School for the Deaf and Blind (now the University of California’s Clark Kerr Campus). In the following decades the Park District acquired land eastward from many individual landowners, the legacy of land subdivision “paper lots” sold door-to-door or by mail in the 1910s and ’20s. In 1982 the Park District purchased a 64-acre parcel covering most of Gwin Canyon, which completed the preserve.

THE CANYON TODAY
This preserve is known primarily for its picturesque hiking trails. The Stone-wall—Panoramic Trail is the primary access through the preserve. The 0.75-mile climb from Stonewall Road to the ridgetop is steep, but hikers are rewarded with a panoramic view of Oakland, Berkeley, San Francisco Bay, and the Golden Gate Bridge. The trail continues east along the ridge, straddling the boundary with University of California property and connecting with the University’s Ecological Study Area trail system.

Gwin Canyon Trail is a scenic, single-track trail located south of Claremont Avenue. It descends from the north end of Norfolk Road and ends 0.7 miles from the trailhead, just above Claremont Creek. In Gwin Canyon an array of native vegetation provides excellent habitat for wildlife.

The preserve is part of an ecological corridor on an urban fringe. In addition to the Park District landholdings, other undeveloped portions in the upper canyon are managed by the University of California and the East Bay Municipal Utility District. The City of Oakland owns Garber Park, a 13-acre oak/bay woodland south of Claremont Avenue. The Clarendon Canyon watershed is a mosaic of vegetation types — grasslands, coastal scrub, oak/bay woodland, and eucalyptus plantations — that supports a variety of animal and plant species. Commonly seen residents include black-tailed deer, coyote, gray fox, red-tailed hawk, and western terrestrial garter snake.

A 1.5-mile section of the creek, known as Harwood Creek, flows through the center of the canyon. It is one of the three main tributaries of Temescal Creek, which eventually drains into San Francisco Bay in Emeryville. Wildfires have been a concern for residents near Clarendon Canyon. In the last century, four major wildfires have spread through the canyon, including the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire. Efforts currently underway to provide protection on wildfires include creating roadside fuel breaks and reducing non-native vegetation.