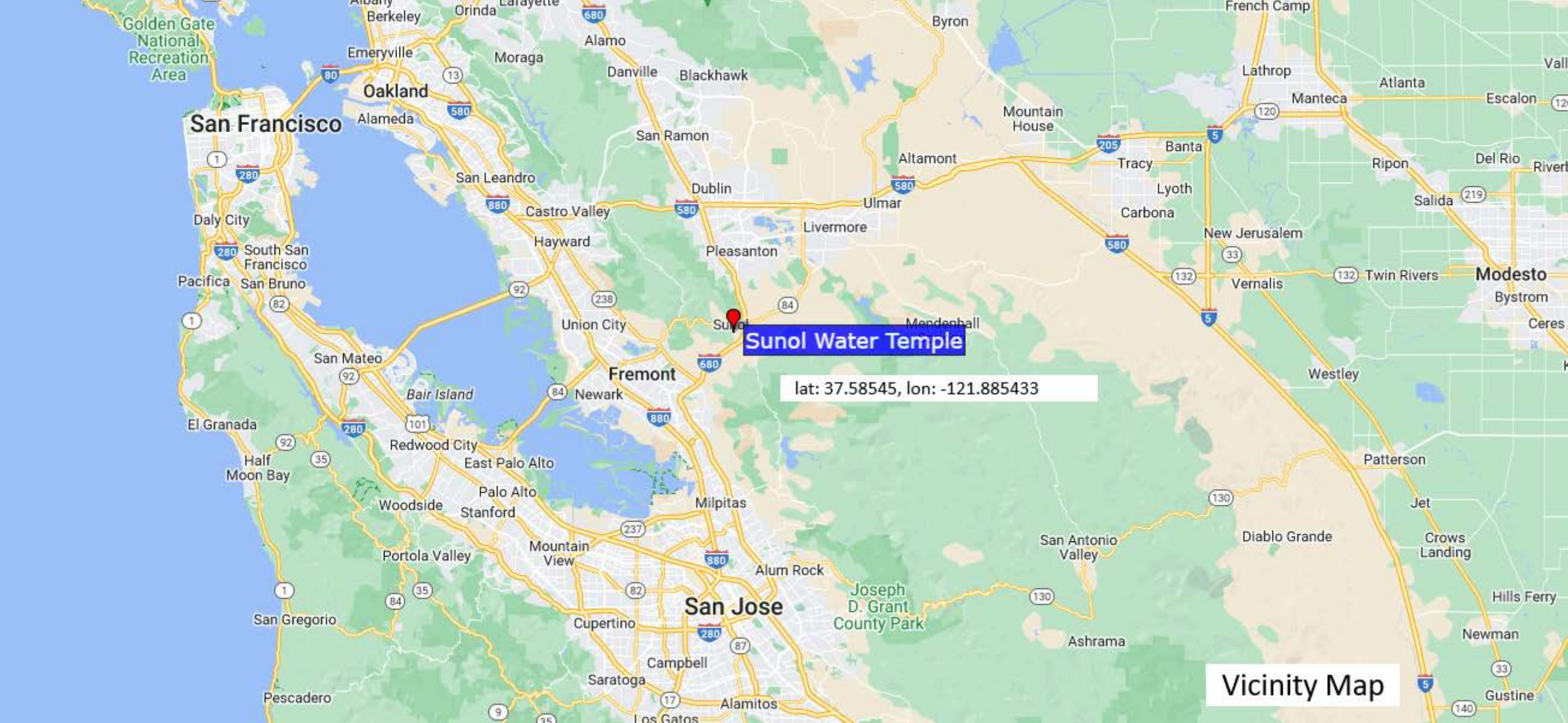




Sunol Water Temple



Sunol Water Temple

lat: 37.58545, lon: -121.885433

Vicinity Map

## From Wikipedia:

Since the mid-19th century the private Spring Valley Water Company (SVWC), owned much of the Alameda Creek Watershed and had held a monopoly on water service to San Francisco. In 1906, William Bowers Bourn II, a major stockholder in the SVWC, and owner of the giant Empire gold mine, hired Willis Polk to design a "water temple" atop the spot where three subterranean water sources converge (a pipe from the Arroyo de la Laguna, Alameda Creek, through the Sunol infiltration galleries, and a 30-inch pipeline from the artesian well field of Pleasanton). Some sources claim Bourn wanted to sell the water company to the City of San Francisco and saw the temple as a way to appeal to San Francisco voters, who would have to approve the purchase (municipal efforts to buy out the SVWC had been a source of constant controversy from as early as 1873, when the first attempt to purchase it was turned down by the voters because the price was too high).

Other sources claim that as one born into wealth and classically educated, Bourn was partially motivated by a sense of civic responsibility [Editor's note: highly doubtful]. Polk's design, modeled after the ancient Temple of Vesta in Tivoli, Italy, was constructed in 1910 (Tivoli is where many of the waters that fed Rome converged in the foothills of the Apennines). Prior to the construction of the Hetch Hetchy Aqueduct, half of San Francisco's water supply (6 million gallons a day) passed through the Sunol temple. The SVWC, including the temple, was purchased by San Francisco in 1930 for \$40 million.

For decades the Water Temple received many visitors and was a popular location for picnickers. By the 1980s the water temple had badly deteriorated, and was severely damaged in 1989's Loma Prieta earthquake, leading some community leaders to call for its demolition. The site was closed to the public because of safety concerns. A community effort led to the temple's restoration from 1997 to 2001, at a cost of \$1.2 million, including seismic and accessibility upgrades. Following its restoration the temple opened again to the public. Today any water that flows through the temple is not part of the potable water supply.

Fields adjacent to the temple belong to the city of San Francisco which has authorized the digging of a gravel quarry on the site. Local residents concerned about the temple's future brought a lawsuit to attempt to block the quarry project, but eventually ran out of funds and dropped the suit.

In June 2006, a new facility named the Sunol Agricultural Park was opened on a site adjacent to the temple. The park provides space for small businesses and nonprofit groups to grow produce and was originally a project of a non-profit called Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE). The park serves a platform for service and educational programs related to sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation.