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## The Area

### Easy walks:

#### **A: Shopping Complex**

**0.51 mile east on Ralston, at El Camino Real**

24-hour Safeway (w/ Starbuck's)  
Togo's  
Baskin-Robbins  
Another Starbuck's & a Peet's

#### **B: Carlmont Village**

**0.53 mile west on Ralston, at the Alameda de las Pulgas**

24-hour Safeway  
Lunardi's Supermarket  
Jamba Juice  
Village Host Pizza  
Baskin-Robbins  
Starbuck's  
Public Library

#### **C: Water Dog Lake**

**0.7 mi west on Ralston to Lyall/Pullman**

Cross Ralston (left) to go south on Lyall  
0.2 mi to Park Entrance at Lake Road. Enter the city park through gate. The gravel road leads to Water Dog Lake and the Brooks Open Space Preserve.

The lake is about 0.5 miles up the trail, the entire trail is 2.3 miles.

The City of Belmont leases the lake and the surrounding land from NDNU. The dam making Water Dog Lake was built in the 1800s to provide water to the Ralston Mansion. A water dog is a newt (salamander).

**S**imon Mezes owned the land that became Belmont. Don Jose Dario Arguello was awarded a Spanish land grant for what ultimately was known as El Rancho de las Pulgas or the Ranch of the Fleas. The cattle ranch included Belmont. A number of legal proceedings occurred concerning the validity of Arguello's ownership of the property. Simon Monserrate Mezes represented the Arguello heirs. As part of the settlement in the 1850s, Mezes obtained all of what became early Belmont; this acreage came into existence as Mezesville. Mezes settled in Belmont and sold land to settlers, farmers, and speculators. By the late 1860s, Mezes improved his property by building stables and landscaping the grounds. Two years subsequent to his 1884 death, Mezes home was destroyed by fire.

**B**elmont was the name of Ralston's estate. The 4.5-square mile city was incorporated on October 18, 1926. Carlmont High School is a California Distinguished School. The novel *My Posse Don't do Homework* by LouAnne Johnson and subsequent movie *Dangerous Minds* were loosely based upon events that occurred at Carlmont in the 1990s. Carlmont is the home of the Friends of Millard Fillmore trivia contest. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Belmont become home to five sanitariums, institutions for the development of mental and/or physical health. The Sterling Downs greyhound racetrack was located east of El Camino Real.

**J**ack London slept here in 1897 while working at the Belmont Military Academy laundry. Look for the plaque at Carlmont Village along the creek that runs out of Water Dog Lake.

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## The Gold, Gods, and Glory

**N**otre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) was founded by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in 1851. While visiting the Bay Area the Sisters established an institute of higher learning, College of Notre Dame, in the city of San Jose. The school was chartered in 1868 as the first college in California authorized to grant the baccalaureate degree to women.

The Sisters soon outgrew their facility in the South Bay and moved the campus to Belmont in 1923. They purchased Ralston Hall, the country estate of William Chapman Ralston. The lavish 19th century estate was the summer home of Ralston. Built around an Italian villa constructed by Count Cipriani in 1840, The Hall is a California Historical Landmark.

**W**illiam Chapman Ralston, San Francisco financier and founder of the Bank of California moved to San Francisco in 1854. His enthusiastic dedication to his adopted city, state, and region led him to finance steamship lines, railroads, Comstock mines, the Palace Hotel, a theater, and wool and silk mills. He overextended himself and his bank. Despite his reputation as a financial genius, a run on the bank in August 1875 forced it to close. At that tense time, Ralston left for a walk into San Francisco Bay.

**C**ount Leonetto Cipriani was among the early settlers in Belmont. Most of what is known about him comes from his *California and Overland Diaries*. This soldier came to California via a cattle drive in a covered wagon and horse from Westport, Missouri in 1853 and built an elegant prefabricated home in Belmont. By 1862, the retired Colonel was made an Italian count and appointed to the Italian Senate. He sold his chateau to Ralston, returning to Italy. He made his final visit to Belmont in 1871 in a Pullman car.



# The Campus

