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Compromise Ends Valle V

By FRED GARRETSON

VALLE VISTA — An apparent compromise has been reached in the battle about who should be allowed to prowl through the ruins of this ghost town.

This town—or rather what's left of it—sits in the Eastbay hills between Moraga and Oakland. The property is owned by the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

The town of Moraga wants Valle Vista set aside as a public park for 14,000 Moraga residents. Administrators of a score of Eastbay school districts want Valle Vista as an outdoor classroom for 400,000 students with public access restricted in order to preserve the unique environment.

Spokesmen for both sides joined the board of directors of the utility district in touring Valle Vista .

EBMUD staff members suggested a compromise under which the teachers would get their proposed 45-acre site while a nearby 10-acre site might be developed as a picnic area for Moraga residents.

Both parcels contain some of the ruins of the old community of Valle Vista which existed on this site in the early years of the 20th Century, according to Lee Jorgensen, manager of EBMUD's land division. He said the town eventually faded away because the water supply was not adequate.

The utility district bought up the land to protect water quality around the shores of Upper San Leandro Reservoir and blocked all public access for decades. In recent years, EBMUD has started opening up its watershed lands and asked the educators to recommend some sites that should be reserved for educational purposes.

Valle Vista sits on the south side of Canyon Road, west of the town of Moraga. Public access is restricted, but permits to hike

Directors' Walk

The East Bay Municipal Utility District board of directors and staff members tour the ruins of Valle Vista, a ghost town that districts want it p

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through the area can be obtained from EBMUD.

The battle over Valle Vista is expected to reach a head at the July 13 EBMUD board meeting.

The proposed alternate site for the Moraga public park won praise from Hazel McClearnen, a member of the Moraga Park and Recreation Authority, and William Penn Mott, former State Parks and Recreation director who is a consultant to Moraga. However, they noted, it is more remote than the proposed outdoor classroom site.

However, on May 13, the EBMUD board voted to use this site as a debris dump for 33,000 cubic yards of material excavated from various EBMUD projects. Jorgensen said the debris dump could be compacted to make a parking lot. The resolution authorizing the debris dump also authorized upgrading a road and a bridge that lead to the dump. Officials said this would facilitate plans to create a public park at the site.

The ruins of homes and barns at Valle Vista, slowly being reclaimed by nature, are considered to be an important part of the proposed outdoor classroom in environmental education, teachers said.

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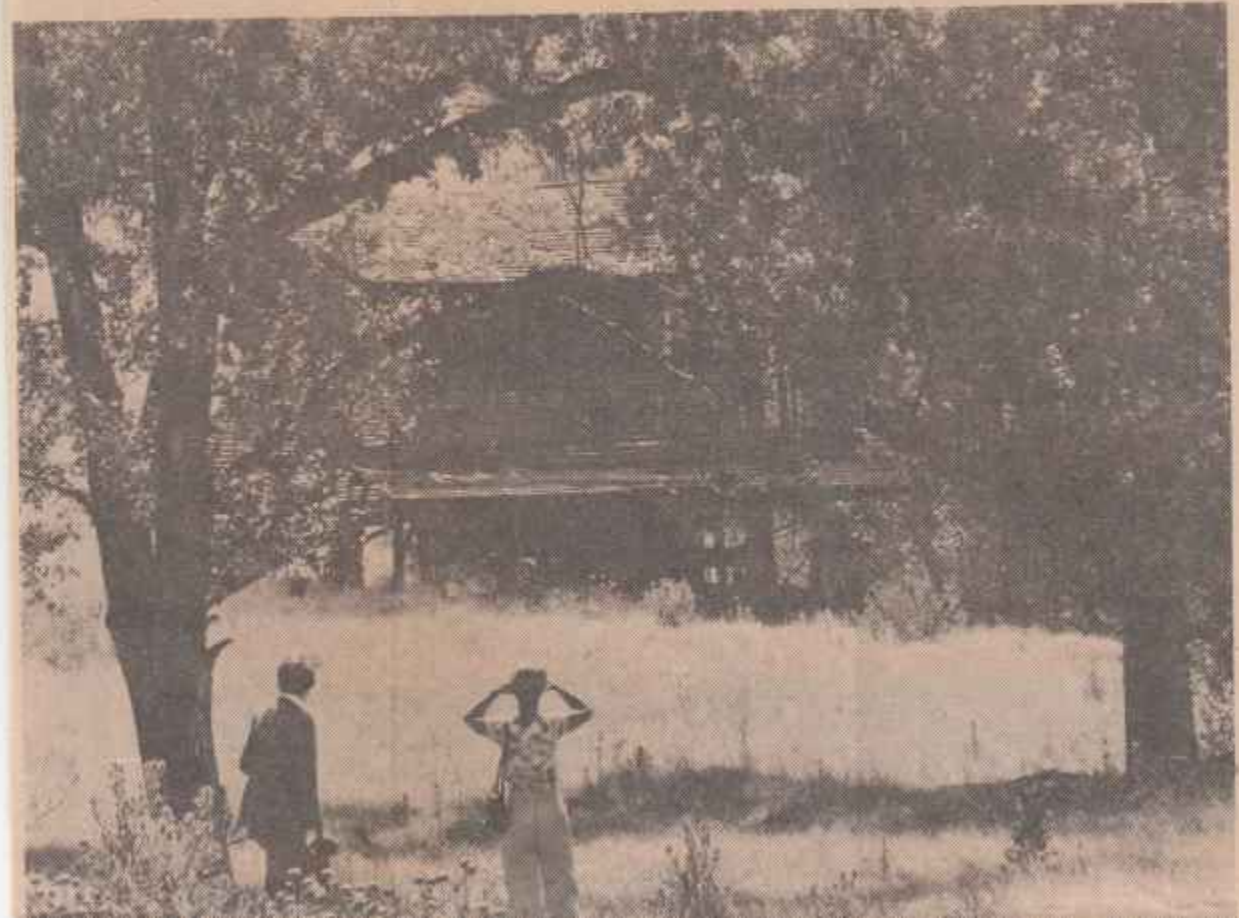
Directors' Walkabout

The East Bay Municipal Utility District board of directors held a special meeting—one that involved more hiking than talking—to take a close look at the Valle Vista No. 1 property. The city of Moraga wants to turn the area into a park for its 14,000 residents. Eastbay school districts want it preserved as an outdoor nature classroom. Board directors wandered through the watershed land (above) and saw slow-running streams (left), an old, disused barn (below) and the sun through the trees (right).

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