

## **Miraloma Park Improvement Club Origins: The Search For A Meeting Place**

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As I wrote last month, the MPIC minutes of August 22, 1930 recorded that “the first meeting of a proposed improvement club for the Miraloma Park district was called to order at 8:30 pm ...at the residence of Mr. Hammersley at 845 Portola Drive.” He was paid \$5 for the temporary use the social hall in his home, but at this meeting a Clubhouse Committee was formed dedicated to finding a permanent meeting place. Members were Mr. Long, Pettingill and Brown.

The early 1930s were hard times, with the Great Depression affecting everyone. The Miraloma Park district was just getting established, with the Meyer Brothers contractors mapping home sites on Mt. Davidson. At first, houses were planned on only a few streets, mostly on the northwest part of the mountain close to established sewer lines and utilities. The southwest, overlooking Glen Canyon, was largely agricultural, with few or no roads and no City utilities. In October 1930 the Meyer Brothers were approached by the Clubhouse Committee to provide a meeting place and were offered an empty Portola storefront. Mr. Meyer donated some chairs and the Club paid him \$6.50 for each meeting at this site, which along with Board members' homes was the meeting place for the first few years.

To promote City awareness of its existence and activities, the MPIC Board contacted local newspapers (dailies) and got reporters to cover their news. In March 1931 they held an open house to which representatives of other neighborhood organizations were invited. Even Mayor Rossi came to offer congratulations and support.

In 1932 a playground was created on Rockdale with a utility building provided by the Meyer Brothers. The MPIC Board asked the contractors about using this small building for meetings, but it was not deemed appropriate. However, the Meyer Brothers were building a brick office at 735 Portola Drive and offered the top floor as a Club meeting place and social hall. The Club accepted, placed a temporary, hand-made sign on the door, and in 1938 a permanent sign. Two meetings a month cost \$15, and the Club bought a Howard radio for \$100 (including servicing) to entertain at post-meeting socializing and dancing. Meetings ran from 8:30 to 11 pm.

Early on, two primary projects occupied Miraloma Park residents: constructing an elementary school and a building dedicated to Club use. For a while, it seemed reasonable to build both on the same site. Through the 1930s and early 1940s many benefit events were held to fund building the Clubhouse once a site was determined. A Garden Club, established in Miraloma Park as part of the City Beautiful program, was extremely active in those days, as most women did not work outside the home and had ample free time for this activity. In the summer of 1939 it was proposed that the Garden Club and the MPIC merge when a clubhouse was built and share the site. This merger happened to the extent that both clubs would share a facility for their separate activities.

The SF School District informed the Club that it would not allow a building on school property for Club use. So the Clubhouse Committee met with Meyer Brothers representative G. H. Winters, from whom they learned that nearby residents objected to nearly every site proposed for a clubhouse, and said they would petition the City to halt any building proposed near their homes. However, Mr. Winters noted an undeveloped area on the west side of the mountain on which, as soon as sewer and utility services were connected, the Meyer Brothers would donate a lot for the clubhouse and \$500 toward building costs. The MPIC then began a vigorous building fund campaign to raise funds from residents and merchants to augment the Meyers' cash gift. However, because it was deemed more important to try to get the SF School District to build a district school, plans for the clubhouse were put on hold.

By early 1940, the SF School District had committed to a district school. Grading of the lot was begun, and the school was to be ready for occupancy by the Fall. With this problem solved, the MPIC could focus again on building a clubhouse. In May 1940 Mr. Winters told the Club that a site at O'Shaughnessy Blvd and Del Vale Ave would be fully connected to City utilities and ready for clubhouse construction that Summer. Mr. Milani, Clubhouse Committee chair, noted that the Meyer Brothers asked monthly rent for the building, but imposed no other obligation. Once the Club had incorporated, it would be deeded the property free and clear.

In June 1940 the MPIC was notified that before applying for a permit to build the clubhouse it should be incorporated as a non-profit, because most of the neighborhood was zoned "First Residential." The Meyer Brothers, as a for-profit corporation, would not be granted a permit to erect a social hall/clubhouse in a First Residential district. A nonprofit corporation with the sole purpose of serving the Miraloma district would have a better chance of gaining a building permit. Therefore, the Board resolved to seek nonprofit incorporation, and in July 1940 the Board and membership so voted.

Clubhouse construction was slightly delayed because the City was slow to establish sewer and utility connections to the site. However, by late Fall of 1940 the building was finished. After a formal dedication Sunday afternoon, November 10, the first Board meeting in the new clubhouse was held on November 14.