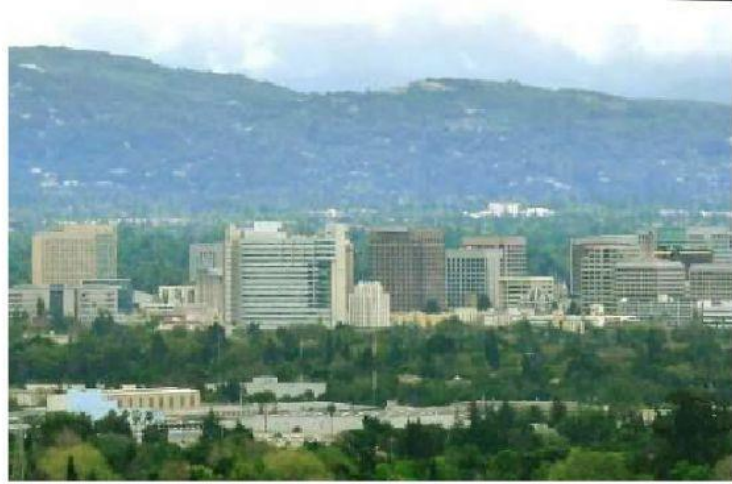# The story of Silicon Valley

If old America was made in New York or Detroit, modern America is made in Silicon Valley. But what is "Silicon Valley", where is it? And why is it where it is?

San José,in the heart of Silicon Valley

It is not made of silicon; and it is not a river valley; but forgetting that, Silicon Valley is probably the most famous valley in the world. Although it is not the place where the first computer was built (that was Manchester, England), Silicon Valley, near San Francisco, was the **birthplace** of the modern computer industry.

For this, we can say thank you to scientists at the universities in California, and to the Hippies of the 1960's.

It was in the nineteen-sixties that American **"youth** culture" really began. California, of course, already existed; but the Sixties Generation rediscovered it.

At the time there were really two different forms of **youth** culture; the "Beach Boy" culture **on the one hand**, and the **anti-establishment** hippies and **radical** students on the other hand; and they all dreamed of California.

For the Beach Boys, that meant southern California, where they could sing about surfing and cars; for the Hippies and radicals, it meant San Francisco, "flower power" and revolutionary new ideas. The campuses at Berkeley and Stamford, near San Francisco, were hot-beds of new ideas, new technology, new culture, and new ways of living.

When they finished university, many of the best students did not look for jobs with big companies like Ford or Exxon. Instead they wanted to be free and **run** their own operations.... and stay in California, not far from San Francisco. Silicon Valley is thus a group of small towns, including Palo Alto and San José, a few miles south of San Francisco.

The high-technology industry was already present around San Francisco. Intel had been founded in 1968, and in the same year the first computer mouse was built at Stamford University. In 1970, Xerox opened a research center in Palo Alto. There were also other electronics companies, like Hewlett Packard, and Fairchild, the world's first "semiconductor" company.

Then, in 1976, an electronics student called Steve Jobs started a small computer **company** in his garage; he gave it the same name as the Beatles' record company: *Apple*.

Very soon, more companies, like Seagate and Google appeared. "Silicon Valley" had arrived. There was even a sort of primitive Internet connecting many addresses in Silicon Valley, called the Arpanet.

Today, Silicon Valley is still the home of the computer industry; it is still full of high technology, but it is not the only center for high-tech in the USA. Today here are computer firms all over the USA.... and all over the world; but Silicon Valley still has the largest concentration of high-tech companies and research centers.

The new grammar for schools, students and teachers

Microsoft, the world's biggest high-tech company, is not based in Silicon Valley. It is further north, near Seattle in the state of Washington.

WORDS
birthplace: the place where a person is born - **youth:** young people - **on the one hand:** on one side - **anti-establishment:** people who reject the "established" system of society - **radical:** very different, revolutionary - **run:** organise - **company:** firm. .

Student Worksheet

Silicon valley... Where is it, and why is it where it is ?

*Here are the **answers** to some questions. Using information from the text, make up possible questions to fit the answers. As you will notice, some of the questions use question words, others do not.*

Where.....

    In Manchester, England

Where ....

    In Silicon Valley, near San Francisco.

Who ...

    The Beach Boys.

Did the best students....

    No, they preferred to stay in California.

When .....

    In 1968

Where...

    In Palo Alto

When ....

    In 1976.

What...

    It was a sort of primitive Internet.

Is.....

    No, there are high-tech firms all over the USA now.

Where ......

    Further north, in Seattle.