



City of Gilroy

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item Title: **Consideration of a Park Naming Application to Re-Establish the Gilroy Golf Course Facility as Ousley Park**

Meeting Date: September 16, 2024

From: Jimmy Forbis, City Administrator

Department: Administration

Submitted By: Bryce Atkins, Assistant to the City Administrator

Prepared By: Bryce Atkins, Assistant to the City Administrator

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Not Applicable

RECOMMENDATION

Council consideration of the submitted park naming application re-establishing the name of the Gilroy Golf Course facility as Ousley Park.

BACKGROUND

The City received a question on June 3, 2024 from Barbara Armenta, descendant of Mary Ousley, regarding the absence of the name of Ousley Park from the Golf Course sign when it was recently replaced. After discussions with the applicant and research, a summary of the history of the park name is as follows:

- The area currently used as the Gilroy Golf Course was being used as a golf course, initially as a lease as a golf course, by Mary Ousley beginning in 1922.
- As part of her will (enacted at her passing) and effectuated in 1938, Mary Ousley donated the area to the City with a few restrictions:
 - The City could only use the land for a park or golf course, or otherwise it was to be returned to the descendants.
 - The property had to carry the name of Ousley Park.
- In 1970, her descendant Josephine Hoey executed, in exchange for consideration, a quitclaim deed for the area. This removed all conditions on the property, including the use restriction and the required naming.

In light of the research and discussions showing the removal of the name, required by operation of the will but removed by execution of the quitclaim deed, and the family's desire to re-establish the name as Ousley Park, the proper approach is the submittal of a Commemorative Dedication and Names Application.

ANALYSIS

The City received the attached Commemorative Dedication and Names Application from Barbara Armenta on July 23, 2024. The application is complete and has attached documentation from Barbara Armenta regarding the history of the land and contributions of Mary Ousley for the City Council's consideration.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has reviewed the application and recommended approval of the application. The City Council is now asked to consider the request to re-establish the name to the property currently hosting the Gilroy Golf Course facility.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may choose to deny the application.

FISCAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

There would only be a relatively small cost for remodeling the sign at the Golf Course should Council approve the request. These costs would be absorbed in the City's current appropriations.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This item was heard at the August 20, 2024 Parks and Recreation Commission, as well as being included in the publicly posted agenda for this meeting.

NEXT STEPS

Should Council approve the application, staff will commence updating the Gilroy Golf Course Sign and other updates regarding the name.

Attachments:

1. Commemorative Dedication and Names Application - Ousley Park.



City of Gilroy Recreation Division Commemorative Dedication and Names Application

Applicant Name: Barbara Armenta

Applicant Phone Number: [REDACTED]

Applicant Email Address: [REDACTED]

Applicant Address: [REDACTED]

Park or facility requested to be named or renamed: City of Gilroy Golf Course

Alternate park or facility (if appropriate): _____

Requested name: re-establish "Ousley Park" with the City of

Name of individual to be remembered: Gilroy Golf Course name

Number of years person has been deceased: Mary Ousley
88 years

Description of significant contribution(s) (attach additional pages if needed)

See attached "Significance of Re-establishing the Name,
"Ousley Park" on the City of Gilroy public
Golf Course"

Please list attached documents, if any, provided in support of naming or renaming

1) Account overview of when Gilroy obtained the
Golf Course on Hecker Pass and the history of the gift.
of the land. Photos included.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Does the requested name meet the policy criteria? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If no, specify: _____

Application Status: ☒ Accepted ☐ Incomplete

Signature: [Signature]

Date: July 23, 2024

Parks and Recreation Commission:

Recommended: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Meeting Date Considered: August 20, 2024

City Council:

Approved: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Meeting Date Considered: _____

Significance of Re-establishing the Name “Ousley Park” on the Gilroy Public Golf Course

Hecker Pass Road, Gilroy, California, July 2024

By: Barbara Hoey-Armenta

To: Gilroy City Staff, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Gilroy City Council

Several weeks ago, I noticed that the “Ousley Park” name is missing from the new City of Gilroy Golf Course sign that was installed at the new entrance off of Autumn Drive. The Golf Course has held the Ousley name since 1936 when it was officially named "Ousley Park" by a condition of the gift of the land to Gilroy. The name appears on the sign posted at the old entrance off Hecker Pass Road. Likewise, documents, maps, and promotional material reference the land “Ousley Park” – even on the internet. I sent an email to the City Manager and Asst. City Manager about the new entrance sign lacking the Ousley name. Communications with Bryce Atkins, Asst. City Manager, uncovered details about the property gifting, deeds, and also history of Gilroy and the land. The outcome of our emails was a determination that my family needs to complete a “Commemorative Dedication and Name Application” to continue to have the name, “Ousley Park” assigned to the City of Gilroy Golf Course.

Therefore, we respectfully appeal to your sense of appreciation for Gilroy’s long line of community-minded donors who set an example of charitable giving, such as the Ousley family who gifted their land for a public use. Mary Ousley’s gift of land to the City of Gilroy for a public golf course and park, should continue to carry the name “Ousley Park.”

Background and History of the Ownership of the Gilroy Golf Course on Hecker Pass Road

The Gilroy Golf Course is located on 36+ acres of the old Ousley Ranch on Hecker Pass Road (formerly Bodfish Road). The City’s use of the golf course land began in 1922 when landowners, Mary Ousley and Clara Ousley, entered into a lease agreement with Mr. C.C. Donahue and E.E. Brownell, the Trustees for Gilroy Golf and Country Club. The lease was renewed in 1925 with Jas. Princevalle and D.L. Raynolds representing the Golf Course. Upon Mary’s death in 1936 the land was deeded as a gift to Gilroy by Mary’s will. Mary was the last of the original Ousley pioneer family to live on the Ousley property, which was within the Solis Rancho and Las Animas Rancho.

In 1969, Mary’s niece in-law, Josephine Hoey, who inherited the Ousley estate, released the land and all conditions to Gilroy in a Quitclaim Deed. The Golf Course land was conveyed with the City holding all rights and interest, easements and rights reserved. Essentially, the Ousley-Hoey family has given use of the land since 1922 to the City of Gilroy, first in lease agreements, then in a gift and finally in a full deed.

Significant Contributions

While the gift from the family is significant, the history of the land and its people is equally significant. The Ousley name is part of the history of the Gilroy community and specifically of the Hecker Pass agriculture and vineyard region going back to 1854. The Ousley name is engrained in the historic Las Animas Land Partition Lawsuit brought about by Henry Miller, which affected nearly every resident of Gilroy for decades in the late 19th century. In fact, the Ousley contribution to Gilroy was honored by Gilroy in a bronze statue of Electa Ousley and Thomas Rea, “The Handshake” by sculptor, Marlene Amerian on Monterey Street downtown.

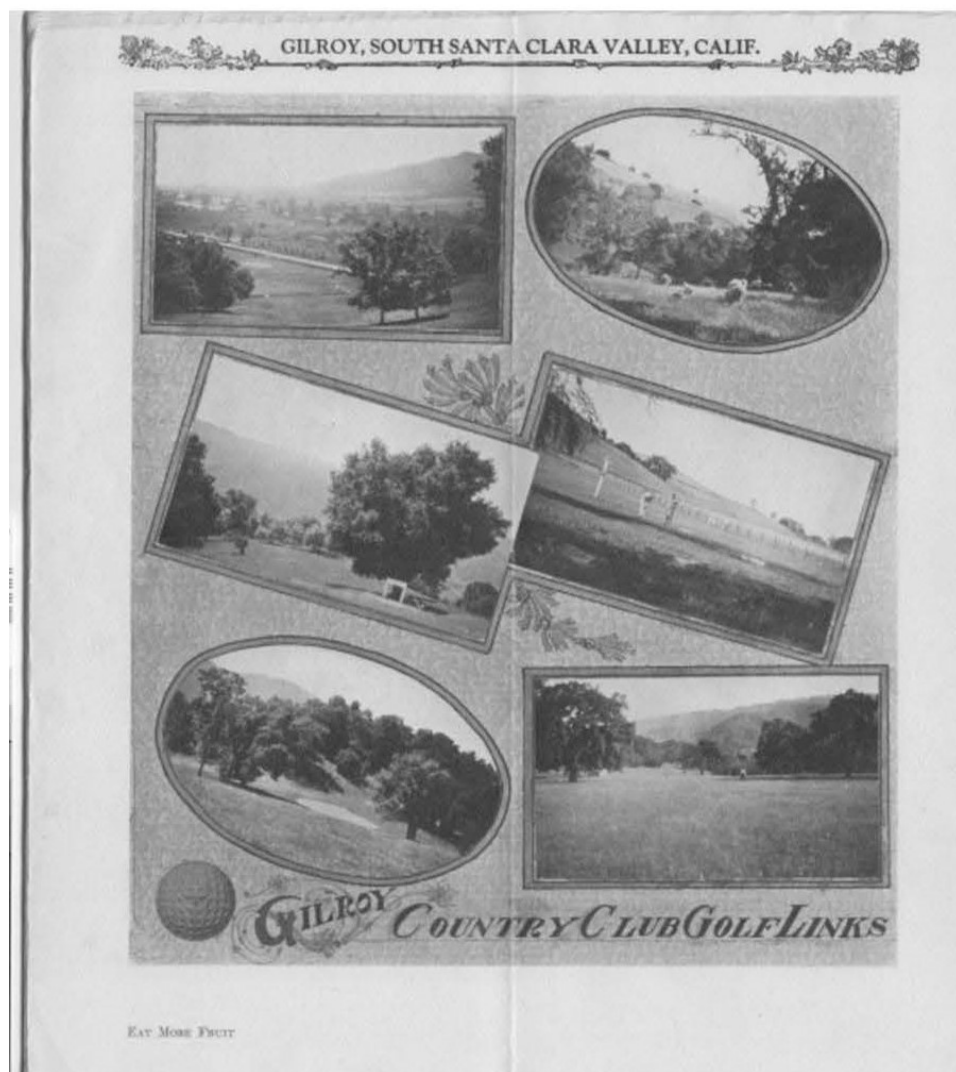
The Ousley family made other contributions of their farm land for community use. In the 1870s the City of Gilroy purchased from Electa’s daughter, Emma Ousely-Hoey, to build a reservoir for water from Uvas Dam. This reservoir was Gilroy’s main water storage for 100 years till storage tanks were built above Santa Teresa Boulevard. (Emma Ousley-Hoey’s descendants, carrying the name of the pioneer Hoey family, still live in the old two-story home, built in 1872, next to the Golf Course.) Another contribution was that the Ousley family gave a cemetery site to the Chinese families to bury their dead, located just west of the seventh green outside the Golf Course. This occurred around 1900 because restrictions of the time forced the Chinese immigrants to bury outside the City limits. (One hundred years later, the remains were ceremoniously exhumed and buried in the Gavilan Hills Cemetery.) Another interesting contribution for the community occurred in 1885 when the City used the Ousley land to build an isolation ward. A building was constructed as an isolation ward for smallpox victims after the 1885 epidemic, but was never used. It was located next to the Gilroy Golf Course. The building was moved in 1960s to the parcel next to the family farm house. It has been restored and is used by the Hoey descendants today.

The Ousley Ranch, also known as Ousley-Hoey, has been a landmark farm in Santa Clara Valley for one hundred and seventy years this year. The Samuel and Electa Ousley family was among the earliest American families in south Santa Clara County, arriving in 1854. The Ousley family and their descendants have resided continuously on the property since that time. Their story is a classic representation of the challenges and opportunities facing Santa Clara Valley farmers and ranchers beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. The added dimension of Electa’s early widowhood adds a deeper understanding to the struggles faced by Californians during an era when prosperity rose and fell, and land titles were uncertain as they faced the Spanish and Mexican land grant litigation. Photos and documents left by the Ousley family of this era reflect the no-nonsense family matriarch, whose tenacity and devotion to her children is exemplified by her quest to claim and retain lands for their welfare. The Ousley Ranch House, built in 1872, and well-maintained today is the symbol of the staying power the family exhibited. The direct descendants, the Hoey family, continued the connection with the

Gilroy community and agriculture business in the 1950s-1980s with abundant orchards, field crops, and cattle. The relationship to farming continues today and can be experienced through the antique shop, the Barn at Hoey Ranch.

Having the City's public Golf Course carry the name of "Ousley" is a reminder to its residents to recognize with pride the connection and identity we have to Gilroy's land, agriculture, public recreation and generous spirit. Therefore, to commemorate the legacy of the benefactors of the Golf Course, we are requesting that the park continue to be identified as "Ousley Park" and the name remain on a sign of the Golf Course.

Historical Photos of the Ousley property in the 1920s before and after the Golf Course was built.



Promotional pamphlet for Gilroy. *Gilroy, South Santa Clara Valley, Calif.: The Home of the Prune.* January 1926. P. 28 Ousley Park, Gilroy Golf Links.



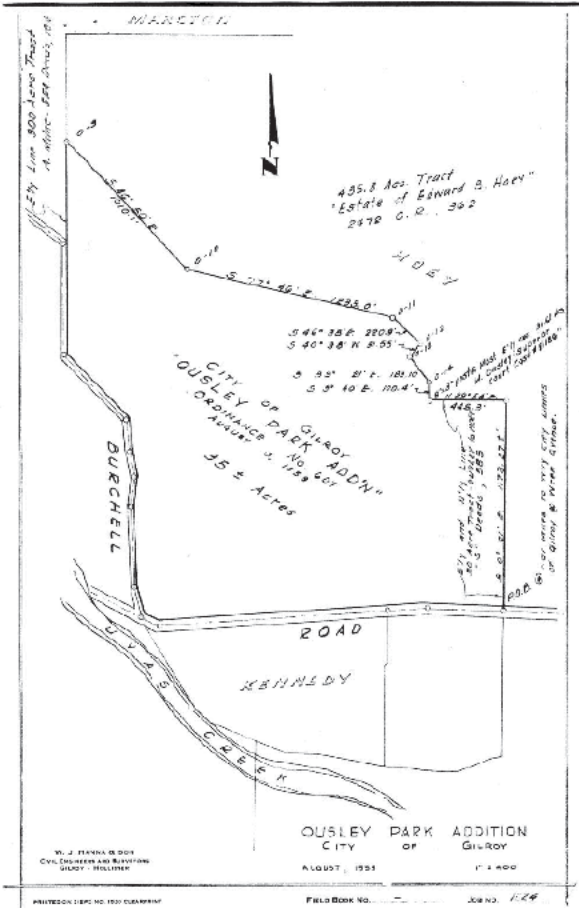
Photographs of Reservoir. Above: Reservoir looking north east. The Ousley family house in far back. Below: Close up of reservoir on Ousley hillside. (Gilroy Golf Course occupies this location today.)
Courtesy of Barbara Armenta from collection of family history.



Ousley property and Bodfish Road (Hecker Pass) before the Golf Course.
Photo courtesy of Barbara Armenta from collection of family history.



Postcard picture taken on Hecker Pass looking north. Orchards and vineyards of the Ousley family.
Present day Gilroy Golf Course, Ousley Park.



place added its number to the emigrant trains which were continually leaving for California," historian J.P. Munro-Fraser wrote in 1881.

The Ousleys were no exception. Sam and Electa, married in 1837, already had seven young ones when they packed up and joined a wagon train heading for the gold fields.

It was late in the spring when they left Missouri and hardships forced delays, so that by the time the train reached Salt Lake, winter was at hand.

Somewhere this side of the Mormon settlement, the immigrants spent the winter, starting out again in the spring when the grass was high enough to provide food for their stock.

Mary Ousley was born May 17, 1853, on what was later called Goose Creek up on the northeast border of California and Nevada.

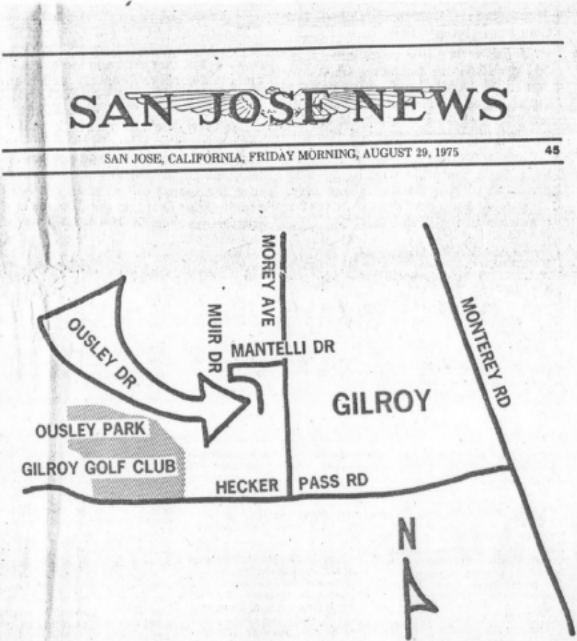
Coming down to the mines around Placerville, the family settled for a year while Samuel panned for gold.

In March, 1854, he decided to give up mining for farming, packed up the family, and came to Gilroy.

For more than 100 years Gilroy's water supply has come from the big reservoir on the Ousley place, and today golfers tramp across the Ousley's cow pasture.

The Gilroy Golf and Country Club is on part of the old ranch. Mary Electa Ousley, the "covered wagon baby" born enroute to California and the last of the nine Ousley children, willed 36 acres of the ranch to the City of Gilroy, stipulating it be used for park purposes and called "Ousley Park." She died July 5, 1936 of injuries suffered in an auto accident.

One of the Ousley girls, Emma, married into the pioneer Gilroy Hory family and their descendants still live in the old two-story Ousley home next to the golf course.



Formerly Part Of Ousley Ranch

This is the entrance to Ousley Park, the 36 acres willed to the City of Gilroy for a park and golf course on part of the old Ousley ranch on Hecker Pass highway. (Staff Photo)

References and Citations:

Ousley Ranch, *A case study in ranching in Santa Clara County from the 1850s to 1900*, by Maureen Olson (Frantzich). Prepared for A Public History Slideshow for History 197, San Jose State University Master's Program, May 3, 2009.

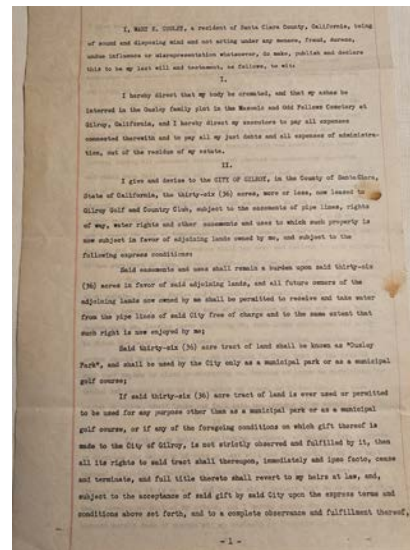
No Good Deed Goes Unpunished, by Barbara Armenta, self-published prepared for University of Massachusetts Lowell, Massachusetts, 2018.

Plaque honors Chinese cemetery, *Gilroy Dispatch*, April 5, 2004.

<https://www.topozone.com/california/santa-clara-ca/park/ousley-park>. Ousley Park is listed in the Parks Category for Santa Clara County in the state of California. Ousley Park is displayed on the "Gilroy" USGS topo map.



Mary E. Ousley (1853-1936)



Last Will and Testament of Mary E. Ousley, page 1, 1936