MY RECOLLECTIONS OF VALLE VISTA -- 1914 - 1920

Dear Wilbur,

We bought the lot on Hillside (Vista) in the spring of 1914 and moved out there about June of 1915.

Later we bought two and a half acres in Moraga on the Old Redwood Road just off the County Road from Canyon to Moraga. We then traded with the Irvine (Moraga) Company for two and a half acres in Valle Vista on the east side of the creek, between the two bridges and bordering on the creek itself. The Moraga site backed up to the Larch property where Mrs. Larch lives, or did a few years ago.

Springmyers also had property there, later buying the Hotel-&-Store property (which became) later a liquor store at Moraga. Mrs. Talbot had the store and post office there first. She then moved to a garage building on the road to the south of the old place. About 1917, or easily 1918, the Talbots sold and moved to Berkeley.

When this (Moraga) property was laid out, there was a big sign in and near Moraga Station: "Watch Moraga Grow." It didn't--due to the First World War, and not until many years later.

In 1915 when we moved to Valle Vista, there were three larger houses on the hill which the Company (Moraga Co.) had built; then came the Robinsons and Lansdales; Hodgkins, Senior and Junior; also the house next to Hodgkins, Jr. where an elderly man lived before selling to Doctor Merrill.

The three Company houses: Mr. and Mrs. Arbuckle lived in the lower one; then on the top of the road, Doctor and Mrs. Witham. Later they sold to Mr. and Mrs. Gilkey and family--they later selling to Miss Cooper.

Facing the other street was the dentist, Doctor Busch and family. He had his office in Berkeley on University Avenue, ust at the end of Shattuck Avenue. They later sold to Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt. He was an engineer on the Southern Pacific Rail Road. They later bought also the property on the upper side of and across the road. They also faced the Creek, and were the last to sell to the Water Company (East Bay W. Co.).

Both the Hodgkins commuted to San Francisco; Earl was with the tile company, and later in the Army during the First World War. Mr. Arbuckle was away from home a lot. The Withams and the Gilkeys were retired. Doctor Merrill had some kind of therapy, and Mrs. Merrill was a trained nurse, but later got her license to practise medicine.

Mr. Russell Holt worked for the Pacific Gas and Electric's main office in San Francisco, and Mr. Jackson in the Ferry Building Post Office in San Francisco. The Lansdales and the Robinsons were both retired and were not there all the time. Later they rented out the places: the Robinsons to Mr. and Mrs. McPhee who worked at the quarry and later bought the Hodgkins, Sr., property. Sam Sessions and Mrs. Sessions who worked for the Water Company as inspector rented the Lansdale place, later buying a house on the hill facing the Station. They then moved south and sold the older place to Doctor Wahl. He used it just for vacations, etc.

The Doctor Merrill property was later rented to an auto body man and wife who worked in San Francisco. Mr. and Mrs. Burnham raised pigeons but later took over the delivery of the Oakland Tribune. Mr. and Mrs. Green also rented the Robinson's property and later bought the Campion home. Mr. Campion had been very seldom on the place; he lived in Oakland.

At Valle Vista we farmed, had cows and delivered milk to the (Moraga) Valley people. We also had dry beans planted on rented property, and later planted Hillside to hay on shares with the (Moraga) Company. Rain caught us with no place to store the hay after baling it, so we quit and moved to Southern California in November of 1920. Later we sold to the Water Company. I also worked for the P. G. & E. in 1917-1918.

Every morning the commuters took the Oakland and Antioch train and Key (System) Ferry to San Francisco from Valle Vista Station at 6:30 a.m., arriving in San Francisco at 7:30 a.m. Some mornings it would be 18°, so men built a fire on the track to warm us while waiting for the train. We had to catch the 5:15 Ferry from San Francisco or wait until 8:00 p.m. to catch the last train from Oakland at 8:30.

We had an Improvement Club which included both Moraga and Canyon. There was also the Trelut Ranch back of what is now Saint Mary's College but had been at one time the site of a Country Club.

We worked for (the election of) Connors (as) supervisor and even went to Rodeo for a banquet and dance. Mrs. Talbot, our first post master got the post office for Moraga. The mail came by train to Martinez and then Walnut Creek, and by horse back to Lafayette and Moraga.

I cast my first vote at the little white one-room school on the Road to Lafayette, and later at a new building which still stands. The latter had two school rooms and a nice auditorium. It was the Spring Valley (Willow Spring) School District, the Moraga School being on the road to Orinda, about half-way from Moraga.

Dances and elections were held at the school. We were paid $8.00 for the elections, and I took the returns to Martinez the next day; the mileage amounted to $8. There was no pay for school board elections.

The little valley of Valle Vista had good roads, but the County roads in winter were not passable with a car. Farmers used a horse and cart mostly, so we never bought our car licence until April.

You, Wilbur, started school in Moraga, and I drove you in the car when roads were passable, or in the horse and buggy when otherwise. I would also pick up some of the farmers' children. Our only children who lived at Valle Vista were Flora, Virginia, and you. They started school after we left, and the Busch children left before you started.

Father drove a jitney between Madrone Park and Canyon, and I ran a soft drink stand for Mrs. Talbot on Sundays in the summer time.

If I think of any thing more, or if you do, will add it later,

M o t h e r