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Homer Lane

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Homer Lane residents gathered for a barbecue on Aug. 24. Adithya Sambamurthy/The Bay Citizen

By **Jamie Hansen**

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A tiny street near Palo Alto in an unincorporated part of San Mateo County is one of the few relics of the days when the area was a hotbed of anti-Vietnam War sentiment, groovy rock music and experimental drugs. Currently, 10 families live in a string of cottages at the end of the road. **JAMIE HANSEN**

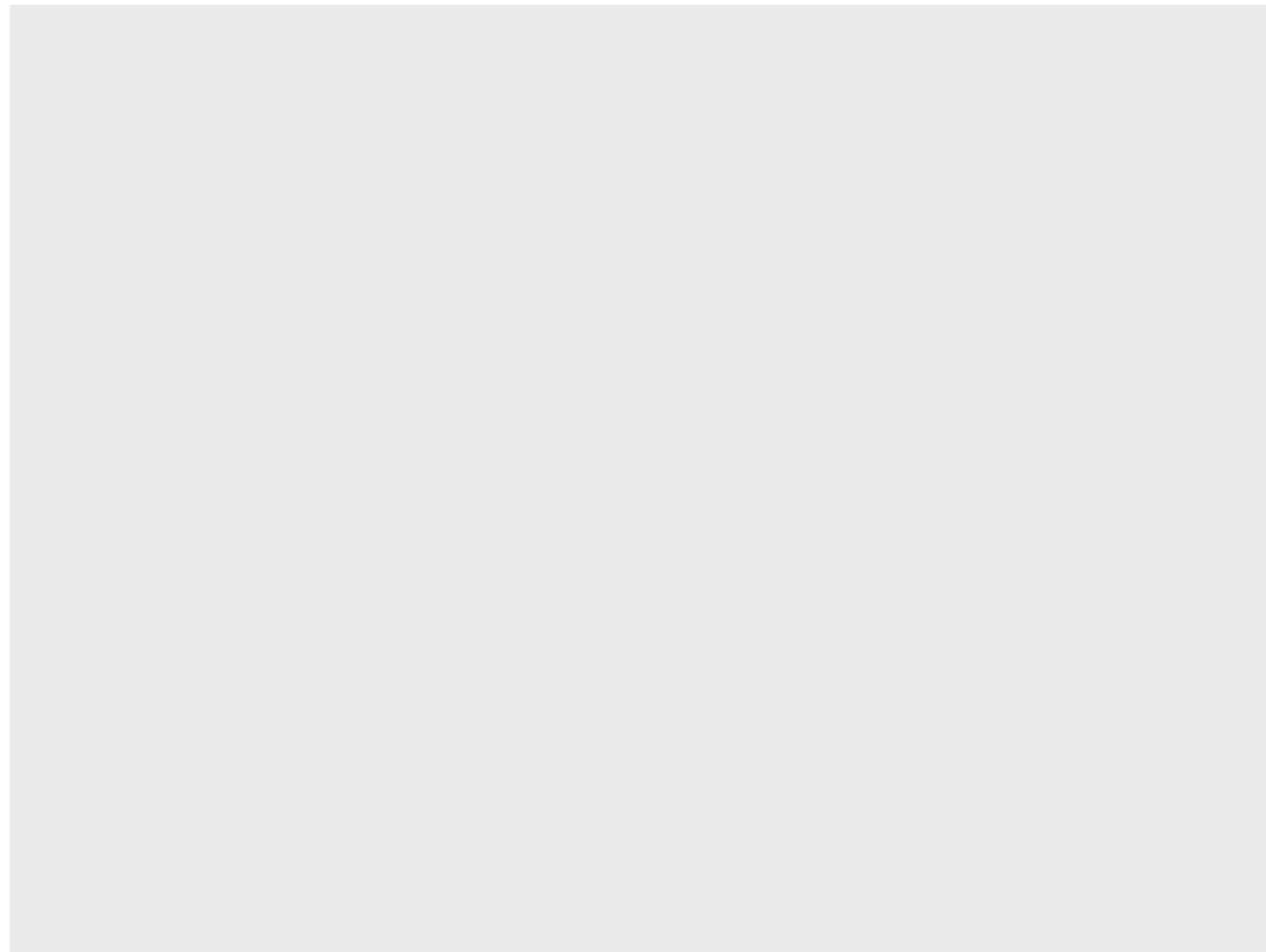
Something Old, Something New

These days, Homer Lane features 10 rusting mailboxes standing guard at the edge of a small, unpaved drive, facing off against a sleek new mansion. In the late afternoon, residents gather to check the mail, read community news posted on a wine-cork message

board and eye the encroaching development with skepticism.

Among the Hippie Havens

When the author Ken Kesey and his drug-fueled colleagues, the Merry Pranksters, were romping around the Peninsula in the 1960s, the area was speckled with what Tom Wolfe, author of “The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test,” a book about their exploits, described as “little boho rookeries.”



Homer Lane, a tiny street in San Mateo County, is a relic of the 1960s. Adithya Sambamurthy/The Bay Citizen

Homer Lane Alums

Musicians, a psychologist, a theater director and a tie-dyer are among the current residents. Past dwellers include Richard Alpert, the Harvard psychologist who became Ram Dass, the Eastern spiritualist; leaders of the Midpeninsula Free University, a radical educational experiment; and, reportedly, Ken Kesey’s cat.

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United They Stand

The sound of tumbling clothes emanates from No. 63, a mint-colored building that holds the shared laundry room. To preserve the special relationship among residents and to discourage developers, Homer Lane dwellers banded together in 1988 to buy the one-acre parcel for \$600,000. They now own it as tenants-in-common.

Down by the River

In the 1930s, a group of Scandinavians from San Francisco built the string of summer cottages that exist today, with some modifications, along the banks of San Francisquito Creek.

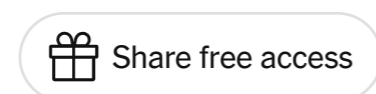
Residents see the creek — rich in wildlife and a spawning ground for steelhead trout — as one of Homer Lane’s most important elements.

Changing Times

All around Homer Lane, significant sites have been disappearing. In Palo Alto, an Apple Store has replaced Swain’s House of Music, where Grateful Dead members are said to have rented instruments. The nearby art-house theater where Susan Martin, a Homer Lane resident, remembered hearing Jane Fonda denounce the Vietnam War became a Borders bookstore, now slated to close.

jhansen@baycitizen.org

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