

# The San Ramon Valley Today

## MODERN ALAMO

### FOCUS:

What is Alamo like now?

### MAIN IDEA:

Use the information provided to learn what Alamo is like today.

### VOCABULARY:

bedroom community  
climate  
residential  
commercial  
incorporated  
business park



## Student Pages

Why is Alamo such a good place to live? Let's make a list on the board of the reasons why we like living in Alamo.

Some of you probably put down that Alamo is close to where your parent or parents work. Alamo is known as a **bedroom community**, which means that people live in Alamo, but may work in surrounding

communities. Some of your parents might work in San Ramon which is a city south of Danville. The development of the Bishop Ranch in 1982 turned San Ramon into a major employment center. Right now there are approximately 200 companies in the Bishop Ranch **Business Park** with room for about 28,000 jobs. It is expected that



more and more companies will come to the Bishop Ranch which will bring even more jobs. Some of your parents may work in Oakland, Pleasanton, or even into San Francisco. Let's make a chart to see where our parents work.

Some of your parents might have come to Alamo, so you could go to a good school. Alamo is known for its good schools. The San Ramon Valley Unified School District ranks among the top 10% of California school districts. What are some of the things that make your school special?

Some people who come to live in Alamo might have come because of the **climate**. **Climate** means what the weather is like over a long period of time. The average minimum temperature is 51 degrees and the average maximum temperature is 72 degrees. The average rainfall is 23 inches and there are 290 to 310 sunny days a year. Bad weather is not a problem for Alamo. Talk to someone who has lived in an area where they had to deal with snow or real hot or cold weather. Ask them about some of the problems they had. Why are we so lucky to live in such a nice climate?

Your parents might have moved to Alamo because there is a lot to do in Alamo. Alamo has five parks. The largest park is Livorna Park. Hap Magee Ranch Park is a very interesting park which we share with Danville. There is a dog park in Magee Park. During the summer you can attend outside concerts at Livorna Park. In September you can visit the Alamo Plaza for an Art and Music festival which raises money for our schools' music programs.



And during December you can celebrate the beginning of the holiday season by attending the tree lighting ceremony at Andrew Young Park. Why do you think parks are part of a good community?

Alamo is close to many wonderful places and maybe that is the reason why your

family wanted to live here. Many people like to visit San Francisco. Some people like to hike up Mt. Diablo. Other people like to visit the beach or take a walk through the redwoods. Many people like to visit Lake Tahoe where you can swim and go boating in the summer, and ski and snow board in the winter. The Bay Area is filled with wonderful places to visit. Where do you like to go?

Alamo is not a city. The citizens of Alamo have voted on **incorporation** several times, but so far residents have voted it down. When an area **incorporates** the area becomes a city, and some people feel they have more control over local issues like growth. Today a group called the Alamo



Improvement Association meets and advises on growth and development.

Several committees advise the County on police, parks, and other issues that affect the citizens of Alamo.

When an area is not incorporated, issues like growth and police protection are handled at the county level. Our county is Contra Costa so, if I want to build an office building, I would have to go speak to the County Board of Supervisors in Martinez.



There are lots of wonderful people living in Alamo and that is another reason why people like to live here. There are approximately 15,625 people living in Alamo. These are your friends and neighbors. How many of these people do you know? Do you think you know 100 people? 1000 people? 10,000 people?

How many of you have been walking or biking on the Iron Horse Trail? There used to be tracks where the trail is now. In 1978 the railroad stopped running, and people started to walk and bike on the trail. The trail will eventually be 33 miles long and run from Martinez to Pleasanton.

Next door to Alamo, Danville has a wonderful county library which offers us all kinds of opportunities. The library has thousands of books for us to read, but it also provides many programs for us to enjoy. In the morning very young children can go to the library and enjoy picture books and story telling, and in the afternoon you can visit the library for programs designed for K-6 students. Adults can visit the library and meet the authors of many books. There are many reasons to visit the library. Do you have a library card?



Alamo is a wonderful place to live. We have beautiful **residential** areas, (or housing) areas. There are also **commercial** areas or business areas. Some

people come to Alamo to shop and eat at the good restaurants. Think about a shopping center you have visited and think about some of the shops that you like to visit. Many families like to go out to dinner. What kind of restaurant does your family like to visit? There are places where we can relax or play. There are many activities planned for us to have fun. We are lucky to live in Alamo.

*Gail Kameron, 2004*

# Teacher Pages

## Student Activities

1. Work with a group to create a park for Alamo. (See activity page)
2. Create a flag for Alamo. (See activity page)
3. Write a letter to the Alamo Improvement Association and convince them that Alamo should have its own flag.
4. City Planning – Why do we put certain things in certain places? (See activity page)
5. Invite someone from the Park and Recreation Committee (R7A) to the classroom.
6. Being a good citizen in Alamo. What would that include? (See activity page)
7. Postcard research: Design a postcard for Alamo and on the back of the postcard write a letter describing the following: location, population, climate, historic sites, shopping, restaurants, museums, parks, annual events, etc. (See activity page)
8. Determine a problem that you think exists in Alamo and write to the Alamo Improvement Association to tell them about it.
9. Be a travel agent and write a speech convincing your classmates that they should visit Alamo.
10. Create a travel brochure for Alamo.
11. Create a museum of various historic sites in Alamo. Have each student be a docent and invite parents in for a tour. Draw a picture of a building and put it on a cardboard box so it stands up. The student should stand next to the model building and tell us its history and what it is now.
12. Complete an illustrated chart with all of the elements of Alamo.
13. Go to the Danville county library, get a card and check out a book.
14. Shop in Alamo. (See activity page)
15. Create a float for Alamo that could go in the Fourth of July parade. (See activity page)

## Field trips: (See special section on field trips.)

- **Family field trips:** any park in Alamo.
- **Passport field trip:** Livorna Park

## History/Social Science Standards:

- Explains why we have rules, laws, and the U.S. Constitution, the role of citizenship in promoting rules, and laws, the consequences for violating rules and laws.
- Understands the importance of public virtue and the role of citizens, including how to participate in a classroom, community and in civil life.

- Understands why their community was established, how individuals and families contributed to its founding and development, and how the community has changed over time, drawing on primary sources.
- Recognizes the importance of human interdependence with the classroom, school, and community.
- Is aware of and respects the significance of human interaction in the social sciences.
- Reads graphic representation of information including graphs, charts, maps, and schedules.
  - Explains how some things are made locally, some elsewhere in the U.S. and some abroad.

## Reading and Social Studies

*Communities*, Harcourt Brace (both textbook and activity book)

The textbook and activity book both have excellent lessons that lend themselves to the study of Alamo. Use as many lessons as you can. Several stories in the textbook *Communities*: Harcourt Brace make excellent reading for the study of a city and its people.

*Wings*: Harcourt Brace, “City Green”, pages 242-255.

## Additional Resources

### *Activity pages*

**Be a good citizen, city planning, Community celebrations, a flag for Alamo, parks, shopping, postcard research**

### *Essays*

*Alamo in Modern Times*

*Modern Communities in the San Ramon Valley*

### *Websites*

[www.ci.danville.ca.us](http://www.ci.danville.ca.us)

Search: Alamo California

### *Books and sources*

- Virgie V. Jones, *Remembering Alamo...and Other Things Along the Way* (Alamo: Morris-Burt Press), 1975.
- *Alamo, Then & Now*, one-page history from Museum of the San Ramon Valley

## Alamo in Modern Times

During World War II an Alamo air watch tower was built by the community. People volunteered, looking for Japanese war planes round the clock from 1942 to 1945. San Ramon Valley's population totaled 2,126 at that time.

The Alamo Improvement Association (AIA) began in 1953 and formally adopted by-laws in 1955. For 50 years its purposes have been: to advance and improve the welfare of properties in Alamo and to preserve the established character of Alamo as an agricultural and semi-rural residential area.

After the war hundreds, then thousands, of new people arrived. Round Hill Country Club opened in 1960 on land which formerly belonged to the Mott sisters and Grover Squire. The freeway was completed through Alamo in 1964.

Rapid valley growth fueled controversies, some of which focused on the philosophy of a new Superintendent of Schools in the sixties. Debates about the pace of development led to several votes on cityhood, spearheaded by residents who wanted more local control. Each was defeated in Alamo. An Alamo-Danville incorporation election in 1964 lost 2,086 to 1,958, with "loss of identity for Alamo" the main concern.

Today Alamo is an enclave of green with many one-half acre lot homes between Walnut Creek and Danville. Its population in 2000 was 15,625. It is governed by the County Board of Supervisors, with the AIA and several active county service areas advising on police, landscape and park issues.

Alamo residents take pride in the same natural beauty which appealed to the pioneers 150 years ago.

~~ Taken from *Alamo, Then & Now*, 2002 (Museum brochure) ~~



# MODERN COMMUNITIES IN THE SAN RAMON VALLEY

The official census figures for the San Ramon Valley passed 100,000 people in year 2000. The valley's recent growth can be traced in census figures:

1940	2,120	1980	57,307
1960	12,702	2000	113,099

In the twenty-first century the major government agencies which provide public services for the valley include:

- General government: Contra Costa County, Town of Danville and City of San Ramon
- Fire: San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District
- Schools: San Ramon Valley Unified School District
- Special districts: Central Contra Costa Sanitary District, East Bay Municipal Utility District, East Bay Regional Park District, et. al.

Several communities were founded in the San Ramon Valley soon after statehood in 1850. It was a lovely valley and immigrants moved here, eager to start new lives. They soon learned to "dry farm" by planting in the mild winters and harvesting in the spring and summer. In early years they grazed cattle and sheep, planted, cultivated and harvested hay and grains such as wheat and barley. In the twentieth century the rural valley produced grapes, prunes, almonds, walnuts and pears.

After World War II California's population swelled and the San Ramon Valley grew as well. First Montair (custom homes in the late 1940s), Cameo Acres (the first houses built from models in the valley in 1951) Round Hill Country Club (1960) and San Ramon Country Club Estates (1962) were planned and opened. New water and sewer pipes were installed. Traffic through the San Ramon Valley on the Old Danville Highway 21 was bumper to bumper. The I 680 freeway opened from Walnut Creek to Danville in 1964 and from Danville to Dublin in 1966.

**Alamo** is named for the poplar (cottonwood) trees which grew there in profusion when the first settlers arrived. The oldest continuing post office

began in Alamo in 1852. In 2000 it had a population of 15,626. It is governed by Contra Costa County with advisory committees of residents.

**Blackhawk and the Tassajara area** are governed by Contra Costa County and, in 2000, had a population of 10,048. The **Tassajara Valley** had a post office from 1896 to 1922 and a volunteer Fire Department from 1969 to 1990. The name derives from an Aztec word meaning "a place where the meat is cured".

**Blackhawk** is now a gated homes community in the foothills of Mt Diablo. The Blackhawk Ranch was established in 1917 by Ansel M. Easton. Originally the name is derived from the Sauc and Fox Indian warrior, Black Hawk; his name was given to a famous Irish race horse which the Easton family imported to California in the nineteenth century. The family's Hillsborough land was called the "Black Hawk Ranch," a name they later brought to their purchase in the San Ramon Valley.

**Danville's** post office first opened in 1860. The name came from Daniel Inman, an early downtown landowner, and probably from Danville, Kentucky (the hometown of early settler "grandma" Sarah Young). This community was the largest in the San Ramon Valley during most of the twentieth century, providing blacksmithies, hotels and barber shops. It incorporated as the Town of Danville in 1982. 2000 population: 41, 715.

The community of **Diablo** (named for the mountain) was one of California's first country clubs. Robert Noble Burgess developed what was first called the Mt. Diablo Park Club beginning in 1912; he owned 50,000 acres at one point, including the Mt. Diablo summit and the Blackhawk ranch. During the early twentieth century it was a significant San Ramon Valley community, drawing visitors during the summer and providing jobs for valley residents. It is governed by Contra Costa County with resident advisory committees. 2000 population: 988

**San Ramon** had several names in its early years: Brevensville (for blacksmith Levi Brevin), Lynchville (for 1850 settler William Lynch) and Limerick (for many early Irish settlers). San Ramon's permanent post office began in 1873. After 1891 when the San Ramon Branch Line of the Southern Pacific arrived, the name San Ramon was applied by all to this small

community. The village center was a half-mile from the San Ramon depot, San Ramon was incorporated in 1983. 2000 population: 44,722.

In early 2004 **Contra Costa County** reached a milestone when its population topped 1,000,000 people. An estimate from the California Department of Finance gave the precise number as 1,003,800, according to the *San Ramon Valley Herald* on Feb. 13, 2004. Here are recent County population figures:

1930	80,000	1970	550,000
1940	200,000	1980	655,000
1950	300,000	1990	800,000
1960	est.400,000	2000	910,000
		2004	1,000,000

~~From Museum of the San Ramon Valley archives, 2004~~

# Being a Good Citizen in Alamo

**Write three rules in your classroom and tell why these rules help your classroom run better.**

Rule One \_\_\_\_\_

How does rule one help? \_\_\_\_\_

Rule Two \_\_\_\_\_

How does rule two help? \_\_\_\_\_

Rule Three \_\_\_\_\_

How does rule three help? \_\_\_\_\_

Tell how you are a good citizen in your school. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Think of two rules that people have to follow in Alamo. Write the rule and tell why you think the rule helps Alamo.

Rule One \_\_\_\_\_

How does rule one help? \_\_\_\_\_

Rule Two \_\_\_\_\_

How does rule two help? \_\_\_\_\_

Tell how you are a good citizen in Alamo.

\_\_\_\_\_

# City Planning for Alamo

**Alamo is unincorporated, which means that decisions about what can be built are decided by the county of Contra Costa which meets in Martinez. A group of people called the Board of Supervisors meets and makes decisions about what can be built in Alamo. Pretend for a minute that there is a big lot next to your house and that there are many people who want to build something on the lot. Put a check next to the things that you don't want next to your house. Why?**

Another house

A gas station

A park

A ten story office building

A parking lot

A school

A pig farm

Junk yard

Jewelry store

Hospital

A restaurant

A clothing store

A drugstore

A movie theater

A chicken farm

## **What things go together??**

1. What would you put next to a pig farm?
2. What buildings would you put next to the drugstore?

3. What would you put next to a school?
4. What would you put next to a movie theater?
5. What would you put next to your house?

## **A Flag for Alamo**

Our country has a flag. Look at the flag and tell what the stripes and stars stand for. Look at the California Flag and tell what the symbols and colors stand for? What colors are used on the flag? Think about Alamo and what kind of flag it should have. Right now there is no flag for Alamo. What symbols should be on the flag. Why should they be there? What colors should be used on the flag? Why?

In the space below design a flag for Alamo. Think about what colors and symbols you are using and be able to explain them to your classmates.

## Community Celebrations in Alamo

Alamo has many celebrations, but one of the most important and the most fun is the Alamo Art and Wine Festival that is held every year. There is always music, food and interesting booths with things to buy. The Fourth of July parade in Danville is part of many Alamo families' celebrations as well. Each year the town of Danville celebrates a time when our country decided that they wanted to be an independent nation. People work together to make floats. Some people ride horses and some people walk with their favorite group. There are even bands with people marching and playing music.

What if you were asked to design a float for the July Fourth parade. What would you put on your float? Here are a list of topics that might help you plan a float:

Prehistoric float: What animals would you show on your float?

Physical feature float: What physical features would you put on your float?

Political feature float: If you were going to show the San Ramon Valley what cities and towns would go on your float?

Native American float: If you had a Native American float what things could you put on the float to show how Native Americans lived?

Mission float: What could you put on your float to show the mission period?

Rancho period: During the rancho period people raised cattle. They put brands on their cattle so each rancher would know which cattle belonged to them. Design a brand that could be on your float.

Pioneer period: Which pioneers would you put on your float?

Agriculture float: There used to be ranches and farms in Alamo. What crops would you show on your float?

Transportation float: What forms of transportation would you put on your float?

Alamo: Think about Alamo today. What things could you put on your float that would make everybody think of Alamo?

- Draw a picture of what your float would look like? Would there be any writing on your float?
- Take a shoebox and make a float. You can cover the box with white paper and then you can draw on the paper. You can use clay or play dough to make things for your float. Be creative.



## Design a Park for Alamo

**Alamo has five parks. There are many things to do at these parks. How would you like to design another park for Alamo? Work with three other students to design a park for our town. Make a park where people of all ages can come and enjoy themselves. Here are some of the things you can put in your park:**

Skate boarding

Soccer

Horseback riding

Hiking

Picnicking

Swimming

Horse shoes

Tennis courts

Volleyball

Baseball

Basketball

Big toy

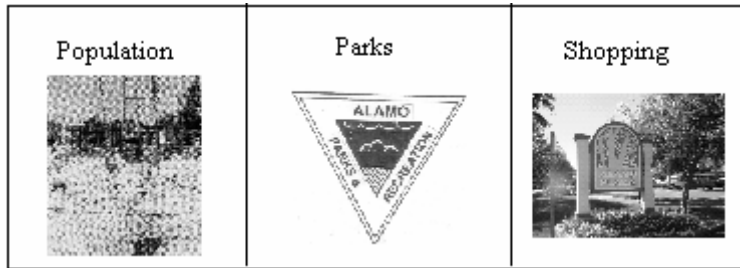
Fishing

Work with a team and plan a new park for Alamo. The team should pick five activities for the park. Remember these activities should be for people of all ages. Your grandfather should like the park, and so should your little sister. Pick out a name for your park. Use a large piece of drawing paper and draw your park. Make it colorful. Present it to the class.

# Postcard Research for Alamo

**Design a postcard about Alamo. Divide it into sections and in each section put a fact and some pictures that represent Alamo. Make it colorful.**

Some examples:



Write a letter to a friend and tell them about a visit to Alamo., Make it interesting and fill it with information. Here are some topic sentences that might help you.

Dear Mom,

I am having such a good time in Alamo. It is such a beautiful town. I am going to tell you all about it.

Alamo is located \_\_\_\_\_. **Tell where Alamo is located. What cities surround it? Tell what state it is in. What part of the state is it in?**

The weather here is wonderful. **Tell about the climate of Alamo.**

Yesterday we hiked on Mt. Diablo. **Tell about Mt Diablo. What does it look like? What makes it so special?**

There are five parks in Alamo **Tell about a visit to Livorna Park or Hap Magee Park. What did you do there? Why did you enjoy your visit to this park?**

Yesterday we rode our bikes on Iron Horse Trail. **Describe Iron Horse Trail. Tell what it was used for, and tell what it is used for now. Tell how long it is.**

Did you know that Indians used to live in Alamo? **Tell the name of the Indians and some of the foods that they ate. Tell what kind of houses that they used to live in. Tell about the baskets that they made.**

If you have been to the Art and Music Festival in September at Alamo Plaza you could tell your mother all about it. **You could also tell her that the money raised from this festival supports our schools' music programs. Have you been to the tree lighting ceremony at Andrew Young Park, or to one of the summer concerts at Livorna Park? You could talk about what fun it was to attend both or either of these events.**

Yesterday we went to the Museum of the San Ramon Valley, and we saw the jaw of the Mastodon. **Tell about some of the other animals that lived in the San Ramon Valley.**

I really had such a good time in Alamo. I hope you can visit with me next time.

Love,