

# What's in a name? Laurel Grove Park

**L**aurel Grove Park—the residential tract that eventually gave the Laurel District its name—was laid out in 1900 with School Street, Kansas Street and Quarry Street as three of its boundaries.

Quarry Street was Maple Avenue's original name, as it once led up the hill to O'Brien's Quarry. Peralta Creek and property lines that later became Midvale Avenue served as the tract's fourth boundary.

The land first belonged to Don Luis Maria Peralta, who had procured it as part of his 1820 land grant from the King of Spain. The Peralta family deeded the property to a farmer with the patriotic-sounding name George Washington Adams. By 1869, attorney Sidney L. Johnson owned the tract.

Johnson held the property until 1900 when his family sold it to Henrietta and Joseph Westall. The Westalls also owned property on the other side of today's Laurel District centering on Maybelle Avenue, which the couple had named for their youngest daughter, Mabel.

The Westalls turned to civil engineer George E. Fogg to subdivide Laurel Grove Park and to real estate developer Henry Z. Jones to develop and sell the lots. Fogg laid out streets running from School Street toward the hills, naming them for states, in succession: Maine, Vermont, Jersey, Delaware, Ohio, Georgia, Idaho, Florida and Kansas.

Fogg evenly divided the tract with Laurel Avenue to echo the subdivision's name. The Westalls may have named the subdivision for a grove of laurel trees that grew along the creek and created the property's boundary near School Street. Perhaps Adams had named his farm "Laurel Grove."

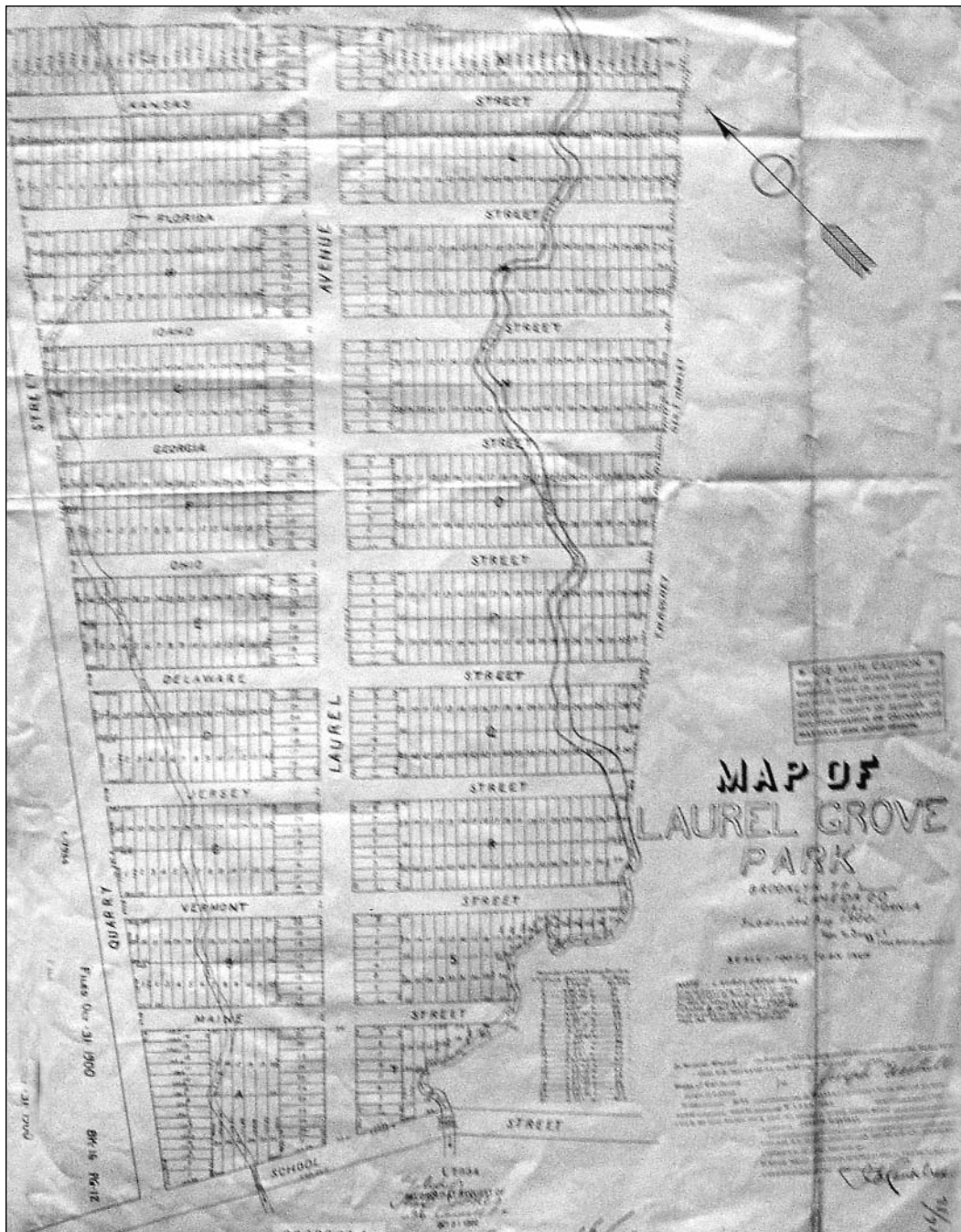
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By 1900, a string of real estate developments had already begun to dot the area that became the Laurel. Some of the homes in one of the Laurel's earliest developments appeared on today's 39th Avenue above Bayo Street. Thirty-Ninth Avenue appears on early maps first as Brooklyn Avenue (named for the Brooklyn Development Company), then as Franklin Avenue.

At first Franklin Avenue was accessible only from above on Redwood Road. Hopkins Street (MacArthur Boulevard) did not run through today's Laurel until after Franklin Avenue was developed.

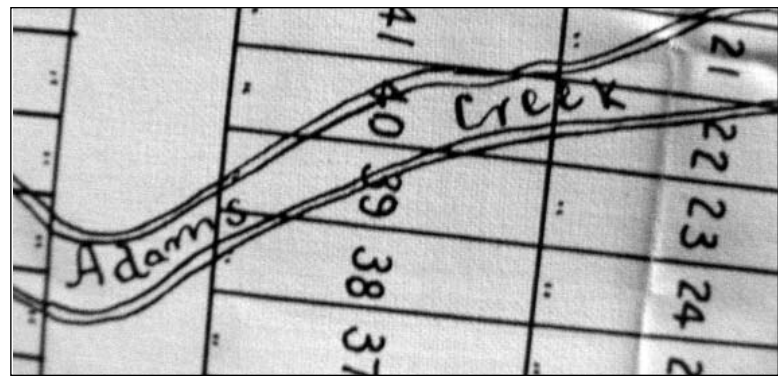
In 1907, the Transbay Realty Company purchased the property which had made up the bulk of O.L. Shafter's estate and began transforming it into "Fruitvale Heights." By 1909, the name had changed to Key Route Heights.

In the 1950s, Frank Paulson and John Henry Behrens sat down with Leonard H. Verbarg, author of the *Oakland Tribune's* popular weekly column, "The Knave," and recalled the days before the developers stepped in.



NOTE :- LAUREL GROVE PARK is a subdivision into lots of the same property heretofore conveyed by Geo. W. Adams & wife to Sidney L. Johnson by deed dated March 22, 1869 and recorded in Book N<sup>o</sup> 40 of Deeds page 193 Alameda Co Records.

**A GROVE OF LAURELS:** In 1900 Joseph and Harriet Westphal hired George Fogg to lay out property they had purchased from Sidney Johnson. The tract map lays out the chain of title back to George Washington Adams, conveniently forgetting Don Antonio Peralta, above. The map even names Peralta Creek for the Adams family, below.







**ALL ABOARD:** Alameda Investment Company salesmen stand at the ready to serve prospective Key Route Heights buyers. A horse and buggy wait to take prospects to see property as passengers board the Oakland Traction Company's Number 11 streetcar. **INSET:** The Number 10 streetcar from Dimond approaches its destination at 35th Avenue and Hopkins Street. A third streetcar ran along Courtland Creek using the old California Railway right-of-way.