What is now Atwater Village was originally part of Rancho San Rafael, which covered much of what is now Glendale and northeast Los Angeles. In 1868, W.C.B. Richardson purchased a portion of the rancho and renamed it Rancho Santa Eulalia. This land eventually fell into the family of Harriet Atwater Paramore, for whom the neighborhood was originally named as "Atwater Park", which was a poppy field at the time it was first subdivided in 1912.

In subsequent decades, residents began to settle in the area. Spanish-style houses and bungalows were built in the 1920s to 1940s, many of which still retain their original details. Growth was aided by the construction of a line of the Pacific Electric Railway with its distinctive "red cars", which ran down Glendale Boulevard. The line, along with the rest of the streetcar system, however, was dismantled in favor of freeways and buses.

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