

# A History of Audubon Hills

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## 1. Early History

Merrill L. Adams compiled the following with the assistance of Tom Chandler of Inter Country Title Co., starting with the chain of title back to and 1873 Land grant patent.

State of California granted to John Breslin 03/04/1874, a land patent.

Progression was as follows:

To J. R. Webster in 18??

To Nathan Kohn in 1895, sales price \$2,500.

To George Meyers on 02/05/1894

To Ernest Thiele in 1935

To Akleigh Thorne on 06/24/1938

To A.C. Williamson on 11/30/1938

To John J. Wiley on 08/26/1946

To August Wilkleman et al on 04/07/1947

To August Wilkleman on 02/04/1953

To Mavis Edwards on 06/01/1964.

## 2. Splitting the Property

Mavis Edwards apparently bought the land to finance Cal Able and Kenneth Wilkinson who started selling off the original 400 acres in smaller parcels by the so called 4 x 4 method. Owners of each parcel purchased, could split to four parcels with relative ease, with only a few limitations.

## 3. Building the Infrastructure

Of primary interest to present Audubon Hills residents is the order of improvements to establish the conditions that we are now enjoying.

- Water and Fire Protection

In 1965, the first order was providing for a water system. As instructed by El Dorado Irrigation District, it was necessary to petition the board of EID. With a lot of help from residents and landowners a 100% sign-up was presented to the board (06/19/1965) resulting in the formation of EID Improvement District No. 14. The water system was designed to meet the state code at the time for fire hydrants located at 1,000-foot radius from each other and from boundaries of Audubon Hills property.

In 1971 Audubon Hills residents petitioned the county to be annexed to the Pollock Pines-Camino Fire Protection District. This annexation was approved December 22, 1971 (with appropriate increase in taxes of course.).

More recently, the state has updated the installation of fire hydrants to 500-foot radius. The Pollock Pines-Camino fire district has evaluated the fire hydrant installation as quite adequate for the Audubon Hills area.

- Zoning, Two Acre Minimum

The Audubon Hills area in 1965 had an assigned zoning classification of “unclassified”. In 1967 an owner of a ten-acre parcel proposed to construct a trailer park which action precipitated a request to establish a definite parcel-zoning requirement. At that time a questionnaire was circulated to all property owners for selecting a choice of 5, 2, or 1 acre. The reply showed 70% wanted not less than 2 acres. Hearings were held with the county planning commission and the County Board of Supervisors; official board action established an R2A single-family residence area on 03/20/1967. Several parcels smaller than 2 acres had previously been established and, of course, were allowed to remain. However, no parcel split to produce a parcel less than two acres has been allowed since the passage. It is important that the residents remain diligent in protecting this regulation, because the county officials seem to forget it exists.

- Formation of
  - Audubon Hills Improvement Association {A.H.I.A.} (1968)
  - Audubon Hills Property Owners Association{A.H.P.O.A.} (1980's & 2000)
  - Audubon Hills Association (2005)

In 1967, it became evident there was a need for an association to provide for local improvements, especially maintenance of our roads. The Audubon Hills Improvement Association was formed and held its first annual meeting on May 8, 1968, with Merrill Adams as president. One of the first actions was to obtain permission from the county to use specified bird names on all the roads with Audubon Drive as the name for the main road. The area had previously been known informally as Cedar Ridge.

Sometime in the mid 1980's, the name got changed to Audubon Hills Property Owners Association (A.H.P.O.A.). It's unknown why, other than when they filed for the federal non-profit status and changed banks; that was the name put on the application. In 2000, the name was updated officially to A.H.P.O.A. so all paperwork would be consistent.

In 2005, Audubon Hills has changed to include a lot more renters in the area. A big focus of this association is Neighborhood Watch, which renters were apprehensive to become part of, because of the title “Property Owners Association”. In an effort to include all residents, and to encourage them to participate; the official name of the association is now simply Audubon Hills Association (A.H.A.)

- Roads, Improved Roads

Back to the roads, initially, the developers provided a minimum of gravel surface on some roads, but after two winters of rain, the roads became almost impassable. By 1968, there were 69 property owners and thirteen homes had been built. Because of the poor road conditions, the Post Office refused to deliver mail into the area and other delivery services were reluctant. Voluntary contributions and resident's labor were proving inadequate to maintain or improve even Audubon Drive.

(The following account is from Walter Haefele written April 2, 1987)

The 17,000 linear feet of private gravel roads were a major obstacle to further growth. The Association made major appeals to property owners, every year, for money to keep the roads passable and spent most of it for gravel and ditch cleaning. The steep hill where Audubon Drive joins North Canyon Road was the worst place. Gradually a fund of \$2,400 was built up from donations. From this fund, \$2,200 was spent all at once in July 1970 to regrade the entrance, lay on six inches of gravel and put asphalt on the 440 feet of hill. The contractor said that the first four inches of asphalt has something wrong with it, so he put on another three inches---that's why the hill has withstood 17 years of pounding with almost no maintenance. (The entrance was realigned in about 1992, and repaved approximately in 1994).

The rest of the gravel road was full of potholes and the dust rose 50 feet in the air when cars passed houses on hot summer days. Many absentee property owners refused to contribute money for the roads; so most of the burden of keeping the roads passable fell on residents.

On December 12, 1972, enough families were in favor of forming a road district (County Community Services District) with ability to have the county collect taxes from all property owners. A county special election was held (there were then 30 residences). It snowed that night before and early voters at Walter Haefele's house had to struggle to get there. Two residents chose to ride their trusty horses through the snow! That evening, when the votes were counted, the yes votes were overwhelming—36 for and 8 against. (The Audubon Hills Community Service District had {and still has} jurisdiction over road construction and maintenance. Thus, the Audubon Hills Improvement Association relinquished that duty. However, there were, and are, many other things in the community that need attention, thus retention of the Improvement Association, a voluntary service organization).

The Board of Directors, of the newly formed road district, was elected at the same time from among nine spirited candidates. The Board tackled the road problems immediately, and survived a blow by the State Legislature, which took away from many community service districts the \$1.00 per hundred tax voted in during the election [and we thought State Government takeaways was a new invention in 1994]. After months

of huddling with the county counsel, the Board was forced to accept the fact that no tax money at all would be available in 1973! So what to do: They borrowed the money!

At a public meeting on August 12, 1973, the Board explained the situation and presented a plan to put an all-weather surface on 6,000 feet of Audubon Drive. Audubon Hills residents voted to accept the plan, and the Directors went ahead with it. They borrowed \$2,700 (The legal limit of one year's tax money) from local residents at 6% simple interest. The remaining money came from donations of \$3,100 by 39 property owners.

The total cost of the extra road gravel, grading, watering, asphalt oil, and fine rock chips was \$6,372. Many Local residents worked for plenty of hours during the construction period in the fall of 1973—removing rocks, filling holes, spreading chips, installing three culverts, deepening ditches, etc. Their work saved several thousand dollars.

The loans were repaid from tax money over three to five year period. A few generous people were so happy to have a hard surface road, that they refused repayment and donated the money to the Road District.

This entire project of surfacing the road was a demonstration of what Americans can do, when they work together co-operatively and put their money where their mouths are. The association had a good lawyer and an experienced building contractor who were willing to work with the residents consisting of retired engineers and a lot of smart hardworking people who all worked without any compensation, doing the things they knew best.

After the main road was paved, Audubon Hills became one of the prime residential districts in the county. Mail and other deliveries came in conveniently and residents and friends came and went in a timely, dust and mud free manner.

The end of Walter Haefele account.

- Roads continued

There was one further action by the community regarding roads. In the early 1980's, it became apparent that the county tax money received for the road district was not adequate to bring the roads up to an acceptable level, and maintain all the roads. After a lengthy series of community meetings, it was agreed we should hold a special election to authorize as follows: "The people of Audubon Hills Community services District do ordain as follows: That a special annual assessment be collected commencing with the fiscal year 1984/1985. The special annual assessment shall be \$25.00 per parcel indefinitely for maintenance and repair of Audubon Drive. The purpose of this assessment is to provide funds for the lawful purposes of the District for road improvement and related expenses." The measure passed by a vote of 62 yes, 26 no.

So, if you check your tax statement carefully, you will find that \$25 charge. Enjoy it as you cruise down a pothole-free Audubon Drive.

#### 4. Summary

We are very fortunate to be able to enjoy this fine wooded residential area. Our properties are here through a series of lucky incidents and through the determined effort of the early visionaries who came here to live. Some of them worked very hard to obtain the refinements we now enjoy.

One interesting sidelight, the reservoir at the entrance to Audubon is named Larsen Reservoir. However Gene Larson says the Larsen Family never did not own land in Audubon, nor did they ever have anything to do with the building of the reservoir. There is another, much earlier tale, related to Audubon Hills area that is significant. In mid-1849, John Calhoun "Cockeye" Johnson acquired some 400 acres in the area and proceeded to build up the Johnson Ranch. This was a place to welcome overland travelers, for a price of course. He built a two-story house, said to have been at the back of the new golf course. It had stables, trading post, garden, and tiled fields. His holdings including meadows and fields of crops are understood to have included the more favorable parts of what is now Audubon Hills.

The diary of George Shepard reports on August 13, 1850: --this morning we came to Johnson's ranch, the first place that we have seen where they have tried to cultivate the ground since left Salt Lake Valley. Johnson, I understand, came in last year poor but young and resolute and got into trade and now he has this ranch as they call it and quite a house and a number of acres of potatoes that look well and he is selling them at 3 bits a pound and says he can have 4 bits in a short time. He has a large stack of hay and selling at 15 cts lb, has 1.50 a meal for victuals to travelers, .25 a drink for liker and does quite a business in selling provisions, and here he is called rich. (from OVERLAND JOURNAL VOLUME 10, NUMBER 4, WINTER 1992).

Apparently Johnson never got true title to the property, it had reverted to Federal, then State ownership by the 1870's.

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Retyped in 2002 & 2005 by: Kimberly McCarthy for Audubon Hills Website