

Decoto Bicycle Tour



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Published by the
Museum of Local History

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Introduction

Decoto has a number of historic buildings and sites, but they are too spread out for a walking tour. Creating a bicycle tour allows the reader to quickly get around Decoto, yet easily, and safely, stop and see the different historic sites. This bike tour will provide the rider a glimpse into the history of Decoto and provide an enjoyable ride.

Brief History of Decoto

Ezra Decoto came to California in 1854 and settled in Alameda County. In 1867, he and his two brothers, Adolphus and John, purchased 334 acres of land on old Mission Road (Mission Blvd). They had heard that a railroad was going to go through the area and bought the land to resell. Some local land promoters bought 234 acres of the Decoto land, after the Central Pacific right-of-way was determined. These promoters formed the Decoto Land Company and started plans for a town.

The Central Pacific created a rail siding around which the town of Decoto was built. In 1874, Andrew Jackson Hare was the land-sale agent for the Decoto Land Company, Central Pacific station agent, Wells Fargo agent, and the first Decoto Postmaster. He also operated the first barley and feed grist mill and managed the first grain storage warehouse in Decoto. In 1878, he opened the first general store. In 1898, the Masonic Home was built, and was originally for orphans and widows.

Quite a number of the early settlers were Portuguese, so many, that the first mass at Our Lady of the Rosary was given in Portuguese. In the 1930's and 1940's, Mexican immigration to Decoto gave it a distinctive Hispanic feel. Recent immigration to Union City has created a majority of Asians, but the historic core of Decoto still has its Hispanic residents.

In 1937, the Pacific States Steel factory opened, becoming a large employer for Decoto. After many years of turning scrap metal into steel products, Pacific States Steel closed in 1978, leaving a legacy of legal issues for pensioners.

During the 1930's and 1940's, two canneries were located in Decoto. The combination of local produce and having two rail lines, made Decoto ideal for canneries. By the early 1960's the canneries had closed. The largest cannery burned down in 1962 and the land developed for homes.

In the 1970's, two non-profits were founded that helped the local Latino community. Tiburicio Vasquez Health Center was founded in 1971, sponsored by the Brown Berets and Venture House Drug Crisis Center. In 1974, Centro de Servicios was founded to help low-income and immigrant families with basic social services.

Tour Map of Decoto



Starting the Tour

For local residents, the bicycle tour can start at any location, which ever is the closest to them. For out-of-town riders, the easiest place to start is the parking lot of Dry Creek/Pioneer Regional Park at the end of May Road, just off Mission Blvd.

Mission Blvd

Start down May Road to Mission Blvd

Turn right on Mission Blvd and continue two blocks

Cypress Cemetery / Chapel of the Chimes

32992 Mission Blvd.

Cypress Cemetery was established in 1873 by a number of local pioneers, such as, J. C. Whipple, F. B. Granger, Sr., John Hall, E. Dyer, and J. M. Ingalls. The first officers of the Association were William Hays, President; J. C. Whipple, Vice President; and J. M. Ingalls, Secretary and Treasurer. A number of those pioneers are buried in the cemetery. Ten acres of land was purchased from Sanford Taylor. After the cemetery was fenced, J. C. Whipple purchased and planted cypress trees on three sides of the cemetery. After the Masonic Home was built, a section of the cemetery was set aside for the Masons.



Well known families that are buried in the cemetery are; Decoto, Dyer, Granger, Harvey, Hawley, Hellwig, Ingalls, Patterson, Ralph, and Whipple. For the early years of Alvarado and Decoto, this was the main cemetery.

The Cypress Cemetery is now part of the Chapel of the Chimes, and sits at the southern end of the property. Even though the Chapel of the Chimes lists a Hayward address, the older cemetery is still part of Union City. The large older headstones and monuments can be easily seen from the road.



Turn around at Lafayette Ave and head south on Mission Blvd.

El Arroyo Mobile Home Park / Mission Gateway Apartments

Mission Blvd, between Tamarack and Whipple Roads

The Gateway Apartments, opened in May 2006, was built on land that had previously been a mobile home park, some older homes, and a small shopping center. Starting at the north end, at the corner of Mission Blvd and Tamarack St., there was a small shopping center with a convenience market, a Latino music store and an older building that housed a used appliance store.



Further south all the way to Dry Creek, was the El Arroyo Mobile Home Park, the smallest mobile home park in Union City. Most of the mobile homes were single width and the park even allowed a few smaller RV-style homes to rent a space. There was an anchor building that housed the park office and a laundry room. On the other side of Dry Creek, was some older duplexes of unknown age, that were quite dilapidated by the early 2000's.



Kelly Garage

Corner of D Street and Mission Blvd.

At the corner of Mission Blvd and D Street was Kelly's Garage, a gas station and garage with two gas pumps in the front. It also served as a bus stop for the Peerless Bus Line. In the early 1960's, Kelly's Garage sponsored Gil Prevette and his car, the Union City Special. Gil raced his car at the San Jose Speedway, sometimes winning and sometimes breaking the car. Later the pump area was enclosed to add space for the market. It was most recently a liquor store. In 2004, it was torn down and used for space for temporary housing for a few residents of the El Arroyo Mobile Home Park, as they waited for the Gateway Apartments to be built.



Teen Workshop

33623 Mission Blvd.

Originally the Fireball gas station and probably built in the 1930's, this building is now the Teen Workshop. Established in 1974, the Union City Teen Employment Program was setup to provide work, employment referrals, and income for teens, and was created from seed money from Union City. The Mohawk Petroleum Company, the original owners of



the gas station, hosted the Teen Workshop for seven years, eventually selling the building to Union City. The primary work of the Workshop is the repair and selling of bicycles. The Police Department donates abandoned bicycles to be either repaired or stripped for parts. The teens are paid to repair the bicycle and the selling of the bicycles goes to pay for the program. For many years the Teen Workshop was run by Larry Orozco, who went on to run the Senior Center.

Red Cross / Post Office

33641 Mission Blvd.

Opened in May 1965, this building was the Decoto Post Office. When Union City was incorporated, the Decoto Post Office was renamed to Union City and the Alvarado Post Office became a station of the Union City Post Office. Mary B. George was appointed Postmaster in 1936 and was still Postmaster when this building was built. In January 1988, a new Post Office was built on Alvarado-Niles Road and this office was closed. It is currently occupied by the Red Cross.



Masonic Home

34400 Mission Blvd.

The Masonic Home was built in 1898, with a dedication ceremony in October of that year. It opened as the Masonic Home for Widows and Orphans. The main brick building was designed by Henry Haight Meyers. Henry grew up in Alvarado, but moved to Alameda a year before the Masonic Home was built. In 1909, the orphans were moved to a facility in Southern California. The home currently **is home for retired men and women, many of them Masons.**



Over the years, the Masonic Home has expanded, first by adding wings to the original building, and then adding additional buildings behind the original building. This includes medical and dental clinics, convalescent care, a lodge and worship building, assisted living facilities, a dining hall, and many different places for activities like wood and ceramic shop, library, and a movie room.



Continue south on Mission Blvd.
Turn down 7th Street and ride north
Turn Left on Decoto **Road**
Turn left on 11th Street

Pacific States Steel

11th Street south of BART Station

Pacific States Steel opened in 1937. The plant made ingots, re-bar and steel rails, manufactured from older steel cars that were melted down on site. Over the years it became a major employer for the Decoto area. The factory started with a few buildings, but over time, additional buildings were added, including the large metal smoke stacks that most remember from the factory. In 1978, the factory was closed. A long process then started with the redevelopment of the site. The factory was torn down in 1987. It was not until 2004 that any environmental remediation efforts were started. The contaminated soil was collected and placed into a heap at one end of the property, where it was capped and sealed in 2006. This allowed for the remainder of the property to be developed for housing.



*Return down 11th Street
Cross over Decoto Road
Turn right on J Street
Turn left on 10th Street*

10th Street

Old Decoto Fire Station

33948 10th Street

This building started out as the Decoto Fire Station in 1951. When Union City was incorporated, the building became Union City Fire Station #1. The new Decoto Fire Station was built in 2009 and the current building has been used by Union City Leisure Services for recreational programs, including boxing.



Decoto Library / Church

33933 10th Street

The Decoto Library used to be housed in this building, starting in 1945, with 556 square feet of space for books. In 1946, Mrs. Ethel Avila was appointed librarian and she held that position until the library was closed in 1965. It was then that the Decoto Library was merged with the Alvarado Library. The building currently holds the Primera Iglesia Bautista Church.



Decoto Market

33909 10th Street

The market at the corner of 10th and I Streets has been a market for more than 110 years. The market, built about 1897, was purchased by John Olsen and John Ralph in 1903. In 1905, John Ralph purchased a market in Alvarado. John Olsen ran the Decoto market until 1949.

In the 1920's, the market housed the Decoto Telephone exchange. In 1936, the Decoto Post Office was moved to the market. It was housed in the section of the building with no windows. In the 1950's, the Post Office was moved to a building on the corner of E and Second Streets. In the 1960's, the building was the Union City Market. It was owned by a Portuguese family, who sold it to a Chinese family, then ran the store up to the late 1970's. It is currently the Super Mercado.



Decoto Barber Shop

33831 10th Street

This small building housed the Decoto Barber Shop owned by Rinaldo Caminada. The barber shop probably opened in 1939 when haircuts cost 25 cents. There were two barber chairs, both bought from a shop in Oakland. In 1975, the haircuts cost \$2. The shop closed in the late 1970's.



Decoto Cannery

Corner of H and 10th Streets

On the south east corner of 10th and H Streets was the Decoto Cannery. Opened in 1919, the cannery ran for over 50 years. It was owned by the Decoto Canning Company, then Better Pack Canning Company, then K. Hovden, then Joseph Pearce purchased it in 1932. In 1949, the cannery was purchased by the Marlo Packing Company, then a year later, it was purchased by Alaco Preserving Company. It is unclear when the factory closed down. It was later replaced by homes. The cannery provided seasonal employment for over 200 local residents. It canned a variety of fruits and vegetables.



H Street

Turn left on H Street

First Our Lady of the Rosary Church Location

13th and H Streets

When the Our Lady of the Rosary was built in 1907, it was located on the northwest corner of 13th and H Streets. In 1951, a church parish hall was built at the corner of 6th and C Streets, costing about \$16,000. The hall was to only be used for parish meetings, and the parish would continue to use the original church building until a new church could be built. On Oct. 17, 1952, the church building caught fire and was mostly destroyed. It was suspected that lit candles might have started the fire. The Parish now had to use the church hall for Mass. The location of the first church is now occupied by a multi-family building at 33763 13th Street.



Turn around on H Street and head East

Hillview Baptist Church 904 H Street

In 1885, a Presbyterian church was built at the corner of 9th and H streets. In 1952, the Hillview Baptist Church purchased the church building and property for their congregation. In the early 1960's, Deacon Harold Strickland purchased the building that housed the "Union City Leader" newspaper and had it moved next to the church. It was the



Sunday school building and later the Youth building. Later in that decade, the church purchased a home next to the property and turned it into the church parsonage. On January 11, 1978, a fire started in the steeple of the church, possibly caused by some roofing work that was being done. The steeple was destroyed, but the one-ton bell was saved. The bell, made in Cincinnati in 1873, was repaired and placed on the corner of the property.



Centro de Servicios

525 H Street

This building was originally the Decoto Variety and Fountain, opened by Manuel Hidalgo in 1947. Manuel Hidalgo was active in the Decoto Merchants Association and helped in the incorporation of Union City in 1959. In the early 1960's, the building became a Crescent Market, owned by Al and Marcela Rodriguez. In 1974, Centro de Servicios was formed by Frank Roesch, Richard Valle, and Jaime Jaramillo to assist low-income and immigrant families, and they moved into the building. The building serves as a thrift store that supports the services that Centro de Servicios provides. The thrift store building is a Quonset hut from World War II.



Decoto Elementary and Auditorium

Corner of 6th and H Streets

The first Decoto Grammar School was built in the 1880's on the same lot as the existing school. In 1925, a new school building was built, including a large auditorium. In 1953, the school was reconstructed, with one wing being moved to the Our Lady of the Rosary Church to be used as their school building. The Auditorium, slightly remodeled in 1947, still stands at the corner of 6th and H Streets. In 1951, after the crash of United Airlines Flight 615 in the hills behind the Masonic Home, the Auditorium was used as a temporary morgue for the 50 crash victims. The school is now the New Haven Adult School.



Turn Left on 6th Street

Turn Left on F Street

Purple Lotus Buddhist School

33615 9th Street (viewable from F Street)

The Purple Lotus Buddhist School was founded in 1997 by Buddhist Master, Samantha Chou, leader of the Purple Lotus Buddhist Temple. The goal was to integrate Buddhist philosophy in school instruction from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The school was managed by the Temple, with most of the students coming from the Temple members. In 1998, a boarding facility was created to accommodate non-local students. In 2000, the School separated from the Temple.



Turn Right on Depot Road and continue when it becomes a bike trail

Turn Right on C Street

Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center

33255 9th Street

In March, 1971, Ben Torres founded the Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center in Union City. The Center was started in the same building as the Family Planning Clinic at 9th and E Streets in Decoto. The Clinic was sponsored by the Brown Berets and the Venture Housing Drug Crisis Center, with additional assistance by the Union City Health Committee. From a simple start, the Clinic would expand its offerings. It started a Venereal Disease Clinic in July, 1971. A planned Dental Clinic Annex was destroyed by fire before it could open. The December, 1971, fire was suspected of being arson, but there were no suspects. The 37x48 ft portable building was leased to the Union City Health Committee and located on Union Pacific property leased to the Clinic. In 1974, the building was eventually repaired. In May, 1977, a mural was painted on the side of the Clinic, by Rojelio Cardenas and Joe Luis Ramirez.



Continue East on C Street

Our Lady of the Rosary Church

703 C Street

Our Lady of the Rosary Church built the church hall (the taller building) in 1951. In 1960, a new church was built, letting the church hall return to its intended purpose and was no long being used to celebrate Mass. In 1963, the Church purchased a wing of the Decoto Elementary School and had it moved to the property to become the building for their school. In 2007, Our Lady of the Rosary celebrated it's 100th Anniversary, with fireworks at the parish festival and the publication of the book "100 years of Faith".

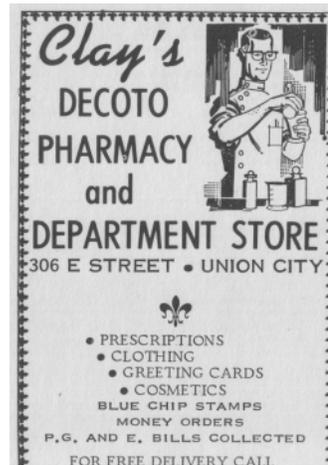


*Head South on 6th Street
Turn Left on E Street*

E Street Businesses

E Street was one of the major business streets in Decoto, up until the 1970's. Redevelopment claimed the business buildings along E Street. The following businesses were:

Cardena's Market	706 E St.
Mal's Liquors	601 E St.
Mal's Barber Shop	603 E St.
Cleaners	605 E St.
Mal's Launderette	609 E St.
Economy Market	507 E St.
El Porvenir Mexican	5th & E St.
Clay's Decoto Pharmacy	306 E St.



Tri-City African Methodist Episcopal Church

201 E Street

This building was originally a theater that played mostly Spanish-language films. On Fridays, it would play second-run English-language films. The theater closed in the late 1970's. The building sat empty, until 1981, when the Tri-City African Methodist Episcopal Church moved into the building.



Decoto Post Office / F & B Market

206 E Street

Sitting directly across the street from the Church/Theater, was the 2nd to last Decoto Post Office. It was moved from the Olsen's Market in the 1950's. The building, with a brick facade, was joined to a store, known as the PX and the later the F & B Market. The 1967 Chamber of Commerce directory shows that Mateo Meats was part of F & B Markets. The Post Office moved in 1965 to Mission Blvd.

Turn Left on 2nd Street

Turn right on Whipple Road

Cross over Mission Blvd back to the parking lot

May House

End of May Road

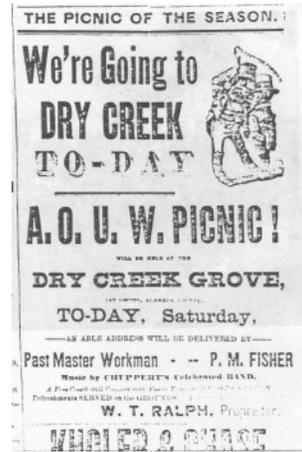
In 1884, August May purchased the land around Dry Creek, using it for cattle ranching. The home at the end of May Road is believed to be the Cosmopolitan School District school house, built in 1868. When May purchased the land, he probably moved it to it's current site and remodeled it into a house. In 1897, August's son, Henry, was living in the house with his wife Clara, and his daughters, Gertrude and Marjorie. The house is now owned by the Dry Creek Apartments.



Dry Creek Picnic Grounds

End of May Road

From the 1870's until 1884, the area around Dry Creek, owned by Jonas Clark, with the tree-lined creek and open field, was operated as the Dry Creek Picnic Grounds. Different local organizations, like the Ancient Order of United Workmen, held picnics through out the summer. A stage coach was run to and from the Decoto train stations to the picnic grounds, to accommodate revelers from out of town.



Dry Creek Cottage

End of May Road

After her husband, August May, passed away, Mrs. Sophie May had her son-in-law, Henry Haight Meyer, design and build a summer retreat cottage on the family land around Dry Creek. The cottage was passed to her daughter, Bertha Meyer. The Meyer family lived in Alameda, but they continued to use the cottage as a summer retreat. Henry Haight Meyer was a well-known architect and was County Architect in the 1920's, designing a number of the Veteran's Halls in Alameda County. The Meyers had three daughters, Mildred, Edith and Jeanette. All three sisters attended the University of California at Berkeley. Edith became a pediatrician and worked at Children's Hospital in Oakland. Mildred became an architect and went into business with her father. Jeanette did not finish college. None of the sisters married and all three lived in their parents home in Alameda. They still used the cottage and Jeanette started designing and working the gardens around the cottage. In 1979, the sisters donated the majority of the family land to the East Bay Regional Park District to form Dry Creek/Pioneer Regional Park. In 1995, after all three sisters had passed away, the Park District was also given Dry Creek Cottage and the gardens surrounding it.

