

JOURNEY INTO ALUM ROCK PARK



ABOVE: Narrow gauge railway car in Alum Rock Park. Electric trains of the San Jose and Santa Clara Railway Company were a popular way to reach the park before automobiles became common.

BELOW: Natatorium (large indoor swimming pool) at Alum Rock Park. As the park's attractions became dated and overused, they were quietly removed.



Horses and buggies at Alum Rock Park about 1908



An early automobile arriving at the park in 1909



Mineral springs fountain on the left, and women's bath house on the right

Rustic Retreat to Grand Resort

Founded in 1872, Alum Rock Park was California's first city park. The Native Americans had named the creek running down the canyon *shistik*, or place of rabbits. In the 1890s, a steam-powered, narrow-gauge train transported visitors into the park with its dance pavilion, restaurant, outdoor plunge, bathing grottos and more than two dozen mineral hot springs. Around the turn of the century, an electric train and then a standard-gauge locomotive replaced the small steam engine as the park's character changed from rustic retreat to a large-scale grand resort with an added exotic zoo, aviary and indoor swimming pool.

The Great Depression and the growing popularity of the automobile doomed the resort's train. People, however, kept flooding into the park. A record was set on Easter in 1935 when 4,400 cars were counted entering the grounds. The park draws visitors to its abundant natural beauty today.

Return of the Steelhead Trout

Flowing through Alum Rock Park to join with Coyote Creek, Upper Penitencia Creek is an essential waterway and an important habitat for the threatened steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*).

Steelhead trout journey into Upper Penitencia Creek between winter and spring to mate and spawn after spending two to three years in the open ocean. The silvery speckled females prepare nests on the creek's clean gravel bottom. Steelhead spawn in fast flowing streams that are well oxygenated, relatively silt free and shaded by trees. With ideal conditions, the eggs hatch in about a month. Efforts are being made to increase the steelhead trout populations along Upper Penitencia Creek by removing man-made barriers, maintaining and enhancing the tree canopy and reducing sedimentation and erosion in the waterway. The trail's unique boardwalk preserves the sycamore trees with their large and cooling canopies, which shade the water for the steelhead.

