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Small triangular piece of land where Soquel Avenue and Morrissey Boulevard meet, served as Easter egg hunting grounds back in the early 1900's. As Portal Park it also boasted a Mission Bell, visible in the old photo above. A memorial tree was planted there in 1947 for the late Clarence (Bab) Ebert, prominent East Side businessman and civic leader. And a branch library was located there for more than 40 years. Today the triangle shaped park has a brand new fountain, some new conifer trees and a small "hill."

If Trees Could Talk

## This Park Has New Trees

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This pie-shaped piece of land in East Santa Cruz has undergone three complete metamorphoses . . . from ragged little park to public library to manicured city park.

It has all happened in the space of about 70 years. Before that, the Costanoan Indians squatted on it.

It happened mainly because the ladies of Eastside Santa Cruz wanted culture: first a park with roses and second a library with books.

The little slice of land has led a peripatetic existence, passing from hand to hand and from crisis to crisis, but always remaining the same: a slender buffer strip separating streets that first were mere foot paths among the bushes, then tracks down which wagons rumbled, then dirt streets with horses and buggies, then paved streets over which hundreds of autos pass daily.

The triangular piece of land is no larger than a pocket handkerchief. It sits at the junction of Water Street, Morrissey Boulevard and Soquel Avenue. (Poplar comes in there too.)

Today there are no trees, but a fountain that springs up among cut-off telegraph poles . . . a novel idea and an eye-catcher.

Originally the slice of pie was a grassy, weedy place where Eucalyptus trees grew and little girls hunted Easter eggs on chilly Easter mornings. The old photo shows them searching for the hard-boiled treasures under the trees.

There haven't been trees on the triangle for many years. When the Eucalyptus were cut down the Eastside Public Library was built there, and it served for 47 years before it had to move to larger new quarters.

Back in 1907 the slice of property was privately owned and the Eastside Santa Cruz Improvement Society purchased it to create a park.

Ladies of the Saturday Afternoon Club history and landmark department decided it was a perfect landmark site, besides being at the entrance to the city (!!! Yes it was). The ladies placed one of the El Camino bronze Mission bells there on May 27, 1910, with pomp and ceremony.

A month later the South Branciforte District of the Improvement association bought the park, named it El Portal Park, and planted rose bushes and carnations. On the naming and, planting

committee were Mesdames Kate W. Cooper, H. C. Pew, D. J. Brooks and J. W. Waters.

On October 20, 1914, Santa Cruz City Council accepted the deed to El Portal Park which stipulated it was to be used only for park and/or library purposes.

Three years later the De-Laveaga Research Club asked permission to build a temporary branch library at the park site, and the ladies of the club noted that they had rounded up 14 carpenters who would donate their labor to build it. Woe to any carpenter who refused!

The budget-minded City Library Board reviewed plans for a temporary building and decided to ask Andrew Carnegie for a hunk of his money — he was going around the country giving libraries away in those days.

After some months of correspondence, Carnegie granted \$3000. The jubilant library trustees, hardly daring to believe their good luck, went to the city to ask street and sidewalk improvement next. An Architect W. H. Weeks prepared library plans.

Getting down to the nitty-gritty of dollars and cents, the trustees found that the library was going to cost a good deal more than Carnegie's \$3000. What to do?

Again the ladies, who were serious about their culture, jumped to the rescue. They manned a hot dog and ice cream booth at the opening of Santa Cruz City Hall and no doubt strong-armed every citizen within shouting distance into patronizing their booth. They also put on a public entertainment to raise money, and somehow persuaded George W. Wood to donate lumber for the library building.

Santa Cruz Eastside Branch library opened September 24, 1920, with Mrs. Harold Bellus in charge of its books.

Upkeep of the grounds always was a problem, even with the little library building there. And space inside the building became a problem as early as 1931. An addition was discussed but never built.

By 1961 a new site had been located and a new name was selected: Branciforte Branch library. The new library was completed in 1967 and the old Eastside library building was razed March 25, 1968.

Landscape architect Ed Wood and the City Planning Commission got busy on plans for another park. They built the fountain — and they planted trees again.