

A Hayward High School in Castro Valley?

By John Christian, Hayward Area Historical Society

Do you know when the Castro Valley Unified School District decided to build Castro Valley High School? It's actually a trick question. Castro Valley High was built by the Hayward Union High School District. That's right; Castro Valley High was built by the now defunct Hayward Union High School district (HUHSD). Prior to the end of World War II, Hayward Union High School was the only secondary school in the entire area. However, after the war, HUHSD started a campaign to build multiple high schools. This was necessary as "Baby Boomers" began filling up local grammar schools.

It started in 1948 when Hayward Union High trustees authorized school officials to begin negotiating for the approximately 30 acre site where Castro Valley High stands today. In about 1953, appraisals of the homes on the site of the school were done and the property was taken by HUHSD using eminent domain. In September 1954 more than twenty homes were sold at auction and hauled away by new owners.



Mabel Avenue as it appeared in about 1953. This area was redeveloped as part of the high school site.

For the school's construction, HUHSD secured more than two million dollars from the state of California. With that money in hand, the district selected Zaballos Brothers Construction to build the new campus. The campus' architect, George Simonds, also designed Mt. Eden and Tennyson High Schools during that same period. The groundbreaking for the campus took place on August 24, 1955, to much local fanfare. The new campus was designed to house about 1,300 students initially. Carl Gelatt was selected as principal and personally oversaw much of the construction.



A sign at the site of the future Castro Valley High School as it appeared in 1956. The image was featured in the 1957 Castro Valley High School Yearbook.

Construction was not without its hiccups. In July of 1956, a carpenter's strike halted work for about 45 days on the campus that was already scheduled to open September 4 that same year. Once work restarted there was a lot of time to make up for. On September 10, only six days behind schedule, Castro Valley High School welcomed 1,363 students. Of that number more than half were freshmen.

Perhaps most impressive was the description of the new campus. The *Oakland Tribune* described it this way; "The walls and hallways are painted in alternate pastel shades and the furnishings, desks, chairs, and tables are of modernistic design in green, yellow and red." The article goes on to brag about Castro Valley High's green chalkboards, not the outdated blackboards found in other high schools.

Since the September 1956 opening, Castro Valley High has grown and changed. The mascot has been changed from the Spartan to the Trojan, and the school's white and green colors have changed to yellow and green. What hasn't changed however is Castro Valley High's role at the center of the community—all thanks to the Hayward Union High School District.