocating for civil liberties. He also served the BSA as an adult leader in the SF Bay Area Council.

Continue on Donal Avenue to Norvell Street and turn right. Proceed to the end of the block and then turn right again when you reach Gladys Avenue. After passing **CASTRO PARK**, you’ll see **CAMERON SCHOOL** on the right.

Cameron School provides educational support for special-needs preschoolers. Small plaques on each side of the front entrance honor founder Christina B. Cameron and former principal Ruth Wuerth.

Proceed up Gladys Avenue until you reach Navellier Street. Cross over Gladys Avenue and make your way northwest on Navellier Street to Wildwood Place.

Looking up Wildwood Place at the condominiums that stand here today, the view is much different than it was a hundred years ago when this was the site of the **REINECKER FAMILY’S CHICKEN RANCH**. It may be hard to imagine, but El Cerrito was home to several chicken ranches and dairies in those days. At one time, a small creek ran downhill from this area, and there’s a photograph from the 1920’s which shows a young boy rafting down the creek.

Continue along on Navellier Street. Just after you cross Portrero Avenue, use the crosswalk to cross over to the other side of Navellier Street and continue northwest. As the road bends and Navellier Street becomes Blake Street, look between the houses for a small stairway at the **MOTORCYCLE HILL** entrance to the Hillside Natural Area.

The forested area behind these houses was once an open, grassy hill. As motorcycle clubs gained popularity in the 1920’s, riders from around the nation would gather here at “Peralta Hill” to compete in hill climbing competitions, though many couldn’t even make it all the way up the rugged hillside.

Follow Blake Street down toward Elm Street. As you walk, you'll pass by the second oldest building in El Cerrito, tucked mostly out of view behind other homes, at 7127 Blake Street. At Elm Street, you'll come to a small park on the corner.

This park is maintained by the Kiwanis Club, a civic organization dedicated to improving the lives of children, one community at a time.

35. To whom is the bench in this park dedicated?

As you turn right to head northwest on Elm Street, you'll see the **RODINI HOUSE** across the street at 1715 Elm Street.

This Victorian-era cottage was built in 1897 by Ambrose Rodini. It is the third oldest building in El Cerrito. A small creek once ran through this neighborhood. It has mostly been “undergrounded” and built over top of, but a short length of the creek remains open to daylight on the Rodini property.

[Note: The oldest building in El Cerrito is the house at 6606 Schmidt Lane, which was built in 1895.]

Continue uphill on Elm Street to the first traffic light. Ahead on your right you'll see a large building with a green roof. Now part of a school campus, this building was originally the **CHUNG MEI HOME FOR CHINESE BOYS.**

Built in 1935 on the site of a former dairy, the Chung Mei Home was an orphanage for abandoned Chinese American boys. (In Cantonese, “Chung” means “China” and “Mei” means “America”.) The Chung Mei Home closed in 1954. In 2016, former residents dedicated a plaque in the building to honor the founder, Dr. Charles Shepherd, whom they affectionately called “Captain”. The building is on private property, so we'll only view it from the sidewalk on this hike. If you look very closely, you can see bas-relief sculptures just above the main entrance.

36. What mythical creature is depicted in the sculptures above the entrance?

Use the crosswalk to cross Elm Street and head down Hill Street to the Ohlone Greenway. Return to the El Cerrito Del Norte BART station and the **END OF THE HIKE.**



EL CERRITO HISTORICAL TRAIL ANSWER SHEET

Name: _____

Hike Date(s): _____

1. _____

19. _____

2. _____

20. _____

3. _____

21. _____

4. _____

22. _____

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