



San Anselmo News

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History of Memorial Park

Our hometown park has roots that are as American as apple pie and one word sums it up, baseball. If it weren't for baseball and San Anselmo's love of the game, potentially there would have never been a park located where current day Memorial Park is located. Below is an excerpt written by the San Anselmo Historical Commission regarding the purchase of the park for baseball games:



“Real estate partners Thomas Kent and Thomas Minto purchased a number of unsold lots in the Short Ranch in 1924 and offered an approximately seven-acre site, suitable for a park, to the Town. The town trustees approved the purchase for \$7,000 in June 1924, and development began the following year. The 1926 season opened in the new Recreation Park after public-spirited volunteers prepared the diamond and constructed the grandstand and Mercantile Trust Co. provided new uniforms for the team. The Herald reported that a “record

crowd was assembled, packing the grandstand and sidelines, while a large overflow crowd in a regular flock of automobiles lined the entire field” to witness the San Anselmo boys beat the Larkspur team. The Fourth of July was celebrated at Recreation Park with “a peach of a program” that included foot races, a tug-of-war, refreshments, and of course, a baseball game, one between the San Anselmo Volunteer Fire Department and the Yolanda Oaks. “Everyone went away at the finish singing praises for the celebration and the new Recreation Park and playgrounds.”

The San Anselmo Baseball Club joined with North Bay teams from San Rafael, Napa, Vallejo, Benicia, Petaluma, Santa Rosa and a Shriners team to form a semi-pro league in 1927. Town residents were assured of seeing the best in semi-pro baseball on Sunday afternoons in the new park.

The local amateur team, the San Anselmo Wildcats, played in a Marin County league and won the league championship in 1927 and 1928. Large crowds attended their Sunday morning games prior to the play of the semi-pro teams. The ball field at Recreation Park was in such demand by teams wanting to play there that the police and fire chiefs were put in charge of scheduling the field.

The San Anselmo Chamber of Commerce organized and sponsored the semi-pro team, the San Anselmo Merchants, in 1934. The team included former college and high school players, many of whom played with the Wildcats. The Merchants continued to field a strong team and played almost continuously until the 1960s.

Bill Franchini, a star player for both the Wildcats and Merchants, recalled: “On Sundays we played baseball. In those days, when I was just a freshman in high school, baseball was a big thing in town. I started out playing on the morning team and then as I got older I moved to the afternoon team. But that was the thing to do for people who lived in San Anselmo. They didn’t have much to do. They didn’t have cars like we do today and the population was 2,000-2,500, so on Sundays they went to the ball game over at Memorial Park. The games used to draw maybe 500 people, and we played pretty good baseball in those days.”

Recreation Park has seen many changes and improvements since the 1930s and 1940s. It was renamed San Anselmo Memorial Recreation Park on October, 9, 1948 on the recommendation of the local Lions and Rotary Clubs and Councilman Clarence Miller. The Ongaro Plumbers, another semi-pro team, played there, Little League started and the San Anselmo Baseball Association (SABA) was formed. Generations of San Anselmo’s youths have played baseball on the diamonds or participated in other sports and recreation at Memorial Park.”



Your MEMORIAL PARK

Many describe the park as the ‘crown jewel’ of the town. It has been in continual use by the community for the past 92 years. Over the years a playground, tennis courts, and most recently a skate park were added. Aside from the addition of the above listed amenities, the park has never received any significant upgrades and is in dire need of renovation.

With this in mind, the Town Council introduced a project that requested input from everyone in town, the Memorial Park Master Plan project.

After one year and over 27 community discussions, the final draft of the Memorial Park Master Plan will be reviewed by the Town Council at their meeting on Tuesday, October 24th. The meeting will take place in the Town Council Chambers, located at 525 San Anselmo Avenue, at 7 p.m. You can view the Draft Plan by visiting www.visionmemorialpark.org.

Upcoming Meetings in San Anselmo	
Sustainability Commission	Monday, October 23 7 pm, Historical Museum
Town Council	Tuesday, October 24 7 pm, Council Chambers

San Anselmo News, published weekly on Fridays, is available on the Town’s website, www.townofsananselmo.org, and by email subscription.