

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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## A Great Place to Stay: Orinda's Sleepy Hollow Neighborhood

By Cathy Dausman



With 150 years of Sleepy Hollow residency among them are, from left: Barbara Ward, Elva Rust and Andy Amstutz.

Photo Cathy Dausman

There's something special about the Sleepy Hollow neighborhood so many call home. Barbara Ward, who grew up in Sleepy Hollow, attended Sleepy Hollow Elementary School, Pine Grove Middle School and Miramonte High

School said, "I don't expect to ever leave." She moved away once, but is now back living down the block from where she grew up. Resident Andy Amstutz, who moved to Sleepy Hollow in 1968, put it simply: "We feel like we have roots here."



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Well known neighbors have included the owners of Boysen Paints and Long's Drugs; even author Washington Irving plays a part. While other Lamorinda neighborhoods bear Spanish or nature-oriented street names, Sleepy Hollow residents live on Ichabod Lane and Crane Court, or Van Tassel Lane, Washington, and Irving Lanes, Sleepy Hollow, Van Ripper or Van Tassel Lanes. And the tree growth has transformed bare California hillsides into a forest glen.

Once, there was very little natural vegetation. In the days before central air conditioning "the hillsides were [originally] so barren and people were hungry for shade," said original owner Nancy Du Puis. Her family purchased their Sleepy Hollow home in the early 1950s. "Now, they take out trees," she added.

Sleepy Hollow in its present form – 457 homes spread across 599 acres – was developed in the early 1950s. A private swim club and a public elementary school lie within its boundaries, and the Sleepy Hollow Book Club is still active after 60 years.

The neighborhood originally was called Sleepy Hollow Syndicate when developer John Allen began building in the 1920s. He placed stone gates standing 12 feet high at Miner Road and Lombardy Lane. Richard Rheem began buying Sleepy Hollow Syndicate land in the 1930s, when he and his brother noticed the area's seemingly perpetual sunshine. By 1937, Rheem owned at least 705 acres.

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