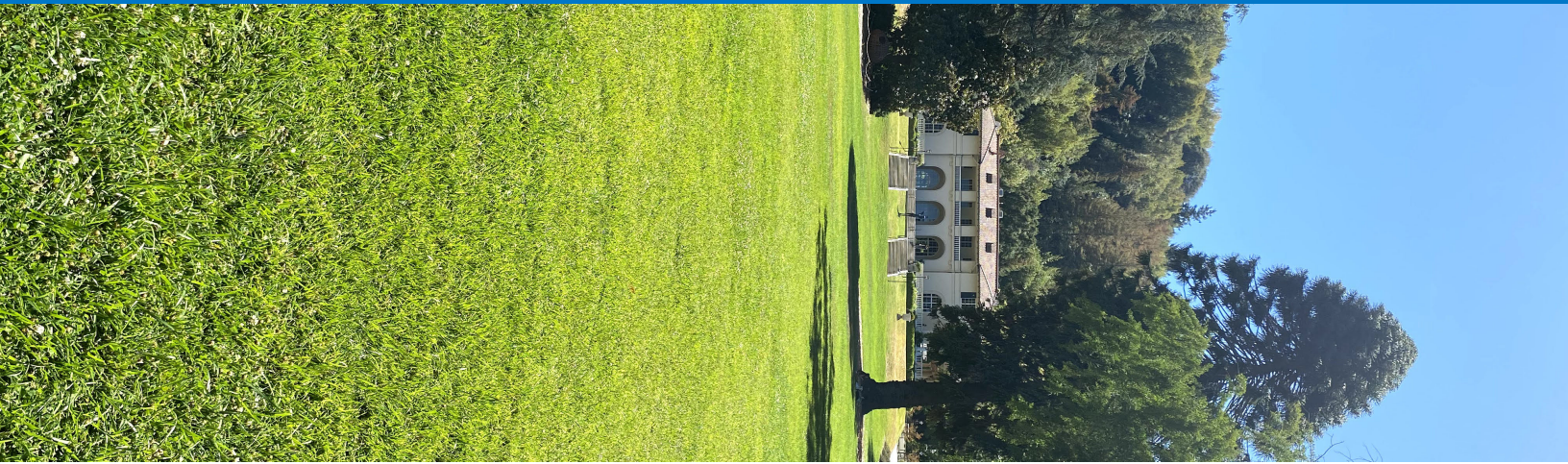




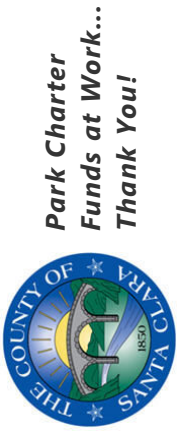
Use this QR code to view your GPS location on the guide map using



Villa Montalvo circa 1925, view from the Italian Garden. Photo courtesy of the Saratoga Historical Foundation.

Accessibility

In compliance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its programs, services, or activities. The Department will make reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy our programs, services, facilities, and activities. If you need assistance with an ADA request, please contact our ADA Coordinator at: ADACoordinator@prk.sccgov.org.



Welcome

Welcome to Villa Montalvo, the magnificent legacy of a native son of California, uniting the pursuit of the arts with the retreat of a woodland preserve. This historic landmark, built in 1912 by James Duval Phelan (1861-1930) is operated in trust by the Villa Montalvo Association, with Santa Clara County Parks maintaining the upland trails.

Activities

The Villa buildings are open for scheduled and private tours only. The arboreum and trails are open for nature lovers, horticulturists and hikers during regular park hours. A nature trail is available, traversing the slopes behind the Villa. Many of the trails are steep and include steps. The Lookout Trail ends at a spectacular vantage point offering a panoramic view of the entire South Bay.

Hours and Fees

Villa Montalvo's grounds are open to the general public from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. The Villa and area immediately surrounding the Villa are open by tour only. The arboretum and trails are open to the general public.

Location

15400 Montalvo Road, Saratoga, CA 95070

Villa Montalvo Arboretum

As mayor and park commissioner for San Francisco, James Phelan had worked closely with John McLaren, the designer of Golden Gate Park. Phelan asked McLaren to advise him on the development of the Montalvo grounds, but the actual design and implementation was performed by George Doeltz. At the time of construction, the land had been practically denuded. The plan called for a gently sloping lawn leading from the villa's steps to an Italian garden. English Laurel, sweet olive, holly and other ornamental plants framed the lawn. Doeltz obtained a variety of plant materials from Stanford University, Phelan Park (Santa Cruz) and Golden Gate Park. He also transplanted a number of large cypress trees from a San Jose cemetery to frame the Italian Garden.

A skillful horticulturist, Doeltz began by planting new trees, laying out walks and building a greenhouse, where he experimented with hybridized plants. For forty years, until his retirement in 1952, Doeltz supervised the planting of every tree and shrub on the property.

The formal Italian garden, which at the time included a view to the valley below, was laid out with boxwood hedges. This garden, representative of the classical Villa gardens of Italy and the Mediterranean, expresses Phelan's sense of classical proportion. Interspersed throughout the garden is statuary, collected by Phelan during his tours of Europe. The Love Temple, which once displayed a marble Venus, was vandalized in the 1940s and further damaged in the 1989 earthquake. Phelan, also interested in exotics, developed a cactus garden.

Cultural History

The Ohlone Indians inhabited the Santa Clara Valley for more than 3,000 years prior to the arrival of the Spanish explorers and missionaries. In 1841, Governor Alvarado of Alta California granted 13,309 acres to Jose Noriega and Jose Zenon. They named the acreage Rancho Quito, which included today's Saratoga and parts of Campbell and Cupertino. Both men transferred ownership of the property to Manuel Alviso in 1844, and in 1866 the U.S. patent for the land went to Alviso and his heirs. The lands were gradually sold off to newly arrived settlers.

In the early days, the flat land and gently rolling hillsides were typically given to cultivation of fruit crops, while the mountainous areas were left largely in a wild state. In the 1850's a lime kiln, possibly the first in the county, was located nearby, operated by Martin McCarty. In 1856, John C. Hutchinson purchased the kiln along with 160 acres and turned to farming the land.

In 1911, two hundred acres were purchased by James Duval Phelan, former three-term mayor of San Francisco, financier, philanthropist and patron of the arts. The property, known as the Bonnie Brae Ranch, was a working ranch of 137 acres when Phelan bought the property, partly planted in prunes, apricots and cherries. This would be the core of Montalvo. Phelan later added portions of the Norton, Hume and other properties, retaining 175 acres and deeding the rest to his sister Mollie.

Phelan was the principal designer of Villa Montalvo, in which he reflected Mediterranean cultural models. Phelan wanted the name

of his retreat to be linked to California's romantic past. The name California is attributed to the sixteenth century Spanish writer, Garcí Ordonez de Montalvo, who in his novel, *Las Sergas de Esplandian*, created a utopian island he called California. This paradise was guarded by fierce griffins and was inhabited by Amazon women. The griffin statues at the entrance of the estate stand guard at Montalvo and serve as motifs for the estate today. Phelan therefore named Montalvo after the man credited with creating the state's name. The architect he selected for his retreat was William Curlett. Later the work was carried out by a San Francisco-born architect, Charles Gottschalk.

Construction of the 19-room mansion began in 1912. The Villa was completed and opened in 1914. During the construction of the Villa, Phelan was actively involved in the Woodrow Wilson presidential election campaign. In 1914, he ran for U.S. Senator and was the first popularly elected senator from California (1915-1921).

In 1930, Phelan died, leaving Villa Montalvo as a gift to the San Francisco Art Association (SFAA) to be maintained as a public park with the buildings and grounds immediately surrounding the villa to be used for the development of art, literature, music and architecture by promising students.

The Villa remained unused and fell into disrepair during the Depression. In 1939, Anne Bailhache, artist member of the Board of Directors of the SFAA, was appointed first resident director at the estate. A Montalvo Society was formed to help Bailhache with her plans. The Montalvo Foundation then began its work towards establishing a creative art center, and a Foundation Dedication was held in July 1939. In 1952, the local group, Friends of Montalvo, filed Articles of Incorporation with the state and in 1953, the trusteeship was transferred from the SFAA to the present day Montalvo Association. Today, Montalvo is a charitable trust.

The Association inherited the responsibility for carrying out the provision of Phelan's will, in that the grounds be dedicated as a public park. Parts of the grounds were in disrepair due to lack of staff. The Montalvo Association convinced the County Board of Supervisors and County Parks Department to lease all but 5 acres of the estate as an arboretum in 1961. Today, the County Parks Department maintains and operates the upland trail network.

Montalvo continues to be a center for the arts with its many art shows, musical performances and artist in residency programs. The house and gardens continue to be an inspiration for all who visit.

Natural Diversity

The grounds immediately around the Villa contain ornamental plantings collected locally and from around the world. The many exotics and native hybrids attract a wide variety of bird life. Other areas of the park include redwood, chaparral and oak grassland plant communities.

The woodland areas of the property include a variety of plant communities which reflect the differences in topography, moisture availability and orientation to the sun. The majority of the wooded slopes have east and north facing exposures. Smaller communities of grassland, scattered oaks and remnants of an orchard are located in the north portion of the park along the orchard trails. Much of the trail system passes through redwood forest. The redwood forest provides its own cool and moist microclimate which supports ferns, trillium and huckleberry. The chaparral areas occur on the exposed ridgebacks and south-facing slopes. Typical plants include coyote brush, oak, chamise and toyon.

Wildlife in the park ranges between adjacent properties and includes, black tail deer, bobcat, rabbit, opossum and raccoon. The many creeks and streams also support a variety of amphibians and other aquatic species.



Hiking Villa Montalvo Trails