

# Thoughts on the ‘official’ name of the Park

In April 2018, I contacted the Alameda Recreation and Parks Department and urged them to rename Jackson Park due to Andrew Jackson’s legacy of enslaving Black people and murdering and displacing Indigenous people. Two years later, the Commission and City Council denamed the park and initiated a community process to identify a new name.

Once the park was denamed, some local residents sought to rename Jackson Park to “Alameda” Park. I began compiling primary and secondary sources about what I once also believed was the park’s first name. In that process, I reached out to local architectural preservationist Woodruff Minor (on Sept. 27) and requested for documentation related to the name “Alameda Park.” This led to a longer exchange about perspectives on historical writing and community engagement about the Park Renaming Committee and process.

Minor sought to reproduce our exchange online. I requested a mutually agreed upon introduction, due date, that we provide citations and virtual links to primary sources for readers, then we could post on any desired website, including the Rename Jackson Park site. Instead of responding at all, Minor reproduced a one-sided exchange while referencing my name and silencing my voice. Minor’s opinions were published on the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society’s website. Unfortunately, the Society did not invite my perspective.<sup>1</sup>

In the essay below, I question whether the City officially adopted the name “Alameda Park.” I provide citations and hyperlinks and a folder full of primary sources—true to my intention for fairness and transparency. Let’s openly discuss and debate this city’s history.

– Rasheed Shabazz, December 26, 2020, for [Rename Jackson Park](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> Woody Minor, “[Thoughts on the naming of a Park](#),” *Alameda Architectural Preservation Society Advocacy*, December 9, 2020, <[https://alameda-preservation.org/wp-content/uploads/minutes-agendas-newsletters/Letter\\_2020-12-09.pdf](https://alameda-preservation.org/wp-content/uploads/minutes-agendas-newsletters/Letter_2020-12-09.pdf)>.

## Did the City name our first park “Alameda Park”? An Essay with Primary Sources

by Rasheed El Shabazz

In his 2001 book *Alameda at Play: A Century of Public Parks and Recreation in a Bay Area City*, Woodruff Minor details the history of the site of the park then-known as Jackson Park. According to Minor, Alameda’s first park derived “its name from the short-lived Alameda Park hotel,” established by the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad. In 1867, attorney Alfred A. Cohen created a real estate subdivision, the Alameda Park Tract and “In 1870, Alameda Park was subdivided into smaller lots and renamed Alameda Park Homestead.” Of the park name, Minor writes, “Originally a private commons attached to an 1860s subdivision, the property was acquired by the city in 1894 and opened the following year as Alameda Park. The name was changed to Jackson Park in 1909.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2018, I referenced Minor’s book when I wrote to the Recreation and Parks Commission and called on them to rename Jackson Park.<sup>3</sup> Saving the park’s history as private property and Minor’s omission of Andrew Jackson’s historic treatment of Black and Indigenous peoples for another discussion, I have recently questioned whether or not the City government ever adopted the name, “Alameda Park.” According to Minor, “The landscaped grounds, christened Alameda Park, served as the city’s only municipal park for the next fourteen years.”<sup>4</sup> However, although the subdivision and its park was sometimes called “Alameda Park,” the City may not have formally adopted a name for the park until 1909.

---

<sup>2</sup> Woodruff Minor, *Alameda at Play: A Century of Public Parks and Recreation in a Bay Area City*, Friends of the Alameda Parks, 2001, 56. Notably, according to the Alameda County Assessor-Recorder, (The Alameda Park Homestead map was filed in May 1874.

<sup>3</sup> Lauren Do, “[Marchin’ on the Trail of Tears](#),” *Blogging Bayport*, April 18, 2018; Lauren Do, “[Good and bad, black and white](#),” *Blogging Bayport*, May 23, 2018, .

<sup>4</sup> Minor does not mention the enslaving histories of Jackson or other presidents, Minor, *Alameda at Play*.

Newspaper articles from 1890 through the 1909 christening of Jackson Park demonstrate that newspapers referred to Alameda’s first public park by multiple names, and City Council minutes do not seem to reference “Alameda Park.”<sup>5</sup>

Newspapers often referred to the park by its location. For example, in 1890, when the *Oakland Tribune* reported that the Alameda Brass Band would give its first concert, the paper stated, “The members have begun fitting up a temporary band stand in the park on Park Avenue.”<sup>6</sup> In 1894, the *Alameda Daily Argus* reported that the City Trustees would be improving “the Alameda park,” but the article’s headline was, “The City Park.”<sup>7</sup> Announcing the July 4, 1895 park opening celebration, the *San Francisco Call* reported the “exercises” would take place “in the city park.”<sup>8</sup> The *Daily Argus* announced a 1906 concert “in the city park on Park Avenue, Alameda.”<sup>9</sup>

Newspapers reporting the 1909 naming of Jackson Park do not reference “Alameda Park.” A 1909 *San Francisco Call* article notes, “The old park in Park avenue that was generally known as the City park will hereafter be known as Jackson park.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the *Alameda Times-Star* and *Daily Argus* referred to the recently purchased

---

<sup>5</sup> This analysis is based on virtual access to City Council minutes via Laserfiche (<http://docs.alamedaca.gov/WebLink/>) and newspapers.com articles ([compiled here](#)). As demonstrated by correspondence with Minor, he is also not in possession of City documentation indicating that the City officially adopted the name, “Alameda Park.” Minor, “[Thoughts on the renaming of a park](#),” AAPS, December, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> “[Alameda Notes](#): The Dull July Season in the City of Few Sensations,” *Oakland Tribune*, July 8, 1890, 1.

<sup>7</sup> “[The City Park](#),” *Alameda Daily Argus*, July 2, 1894. There are multiple references to Alameda park (capitalized and lower-case). In reference to condemnation proceedings, private commons referred to as “Alameda Park,” in “[Now has a park](#): City Attorney’s Good news to the Trustees: Review of the Litigation Concerning Alameda Park,” *Alameda Argus*, June 12, 1894. Also, *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 13, 1895, 22; “[Our Public Park](#),” *Alameda Daily Argus*, June 14, 1895, 1.

<sup>8</sup> “[The Fourth of July](#),” May 23, 1895, 1; “[Alameda](#),” *San Francisco Call*, June 25, 1895, 11; “[Alameda](#),” *San Francisco Call*, July 4, 1895, 11. The day after the Fourth of July celebration, the *Argus* simply called it, “the park,” in “[Unfurling the stars and stripes](#),” *Alameda Daily Argus*, July 5, 1895, 1.

<sup>9</sup> “[The Concert Next Sunday](#),” *Alameda Daily Argus*, May 11, 1906, 1.

<sup>10</sup> “[Alameda improving its three city parks](#),” *San Francisco Call*, May 10, 1909, 4.

land as, “the Park Avenue park.”<sup>11</sup> Newspapers appear to have referred to the park by its geography: the street/address and its location within the city/township of Alameda.

The *Oakland Tribune* reported in 1909 that the Park and Playground Board of Commissioners “officially adopted names for the parks in Alameda,” including the park “between Park and Regent streets, from Encinal avenue south, “Jackson Park.””<sup>12</sup> The May 16 *Tribune* article noted the official adoption of names by the Commission, but did not reference any previous name or a renaming. But what did the City *officially* call the park?

At the May 17, 1909 City Council meeting, the Parks Commission advised the Council that it had named ... “the Park located between the east[sic] and west side of Park Avenue as “Jackson Park”.”<sup>13</sup> If the park had been officially named “Alameda Park” by the City, wouldn’t newspaper articles or city council records likely refer to the park by its former name or at least mention that the park was being renamed?

In 2020 correspondence insisting the park name “revert” to Alameda Park, Minor asserts, “While it is true that prior to 1909 Alameda Park was sometimes referred to informally in newspaper articles as “the city park” or simply “the park,” since there was no other, it seems evident from the record that the private park’s historic name morphed naturally into the public park’s official name.”<sup>14</sup> Minor cites a 1897 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, a City ordinance, and a court order which make reference to “certain land” called Alameda Park.<sup>15</sup> The private maps and the court order; however, do not

---

<sup>11</sup> “[Dr. W. A. Clark](#),” The Evening Times-Star and Alameda Daily Argus, July 1, 1909, 8.

<sup>12</sup> “[Parks are named after presidents](#),” Oakland Tribune, May 16, 1909, 20.

<sup>13</sup> [Minutes](#), regular City Council meeting, City of Alameda, May 17, 1909, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Minor, “[Thoughts on the Naming of a Park](#).”

<sup>15</sup> In his initial correspondence, Minor references four *Argus* articles and two ordinances, including [1] Ordinance No. 109 [17 June 1889] - “Determining that certain land in the City of Alameda, known as Alameda Park, is necessary for a public park, and directing that proceedings be instituted to condemn the same” and “[3] Ordinance No. 165 [25 May 1891] - “Defining width and location of roadways of Park

indicate that the City named the park, “Alameda Park.” Alameda’s first park does not appear to have been formally or officially named by the City until 1909.

While it is clear the park formerly known as Jackson Park was previously known for a time as Alameda Park, it had also been known as the city park and the park on park avenue, until the City chose to honor Andrew Jackson by naming the city’s first park, “Jackson Park.” As a name (“Chochenyo Park”) to replace Andrew Jackson Park goes forward to the City Council in 2021, it is important to have an accurate accounting of our first public park’s name. The various legal and political maneuverings to gain title to the land suggest the process was anything but “natural.”

## Resources for Research

### Primary Sources

- Rename Jackson Park Sources, [Folder with Primary and Secondary Sources](#)
- Petition to Rename Jackson Park, <https://campaigns.organizefor.org/petitions/rename-jackson-park>
- Rename Jackson Park timeline, <http://renamejacksonpark.wordpress.com/timeline>
- Park Renaming Process, City of Alameda, <http://alamedaca.gov/rename>

### Secondary Sources

- Woody Minor, “Thoughts on the renaming of a park,” December 9, 2020, Architectural Preservation Society, [https://alameda-preservation.org/wp-content/uploads/minutes-agendas-newsletters/Letter\\_2020-12-09.pdf](https://alameda-preservation.org/wp-content/uploads/minutes-agendas-newsletters/Letter_2020-12-09.pdf)
- Woody Minor, “Jackson Park,” in [Alameda at Play: A Century of Public Parks and Recreation in a Bay Area City](#), Friends of the Parks Alameda Park, 2001.

## About the Author

*Rasheed El Shabazz is a member of Rename Jackson Park.*

---

Avenue around Alameda Park.” (Minor did not provide the original documents.) Both plates of the 1897 Sanborn Company Maps are available [here](#) (“64”) and [here](#) (“62”). Presumed citation: Sanborn Map Company. “Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.” Alameda, California, 1897.