



Located on the Lower Level of the Lafayette Library

The Lafayette Historical Society was saddened by the recent death of another of our wonderful volunteers, Jeannine Kikkert. Jeannine was born in Oklahoma in 1932, the youngest of ten children. When she was nine her family moved to North Hollywood where they lived during World War II. Then there was a move to Bakersfield where she lived with her sister and attended Bakersfield High School and participated in drama and dance. She was the first runner up for Miss Bakersfield. After high school she worked as a bank teller where she met her future husband, Dave Kikkert. They married in 1953 and soon moved to San Francisco where Dave started his own business. They had five children....the oldest son Patrick volunteered with his mother on Tuesday mornings in the History Room. Jeannine was always interested in learning about people's families and telling about hers. She loved genealogy and spent hours at the Walnut Creek Library doing research on her own family. She loved the History Room and people. Her enthusiasm and warmth will be missed.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE 2021

Welcome to our new members and to those who have recently renewed their membership or have made a donation:

Karl Pister
Sande Hubbs
Jeff Crenshaw
Fr. John Kasper
Stu Swiedler
Frank Barham

Glen Zamanian
Jane Minor
Stanley Pedder
Nancy Flood
Kirk Allen
Michelle Fanto-Chan
Kathy & Allen Hopkins

Leonard Holmes
Trudy Salter
Sherril Barber
Joan Bruzzzone
Carol Singer
Sharon Fraetis

Thank you for your support of the Lafayette Historical Society.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Your membership is exceedingly important as it makes it possible for our organization to pay annual rent to the City of Lafayette for our space and be able to pay for our phone, insurance, and other needed supplies. If you have a **red dot** on your address label for this issue, your membership is up for renewal in the next month or two. If you have a **red L** on your address label you are a Life Member and do not pay dues so if you'd like to make a donation it would be appreciated. Even though the History Room has been closed since March 2020, we still have bills to pay!!

Student Membership is \$10

Individual Membership is \$25

Family Membership is \$50

Additional Donations are always appreciated

Please send to LHS

PO Box 133, Lafayette CA 94549

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral Histories which date from the 1970's have been stored on tapes and discs in the History Room. Many of these tapes have recently been digitized and are available for viewing on the Historical Society Website – lafayettehistory.org. In the top row on the website you will find Archives/Oral Histories which will take you to the oral histories. Below is a list of the tapes that tell about early life in Burton Valley. The committee continues to work to make additional tapes available.

Jack Marchant: Jack Marchant built over 2,000 homes in Lafayette, including a third of the houses in Burton Valley. Hirsch Morton was Marchant's architect for several years. Marchant was a part of a movement in suburban design that embraced the concept of "modern living" and low slung "California Ranch Style" houses that blended into the landscape. Grading on Marchant projects was typically minimized, thus leaving the tracts in a rolling, "naturalist" (as opposed to flat and grid-like) state."

Russell Bruzzone: Russell's grandfather, Frank Ghiglione, was a truck farmer who came to Lafayette in 1906. He previously ran vegetable farming operations in San Pablo and in the Rockridge District of Oakland. In this interview Russell looks back over his long career as a homebuilder and developer. He started building homes in Lafayette in 1954. In addition to the many homes he built in Lafayette and Moraga, Russell also developed the Plaza Center and other shopping centers. In addition, he helped school districts acquire the large land parcels they needed for new schools to serve the educational needs of these growing communities.

This is the second article about the Burton Valley area of Lafayette in our series about the “Hoods of Lafayette”

BURTON VALLEY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS - EARLY 1950's

All of Lafayette changed tremendously in the 1950's. Agricultural land was sold to housing developers and the population boomed. There was an influx of people moving into California post-war, and others moving from rural areas to be near opportunities in cities.

Over 2,000 homes in Lafayette, including one-third of the houses in Burton Valley, were built by the Marchant Construction Company.

From *Lafayette Vistas* Winter 2000:



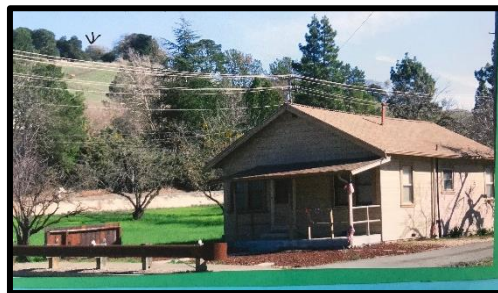
“Marchant was a part of a movement in suburban design that embraced the concept of ‘modern living’ and low-slung ‘California Ranch Style’ houses that blended into the landscape. Grading on Marchant projects was typically minimized, thus leaving the tracts in a rolling, ‘naturalist’ (as opposed to flat and grid like) state.”

Hirsch Morton, Marchant’s architect, is largely responsible for the style we see today. He is quoted in *Voices of Lafayette* by Julie Sullivan:

“We probably designed several thousand houses. I felt like giving beauty back to Lafayette. It was the place I wanted to be.”

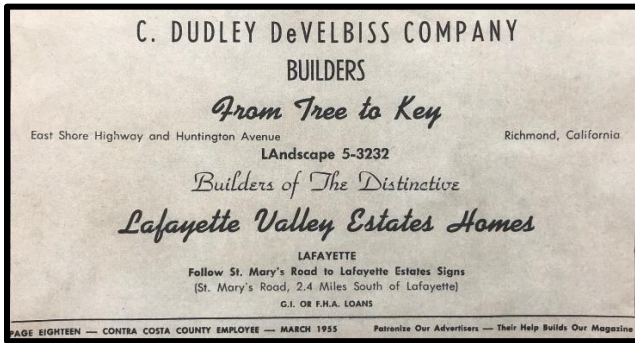
One of the early housing developments was Rose Estates off Glenside Drive. Rose and Augustine Lobo were able to buy the land in the early 1920's. Land on the edges was sold occasionally, but not the center bulk of the Burton Valley land which the Moraga Land Association continued to own.

When driving down Glenside there is a small brown house with a bit of field and fruit trees next to it (by Michael Lane). Larry Cody now lives there on the last bit of land that his grandparents Rose and Augustine Lobo owned. They lived in this two-bedroom house with their four children, two boys and two girls. They were Portuguese who originally migrated to Boston and worked making shoes. Other Portuguese had been settling in Lafayette and through them they heard that there was good land available (and probably good weather, too!). The family was hard working and self-sufficient, raising chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and growing vegetables. For a cash crop they had walnut and pear orchards.



In the early 1950's, the Lobos decided to develop their land. The family owned an earth moving company by then. (They were the ones who took down the hill that was where

the Plaza Center in Lafayette is now. There are pictures of Mt. Diablo Boulevard cutting through a large hill that is not there anymore.) Because of their company, they were able to do the grading themselves and sold lots on their property. They named the housing development Rose Estates. The main street is Augustine Lane, and Buzzie Court is named for a grandchild.



Lafayette Valley Estates was begun in 1954 with about 200 houses. A house in 1956 cost \$14,500 in this development.

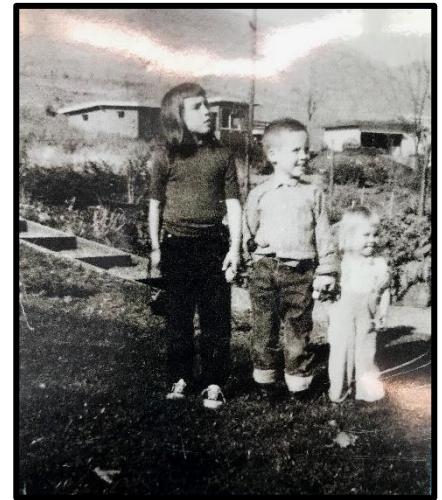
Catherine Sinnott and her family moved into Lafayette Valley Estates in 1956. Here are some of her memories as recorded by the Lafayette

Historical Society Oral History Project:

“Well, I remember it was very quiet. I walked up above my house and there was a man about four houses away that I could see sweeping, and I heard his broom sweeping. I couldn’t believe it because in the city there is always enough noise so you can’t hear little things like that...”

“...across St. Mary’s Road from us was all walnut and pear orchards, and there were little shacks for the migrant workers... There were little out houses for them. There were horse ranches around...”

“They had coffee klatches and lots of ladies got together (and) enjoyed each other ... we were a long way from everybody else so we got well acquainted with our neighbors.”



Catherine Sinnott has liked her home so much that she still lives there.

~~Laura Torkelson

THE OLD CURRAN RANCH

Most people in Lafayette, especially those who live in Burton Valley, drive by land that once belonged to the Curran family. Today, we love looking at the two horses who live there. There was an article in the *Lamorinda Weekly* about the horses. The brown one is named Blondie, remembered because the blond one wasn’t. I think that Blondie was a 27 -year-old retired roping horse. Maybe one of you readers remembers more. At any rate, the horses and the land are what we look at when we stop where Reliez Station Road becomes Glenside.



Until a few years ago, there was a little old house rotting away on the side of the paddock (where there were cattle). Gussie and Patrick Curran bought 101 acres in 1920. Gussie grew up in Paskenta, near Red Bluff. Patrick was born and raised in Wildcat Canyon, in what is now Tilden Park. His family was from Ireland and they raised dairy cows and grew hay.



When Patrick was a young man, he went up north to the Mt. Shasta area to work in a logging camp. There he met Gussie. They were married in 1907. By then, Patrick's parents had moved to Oakland and owned a livery stable. Patrick and Gussie moved in with them, and in time, produced four children. By 1920, they had saved enough to buy land of their own. Another child was born after their move to Lafayette. With hard work, the Curran family

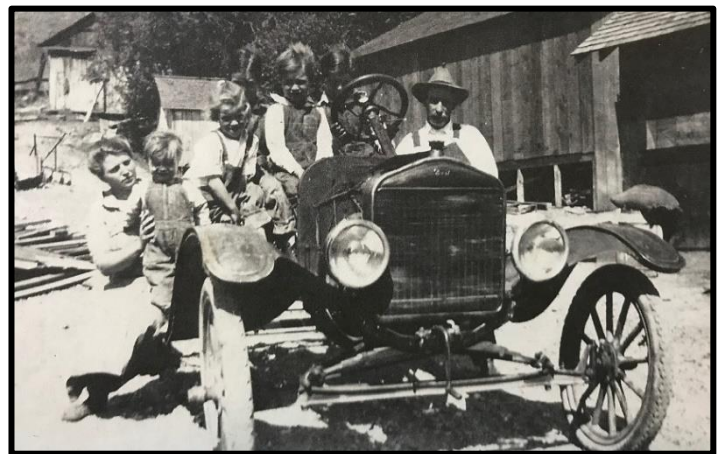
thrived in Lafayette, raising milk cows, producing milk that they bottled and sold to residences, mainly in Berkeley and Oakland. Patrick died in 1928 from pneumonia.

Gussie and her five children continued to operate the dairy.

In 1934, Gussie married Joe Botelho, of Portuguese decent, who owned a blacksmith shop in Walnut Creek. His shop was on the corner of California and Mt. Diablo. A block or so down is a street named after Joe's father, Antonio, who owned a lot of property in downtown Walnut Creek. After marriage, they switched their operation from a dairy to raising beef cattle, and they grew walnuts. In the fall, the call would go out to the whole family to gather and harvest the walnuts. The kids would have black hands from the walnut husks when they went back to school. All "hands" would gather for barbequed steak or ham hocks and beans as a picnic in front of the house. It is remembered as great fun!

Gussie's grandchildren and great grandchildren have many memories of life on the Curran Ranch. You can read some in the History Room. Gussie Curran Botelho died in 1968 at the age of 80, still living on the land where so much of her rich life had been lived.

~~Laura Torkelson





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