

San Lorenzo Grammar School

The first school building in San Lorenzo was constructed in 1859. Prior to that classes had been held in a portable room built on a wagon. The mobile classroom went back and forth between San Lorenzo and Hayward. The new school was near the "Four Corners" where all the local businesses were located. By 1902, a larger building was needed, so a two-story wood building was constructed on the same site. When an arsonist burned down the wood building, it was replaced with a brick structure. That building was in use until 1952, when it was closed because it was not earthquake safe. When some of the orchards were turned into housing tracts in the 1910s and 1920s, more schools were needed. Ashland Elementary School was built in 1923 and Sunset Elementary School in 1926. Today, the school district office is located at the site of the original San Lorenzo Grammar School, at the corner of College and Usher.



San Lorenzo Grammar School, ca. 1890

San Lorenzo High School

Until the 1950s, San Lorenzo students had to travel to Hayward to go to high school. San Lorenzo High School had its ground breaking in 1950 and opened for classes in 1952. The first class to complete all four years at San Lorenzo High was the class of 1956. The school was originally part of the Hayward Union High District.



San Lorenzo High School, ca. 1955

San Lorenzo Library

The San Lorenzo library was the first official branch of the Alameda County library system. It was established in 1910. The first San Lorenzo library was in the Village Hall and consisted of two bookcases containing 100 books. It then moved to its own building at Hesperian and Sycamore around 1930. A new library building was constructed around 1945 next to the firehouse on Paseo Grande. A few years later the building was bought by a church and moved to Hacienda & Via Toledo. The current library is behind the Village Association building.

Village Hall

For residents of early San Lorenzo the place to go for fun was the Village Hall on the corner of Lewelling Boulevard and Usher Street. The auditorium in the hall hosted travelling vaudeville shows. Dances were also held in the hall. It was used by local clubs, such as the Woodmen of the World and the Ladies Aid Society, for meetings and social events. The building was originally constructed for use as a fruit dryer, but that business failed. It was then adapted for use as a community center. The building remained standing until 1953, but its heyday as a community center was from 1894 until 1924.

The Pavilion at San Lorenzo Grove

When San Lorenzo Grove opened in 1893, the *Hayward Journal* called it the "Picnic Paradise of California." The Grove featured picnic grounds, ball fields, an outdoor bandstand, and the oak grove for which it was named. The Grove was located at Tracy and Lewelling, a few blocks from the Oakland-San Leandro-Hayward Electric Railway which ran along East 14th Street and down Lewelling to San Lorenzo. Oakland residents would take the trolley down to San Lorenzo to spend a relaxing day in the country. Or they would stay in one of the hotels in San Lorenzo for an extended vacation. Business eventually slowed by the 1920s which resulted in the sale of the Grove to M.S. Rodgers. Rodgers then closed the Grove in 1926 and used the lumber from the dance pavilion to build a house for his daughter, Mary Videll. The home is still standing on the corner of Tracy Street and Lewelling Blvd.



Pavilion, San Lorenzo Grove, ca. 1905

St. John's Catholic Church

The cornerstone for St. John's Catholic Church was laid on Lewelling Blvd. in 1897, and construction was completed in 1901. It was originally a mission church, which meant that it did not have a regular priest of its own. Visiting priests from San Leandro came on Sundays to hold mass. St. John's became a parish church in 1925.



St. John's Catholic Church. This photo was taken around 1902. The people are (left to right) Mary Ellen (Faria) Silva with her bicycle, Mr. and Mrs. Enos Stanton at the gate, and Mr. Sampson, a carpenter who is believed to have built the church.

San Lorenzo Holiness Church

The San Lorenzo Holiness Church was located on Lewelling Blvd near Washington Ave. In 1929, Kumaichiro Shinido, who owned a nursery in San Lorenzo, donated an acre of land and the farmhouse next to his nursery for the church. The parishioners were mostly nursery workers. It closed during World War II when the Japanese were placed in internment camps. In 1944, Kumaichiro died in such a camp. In 1949, the four Shinido sons together with other volunteers built the current San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church on Lewelling Blvd. The original church was demolished in 1962.



San Lorenzo Holiness Church, ca. 1929

San Lorenzo Cemetery

With any growing community, a burial ground became necessary. The first unofficial cemetery sprang up on the edge of the small town on land that was part of Rancho San Leandro, now the corner of Hesperian Blvd. and College Ave. Why that particular piece of land became a burial ground is unclear, however, the close proximity to the small business district and homes of San Lorenzo fit with the late 19th century culture when death and departed loved ones played a bigger part in life. Death was not something to fear, and there were elaborate rules both written and unspoken for handling the dead and mourning periods. The size and decoration of the grave markers befit the person's wealth, standing in the community, occupation, and often nationality. The first recorded burial in the cemetery took place in 1854, and a group of concerned citizens formed the San Lorenzo Cemetery Association on February 27, 1864. The cemetery is the final resting place for people primarily from San Lorenzo, San Leandro, Hayward, and Castro Valley. In 1964, the cemetery was officially dedicated as the San Lorenzo Pioneer Memorial Park, honoring early pioneers to the area.



San Lorenzo Pioneer Cemetery is now owned by Alameda County

San Lorenzo Theater

No town in the 1940s was complete without its own movie palace. The 700-seat Lorenzo Theater served the community of San Lorenzo starting in 1947. The interior was painted with beautiful murals, which are still there. This theater is on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. It is privately owned, and although it is still standing on Hesperian Boulevard, its future is in question.

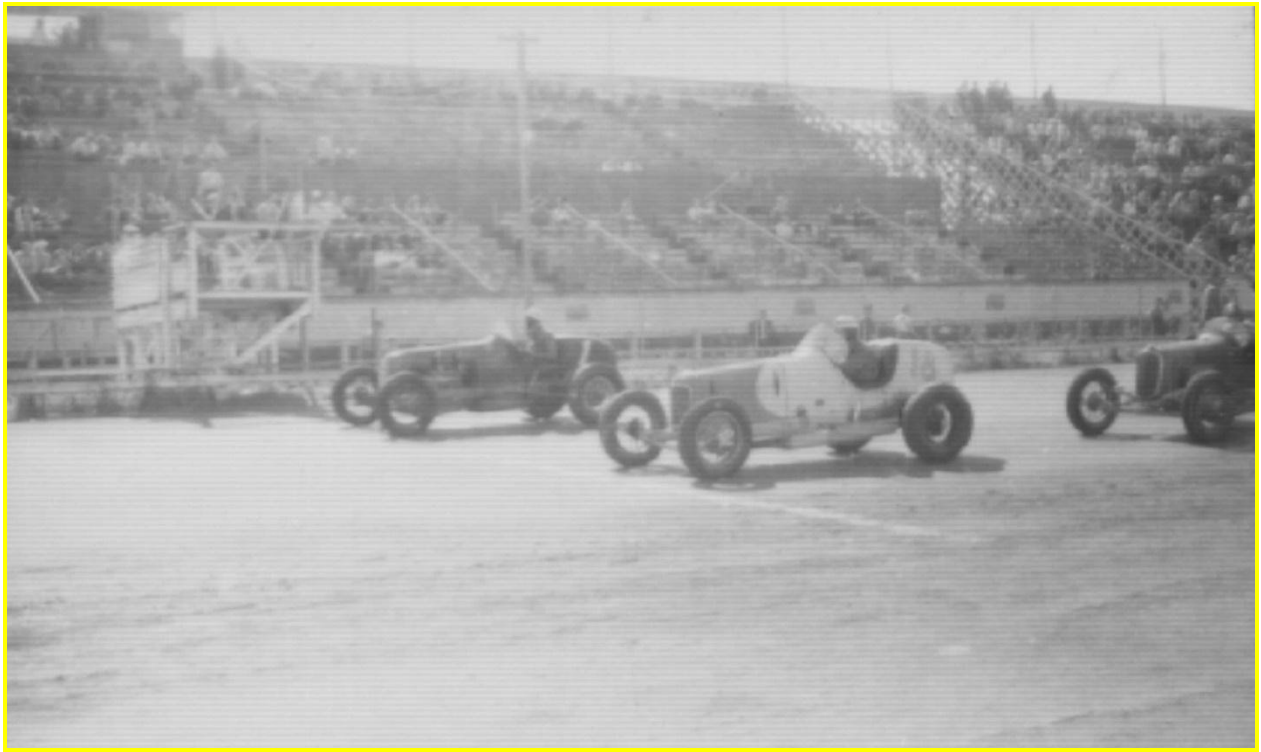


San Lorenzo Theater, ca. 1948

Oakland Speedway

The Oakland Speedway was a one-mile dirt racetrack built in 1931 on farmland leased from the Coelho family. Designed for automobile and motorcycle racing, its grandstands seated 25,000 people. Even though it was named "Oakland Speedway" the auto racetrack was located in San Lorenzo at the corner of Hesperian Boulevard and East 14th Street, today the location of Bayfair Mall. The "Oakland" in the name refers to the Oakland Speedway Association. The last race in 1941 was a 200-mile motorcycle competition. Later that year, the grandstands burned down, and in 1942, the federal government banned all forms of auto racing under wartime restrictions.

After the war, a new track was built on the same site. Though it was officially called the Oakland Stadium, many people still referred to it as the Oakland Speedway. Auto races were held on this version of the track from 1946-1955 when the track and grandstand were torn down to make way for Bayfair Mall.



Auto race at the Oakland Speedway, ca. 1939