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Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

University History Series

BLAKE ESTATE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviews with:

Igor Blake
George and Helena Thacher
Elliot and Elizabeth Evans
Louis Stein
Clark and Kay Kerr
Janice Kittredge
Norma Willer, Anthony Hail, and Ron and Myra Brocchini
Charles Hitch
Toichi Domoto
Walter Vodden
Mai Arbegast
Geraldine Knight Scott
Florence Holmes
Linda Haymaker

With an Introduction by Libby Gardner

Interviews Conducted by Suzanne B. Riess in 1986-1987

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ANSON S. BLAKE

1948

ANITA BLAKE

1950

Photographs by G. Paul Bishop

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INTRODUCTION

The story of Blake House begins with Anson and Anita Symmes Blake, who built a magnificent house overlooking the San Francisco Bay in 1922 and surrounded it with ten and one-half acres of matchless gardens. For some forty years the Blakes and Mrs. Blake's sister, Miss Mabel Symmes, lived in Blake House and devoted careful and loving attention to both house and garden. In 1962, the Blake Estate came to the University of California, an extraordinary gift that reflected the Blake family's longstanding devotion to the University.

The idea of arranging for an oral history about the Blakes occurred to me in 1985 while I was redecorating a portion of the house. I became interested in learning more about Anson and Anita Blake and her sister Mabel Symmes--their personalities, lifestyles and interests--who designed and brought the house and garden into being and stamped their indelible and nurturing influence on this unique estate. Firsthand accounts were essential from those people who knew the Blakes personally and who were involved with the house and garden in significant ways. I also wanted to include interviews with those who were a part of the process which led to Blake House becoming the official residence of the President of the University of California.

Thus, the voices in this oral history weave a fascinating tale of the people who lived in Blake House, cultivated its gardens, preserved its abundant beauty, and created its special charm. They give an equally fascinating account of local history and a wealth of information about Blake House--its architecture, interior design, horticulture, and many other aspects as well--over the course of its sixty-five-year history. Above all, the voices in this oral history tell the story of a family, a home, a garden, and a university, and how they all came together to create a place of rare loveliness and unusual interest.

Blake House today blends the traditional formality of the past with an appropriate sense of the present in a unique and special way. The house is now used by the President and me to host members of the University's faculty, student body, staff, administration, and alumni from all nine campuses. It serves as a gracious and elegant home for welcoming visitors

from throughout the state and nation and from all over the world. Our guests come for luncheons, dinners, receptions, and meetings, enjoying its magnificent setting and spectacular view across the Bay to San Francisco and the Golden Gate.

The marvelous experimental garden, cultivated by the UC Berkeley Department of Landscape Architecture, serves as an outdoor laboratory for landscape design classes and for plant identification. It is a unique "working garden" with a variety of environmental conditions for landscape architecture students.

The story of Blake House is an important chapter in and contribution to the history of the University. You will find it presented vividly and interestingly on these pages.

I wish to thank Willa Baum, Division Head of the Regional Oral History Office at The Bancroft Library on the Berkeley campus, who took an initial interest in this project. I am indebted especially to Suzanne Riess, Senior Editor of the Regional Oral History Office, who was enthusiastic about this undertaking, pursued many avenues of inquiry, conducted the interviews, and carried the project to conclusion. I wish to express my gratitude to all those who contributed their recollections to this oral history. To those who made this account possible, my thanks and appreciation for a wonderful story, wonderfully told.

Libby Gardner

Blake House
November 1987

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Origins of the Blake Estate

The origins of the Blake Estate and the history of Anson Stiles Blake and Anita Day Symmes Blake go back nearly one hundred years. Anson courted Anita and asked for her hand in marriage in 1890. Miss Symmes' father refused, saying to his daughter's suitor in a letter, December 1, 1890, "I ask you to trust your future to her continued interest in you and to the hands of Father Time who if sometimes slow is always sure." In 1894 Anita Symmes graduated from the University of California, and she and Anson Blake married. They built a house in Berkeley where they lived until 1923. This house was on Piedmont Avenue, next door to Anson Blake's mother, Mrs. Charles Thompson Blake. The Piedmont Avenue property had come to Harriet Waters Stiles Blake from her father, Anson Gale Stiles, an original trustee of the College of California.

In 1922 the University sent a message to the Blakes, Anson and his wife Anita, brother Edwin Tyler Blake and his wife Harriet Whitney Carson Blake, and to the widowed Mrs. Charles Thompson Blake informing them that the property on which their houses stood was being condemned in order to build the California Memorial Stadium in Strawberry Canyon. While this move on the part of the University was met with outrage by many of the faculty families who had built their homes in that sylvan area east of the growing campus, the Blakes had a ready alternative. The family owned sixty acres in Kensington, divided into four pieces, one for each of the Charles Thompson Blake children. Anson and Edwin and their wives chose to build on this location four miles north of Berkeley. The other children were Robert Pierpont Blake who lived in Massachusetts, and Eliza Seeley Blake Thacher who lived in Ojai, California. Their lots were sold. The senior Mrs. Blake moved into the house the Edwin Blakes built.

"At that time the surrounding hills were covered with grasses and chaparral. The Blake property had fine outcroppings of Lawsonite rock, a generously rolling terrain, and a beautiful view of the bay below. The area seemed so remote from town... that the Blakes called their new home La Casa Adelante, Spanish for 'over there' or 'far away.'"

*Linda Haymaker, "Blake House," Pacific Horticulture, Spring 1987.

In December 1957, thirty-four years later, Mr. and Mrs. Anson S. Blake conveyed their estate to the University of California in a deed of gift that required the Regents to endeavor to "maintain the trust property in a manner substantially equivalent to the care and maintenance it has received heretofore to the end that it shall be an effective part of the instructional and research activities of the University." As for the house, the Regents were permitted "to use the same or any other structure which at their discretion they may erect in its place, for or in support of other University purposes, including but not limited to use as a residence or for conferences."

Now another thirty years has passed and Blake House, "a gracious and elegant home" as the lady of the house Mrs. David Gardner describes it, is welcoming students, faculty, staff, and administrators from the nine campuses of the University, as well as visitors from throughout the state, the nation, and the world.

A History Proposed

Beautifully hidden away by location and vegetation, Blake House still seems "far away." Even today many in the University and Berkeley community have not heard of the Blakes or of the house and the garden. To bring together all the information possible about Anson and Anita Blake and to augment through interviews the scanty knowledge of the years of change, University of California President and Mrs. David Pierpont Gardner in June 1986 asked the Regional Oral History Office to develop an oral history record. Blake House, official residence of the presidents of the University since 1968, needed more than the brief historical summary printed on the welcoming brochure.

A history of Blake House was perfectly suited to the oral history method. Leading actors or well-placed witnesses to the life and times of the house and the garden could be interviewed in a format similar to that developed for the history of the Julia Morgan-designed vice-president's house, 2821 Claremont Avenue in Berkeley. The Morgan House oral history had been completed in 1976. Now both of these significant University houses would be brought to life through oral memoirs.

In July 1986 the oral history office outlined as prospective interview topics the Blake family, the University and the house and its remodelling, residents of the house since the Blakes, and the Blake Garden and its use and development by the Department of Landscape Architecture of the Berkeley campus. Interviewing began in the fall of 1986. The first interviews were undertaken to discover more about the Blakes themselves.

The Anson Blakes

Anson Blake was the grandson of Eli Whitney Blake of New Haven, Connecticut, and the son of Charles Thompson Blake and Harriet Waters Stiles--whose mother Ann Jane Waters Stiles had endowed Stiles Hall to house the University's YMCA. Anita Blake was the daughter of Frank J. Symmes, banker and president of Thomas Day & Co., a gas and electric company. These were prominent, well-to-do California families. The genealogy of the Blakes is appended.

Anson Blake went into banking following his graduation from the University of California in 1891. After the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906, he and his younger brother Edwin took over the family sand and gravel business, variously named Oakland Paving Co., Blake & Bilger, and Blake Brothers Co. The business had been made possible two generations earlier by inventor-grandfather Eli's rock crusher. Considerable land was reclaimed in the Sacramento Delta by the company. This work engrossed Anson Blake. Supervising projects in the Delta, he was away from his wife Anita often, as we know from her letters to him now in The Bancroft Library.

Those letters from Anita Blake were not written by a bored wife sitting listlessly at home, however. Mrs. Blake, who had studied Greek and Latin and the humanities in college, was immersed in hay husbandry, land management, and getting "A" grades in her Extension Division studies in swine husbandry and poultry husbandry. In 1908, with his fee for service as receiver for the construction company which completed under his supervision the Mare Island Drydocks, Anson Blake bought and presented to his wife their ranch property in St. Helena. There in Napa County, on Howell Mountain, she practiced her interest in agriculture and put her considerable managerial talents to work--as well as concerning herself with the lives of the tenants. Childless, she turned her time and energies to passionate and precise care for gardens and the land. The detailed, descriptive letters from Howell Mountain date from 1911 to 1920.

In the University of California Archives is an interview taken for the University's Centennial History with Anson Blake in May 1958 in which he notes that Anita Blake used to go horseback riding with Benjamin Ide Wheeler "around the hills [after he ceased being president] until he died." Nephew Igor Blake describes in his oral history interview how his Aunt Anita "commuted" to Howell Mountain, a trip involving horses and boats. Today we look at pictures of a frail eighty-year-old woman, but her letters from more than a half century back are vigorous messages from a woman, if not with a hoe, most certainly with a shovel and a rake.

The "eviction" notice of 1922 meant for Anita Blake an opportunity to create a new and very much larger garden than the garden on Piedmont Avenue. This was work she was ready to take on. Her sister was ready too. Miss Mabel Symmes, an 1896 graduate of the University, had studied landscape architecture in 1914. She would live with her older sister and brother-in-law in Kensington and the garden would be everything they wished a garden to be. Between the sisters they had all the determination and expertise needed to transform a remote grass and chaparral-covered hillside into a gracious Mediterranean garden.

The Changing Blake Estate

Each of the interviews in the Blake Estate Oral History Project has a brief introduction explaining the relationship of the interview to the broad questions of the project, and describing the setting and the participants. The order of the sections of the interviews is: the Blakes and their house; the University and Blake House, 1962-1975; the Blakes and their garden, 1950s and early 1960s; and Blake Garden from 1960 to today.

The interviews with Igor Blake, a nephew of Anson and Anita Blake, with George and Helena Thacher, also family members, with Mr. and Mrs. Elliot Evans, close family friends, and with Louis Stein, all concern Anson and Anita Blake as they were remembered at home in Kensington. In 1957 the Blakes deeded the estate to the University with the right to remain living there until their death. After they and Miss Mabel Symmes had passed on--Anita Blake was the last to die, in 1962--the University considered how it might use the house. For a period it was a dormitory for graduate women students.

In 1967 Charles Hitch was named president of the University, and he and his family needed a residence. The Regents designated Blake House as the President's House which was particularly perfect because the Kensington address distinguished it from the University at Berkeley. A team of remodelling architects and decorators at once took on the task of turning the house into a suitable home for a president, making substantial changes and dealing with a generation of deferred maintenance.

Changes were necessary in the garden as well, although generally the plantings had been responsibly cared for. Since 1920 the Blakes had made the gardens, remarkable in their range of plant materials, available to students in the Department of Landscape Architecture on the Berkeley campus. In 1957 the department established the position of garden director to keep a watchful eye on Blake Garden. To have for study a garden now over sixty years old was the irreplaceable gift from the Blakes.

Blake House Today

The Hitches' successors, President and Mrs. David Saxon, lived at Blake House from 1975 to 1983. But President and Mrs. Gardner with their larger family and different needs chose to make their home in Orinda and to use Blake House for receptions, dinners, meetings, and as a presidential office off campus.

Mrs. David Gardner was our first advisor on this oral history project. Her respect and affection for the house is evident in her Introduction. She had in mind a number of people important to talk with. She and President Gardner wished first of all to have Marguerite Johnston interviewed. As chief social advisor and administrative secretary to five University of California presidents since 1957, Mrs. Johnston would have provided an historically continuous view of that role. But she died on June 29, 1986, just as the interviews were being planned.

Blake House today is a 12,434-square foot building with seven bathrooms, two kitchens, and three bedrooms, "the biggest three-bedroom house in the world" as President Charles Hitch said to a reporter in 1968. The numerous bathrooms and extra kitchen result from the 1967-1968 remodelling to make the house suitable as an official residence. Yet despite its admittedly official designation, the house is a real home with a housekeeping staff and the warmth of people coming and going. Mrs. Pat Johnson, administrative secretary to the president, has her office in an upstairs room. Landscape students are visible in the gardens. And major and minor events are arranged and staged in the house all week long. And every time there is such an event visitors ask, What is this place? Whose house was this? How did these spectacular gardens grow in Kensington?

Other Historical Resources

As I did the early research for this oral history I thought Anita Blake herself a perfect subject for a biography. She wrote often to her husband Anson, sometimes daily, both before and after their marriage, and he kept those letters. I have appended several of the letters to give a flavor of the woman that the interviews don't give. I have also appended a few letters written to Mrs. Blake by relocated Japanese friends, and excerpts from her diary of December 7 to December 29, 1941, to show her compassion for the Japanese families interned in World War II.

We are without equivalent affective material from Anson Blake, but his character is evident from the content of his wife's letters and from the apparent pleasure he took in business and

his concern for history. He joined and was a director of historical societies and wrote extensively and studiously about early San Francisco, Berkeley, and California history, and from 1903 to 1952 was chairman of the board of Stiles Hall. As for Miss Mabel Symmes, Walter Vodden's interview is most descriptive. Some of Miss Symmes' papers and correspondence are in the library at Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, and in the University of California Herbarium, Berkeley.

It would be interesting to know more of President Robert Gordon Sproul's part in the gift of the Blake Estate to the University and of his friendship with Anson and Anita Blake. Miss Agnes Robb, secretary to the late president, wished to record that history but ultimately was not able to. In the Appendices are President Sproul's 1957 memos of conversations relating to the Blake property--memos which attest to Miss Robb's conscientious approach to presidential record-keeping. Future researchers may be able to find in the Sproul papers more information on the friendship between the two families. Both men served on the board of Stiles Hall.

We were dissuaded from interviewing Ruth Kingman and Dyke Brown by their own testimony that although they were acquainted with Mr. Blake in the 1930s, or "had seen him at meetings [at Stiles Hall]," they could add no more. John Landon, a Stiles Hall board member in the 1950s and attorney in the office of the General Counsel of the Regents at the time of the official transfer of Blake House to the University, refers the researcher to the Regents and the General Counsel's records on Blake House.

The Appendices to this oral history are extensive. They are included both to serve as indicator-guides to other resources and to enrich some of the stories related in the interview. An important byproduct of this oral history is the creation of a kind of bibliography of the Blakes, supplementing Igor Blake's compilation of twenty years ago which was invaluable in writing this Interview History. I am once again in debt to James R. K. Kantor who took time to read the interviews and make the kind of corrections to the text that only a very alert University archivist and social historian can make.

This Blake Estate Oral History will be as much a beginning as a conclusion if it puts chroniclers of architectural history, landscape design, and local and University of California history on the track of new resources. They will join me in thanking President and Mrs. Gardner for initiating this work.

Berkeley
February 1988

Suzanne B. Riess

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. George Blake Thacher
2. Anson Stiles Thacher
3. Helen Sherman Thacher
4. Harriet Janet Thacher
5. Harriet Whitney Carson Blake
6. Eliza Blake Thacher
7. Sherman Day Thacher
8. Robert Pierpont Blake
9. Harriet Waters Stiles Blake

10. Caristry
11. Elizabeth Thacher
12. Sherman Day Thacher, Jr.
13. Pedro
14. Nadezhda Nicholaevna Kryzhanovskaya Blake
15. Anita Day Symmes Blake
16. Anson Stiles Blake
17. Tarkov
18. Edwin Tyler Blake

A 1920 Portrait: The Blake Family on Piedmont Avenue, Berkeley

Greetings, from Aunt Anita and Uncle Anson
Above left, 1938; above right, 1936; below right, 1934.

Below:

"Love and Christmas Greetings to
 George and Helena from Uncle
 Edwin and Aunt Harriet"

Anson Stiles Blake receives LL.D. from President Clark Kerr while President Emeritus Robert Gordon Sproul adjusts the hood. (President W. E. Sterling of Stanford in background.) September 29, 1958.

Italian table and chairs dated 1610 that belonged to the Blakes, now sits in living room looking out on reflecting pond [east]

[living room view to the west]

Mrs. Hitch shares this study with her husband; his larger desk sits across from her French provincial work table

The "Taft bed," used by President Taft in the White House, was a Blake Treasure

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Igor Blake

A NEPHEW'S RECOLLECTIONS, 1945-1962

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1986

IGOR ROBERT BLAKE

1982

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

When the Blake House Oral History Project was proposed to the Regional Oral History Office, among the first prospective interviewees was Igor Robert Blake, nephew of Anson and Anita Blake. Back in 1945, seventeen-year-old Igor visited the Anson Blakes and the Edwin Blakes, coming out West from Cambridge, Massachusetts where he was born and brought up. Igor Blake is the son of Robert Pierpont Blake and Nadejda Nicholaevna Kryzhanovskaya Blake. His father, Robert Pierpont Blake, was the youngest of the four children of Charles Thompson Blake and Harriet Stiles Blake.

Igor Blake's recollections of the 1945 visit give us a glimpse at the two Blake households in Kensington, Anson's and Edwin's, and how they functioned to serve both the senior Mrs. Blake and—at least this was the plan—Mrs. Symmes, Anita Blake's mother. Mrs. Blake's sister Mabel and her mother were to be part of the Anson Blake establishment. Mabel was so, from 1923 to her death. Mrs. Symmes passed on before she would have moved in. Mrs. Charles Thompson Blake, the mother-in-law, lived in a suite in the Edwin Blakes' house, just northeast of the Anson Blakes, until she died in 1928.

The Blake House Oral History Project attempts to tell the most complete possible story of a house, its concept, planning and furnishing, antecedents, occupants, and surrounds, environmental and cultural. To this end, Igor Blake was able to answer questions about the everyday life of his aunt and uncle. His personal knowledge was enriched with a wealth of Blake history which he had assembled twenty years earlier at the request of President and Mrs. Charles Hitch, first occupants of the renovated house. [Appended to the oral history are several sections of Igor Blake's "Notes on the Blakes in England and America."] Like President and Mrs. David Gardner, the Hitches admired the house which became their residence in 1968, respected its history, and wished to know more about the original occupants.

Mr. Igor Blake is a careful historian and interviewee and provided me an opportunity to meet a "real" Blake, which set the stage for my other interviews about the family. We met for a first interview in the conference room of The Bancroft Library, appropriate enough as its walls are hung with 19th century lithographs reminiscent of the Westward Ho spirit that brought the Blakes to California. The second meeting was in the Regional Oral History Office, an impromptu taping of the answers to some supplementary questions.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

September 23, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Igor Robert Blake

Date of birth 8-19-1928 Place of birth Boston, Massachusetts

Father's full name Robert Pierpont Blake

Birthplace San Francisco

Occupation Professor of History Harvard University ^{Director} ~~President~~

Mother's ^{maiden} full name Nadejda Nicholayevna Kryzhanovsk

Birthplace Caucasus, Russia

Occupation _____

Where did you grow up? Cambridge, Massachusetts +

Present community Newport, New Hampshire
La Fayette, Ca.

Education BA Bowdoin MBA Stanford

Occupation(s) Director - Blake Brothers Company.
University Administrator +
Investments

Special interests or activities Farming gardening
Travel arts theatre History
Investments, Community Service

IGOR ROBERT BLAKE

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Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720
(415) 486 6671

Education: 1951 B.A. Bowdoin College
1953 M.B.A. Stanford University
Graduate School of Business

Experience: August 1986-present: ~~Chairman~~ Division Administrator Biology and Medicine Division.
Chair LBL Parking Committee and member of the panel of Laboratory Hearing Officers.

1982-August 1986: Staff Position Plant Engineering. Worked on space administration, LBL long range facility plans, institutional plans and site development plans.

1977-1982: Department Head, Business and Auxiliary Services, LBL. Responsible for Business Services including Audit Coordination, Insurance Risk Management, Cafeteria, Work for Others, and Property Management, Protective Services, and Administrative Data Processing.

1963-1977: Division Administrator, Biology Medicine Division. Responsible for budget preparation and monitoring. Introduced the use of a computer-based budget planning and monitoring system. Responsible for safety, facilities planning and operating which included hospital units, patient treatment facilities at the accelerators, research animal colony, and electronic and mechanical shops. Served as Chair of the Administrative Services Salary Committee of LBL, on the Emergency Preparedness Committee and on the Administrative Advisory Committee.

1956-1963: Officer and Director Blake Brothers Company, Richmond, California, manufacturer of crushed rock, asphaltic concrete, and ready-mix concrete, and general contractors. Coordinated reorganization plan under which Standard Oil Company of California acquired the assets of Blake Brothers Company. Experience in real estate management and estate planning.

1953-1955: U.S. Army, procurement.

Community Activities: President and Chairman of the Board of Directors Stiles Hall, University YMCA, 1971-1974; Trustee and member of the Admissions and Allocation Committee, United Way of the Bay Area and Chairman of the Membership Committee. (The Membership Committee was responsible for the selection of new agencies.)

Member of the Executive Board, Mt. Diablo Council, Boy Scouts of America, 1962-1972, and holder of the Silver Beaver Award.

Director, Richmond Chamber of Commerce, 1962-1963; Member of the Contra Costa County Highway Advisory Committee; Vice President for Contra Costa County, The Society of California Pioneers.

A Visit to the Blakes in California, 1945

[Date of Interview: November 19, 1986]

Riess: How is it that you decided to compile your book on the family history?*

Blake: When President and Mrs. Hitch were planning to move into Blake House, they expressed an interest in a Blake family history, and wondered if I would write down what I knew of the family and its houses.

Riess: Of course your family is historically minded, isn't it? Anson Blake himself was--

Blake: He was very active in the California Historical Society and in the Society of California Pioneers--serving at one time as president of each. One of his contributions to both of them was helping each survive during the Depression. He was on the board of both organizations. In the thirties when they were both short of money, he negotiated a lease so that the two organizations could share a building and thus save money. They carefully inventoried all of their property; they had one small joint office in the center with a single light, and a part-time secretary. I visited it in 1945. They led me in very carefully, saying, "Please don't bump things." There were boxes, things tied up with tags on them, pictures wrapped up and just stacked, books stacked--it was just storage space.

They were able to continue business by this frugality. My uncle said that after the war he looked forward to turning over these duties to others, but this was one of his wartime efforts to help them out. It did work, and he lived to see them both moved into new quarters, where they are now: one on Jackson St. and one

*"Notes on the Blakes in England and America," Igor Robert Blake, 1971. Appendix A.

Blake: on McAllister St. My wife and I had the pleasure of taking him to the opening reception of the California Historical Society on Jackson St.

Riess: You said that you visited those quarters in 1945?

Blake: Yes.

Riess: So you were only seventeen?

Blake: Right.

Riess: Tell me about that visit.

Blake: My father arranged for me to come out to California in 1945. I think the thought was stimulated by the death of his sister, Eliza Blake Thacher, the year before, and by the concern that I had not met my two uncles or seen any of California. That prompted a six week's trip by myself across the country, starting in southern California, meeting old family friends and relatives, and then up to the Bay Area. I think there were forty letters of introduction with which I was to dutifully trot around and call on people.

Riess: What fun--but that takes a lot of doing.

Blake: Right, it was fun as a young person to make the trip across the country by myself and meet all the people. I stayed for the first week with Edwin Blake, and then the second week or ten days with the Anson Blakes.

The Brothers and Their Households

Riess: I want to hear about both. That means you stayed in what is the presentday Carmelite monastery.

Blake: Yes. The monastery house, Edwin Blake's house, had been built at the same era as Anson's, circa 1922. It had a wing on it for my grandmother, Mrs. Charles Thompson Blake. She was in her eighties at the time the University took over the three family houses on Piedmont Avenue, where the stadium now is, and she didn't wish to build a house for herself. I stayed in her suite of rooms, which consisted of a living room, a small kitchenette, bathroom, dressing room, and an entry hall. It had a pair of double doors which opened up onto the Edwin Blakes' hallway, so she could have free access into that house, but if she wasn't feeling well, or if they were having a large party in which she didn't wish to participate, she could close the door and have her own privacy. There was a separate entrance through that part of the garden for her. I remember enjoying that suite.

Blake: That suite basically is the outside chapel now, and the quarters for the custodian, the lay contact who sees the outside world, does the marketing, meets people, goes out of the monastery, etc. The Carmelite sisters do not see people, except on very special occasions, like accepting a new member into the organization. Their nun contact with the custodian was called the pontis—Latin for doorkeeper.

Riess: When you were in the house were your Uncle Edwin and his wife still alive?

Blake: No, his wife died in 1937. There were two widowed sisters who lived in the house and continued living in the house until his death.

Riess: Family members?

Blake: The Edwin Blakes had no children.

Riess: Who were the widowed sisters?

Blake: They were his sisters-in-law, not members of the Blake family: Mrs. Eleanor Batt and Mrs. Derby. Mrs. Derby was away, I did not meet her, but I did meet Eleanor Batt.

Riess: Were they friends of Anita's, then?

Blake: No, there was no contact. They never went to each other's houses.

Riess: Really?

Blake: No--they never did.

Riess: Even earlier?

Blake: I'm not sure what happened before Aunt Harriet--Harriet Whitney Carson Blake--died. After that they never communicated.

Riess: That's too bad.

Blake: Anita never went up there.

Riess: Is that more like it? Is that the feeling that you got?

Blake: Anita had a very strict moral point of view, and she didn't consider it appropriate for them to be living in the house even though there were two of them.

Riess: Luckily your father thought it would be all right for you. Were you aware at the time of the situation?

Blake: I had been briefed of where there had been problems and what one had to watch out for, both here and in a couple of other cases, to sort of be on my guard with X and Y.

Riess: Had any fences been erected between the properties?

Blake: No, the gardens had been planned together so that you could walk between them. Anson Blake came up to greet me the day I arrived, and then Mabel Symmes came up to take me down to meet Aunt Anita the following day.

Riess: It sounds like Anita was running things. But really the relationship was between Edwin and Anson. They were brothers.

Blake: They saw one another daily at the office they shared at Blake Brothers Company. I think they drove separately, but they did share an office and work together. Edwin was the engineer who laid out the plant in Richmond in 1906 and developed the design for the hopper barge which was self-unloading and which took the products to San Francisco and elsewhere. That was his side of the quarry business, the engineering side. He had worked previously in the gold mines—I don't remember which ones. Then, when they were starting to build the new plant in Richmond in 1906—which they planned before the fire, construction was underway, and it was completed after the fire—he recruited a group of Cousin Jacks, which were the Welsh miners from the gold rush [days].

Riess: This term I don't know—"Cousin Jacks?"

Blake: "Cousin Jacks" is the term for the Welsh miners who came over to work in the gold mines in California. When that business was tapering off, he recruited them to come and build and run the quarry plant.

Riess: When you were at the house, how were you entertained the first week?

Blake: I don't recall anyone being invited to dinner. I remember going to the quarry and seeing that.

Riess: Did you have a bicycle?

Blake: No, I did not have a bicycle. I hadn't yet got a driver's license as it was still wartime, so I had to be driven—I had my seventeenth birthday on the way across the country. I remember some of the activities that Anson Blake organized. There was a day of going down to Stanford. I was told how you got the train and I went down to Stanford and delivered one of the letters. I met a professor of history at Stanford, Thomas Bailey, I believe it was, and saw the university.

Riess: Was there the #7 bus down the Arlington?

Blake: Yes, there was the #7 bus, and I would take that, or they would drop me off on the way to the quarry and I would take the bus back.

When I spent the week with Anson Blake, he sort of picked up on what I had or had not done with the letters, and who I had seen or not seen and got that organized. He took me to call on a group of older Blake family friends who had known my grandmother and my father--I honestly don't remember their names at this time. I could look them up, because some of them would have been in the letters of introduction, but I don't have them readily available.

Riess: Did he take you to clubs in San Francisco or that sort of thing?

Blake: I saw the Pacific Union Club, etc., through meeting some of my father's friends when the letters of introduction were delivered. I went on the Key Route System on two or three trips to San Francisco, and then Mabel Symmes took me for a tour, and Uncle Anson took me to the de Young Museum, I recall. I went to Kent Woodlands with both Anson and Anita Blake to meet Mrs. William Sherman Kent, who was a Thacher cousin. She was the sister, I believe, of Sherman Day Thacher, the husband of my aunt, Eliza Seeley Blake Thacher.

Anita Blake in Chinatown

Riess: Did Mabel take you to see botanic splendors?

Blake: Yes.

Riess: Did Anita?

Blake: No, Anita took me shopping, to Chinatown, because I wanted to get my mother a present. She was correct in recalling that my mother did not care for lacquer, even so, I did get my mother a set of lacquered demitasse cups, which Aunt Anita helped me find through her contacts in Chinatown.

Riess: How was she with the Chinese merchants? Was she very familiar?

Blake: She was indeed, because she had collected extensively and they recognized this.

Riess: Did she go to just one shop usually?

Blake: No, I think she went to a selection of shops, several different ones.

Riess: Would she be taken into a back room and given a lot of courtesies?

Blake: A great deal of attention was paid. She didn't make any major purchases at that time, but she bought a few pieces of that nature for wedding gifts. Aunt Anita said she didn't mind having an extra gift on hand once she'd made the effort of getting over.

Riess: I knew she gave a great collection to the University, and that she had an interest, from early days, in oriental art. Was she quite knowledgeable? Did she know periods well?

Blake: Oh, yes, she knew her periods well. She was Phi Beta Kappa, she'd read extensively—she was certainly very knowledgeable. History, literature, painting—the objects themselves. I think she was extremely well-read, she consulted a lot with the faculty in this field and they entertained a lot of them, so I think she was well-informed.

Club and Social Life

Riess: Did she ever tell you anything about the Fortnightly Club?

Blake: No, she did not.

Anson Blake belonged to something, and I'll have to think if it was like Town and Gown—I can't remember what it was called. Professor Curt Stern, on the campus here, belonged to it. Uncle Anson said it began to peter out, as they didn't move fast enough to take the younger people in. They'd taken in Professor Stern, who, when I met him, was over seventy, and then the older people got to the point where driving in the evening was difficult. It was a half UC group, half town group. It faded out of existence sometime between '45 and '50.

Blake Brothers Company moved its offices from the Balboa Building in San Francisco to the site of the quarry in Richmond in 1939-1940. Prior to 1939-1940, both Anson and Edwin commuted to the city for their business. So it would have been logical that they had many contacts in the city, but I don't happen to know of any.

But you asked about my stay in 1945. The Anson Blakes took me to—I think it was that time--the Claremont Country Club for a Sunday dinner.

There was a club in San Francisco that Anita belonged to--my wife may remember it, they went to lunch there. The older people knew her, and although she had great difficulty with her sight, once she knew who they were, there was recognition. I remember my wife Liz saying they went to lunch at one of those clubs. She knew the really older members.

Blake: There were references, I know, to dinner parties. I think those were in the earlier days. Later, she seldom went out. I recall going out with Uncle Anson and Aunt Anita to old family friends in San Francisco, Esther Landsdate (Mrs. Philip). They had grown up on Rincon Hill together, and then moved to Broadway when that area developed in the 1890s. They were Anson's contemporaries. My cousin Romola Bigelow Wood (Mrs. Samuel A. Wood) had us on Presidio Avenue, Uncle Anson and I. Aunt Anita didn't feel up to going and sent her regrets.

They did come out to our house; they were interested to see the family things, the portraits, etc., that we had installed, and they were curious to see the garden.

Riess: That was something they regularly did?

Blake: Not regularly. They would occasionally come here from time to time. They usually dined at home. I think if they didn't—if the maid were off, or something like that--then maybe they would go out.

Riess: How about music in the Blake House? Did they have a piano?

Blake: They had a piano, but I don't believe anyone played it. Aunt Anita at times referred to having a musical evening and having a string quartet to play. They subscribed obviously to a record club in the twenties, because there were those classical selections from the twenties and the thirties. I don't know if it stopped during the Depression, or if they lost interest, but it was a definite period, and then it stopped—to judge from what was left in the house.

Riess: What happened to those records?

Blake: My wife and I took some of them, and I think they're back on the farm in New Hampshire. I must admit we didn't play them, but we thought we might do something with them, and we were short of space so we sent them back to New Hampshire.

Riess: I just want to get a sense of the pulse of life in the house.

Blake: They entertained a few times when I was out. They had a couple of large teas, one hundred and fifty people, and did large entertaining and got it catered, and sort of did their thing. Occasionally an old family friend or some cousins would come to visit. I met a series of cousins: Naomi Howard—she was a Taft cousin; Charlie Taft was another; the Weersma cousins. Karel Weersma was Dutch, and he married Adelaide Blake, Kingsley Blake's sister, who is a cousin.

Mabel Symmes' Position in the Household

Riess: And then there were all those Symmeses.

Blake: Aunt Anita's maiden name was Anita Day Symmes. Mabel Symmes lived with them. As I told you, the Edwin Blakes' house was built with a wing for Grandmother Blake. The Anson Blakes' house was built with two large rooms: one was for Mrs. Symmes, Aunt Anita's mother; and the other was for Mabel Symmes. Mabel Symmes lived in the house and made a monetary contribution of X dollars a month towards the household expenses, and then gave gifts in addition to that. I remember she gave a fence when part of the Edwin Blakes' house was subdivided and the land sold. They were concerned that the children who moved in were coming into the garden so they fenced the northern line of the property, and that was a gift from Mabel Symmes.

Riess: Was her income from inheritance?

Blake: Yes. She did well in her inheritance, she invested in stocks, something which Anita basically did not--she kept the ones she had inherited, but did not invest further. Mabel Symmes' estate was well over half a million dollars, and it was basically stocks. She managed all that herself, was very efficient on those matters, and never said anything. She did, as you're probably aware, take a second degree or additional courses at the University of California when the Landscape Architecture Department was established in the twenties.

I recall once when Mabel Symmes referred to Dean Wurster as her classmate. Liz, my wife, sort of went through mental calculations, looking at Aunt Mabel, and having had Dean Wurster in college and worked with him professionally as an interior designer, wondered about this, when Aunt Anita chirped in, "Elizabeth, Mabel did not explain that she had gone back to the University in 1922 when the Landscape Architecture Department was established and taken courses, and that's the time when she was associated with Dean Wurster." Mabel had graduated in 1896 from the University and then went back to take additional courses in landscape architecture at a much later date. She did practice landscape architecture and did various houses, such as the Olney's house on Claremont Boulevard. She did landscape design professionally as well as doing landscape design for the Blake House.

Distribution of Symmes Inheritance

Riess: What happened at Mabel Symmes' death? Who was in her will?

Blake: Her nieces and nephews. Whitman Symmes was one nephew, then there was Day Symmes, known as Bud, and Carol Symmes Kuechler. They were in her will, as well as a grandniece and grandnephew who were Carol Kuechler's children: Larry and Anne.

Riess: I looked at the will, but I thought it was Anita's and Anson's, so I was mystified why it was all going to these people. It must have been Mabel's that I was looking at.

Blake: There were basically the same provisions in Anita's will. I never read Mabel's will, I've had nothing to do with it, but I read Anita's will because I was involved in helping them to settle the estate. Both drew up their wills at the same time and basically had the same heirs.*

Riess: So the money didn't go in the Blake direction at all.

Blake: No. Anson Blake had made some provision for the members of the Blake family. Anita Blake told me she was leaving her portion of Uncle Anson's estate to her side of the family, as she had little else to leave them. The house they had given to the University; she had a small amount of stocks; she had ploughed some of the money in to pay off the mortgage on the house during the Depression, and had used other of it to buy the art objects.

I don't think Mabel bought anything. She had the contents of her room, and she used to have a car. I think Anita contributed half the expenses of the car. She gave up the car sometime after my first trip here, and it did not exist when I came back in 1956. (I did come to California in 1950 and Mabel still had the car.)

*For a further note on the will, see Appendices. Appendix W.

Anita Blake

Anita Blake's Economies

Riess: Were they on hard times, would you say, in genteel poverty up there?

Blake: The Depression was rough. The thirties were extremely rough. We did pull through, and in the fifties things went extremely well. Real estate was paying very well--my father had a third interest in the real estate--

Riess: You mean the other acreage in Kensington?

Blake: No, other commercial real estate. My father had acreage in Kensington, but he and Aunt Eliza sold theirs after the war for subdivisions--they never built. Each child was given ten to fifteen acres. (The thing was divided into four pieces, and it was something like sixty acres.) Anson and Edwin sold a few lots off their pieces.

Riess: But when you're referring to real estate--

Blake: I was referring to commercial real estate in Oakland and elsewhere.

The quarry, Blake Brothers Company, did not pay dividends from the late twenties through to the fifties. I think they paid two preferred dividends before my father died in 1950. The quarry did very well in the fifties, so there were funds then. They had given the house to the University. Once when Anita bought a second-hand washing machine and I said, "Why not a new one?" she said, "Well, they said it would last three or four years, Igor, and I don't think I'll be around after that."

There was a request from Anson Blake to my wife to take Anita shopping because her clothes were getting threadbare. He specified some money and they had a very successful trip. They ploughed through the San Francisco stores all day long, and maybe went to lunch, and she got herself eight or ten dresses, some of them made to order. But she did need help, and she did need to be encouraged.

Riess: When would this have been?

Blake: This was after we were married, '57 or '58, because I remember Uncle Anson asked my wife if she would assist and encourage. "I'm aware that prices have gone up," he said, "I do read the paper." (Anita thought it was terribly expensive.) "But our income has increased, and inflation is here, and we just have to pay these prices. Please tell Elizabeth"--as he called her--"not to worry about the cost of the thing, this is just something we have to do, and Anita needs a little encouragement."

Riess: They went to San Francisco to do this?

Blake: Yes. She had a dressmaker--it may have been someone Aunt Anita knew, or it may have been the one my wife had at that time who had made her wedding dress and who also catered to older people and made things in the style they liked and were comfortable with.

Riess: We were talking about social life, large tea parties and cousins, and got derailed a bit there. Were there other family events? If they went out at Thanksgiving, then I take it they didn't do a gathering of people at Thanksgiving. And yet there were you and Elizabeth.

Blake: Right. What did we do? There was certainly no large gathering at Thanksgiving. I think the first year we were married we had Thanksgiving, but the only other time I had Thanksgiving with them was the two years I was at Stanford from 1952 to 1953. Aunt Anita was very fond of the maid of honor at our wedding, Verna Hink (now Mrs. Robert John Stewart of Atherton), also a Phi Beta Kappa, and she entertained her together with a group of her Berkeley literary group friends at a tea. At one of those occasions there may have been some cousins--I can't absolutely remember if someone else was there or not.

Anita Blake's Attitude Toward Religion and Suffrage

Riess: Then on Christmas was there a big, beautiful Christmas tree in the house?

Blake: No, there was no Christmas tree because I never saw a Christmas tree, and I was also curious if there were any Christmas ornaments. We'd had some from my wife's side of the family which were fun to have, old ornaments, but when we were given permission to rummage through the house, there were none.

Riess: Interesting woman.

Blake: She was not interested in religion. When she went into the hospital she had let her Blue Cross insurance go because she didn't like to part with the dollars for insurance. So she had to pay for one of the trips to the hospital herself, and I talked Blue Cross into taking her back in at eighty-something. She said that when they asked her her religion, she said she was a Buddhist. She had actually been brought up as a Unitarian and resented the fact that when she was at Berkeley the YWCA wouldn't let her join because she was a Unitarian--they didn't consider that acceptable. She could attend meetings but not join. I don't think she actually converted, she had no religion, she had a sort of philosophy rather than a religion, and therefore the religious holidays didn't have any meaning for her.

Riess: Can you think of any little sayings that you associate with her? Any attitudes about spiritual issues, about one's stay on earth, that were part of her philosophy and were obvious and clear and accounted for some of her other attitudes? For instance, I gathered from something I read that she was not for women's suffrage, which surprises me, for someone as strongminded as she was.

Blake: Yes, I knew that. Anson Blake was chairman of the local committee in opposition to women's suffrage. I discovered that when I went through his correspondence. He kept all of it, and I ploughed through that. There was a whole collection of advertisements from some committee in New York. None of the texts were there. They talked about "our cause"--this was 1919--and finally there was a letter from Charles Lee Tilden, who was a classmate from the class of 1891: "Dear Anson, I enclose a check to your order and fifty dollars gold to support our cause in opposition to the women's suffrage." That was all pinned together, and then he had taken this few hundred dollars and placed ads in the Chronicle and some other newspaper. There was a sheet of how large an ad in which papers, the Examiner, the Chronicle, the Tribune, or whatever they were. He divided it up and reported to New York that that, he thought, was the best coverage for the Bay Area.

She always asked for advice on elections. It wasn't quite down to the dogcatcher, but you had to sort of inquire, and you also had to say whom you inquired of. So I inquired of Henry Steinbeck in the office, and Henry Steinbeck personally did not know X, but he inquired of Y, and we would call Aunt Anita, but Y was somebody who knew Uncle Anson, and so we'd go through the ballot very carefully to be sure that she was adequately informed. Very definite opinions on, for example, no flourides in the water--great opposition to that. She debated sending money, but I don't think the check and pen came together.

Guiding the Family Finances

Blake: I used to look at the checks for the income tax purposes. There was no balance in the checkbook and I couldn't make heads or tails out of the checkbook stubs. I needed things for deductions, so I used to get the checks and the statements and rifle through it to get what I wanted for income tax purposes, and have one of the employees at one of the banks look up all the dividends, because in that era you had no advice of dividends. She kept no records, so I figured out what the income was in the year before, and therefore the number of shares. Then I gave the banker the list and said, "Please calculate it." He'd groan and say, "This is not our service," and I'd smile and say, "I know, but Blake Brothers Co. has a very nice account with you, and we just would appreciate it." And he gave it to someone and it was done.

Later I was able to verify that when she decided to give me the key to her safe deposit box. I went down and I counted all the stuff in there. Everything was in its original envelope, and I got them all together. I'm sorry I didn't save the stamps; she took the envelopes home and I didn't wish to ask her. I got all the certificates together so that I could get the things organized and made a list so that I could tell if I had been accurate in the tax calculation.

Riess: She would seem more likely to be for suffrage than to be against. You're saying that once she decided to vote, she wanted to be a fully participating voter.

Blake: Yes, but she wanted advice very definitely. She always got advice. I guess Uncle Anson gave her advice on what to vote, and then she wanted advice from me after Uncle Anson died, so it was one of my tasks.

One of the rituals was tea every afternoon. In my quarry days I used to stop on my way home and see her once a week or so. I would stop in time to have tea, and then I conducted what business there might be. Usually one topic an afternoon.

Riess: These are the years after he died?

Blake: After he died in '59, and she lived to '62. It was then that I would stop by.

Riess: What do you mean, one topic an afternoon?

Blake: If it was a business matter you brought up something about the estate and you went through that, and there had to be a check written or a letter composed. Then she said, "Fine, now we'll have tea and talk about something else." So you basically did one thing

Blake: at a time. If the banker who was trustee wanted something—the letter would be sent to her, but with a copy to me with the check—I would take the checks, she would endorse them and I would deposit them, and we would get the answer to whatever question there was.

Riess: You were quite a young man to be doing all of this, were you not? You were about thirty?

Blake: Yes. My father died when I was twenty-one, so I had to pick up for my mother, our side of the estate, and that was one of the reasons that I knew something about the real estate, because I had a share of it as trustee, and I required all the lawyers to send me copies of everything. I also had received my MBA from Stanford in '53. I remember joining my uncle, slightly to his surprise, when there was going to be a meeting on the real estate. I said I would like to attend, I wanted to know what was going on—which was fortunate, because the poor gentleman in the bank got himself arrested for fraud and left. It was fortunate that I knew what the situation was because shortly after that my uncle died. My father's estate had about 26 percent interest in Blake Brothers Company, and I ended up with about 33 percent of the Blake Brothers Company

Riess: You must have been someone she trusted completely.

Blake: She made a great distinction between heirs and non-heirs. She told me I was not an heir, and therefore when she had her terminal illness and the nurse asked her who did she look to, I was the one to oversee her medical care. Her nephew, who was a year or two younger than I, was an heir, and that would have been a conflict of interest. So I oversaw the last three or four weeks of her illness, and in those days it was daily trips in the morning on the way in, and again usually on my way home. The quarry was on the way from Lafayette; to go via Kensington wasn't that far out of my way.

The Blake Estate

Tending the Gardens

Riess: Other topics she might take up--would they be matters of the garden?

Blake: She talked a lot about the garden. I did meet Professor [Leland] Vaughan and Mai Arbegast which was helpful. Professor Vaughan had given me his card, and he said if there are any questions on the house, please let him know [at the University]. He was extremely helpful. There were some things to be repaired; plumbing, etc., were getting in an ill state of repair, and he said, "Just have the work done and have the bill sent to me." I remember calling him up and saying that it was six or seven hundred dollars. He said, "There's nothing to do but have it done. I know it's a patch job, but you have to have hot water." I said I was sorry, I knew they were chronic problems.

Riess: The landscape architecture department used the gardens?

Blake: Yes, and Aunt Anita was surprised at the compartmentalization of the University budgets, which in retrospect I understand. [laughs] They had money for equipment but not money to hire students to water. She was upset with Walter Vodden's idea to put in a sprinkler system because she preferred handwatering, because with handwatering you'd not water particular blossoms and remember that the whatchmacallits liked a lot of water, and you didn't water those until they'd finished blossoming, etc. The sprinkler system was more of an institutional approach, not the hands-on technique. The Blakes used to water themselves on the weekend—they would pull hoses and water—that was their weekend activity.

Riess: Anson and Anita.

Blake: Yes. They both would be out in the garden, and he would help with the watering, moving the hoses, and discussing what should be done and how things were coming. She missed Mabel because she was the

Blake: person with whom she discussed the garden. I've forgotten whether Mabel died before or after Anson--*

Riess: After.

Blake: Yes. Then it was in between, I guess. So that left her alone in the house, and they had shared the garden and discussed it all those years.

Riess: Was Mai Arbegast someone who was invited into the house?

Blake: I think she joined them for tea. I think Professor Vaughan was in the house, and I think he was there for tea, yes, because I believe I met them in the house. I sort of had in mind that I was wanting to meet them, thinking it would be important--not quite knowing what was coming along. I had heard from Walter about them, and I waited for the opportunity to meet them, and it finally did come around.

Riess: How about other young people in her life over the years?

Blake: She didn't refer to any. There was some correspondence with someone she had met. There was some reference occasionally to hearing from X or Y, but it may have been, say, that X is now in India or someplace, and there was something in the paper about them. It was in some general discussion like that.

Riess: Of course she had lots of written contact with horticulturists all around the world.

Blake: Yes. And a lot of people would come and see the garden. There were garden club tours. When they were younger she was very proud to have the tours. Other than a couple of garden parties my wife attended, I don't remember participating in any of the garden club openings, etc. I think those had been more an activity of the twenties and thirties.

Riess: Did she have a horse up there too?

Blake: I'm not sure if she had a horse there or if the horse was on Piedmont Avenue. She definitely had a horse on Piedmont Avenue. I'm not sure if there was a stable up there—I never saw the stable--whether it had been converted into a part of the garden. There were borzoi dogs there when I arrived in 1945. In that album of photographs there was a picture of them.

Riess: And lots of cats, apparently.

*Anita Blake d. April 25, 1962; Anson Blake d. August 17, 1959; Mabel Symmes d. February 1, 1962.
Appendix X.

Blake: There were a lot of cats. My mother described the cats as being kept in cages--Persians, etc.--but they didn't come in the house regularly. They were occasionally brought in and then taken out. This was my mother's description, and this goes back to the twenties.

Robert Pierpont Blake

Riess: Did your mother and father visit out there much themselves?

Blake: They visited in the twenties, when Grandmother Blake was alive. They came out about three times--I don't remember the exact years. My father then came out alone in 1934 to get the LLD degree from Berkeley, and then alone in 1948, when he came out and was drawing up his will. He wanted to see Anson, and I guess Edwin was still alive at the time. As well as draw up his will, he wanted to get an idea of the financial situation. My mother did not come out in the thirties and did not come out in 1948.

Nineteen forty-eight was a funny academic year at Harvard. During the war he had taught in the summer school, so he had the fall off in either '47 or '48 to make up for the time, so he decided to do the trip. He also went down to Fresno to scrounge up some money for Armenian studies. He taught, in part, Armenian history, and there was a journal; they wanted to get money out of the Armenian groups in Fresno to support Armenian history subjects, etc. So the other part of his trip was a little fund raising activity.

Riess: Did Aunt Anita like to talk about the past? Did you encourage her to tell stories, or was that kind of closed off?

Blake: No, she had her definite views on things and expressed them. She talked a lot to my wife about some of her thoughts. She was a great believer in books. She had read various children's books, and if a friend had a child or friends had grandchildren she would give them the appropriate book on how to raise and rear children; although I don't believe she gave us one, it was her standard procedure.

Riess: Her views were acquired through books.

Blake: Yes.

Riess: And maybe through her Unitarianism?

Blake: I'm not sure, I don't think there was ever a reference to going to church or anything.

Relations with the University of California

Riess: Do you know anything about her relations with University people? I know she was friendly with Ida Sproul.

Blake: Yes, they had an ongoing relationship. They had met Clark Kerr just before he was president, and I remember when they had a discussion about adding him to the famous tea list. I was present when they did discuss that, and yes, Uncle Anson thought that would be appropriate, he was up and coming and he was very nice, and he got added to the tea list. He made that rung, and about six months later he became the President of the University. [laughs] But at that time they were still very much a part of the Berkeley scene.

The Staff

Riess: You said that there was a housekeeper. What was the staff over the years--when you first met them, and then later?

Blake: They always had a cook, one person most of the time. I think on my first visit, during the war, there wasn't anyone. They were younger, although they were still old. It was either '45 or '50—I don't remember which--when there was no servant and had not been for several months. They hadn't found a suitable one.

There were usually several in the garden, I believe three at the time: Walter, Jim Anderson, and Churchill Womble.

Riess: I remember all three of those names from talking with Walter, and in fact he said that occasionally he was invited in to do something.

Blake: Right.

For some reason the University asked my uncle to hire Walter; they selected him, Uncle Anson hired him, and then in July of the year my uncle died—he died in August--Walter transferred to the University payroll. I remember because I'd straightened out the social security report for Walter and the other gardeners. My uncle had mentioned that he was doing that, so I'd seen that in the hospital and sort of got my hands on the pieces of paper, and then did the final report and gave them their W-2 statements and things like that. It was fortunate that the University then was prepared to take over that aspect of the thing. It had something to do with budgeting. They chose to do it that way for some particular reason.

Riess: I know he was told about the job by Vaughan.

Blake: But he went to work for my uncle for six or nine months. Perhaps they were working it into the state budget. There was some technical reason that I wasn't aware of. He was brought around as the person that they had selected, and I guess it was a courtesy to have an input from my aunt and uncle. I don't think they were given any other choice, but they were consulted.

Riess: Was there a vegetable garden? Do you remember eating anything from the estate?

Blake: There were gooseberries--I remember those because you couldn't buy those in the market--and there was watercress, but I don't believe there was a full vegetable garden with peas, carrots, potatoes, etc. There was some fruit, but again it wasn't the apples, it was the exotic.

Riess: Persimmons and pomegranates.

Blake: Something of that nature. But you didn't go out to look at the vegetable garden.

There was a wonderful story of the cats: There were ten or twelve mongrel cats, and Professor Vaughan brought up the fact once to my aunt that the University was most appreciative of the house and the art objects and all that, but they wondered what was going to happen to the cats. So my aunt consulted the county health officer, and she did agree to have all the cats trapped and they were all altered--that was awkward for her to discuss. The ones which the county health officer said were in quite bad shape--they certainly looked mangy--those didn't come back. So there were something like nine after that.

Then there was the matter of who paid for their maintenance. Aunt Anita had a trust in the bank in the city and I paid out of that for the maid and things, nurse, food, during the last weeks. Professor Vaughan paid for the garden staff. But I didn't want to ask Professor Vaughan to pay for the cats. I personally paid for the cats for a couple of weeks and Walter had also paid for them. Then I brought up the subject with the executor of the estate and I told Walter we'd pay to have the cats terminated out of the estate, or the University can assume the cats, but Walter shouldn't have to pay for them. Walter agreed to check with Professor Vaughan who decided that the University would take over the cats.

I don't know what's happened since then. That was one of the little bits of things we were tidying up and closing out and worked out with Walter.

Riess: That's really nice, a very loving, sentimental gesture.

Blake: But there would be some advantage to having cats who kept the mice down.

Riess: You dashed the sentiment. [laughs]

Blake: I guess Professor Vaughan wanted some rationale when he put it down, for when University auditors come around and they wanted to know what Professor Vaughan was doing. I presume they wanted a rationale so that they could authorize the expenditure. I can see that. I administer at the university.

The Carmelite Nuns as Neighbors

Riess: Did you have anything to do with the sale of the Edwin Blake house to the monastery? Did you know Noel Sullivan?

Blake: No. My uncle handled that as executor. I remember his writing to my father when my father was still alive--he died about the time the place was sold--but they were needing funds and to settle the estate. They couldn't find anyone to buy it, and it was not a gift to someone--as sometimes people have attributed--it was for sale, and Mr. Sullivan made the best offer and Anson worked out the dividing up of the place. Mr. Sullivan bought the house and about three acres, and the rest of the garden was subdivided and sold off. I did not know Mr. Sullivan.

Riess: Was there any problem for Anita having all of that religious activity up there?

Blake: No. They invited her up. They wanted to buy some trees, and she didn't want to sell any, and there was something in the correspondence in remarks to the effect that the church is eternal--implying that she was not.* [laughs] She did convey to them later that they were giving the place to the University. They did invite her, and she went up to witness one of the initiations into the monastery. She told them a lot about the garden, and they were terribly interested because she pointed out that the climate in the Holy Land is very similar to Berkeley, and therefore all the things mentioned in the Bible in theory could be grown in Berkeley. You know the Carmelites are a very sheltered group, no communication outside, and no contact, so that gave the nuns something to do for a project, they could get the seeds and the plants and the trees and everything, and they set about looking up in the Bible all the plants.

She knew from something she read that there were close to two thousand plants mentioned in the Bible. They were going to be sure they had one of each in the garden. She gave them the list of the plants mentioned in the Bible.

*See Appendices S, T.

Riess: Did they really follow through on that?

Blake: I don't know. She talked about it. I still get Christmas and Easter cards from the Carmelites. I got invited out once to talk to them, and I went out with Ralph Chaney because they got interested—I guess they go through studies—in Pierre Chardin, a Catholic theologian and paleontologist. They were reading his works. He was a great botanist, he was a friend of Ralph Chaney, and the question the nuns wanted to know of Dr. Chaney was if Tailhard de Chardin had seen both Anson and Edwin Blake's gardens--because he had been in Berkeley in the twenties. Ralph Chaney said he couldn't honestly remember if he had or hadn't--probably had because the gardens were in their prime.

But that was more of Ralph Chaney's visit than ours; we decided to go together. I suggested it to Ralph Chaney and he thought that would be a lot of fun, so he and Marguerite Chaney, and Liz and I went out. Our discussion was with the portis. I'm not sure if others were listening; they could have been, but they didn't speak. Ralph Chaney did ask the portis her name, and it was, I think, Madeleine O'Conner, and asked something about the class of the thirties. As it turned out she had taken one of Ralph Chaney's courses.

The Carmelites asked my uncle some advice and questions on things, and he pointed out that when they had virtually modified the house, they hadn't thought through the drainage system. It had originally been very carefully laid out because Edwin Blake was an engineer, and he had worked with an architect with the drainage system. Anson Blake had noticed that the Carmelites' modification of the drainage system was faulty and commented on it, but his advice was not taken. Then later when they complained about the drainage, he pointed out that they had not adequately provided for it, and said, "I think you'll have to do this and this and this."

The Architect, and Building the House

Riess: Speaking of the original, Gladys Wickson makes the mistake of saying that the Blake House was by Faville rather than Bliss, of Bliss and Faville.*

Blake: That's right. I'm quite sure it's Walter Bliss, because I'm quite sure Aunt Anita referred to him enough times. I guess Gladys Wickson made the mistake of getting the two principals mixed up.

*"In Memoriam," Cal. Hist. Soc. Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 2, p. 179.

Riess: Did Anita ever talk about the building of the house with you? Do you have any lore about that, how they chose Bliss and how they decided how to lay it out?

Blake: Something about the large living room, the books, some discussion about that. She worked very extensively with whoever was the plasterer or the artist who did the ceiling panels in the living room and in the dining room. There were references to planning the house and the rooms upstairs for her mother and Mabel Symmes. Some reference that it had been agreed that Grandmother Blake would go to the Edwin Blakes' because her mother was coming here. There was some discussion about that. She described moving the gardens, the planning, and how she had prepared and worked in getting ready to move the gardens when they were moving out.

Riess: From Piedmont Avenue.

Blake: Yes.

Riess: What a thought, moving a garden!

Blake: The lots on Piedmont Avenue were small, so there couldn't have been that much because they sold most of the land. I'm not sure if they used or had an arrangement to use some land behind the house on Piedmont Avenue. It was a point I couldn't make out. When I wrote the article I talked my way into the land office in University Hall in order to get the history straight. Anson Gale Stiles, grandfather of Anson, Robert, Edwin and Elizabeth, purchased seven acres from the Trustees of the College of California in 1868. The University later bought back from Mrs. Stiles most of the land except for three lots which she gave to her daughter, Mrs. Charles T. Blake, Anson and Edwin.

Other Bay Area Gardens

Riess: Did Anita know or make reference to Filoli and the Bourne family there, or any other great gardens?

Blake: My uncle once referred to the other major gardens in the East Bay and said that they were both going to the McDuffies' garden party. I wasn't invited. They were among the few people in Berkeley who also still had a garden.

They had some students who stayed at the house in the early days and helped in the garden, and there were some contacts with some of those because I believe there was a trip down to San Jose after I was out here. I came out in '56 and married in '57. They went to see someone's garden and have lunch, and that was a major

Blake: motor trip for them. Anson drove. The garden was small but absolutely meticulous and they had a good time. Aunt Anita was curious to go see the garden and lunch there. I suspect earlier they did more of that.

Riess: Of visiting other gardens.

Blake: That was when Mabel had the car, and she and Anita went more places with the car. Without the car she became more isolated. And then Mabel didn't drive, and then Anson's driving was limited to trips to the doctor, going to the quarry, and the shopping. He did get his license renewed until he was ninety-one. [laughs] Let's say there were many bent fenders. He never had them repaired, he just drove with the fenders bent.

Riess: Softened the edges.

Blake: Softened the edges. When they were torn he took them up to see if they would weld them at the quarry. They said, "No, you take it down to the body shop."

"No, you just weld it."

"But it'll show, it'll catch on someone's clothing or something"—it stuck out like that. [gesturing]

"No, you just take a hammer at the blacksmith's and pound it in."

"Do we paint it?"

"No, you don't paint it, you just weld it. That's all." That was the vehicle. [laughter]

Riess: When they had students living with them, what room would the students have had?

Blake: There were servants' quarters at the end of the house, and a separate stairway. They also had something, prior to that, on Piedmont Avenue, a spot for a student. I can't be sure if the students I recall were from Piedmont Avenue or the newer house, but they had a student room, and that may have been their early gardening help. You didn't need that much of a gardener on this small plot. You had the house and a small amount of garden, and maybe the student also did Grandmother Blake's garden—I don't know, that could have been.

Riess: Were Anita and Mabel involved in any way with the botanical gardens on campus, or the botanical gardens that are a part of Tilden?

Blake: I never heard anything about it, so I don't know.

Riess: Perhaps Mai Arbegast will know.

Blake: She may know, yes, I don't.

Mrs. Hitch told me the story about her inviting a group of people who knew the Blakes, and the price of the invitation to lunch was a good story--written out--about Anita or Anson Blake. She rattled off the names, and some of them rang a bell with us, but I never heard if she got the stories, or what happened.

Anson Blake and the Blake Brothers Company

Riess: Do you think Anita Blake had a happy life? [pause] I don't know why I ask that. I'm having a hard time--

Blake: I think she was content. I don't know if there was something missing, but that was something she wouldn't have shared. I mean, she carried on with her interests and yet I don't know if she had it to live over again what she would have wanted changed.

Riess: You referred to their stance against women's suffrage. Then I read that Anita did not support the openness of Stiles Hall, whereas Anson did. Did they get into discussions of this kind of thing in front of you? Stiles Hall was, after all, pretty much of a hot spot.

Blake: No, she felt that was his activity. She made a few comments afterwards, over tea, that she was sort of shocked and couldn't see how Anson could support it, etc. But I never heard anything between them. They seldom discussed or disagreed.

Riess: It sounds like Anson felt that he was close to those boys at Stiles Hall. That would make a difference, wouldn't it?

Blake: Right, he was chairman of the board, he was active in it. I'm not sure if he was the last few years--he'd served fifty years as chairman of the board--other than taking me there to show me the building. I got invited by Bill Davis to Anson's fiftieth year on the board. I was in Stanford when he stepped down. Bill Davis found out that I was here and invited me up for that occasion. I remember Dr. Sproul was there, and to my surprise he remembered my father, who had gotten an LL.D. degree while Sproul was president in 1934, which seemed to me to be a remarkable memory.

They [Robert Pierpont Blake and Robert Gordon Sproul] had corresponded a few years before that; he had asked him to represent the University of California at the founding of Brandeis University, and something else. The University of California wanted to be represented, but [Sproul] didn't want to fly across the country at

Blake: that time. He was too busy after the war when the University was expanding. But they wanted a distinguished representative, and asked to impose on him to do a couple of things. So there had been a couple of letters of correspondence. But I was amazed that he remembered.

Riess: A piece of history: At one point the name of the Blake Bros. Co. was Blake Brothers Company, Crushed Rock and Riprap, Asphaltic Mixes, Richmond. The first time I encountered the term "riprap" was through an Army Corps of Engineers project. I thought it was a corps term.

Blake: It is a corps term. It's heavy rock, as you see around that wharf in the lithograph [on wall of The Bancroft Library conference room]. They could be pieces so big [gestures] which were placed for levee work and around wharfs or jetties like that.

Riess: So it's not a term that was invented by a Blake?

Blake: No. Eli Whitney Blake, Anson's grandfather, invented the rock crusher, which was one of the reasons probably that Charles Thompson Blake, Anson's father, went into the quarry business. As well as selling the crushers, he used them, and in the 1870's down by the Claremont Country Club, now in Oakland, Charles Thompson Blake, California Pioneer, Yale class of 1847, founded with his classmate C.T.H. Palmer the Oakland Paving Company.

Riess: I haven't asked very many questions about Anson. I'm afraid that it's partly because he's not emerging as a colorful character. Maybe that's doing him a disservice.

Blake: I think it is. He was much more socially inclined than Edwin. Edwin was a little bit quieter, did his engineering, didn't communicate. Anson was active in Stiles Hall, the Historical Society, and the Pioneer Society. I saw the tail end of his activity in the Pioneer Society. He certainly had been involved with activities in San Francisco, and he kept up his contacts there. It must have been once a week or something that he went to San Francisco rather than to the quarry.

He was chairman of that centennial commission for the landmarks--during the centennial California had a commission to identify important historical sites, and Anson chaired that group. They selected the historical sites to bear bronze plaques such as Sutter's Fort, and other sites. Anson knew his California history, actively collected texts on California history, which went to the California Historical Society. He also received an LL.D. degree from Berkeley in 1958 in honor of his being "the grand old man of Stiles Hall, University YMCA."

Blake: He was active in banking. He was chairman of the National Recovery Act Code Committee for Rock, Sand and Gravel. He continued even when I was here to go to the Rock, Sand and Gravel Association annual meetings, etc. So he was the more out-going of the brothers, and kept in contact with members of the family. He followed up on the real estate. I had a lengthy correspondence with him on my father's estate and he helped to get that resolved. I worked with him and got his agreement that I should succeed my mother as co-trustee of my father's estate. I thought it was more politic that I got his concurrence, although it was not required. My father's will provided that I could be trustee rather than my mother, and she had had no interest and I felt that someone had to take a hand.

Riess: Did he act as a kind of older brother to your father?

Blake: Yes, he managed the family real estate. My father gave him power of attorney; my father paid no attention to those matters at all. Anson held all the stock certificates and managed all of it, just sent my father checks, so he had no records. I remember when my father died I was asked by the attorneys where all those holdings were. I said, "They're all in California."

I think he became quieter in later years, but he still continued going to the office up to the last three or four months, although not on a regular basis. When I first started on the quarry in '57, he was going daily still. It then sort of petered down that he came to board meetings, and then the last two or three months he didn't make it.

Riess: Do you think he felt very connected with the East Coast? In the material you gave me there's a great feeling of old family and old family history, Eli Whitney Blake, Yale, and so forth.

Blake: He went back to New Haven in the year my father was born, in 1886, and met his grandfather, Eli Whitney Blake, and he spent the summer there. Eli Whitney Blake died later on that year. He saw all that generation--Eli Whitney Blake was in his last year but I guess in good health and alert--that summer. And then he kept up with the dozens of cousins, etc.

Riess: Those ties were not broken, but this was definitely a California family.

Blake: Right. He very much kept up correspondence with the older generation of the people in the east while being a part of California.

Epilogue

[Date of Interview: 1 June, 1987]

Riess: This second meeting we are having in part because I read a lot of Anita Blake's correspondence in The Bancroft Library and it brought up new questions.*

I was curious about her deep connections with a lot of the Japanese and her apparent help to them in the war relocation period. I wondered if you could fill in any kind of background about that and in general whether you felt that she had a real affinity for the Asian population.

Blake: She had a great respect for their art, their culture, their history. She was very knowledgeable on these subjects. She certainly had a respect for them as individuals. One occasion, she told me the story of keeping a package for a Japanese gentleman—I don't recall his name—who came to her just before the relocation effort was undertaken and delivered a package about two feet long and several inches thick. It was wrapped, and she kept it for him. After the war, she handed it back to him. He thanked her very much. She never opened it nor ever knew what the contents were.

Riess: Did they have a Chinese cook?

Blake: There was a Chinese cook on one of my earlier trips to visit them. I don't absolutely remember which one that was. But I do remember meeting one. There was also a nephew, a grandson, or some Chinese boy who was going to school, and Mabel Symmes was helping him with his reading.

*This follow-up session was conducted in the oral history office six months after the first meeting. All the other Blake series interviews had been taken in the months between and several questions had arisen. The questions had been directed to Mr. Blake by mail, but a verbal response was deemed to be preferable to a written response.

Riess: And how about on the gardening staff? Did they have any Japanese gardeners?

Blake: I don't really remember meeting the gardening staff in 1945.

Riess: Well, that would have been difficult, wouldn't it, for them to have gotten back from relocation.

Blake: They obviously had someone, but I don't remember meeting the individual on my first trip. On my second trip in the early '50s--I think maybe Jim Anderson was already there at that time. But I couldn't be absolutely sure of when he arrived.

Riess: Okay. The next thing I had asked you in my notes was about Anita's general health, because she does seem to have a lot of ailments. In fact, she went East for some eye operations when she was much younger--went to Philadelphia for some operation.

Blake: Yes, it was early, I think, a cataract removal. I remember someone describing her as being led to a garden party because she couldn't see, and she had to have someone take her. Her eyes did get better, but they were always a problem. I don't remember anything else about her health, other than that she was very sensitive about additives, such as flourides in water. She was opposed to the fluoride initiative as she didn't feel those things should be forced on the public.

Riess: You and other people have referred to students who lived with the Anson Blakes. Do you remember who Charles Grant might have been?

Blake: Yes, I met Charles Grant when I was in the quarry business. At that time he had the C.H. Grant Equipment Company, which sold concrete mixer trucks and other types of equipment. I gathered he had been one of the students who lived in whatever those quarters were. I think it was where the horse was kept, and it may have been a quarters which was shared, and he also helped in the gardens of Edwin Blake and Mrs. Charles T. Blake.

Riess: Because Anson and Anita had no children, I was curious as to whether you thought that the bonds that they formed with these students were particularly deep and meaningful.

Blake: There were some certainly who kept up the correspondence and contact with them after they had left the University. I don't know what proportion, but there were references to the gentleman who later was president or manager of the Yellow Cab Company in San Francisco who had been was one of those students.

Riess: They didn't turn up in the wills?

Blake: No.

Riess: In the interview that I had with Mai Arbegast, she mentioned the letters of James West, who was the really quite famous botanist who corresponded with Anita Blake. Mai Arbegast had seen some of James West's letters. She says that they were under Mrs. Blake's bed along with, she thought, other letters and memorabilia that were precious to Mrs. Blake, some oriental scrolls, some objects of sentimental value. I then assumed from that that perhaps that had also included the letters, which I can't find any place else, that Mrs. Blake might have received from Anson Blake. I wondered if you could tell me about the situation under the bed.

Blake: The bed was a four-poster bed, with very high legs. Dr. [Helen] Christensen had expressed concern that Mrs. Blake had to slide off the bed onto the floor. So a stool was made so she could get out of the bed onto the stool and then onto the floor, rather than slipping off the edge of the bed, hitting the floor, and then steadying herself. I think there could have been a curtain or---it has a name, hanging---

Riess: Dust ruffle?

Blake: Yes, a dust ruffle under the bed which shielded the boxes and whatever these things you may be referring to. That could have been. I looked at the height of the bed because I worked with my wife and we had the stool made which she got out of bed onto and then stepped down. We had a rather solid stool made at Dr. Christensen's request.

I did get my aunt to sit on the bed, as one of the questions was how tall the stool had to be. I also supported Dr. Christensen's request to remove the small oriental runner, because it slipped on the hardwood floor. I think I found another place to put it, and so she could still see it. But I did not look under the bed as I had no occasion to.

Then later in Mrs. Blake's last illness, after she had become unconscious, the nurses, through Dr. Christensen, requested that we get a hospital bed, and we agreed to that, and then the gardeners took down the four poster bed and took it upstairs and put it in the room which had been built for Aunt Anita's mother, Mrs. Symmes. That room was seldom used as a guest room because the bath was shared with Mabel. So they used the other guest room, which had a separate bath, for the guests when they had them.

Riess: Mrs. Symmes lived in the house?

Blake: The room was built for Mrs. Symmes. You may remember I mentioned to you that a wing was built onto Edwin Blake's house for Mrs. Charles T. Blake, Anson's mother, because it had already been the decision

Blake: to build rooms for Anita's mother and Mabel into the Anson Blake house. But Mrs. Symmes either died before the house was complete, or shortly thereafter.

Riess: But it was referred to as Mrs. Symmes' room?

Blake: Yes. Into that room they put the bed. I don't know the rest of the material you referred to--it might have been under the bed, if that was put up there--or what happened to it.

Riess: You said that Mrs. Blake's bed had somehow gotten confused with the Taft bed. The Taft bed, of course, is the great legacy.

Blake: Aunt Anita had left a list of things which were to go to various people, which she had dictated to Dr. Christensen. In that list there was a reference to the Taft bed, which had been Fanny Edwards Taft's bed, come down through the Taft family. It had come from her estate. Charlie Taft, the brother of Robert A. Taft, the son of the president and cousin of the Blakes--not the Symmeses, Mr. Pettitt who wrote the history of Berkeley attributed the Tafts as cousins to Anita, which was a mistake--he wrote to President Clark Kerr asking for some of the rugs and the bed to go into the Taft house in Cincinnati, which they are restoring.*

President Kerr agreed, and in preparation of that the bed got taken down to get ready for shipment. Someone then managed to mix up the pieces of both beds. They stacked the two together. So I was asked to go in and sort pieces of the bed out. One of the gardeners helped me. So we sorted literally piece by piece. I recognized which was the Taft bed because of its posts. I had to get the side rails and the canopy pieces, and the only way I could be sure what all fit together was to partially assemble both beds. They were marked, labeled, and put in two sides of the rooms, and they went their separate ways.

Riess: Yes. Walter Vodden, in talking about the canopy bed that Mrs. Blake slept in, said that the canopy protected the bed itself from whatever leaks there were in the roof.

Blake: That part of the house had an opened area above it. I guess you could have walked out from Mrs. Symmes' room and Mabel's room onto a sort of little deck sitting area. There were leaks in that roof, from time to time. The ceiling was in rather poor shape.

*From a May 8, 1970 letter from Charles P. Taft to Igor Blake: "I do have the bed, and I think also a rug. I do not think there was a Taft desk..."

- Riess: So just to nail down, once and for all, this business about the goodies under the bed— You were not party to doing anything with them? They could still turn up somewhere?
- Blake: The most logical thing would have been to have put them upstairs in that room where they moved the bed. But I'm not sure--
- Riess: They're not among family memorabilia that at some disposition of family papers went one direction or another?
- Blake: No, because we would have recognized Anson Blake's letters. Anson Blake gave a couple of boxes of older family correspondence to me about the time I was married. Aunt Anita gave me a group of my father's letters to his mother from his era when he was traveling in Russia from 1916 to 1920.
- Riess: Robert Pierpont Blake.
- Blake: Yes. I did get that group of Robert Pierpont Blake correspondence.
- Riess: I was interested that in your note to me you said that the estate had been homesteaded to Anita. I wish you'd explain that. My question to you was why on an old map the estate was in the name of Anita Blake, because the Edwin Blake property was in his name. Of course, maybe this is because his wife had already died. But, in any case, maybe you could make that clear again, why it was done that way.
- Blake: My uncle told me that he had taken steps to homestead the house in Anita's name, which would give her protection in the event he went bankrupt during the Depression. Then, he felt, the house would be secure as her property. I've never looked up the legal implications of it, but as I understood it if someone went bankrupt and the house had been homesteaded, then it was a way of preserving it from the bankruptcy claims; and then also if it was in his wife's name, because she did not co-sign the notes, etc., which he had.
- Riess: Sounds like a fine solution, and probably it's not allowed these days.
- Blake: I'm not sure, but it was allowed in the '30s. That's when he took steps to do it because the Depression, as I mentioned earlier, was a difficult time for them.
- Riess: Yes. Anita's first letters to her husband were to him in Venice. What was Venice?
- Blake: Venice is an island in the Sacramento Delta, one of those islands built by building a levee around it and pumping out the water. They raised asparagus and other crops. We had some fraction of the island.

Riess: You mean, it was owned by the Blake Company?

Blake: It was owned somehow by the Blake family. It must have been sold by the time Grandmother Blake died in 1928 because it wasn't in her estate, as I recall, because I don't think my father ever had a portion. Grandmother Blake left one quarter of her estate to each of her children, minus a few small bequests. I've read the description of what he acquired from her, and he did not acquire a piece of Venice Island. So it looks like maybe they sold it at an earlier time.

Riess: Do you know when it was created?

Blake: My father referred to going up the Sacramento River as a teenager. That would have been about the turn of the century, 1899, 1900, or something like that. They still had it then. I'm not sure if that was something which may have been sold when they reorganized the quarry business. In 1914 we acquired basically the entire ownership of the San Pablo Quarry in Richmond and changed the name of the company to Blake Brothers Company, and split up the partnership which Grandfather Blake, Charles Thompson Blake, had had in the Oakland Paving Company. I'm not sure if that was one of the tradeoffs, or how Venice Island was sold.

Riess: Well, that's interesting. I hadn't done any research in the history of the delta, but I would like to include, right here and now, anything of it that we can.

Blake: It was one of the things Anson Blake was involved with. But other than the fact that it existed, I'm not sure.

Riess: Well, do you think that he also worked on riprapping the rest of the islands in the delta, or was this the only one?

Blake: We sold a lot of riprap because the Blake Brothers Company, the San Pablo Quarry as it was called, was built with the idea of shipping the product by water to San Francisco and up along the delta. So we did an extensive amount of water delivery of rock and asphalt. The early roads to Sacramento were paved with the products of the quarry as they went along the river edge. They took the material by barge and built roads on the edge of the levees all the way to Sacramento.

The riprap business was a very important part of the quarry business, much like Basalt Rock still has such a capacity to supply riprap along the delta area of the islands. The difference now is that the landowner paid for the riprap in the early days, rather than the state. When the island flooded, it was a major financial loss to the individual. There was no federal or state help. Now the farmers expect to be helped when there is a flood.

Riess: These letters were written to him when she was at Howell Mountain, at the Hacienda de los Posadas, early in their marriage.

Blake: That would be logical. He might have stopped there coming back down. There was an extensive ferry and bay commerce business. There was a regular route for ships stopping at wharfs, delivering passenger mail and freight. Early freight bills indicate the extent of local commerce on the bay, and my father referred to going up with Anson, and the boat would stop at the Blake Brothers Company. They would stop at the Venice Island Wharf. They would stop at these various places, leaving off material, and picking up freight. On the way back they could stop in San Rafael.

Riess: San Rafael rather than Benicia, or--

Blake: I mentioned San Rafael because when the Richmond-San Rafael ferry was put in, Anita used to take that, referred to taking it in the very early days when she still had the horse.

Riess: That's how she got up when she would come from Berkeley?

Blake: Right. It would take, I think, two nights, if you stopped one place and then had one second day's ride.

Riess: She was in a horse and carriage, or just on horseback?

Blake: Horseback I presume. When they went to Howell Mountain, if they went for a longer period of time, she took the horse with her.

Riess: So when she would come back she would stable the horse somewhere in San Rafael, come back on a ferry--

Blake: Come back on a ferry--the horse too. Or maybe she'd spend the night in San Rafael, and then come back for the rest of the ride. It would be a few hours ride from San Rafael to Kensington. Wasn't that bad a ride.

Riess: But she didn't bring the horse back to Kensington?

Blake: I never knew if the horse was at Kensington. There was apparently a stable at Piedmont Avenue, and I don't quite know when she stopped keeping horses.

Riess: This might have been journeys from Piedmont Avenue, actually. The time at Hacienda de las Posadas is a very early time, 1916 or so.

Blake: They also referred to riding to Sleepy Hollow, riding over the Berkeley hills. They both rode.

Riess: It's really hard for me to imagine Mrs. Blake leaving Piedmont Avenue on horseback and riding to Richmond. I mean it doesn't sound like something that ladies do. Just off by herself for a four hour ride, or three hours.

Blake: Or something, yes.

Riess: And what could she possibly carry by way of clothing?

Blake: A travel bag on the back saddle would be a minimal thing. That's about all there would be. Aunt Anita never described that detail.

Riess: But there were no brigands along the road in those days.

Blake: Well, Edwin Blake used to take the payroll for the quarry out to Richmond on payday, and he always took a revolver because the payroll was in gold coin. It was all counted out in envelopes. He drove out, Blake, in a buggy but he had his army service revolver on the seat next to him, because payday was a known day, and he was a recognized person. One of his trips to the quarry always coincided with payday. He went there other times, but he always arrived on payday with the revolver.

Riess: By that very token, that's why I'm really surprised at Mrs. Blake riding off on her own. It's what's come down in the family history to you, apparently.

Blake: Yes.

Riess: Those reports from Howell Mountain are very vivid, and she seemed to enjoy her position as kind of the manager. I am going to include some in the oral history.

When she was in St. Helena, I don't know whether you know that she got a couple of degrees from University Extension, one in dairy husbandry, and one in hay husbandry.*

Blake: No.

Riess: By correspondence. She managed to deal with the railroads and to get a whole carload of hay, delivered from somewhere in southern California, or some area. Anyway she was busy and very effective.

*Anita Blake's correspondence course work with Agricultural Extension is in the University of California' Archives in The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

Riess: I asked you whether you had ever visited that property, or what the ownership of the property was. I guess it was maybe out of her hands by that time?

Blake: She gave it as a gift to the state for a conservation area and was very unhappy because in those days the state's concept of conservation was recreation, not the sort of wilderness, natural state type of thing which she had envisioned it as.

Riess: Do you know the land? Have you been out there?

Blake: The area was pointed out to me when both of them went to St. Helena to the Seventh Day Adventist place for physical therapy and rest.

Riess: This was in the fifties that they were going up to the sanitarium there?

Blake: Right.

Riess: Had that been a regular kind of rest cure program?

Blake: They had been up once or twice before, and I guess she persuaded Uncle Anson to join her on this occasion. So they both went up together.

Riess: How is it that that property came into the family, the Howell Mountain land?

Blake: My uncle bought that with the fee he received as being trustee for Scofield Construction when it went bankrupt. Scofield Construction had the contract to build the Mare Island drydocks. In those days they just had begun to have a bonding company. So the courts took over, and my uncle was appointed by the court as receiver for Scofield Construction.

Then he ran Scofield Construction and kept the crew and the people and equipment together in order to complete the Mare Island contract. The bonding company had to pay for that. With that fee--that was a two or three year job--he acquired the piece of land and gave it to Anita.

Riess: And this was long before they moved, long before they had any reason to think that they might move to that Kensington property. It's evidence that Anita had an enormous need for land.

Blake: Yes. So obviously they had been thinking of the Howell Mountain place. I don't quite have the sequence of the Sleepy Hollow property, but they were sort of debating what they wanted, and where they wanted to build whatever they were going to build. Then they decided to have the garden and build the Kensington place, and they sold the place in Sleepy Hollow. But I don't have dates for these transactions.

Riess: It was only the University's need for the Piedmont Avenue area, though, that propelled them out to Kensington.

Blake: Correct. Yes.

Riess: Otherwise do you think that the scheme would have been to have the Piedmont Aveue house, and then a second--

Blake: Maybe a second place for a ranch, or a--. I think a ranch was in mind, maybe.

Riess: Because Anson would always have needed to have been near the business. He couldn't have been living in St. Helena, could he?

Blake: That would have been more difficult in those days, but possible, to get to San Franciso, and to get to Richmond, again by ferry.

Riess: Think of that passion for land.

Blake: Yes.

On the gift of the property, Anson Blake had a small piece of Edwin Blake's garden, which he had taken in his name. So he joined in signing the deed because he had a fraction of an acre. They took a small fragment of Edwin Blake's estate, when Edwin Blake left his estate to his two brothers and his sister. In the settlement, Anson took a small piece, half an acre or three quarters, or something, to round out their garden and protect a certain part of it.

Riess: In the gift to the University?

Blake: In the settlement of Edwin Blake's estate (1949 or 1950) before the gift to the University in 1957. Then he had a small piece of the garden in his name, a fraction of an acre, or whatever it was. I have the correspondence on Edwin Blake's estate.

Riess: In fact, the gift is ten and a half acres, so maybe that explains the half acre.

Do you know when Mabel Symmes came to live with Anson and Anita, and where she had lived before that time?

Blake: I assume she had lived with her mother before. The Symmeses had a house in San Francicso in 1906; in the fire they were living there and I assume they must have rebuilt. As Mrs. Symmes was getting older in the '20s, they decided to move into the Kensington house. I don't believe they were living in the Piedmont Avenue house which, I think, was rather small.

Riess: But you do think that Mabel Symmes was in the Kensington house from the beginning?

Blake: Clearly, but perhaps Mrs. Symmes had died by the time the Kensington house was completed. The rooms were designed for Mabel and her mother. So Mabel moved in in the very beginning. Anita, I think, was the oldest, and there were at least two brothers.

The decision that Mrs. Symmes and Mabel move in together was the plan. If Mrs. Symmes ever moved, or if she died before she got there, that's the chapter I don't know. But I assume Mabel was then living with her in whatever quarters she had.

Riess: Thank you. And thank you for coming by to clarify these points.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

George and Helena Thacher

THE BLAKE AND THACHER FAMILIES AND HISTORY

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1986

George and Helena Thacher, 1986

Photograph by Suzanne Riess

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

George Thacher and his wife Helena are "family." George's mother, Eliza Seeley Blake, the only daughter of Charles Thompson Blake and Harriet Waters Stiles, married Sherman Day Thacher, founder of the Thacher School, and went south to live in Ojai, California. Every summer the Thacher children, six including George, came north for visits. A Blake house on Piedmont Avenue in Berkeley was where vacations and holidays were celebrated. Grandmother Blake--Charles Thompson Blake had died in 1897--was a small, imperious matriarch as George Thacher describes her. She insisted on having her family around her every summer. In a photograph from Piedmont Avenue days they lounge in splendid individuality--children, dogs, and the tiny matriarch.

I interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Thacher in Orinda where they live a country life. In their small comfortable house firmly set on a hillside, surrounded by fruit trees, they could be back in the Sierra foothills they lived in after their marriage in 1934. That life did not permit a lot of contact with the Anson Blakes--they didn't "come out of the woods" until 1959--but Helena remembers very well being "looked over" before the marriage by the very proper Mrs. Blake and found satisfactory, particularly because of a shared interest in wildflowers. She also shared Anson Blake's interest in the California Historical Society. Helena Thacher was close enough to the Blakes that she was willed all of Aunt Anita Blake's personal possessions, "knowing she would distribute them according to my wishes," as Helena ruefully quotes the will. That was not an easy job.

It was a pleasure to join George and Helena Thacher in Orinda to look at photographs of the young Anson, and to acquire for the oral history and for the permanent collection in The Bancroft Library copies of Anson's papers written for presentation at the California Historical Society, as well as photographs of and from Blake House sent as greetings at Christmas. The interview echoes the genial give and take between the Thachers, whose beginning married life in tents and mountain cabins and years of Sierra seasons deserve more space than they get in this record of Blake family history.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

September 23, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Helena Duryea Thacher

Date of birth Oct. 13, 1906 Place of birth Palo Alto, Calif.

Father's full name Edwin Duryea, jr.

Birthplace Craigville, N.Y. - near Goshen

Occupation Civil engineer

Mother's full name Roberta Vincent Taylor Duryea

Birthplace Ithaca, N.Y.

Occupation Housewife

Where did you grow up? Palo Alto, Calif.

Present community Orinda, Calif.

Education Stanford

Occupation(s) Elementary school teacher

Special interests or activities Wild flowers. Volunteering
at the California Historical Society library.

Past activities: Hiking with the Sierra Club. Ex-
tensive wored travelling.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name GEORGE BLAKE THACHER

Date of birth Feb. 26, 1903 Place of birth San Francisco, CA

Father's full name SHERMAN DAY THACHER

Birthplace NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Occupation Founder & Headmaster Thacher School
a boys college preparatory school.

Mother's full name ELIZA BLSEELEY BLAKE

Birthplace San Francisco, CALIFORNIA

Occupation HOUSEWIFE

Where did you grow up? OJAI VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Present community ORINDA, CA.

Education YALE, PH B, '25
M.I.T., BS Civil Engineering, '27

Occupation(s) CIVIL ENGINEER, Hydr2-Construction
Tunnel Construction PG&E & BART

Special interests or activities TRAVEL - CAMPING
SCIENCE

The Charles Thompson Blake Family

[Date of Interview: November 24, 1986]

Riess: Mr. Thacher, you were born in San Francisco in 1903?

G.T.: Yes.

Riess: Your mother came up to San Francisco for your birth?

G.T.: Yes, and after I was born she went to her mother's in Berkeley and stayed there for some weeks, and then she went back down to Ojai, where she lived.

Riess: Her mother's in Berkeley would have been on Piedmont Avenue?

G.T.: Yes, 2235 Piedmont Avenue.

Riess: We can't have any memories from you about that. [laughs]

G.T.: Well, about the house, yes, because we spent all our summers over there, but not at the time. My first memory of that house was on Christmas, when they say that I was only about three years old. I remember the Christmas tree in the living room. I'd never seen one before, of course, or if I had I didn't remember it.

Riess: There really was a Christmas tree? I asked Igor whether they ever had Christmas trees out at Blake House, and he said no.

G.T.: I don't think they did out at Blake House, but my grandma did. She moved there around 1889; I think that's when that house was built. I don't know when her sons built their houses up there, but it was probably soon after.

Grandma was a very imperious person. She was about four-feet-ten and she wore a size one shoe, Mother told me. That's a pretty small foot. But she had a mind of iron, and she ruled her children to the day of her death. Mother said it was fine, because she had very good judgment until towards the end when she was slipping a little.

Riess: Was it that she was very virtuous, or very moral, or very New England?

G.T.: Well, she was New England, and very intolerant of certain things--what's called racist now, but we all were. We had Chinese help, and Chinamen were not people, they were rather like the horses on the place. But they did speak to us, and some of them we had great affection for. She was also very class-conscious, according to my mother--I wouldn't have noticed that. Mother said she'd ask if she could bring a girl home from school and Grandma would say, "Who is she?" Mother would say her name, and Grandma wanted to know, "Yes, but who is she? Who are her parents?" And if Mother didn't know or couldn't say she didn't come to Grandma's house.

I don't think Grandpa was that way at all, but I never knew him, he died quite a while before I was born. My father said he was a wonderful storyteller, and of course I knew he was because the letters that he wrote back to his family in New England were absolutely fascinating. They're all in the California Historical Society if you want to read them.

H.T.: I have a whole lot of copies.

G.T.: Have you got copies of all of them?

H.T.: Yes.

G.T.: Bless your heart.

Riess: That's Charles Thompson Blake. When you're talking about Grandmother, are you talking about the woman who endowed Stiles Hall?

H.T.: I think it's the next generation back. [Mrs. Anson Gale Stiles (Ann Waters), who was Charles Thompson Blake's mother-in-law, endowed Stiles Hall.]

Riess: Stiles Hall has become such a liberal institution on campus that it's interesting to think that it was endowed by a woman whose attitudes would not be so tolerant.

G.T.: I'm sure Grandma did not endow it, no. It seems out of context, to me.

Riess: Originally Stiles Hall was a Bible-reading group, of Presbyterian persuasion. Were the Blakes a Bible-reading family?

G.T.: No, I don't remember Grandma Blake ever reading a Bible. She went to church, and Mother used to go with her. My father was from a very strict family of good old New England Congregationalists who believed in the Bible and all sorts of things. But he backslid

G.T.: somewhere along the line and became an agnostic. He just didn't believe that the word of God was in the Bible, but he thought that church was good for you, and believe me, you went to church, whether you liked it or not. [laughs]

Thacher School

Riess: I was reading about the Thacher School, and it didn't look like there was a required chapel.

G.T.: No, there wasn't. He didn't believe that much in it.

H.T.: Well, all the boys went down to church.

G.T.: Yes, they had to go to church on certain days. On Sundays they'd all arrive down at the church on horseback.

Riess: How is that, to be brought up in a boy's school?

G.T.: I don't know, that's my life. It was perfectly normal to me. It was rather strange to be brought up in a house with no kitchen. My mother never cooked a meal until the summer in World War I, when it got rather expensive to keep a Chinese cook there, so she started learning to cook. [laughs] She never learned very well.

H.T.: Once she asked me how much water to put on a roast leg of lamb.

Riess: Did you all eat at a family table in the dining room?

G.T.: No. The children, until they went to the school, ate beforehand. We had a nursemaid, and we would eat beforehand or afterwards, but we ate in the school dining room, after breakfast, and beforehand at lunch and dinner.

Riess: Did your mother hold you up to the same standard that your grandmother would have?

G.T.: No, she was a very understanding person. Sort of a buffer between us and our father, who was pretty imperious. His word was law; you never questioned it, you did what he said when he was there.

There were very few women at the school, other than Mother and Grandmother Thacher--you took care of your elderly relatives in those days, and she lived out next to us--and Mrs. Barnes, and the school nurse. That's all, four women at the table.

Riess: During the time you were down there you came up regularly?

G.T.: Every long vacation we'd come up to Berkeley and stay with Grandma. Mother said that she had no choice. She would have liked to have gone somewhere else sometime, but Grandma said, "You will spend all your vacations with me," so that's what they did.

Riess: But she couldn't get Robert Pierpont Blake to come, could she?

G.T.: He came along much later, and also he disappeared into the depths of Russia and didn't show his head for years. All during World War I he was there. He just loved languages and he loved history. He was amazing, he spoke all sorts of languages.

Dining at Grandmother Blake's

Riess: Edwin and Anson were obedient to their mother's will.

G.T.: They lived there all the time, and they ate dinner with her every Sunday night, and they dressed for dinner as long as they were in the old house in Berkeley--I think they did.

H.T.: Uncle Anson and Aunt Anita did, and we had to dress in evening clothes for Sunday supper.

G.T.: Did we?

H.T.: Heavens, yes. I remember the dresses I wore.

G.T.: I probably wore my tux then. [laughs]

H.T.: You certainly did.

Riess: Sounds as if you're one of the few people who's worn out a tuxedo legitimately.

G.T.: Well, I grew out of it, actually. I had it for a long time.

Riess: And the wives were of the same ilk? Did Anita and Harriet rebel, or were they chosen by their mother-in-law?

G.T.: Oh, no, certainly Aunt Harriet, Edwin's wife, wasn't. I don't think either of them were chosen, no. Aunt Anita fitted right in with that, she was the last of the Victorians. Oh, you can't believe her!

Riess: Tell me.

G.T.: Gosh sakes! It's hard to remember the stories. I wrote some of them down, if I can find the place I wrote them and read them when I find them. I just wrote down that she was proper, and formal, and a marvelous gardener.

Riess: When as a teenager you first knew Anson and Anita, they were a couple in their late forties, probably.

G.T.: They were the same as Mother, although Anson's older than Mother--two years. Yes, he was a genial person. The only time really I would see him would be Sunday evening after dinner. (I didn't go to Sunday night dinner until I was twenty-one.) After Sunday night dinners they'd all gather in the living room and converse. Uncle Anson was very fine, very genial. Didn't know how to say anything to children because he never had any, but he was nice to us. Uncle Ned, Edwin, would get off in the corner and smoke his cigar and not say one single word the whole evening. I thought he was tongue-tied, until much later, after I'd started to work in civil engineering--he was a mining engineer--then you couldn't stop him talking about his mining days, and about engineering, and so forth. He just wasn't interested and he stayed in his corner and sulked. [laughs]

Riess: The rest of the family would talk politics, or literature, or what?

G.T.: I don't know what they talked about. It was very dull to me as a teenager or younger. The last summer we stayed there was 1919 or 1920. I would have been sixteen or seventeen, and I didn't pay much attention to what they said.

Riess: You were there for the whole summer, as well as for Christmas vacations?

G.T.: The only Christmas we went there they said I couldn't remember because I was too young, but I do. They never believed it.

Riess: But for the summers there was enough room to keep all those Thachers?

G.T.: We got pretty much overflowing towards the end, because there were six of us.

Riess: In fact it was a remarkably large family.

G.T.: Six children?

Riess: Yes.

G.T.: No, not for then. We should have been nine. Mother lost three between my older sister and me. That's the reason I was to be a Caesarean.

- Riess: It must have been a source of enormous satisfaction to your grandmother that your mother was so--"prolific" is not the word--
- G.T.: [laughing] "Prolific" is right! There wasn't much choice in those days, actually. You had babies, if you got married, once a year.
- Riess: Do you know why Anson and Anita didn't have children? Was there ever any discussion?
- G.T.: If there was I most assuredly would not have heard it.
- H.T.: Goodness, no. Nor did Uncle Ned have children.
- G.T.: You didn't talk about babies. [to Helena] How much younger is Harriet than I? Ten years? (Harriet Thacher Herrick, my sister.)
- H.T.: Something like that, yes.
- G.T.: I was down in the orchard eating oranges and Father came down and said, "You have a new sister." I had absolutely no idea that Mother was pregnant. I mean it just wasn't mentioned, anything like that.
- H.T.: And a little kid wouldn't notice.
- G.T.: Mother was kind of fat anyway, you couldn't tell. With my sisters you couldn't tell at all--that was supposed to be good. It was a different world, oh, goodness, you don't know how different.
- Riess: When you say that Anita was such a Victorian lady, maybe you should describe her to me.
- G.T.: She doesn't stand out at all in my mind when I was young. She did later, long after we were married.

Helena and George Thacher's Marriage and Years in the Sierra

- Riess: Where did the two of you meet?
- H.T.: In Ojai. I was born in Palo Alto.
- Riess: Why were you in Ojai?
- H.T.: I was a guest of a college friend of mine whose grandparents had a house down there. They came from Milwaukee and came there in the winter, so we could go down to my hostess's mother's and stay there in the summertime.
- Riess: Where did the two of you meet?

H.T.: On a blind date.

G.T.: Fourth of July, 1930. I'd just come down from the job I was working on at Salt Springs out at Jackson, for PG&E, for the weekend. (Salt Springs is the name of a flat on the Mokelumne River where the PG&E was building a dam.) My brother was there all alone, but he had two guests that had shown up, a classmate, and his new wife. He wanted to entertain them.

H.T.: So he called up my hostess and asked if she would go out and have a picnic with him, and she said, "I can't, I have a houseguest." "Oh, that's all right, I have a brother who arrived here at four-thirty this morning, and he'll go." It was proper in those days for the hostess's mother to ask people over beforehand for iced tea. Did George arrive? I should say not. Well, he'd just gotten in.

G.T.: Tired.

H.T.: Well, yes, you were tired.

G.T.: And diffident.

H.T.: I should say you were. I didn't care if I ever saw him again.

G.T.: But somehow it worked out.

H.T.: Four years later it worked out.

Riess: How old were you?

G.T.: Twenty-seven.

H.T.: I was almost twenty-eight when we got married.

Riess: Did you have a career?

H.T.: I was a grammar school teacher in Needles, California. When I got out of school it was hard to find a job, and also I had horrible sinus trouble, and the doctor in Palo Alto said, "If you could find a job in the desert it would be wonderful." I thought if I could find a job anywhere it would be wonderful, so the two worked out very well.

Riess: Then, after you got married, where did the two of you settle down?

G.T.: Let's see: we got married, went on our honeymoon, and we were going to go up to a job in Lake Almanor--I was construction engineer for PG&E. But they cancelled the job, didn't need me, so when I came back from the honeymoon they didn't have a job there, but they did give me a job in the office, which I didn't like much.

- H.T.: And I had to quit a teaching job--everybody did at that time--when I got married. Only unmarried girls and widows had jobs teaching.
- G.T.: That was the Depression.
- Riess: Is that because of the scarcity, or was it a policy?
- H.T.: I'm not sure; I think it was the policy. I knew that I had to stop my job if I married.
- G.T.: It was the policy, yes. We lived in San Francisco for a year in an apartment. Just barely made it financially. For five months we were four dollars behind.
- H.T.: We never sent a letter if we could send a postal, and we never took a streetcar if we could walk. We couldn't get gasoline for the car--he kept his car in a garage--but now and then we could splurge and take a picnic up in Marin or something like that.
- G.T.: It was pretty tough, and then PG&E did start a job.
- H.T.: We went to Vacaville first.
- G.T.: Oh, that's right, to work with this Soil Conservation Service in the Three C's Camp in Vacaville. Then at the end of the year PG&E said they were going to drive a tunnel up on the Stanislaus River, and would I go? I said I certainly would. It was a raise, and also it was work I liked. They didn't start that for quite a while, but they sent me up to another job up at Lake Pillsbury in Lake County. You were pregnant at the time.
- H.T.: Yes, I was.
- G.T.: I should say you were! Helen, my sister, came up and camped with us for some months. It was a camp job, most of the jobs were in those days. Then the job did start up at Stanislaus and I went up there and Helena went home to her mother, where she had our first son. PG&E was very nice and built a little house for us up there.
- Riess: Before then you were in a tent camp?
- H.T.: We didn't have a tent, we just camped out.
- G.T.: On the ground. I used to eat most of my meals in the cookhouse--breakfast and lunch anyway. And the cook was very nice, he'd send us cookies and things to eat.
- H.T.: Dilly and I went up to get cookies every day until I happened to see myself in a store window, and I was horribly fat. [laughs] I felt fine, you know, and I didn't notice it. George had a brother that

H.T.: weighed 256 pounds and I wore his old jeans--and filled them. George just brought down cookies after that.

Riess: I see, not that you gave up the cookies.

H.T.: No, I didn't give up the cookies, but I gave up being seen by everybody.

Riess: You and—who did you say?

H.T.: Dilly. Her name is Helen, she's a sister of George's. [Helen Thacher Griggs] She came up and camped with us, and later on she came up to help me take care of the children.

Riess: How many children did you have in all?

H.T.: Two, boys.

G.T.: After the house was done we could drive in the summertime--

H.T.: There's no road there.

G.T.: But we had to go up on a tram, which was an open flat car that they pulled up the mountain on a cable, and then we got on a little construction railroad that ran on top of a flume for some miles, and then we walked up to the house, where the tunnel was being built. We were there for three years.

Riess: Do you remember that fondly?

H.T.: Oh, very.

G.T.: It was wonderful. Although Helena was kind of lonely, she was the only woman at first.

Riess: By the time you emerged from that the Depression had abated somewhat?

G.T.: Yes, we had no trouble living after that. I stayed with PG&E all the time.

H.T.: Between jobs I went home to mother, which was very handy, because I didn't know where to settle. He'd go work to start jobs--

Riess: And then locate someplace where you could--

H.T.: Yes, and sometimes one week he'd be told he was going to such-and-such a place, and the next week he'd find out he wasn't going there, we were going someplace else, so it was very handy for me to have some--

G.T.: Home base.

Riess: I can imagine that those early days with PG&E were kind of an adventure.

G.T.: It was the end of an era. There are no camp jobs now. People drive to work whether it's a hundred miles, and seldom stay up there in the hills. But then, when I started with PG&E in 1927 at Salt Springs, they gave me two days off a year, Christmas and the Fourth of July. You worked every other day, 363 days a year.

H.T.: And if you took a vacation, you quit.

G.T.: You were through.

H.T.: You didn't know when you came back if you'd have a job or not.

Riess: One of the things that's associated with San Francisco and the thirties is the general strike, and a heightened awareness about being a laboring man.

G.T.: There was a surplus of labor then, and PG&E was very anti-union at that time. B. M. Downing, PG&E General Manager, was violently anti-union. PG&E workers tried to start a union, but as long as he was in they never had one.

Anson and Anita Blake

Family Finances in the 1930s

Riess: Did other members of the family, Edwin and Anson, have sufficient money to get through that? Could they help you out if you had really applied to them for some money?

G.T.: They were in pretty bad shape. Uncle Anson at that time was director of the Bank of Oakland, which went broke, and he got hit with a big bunch of money he had to pay up. I think he had to pay eighty thousand dollars--which is like eight hundred thousand would be now--although it wasn't his fault the thing went broke. He objected to the loans they made, but didn't have enough clout to stop them. No, they were just about on the rocks. He borrowed money from everybody he could, and the business, the rock quarry he ran, they had to borrow money. Borrowed about \$450,000, and most of it from his mother, who had inherited it from somebody--I guess her husband.

Riess: She was living with them out in Kensington?

G.T.: With Edwin. She had an apartment in his house.

Riess: And she was holding that much money?

G.T.: Yes. I don't know just where they raised all that money. I know that Mother had quite a few of the bonds, and I inherited them eventually. They were seven percent bonds, which was usurious in those days--that was awful for those days.

Riess: Where were you when they made the move from Piedmont Avenue to the Kensington address?

G.T.: I was in school, at Yale. That was 1922, wasn't it?

[tape interruption]

Riess: Your parents sent the boys back to Yale, to get a Yale education?

G.T.: Oh, heavens, yes. I had no choice on that.

Riess: When you were back at Yale did you come home in summers?

G.T.: Yes, all except the last one. Then I went to MIT after I was through at Yale, for two years, and I didn't come home for that summer either, so it was quite a stretch there that I was away from home.

Riess: When they sent you back to Yale were you sent with letters to eastern relatives?

G.T.: Oh, heavens, they were all over, thousands of them.

Riess: How was that? Did you feel like quite a different breed?

G.T.: I never liked the East at all, or the people. They were awfully stick-in-the-mud, they never went anywhere, whereas we did move around a little. I would have much preferred to have gone to Stanford or Cal. Mother went to Cal, and of course Uncle Anson and Uncle Edwin did too. I don't know about Robert, don't know where he went. I know he ended up at Harvard.

I don't know much about the move from Berkeley to Kensington. I would visit them in the summers. I remember one time we went up there and spent a night, my brother and I, on our way back to college, and it was the year of the Berkeley fire. We got there the day after the fire.

Riess: September, 1923.

G.T.: We did see the house at a very early time. I don't remember whether we stayed with Anson or Edwin.

Riess: Both of those houses imply prosperity.

G.T.: Oh, yes, they were doing pretty well then, though they never did very well until the Second World War, and then they paved everything in Richmond and around there. That's when the company really took off and put the rip-rap around Treasure Island for the 1939 fair.

Riess: I've always thought of it as a wealthy family.

G.T.: Well, it was, it was a very wealthy family indeed. They had big houses, they had help until towards the end--they always had a couple of gardeners at the Blake House. I should think Uncle Edwin, as long as he lived, had a cook. I can't remember. I'd just come down there once in a while from the mountains and have a

Riess: Were they particularly fond of any one of the nephews or nieces?

G.T.: I don't think so.

H.T.: Elizabeth Thacher, George's older sister, lived with them for a while. [Elizabeth Thacher, 6/13/97-8/8/84.]

G.T.: Elizabeth lived with Grandma when she went to Cal. I don't know. There was a while there when I didn't see much of them, and then when Uncle Edwin died Uncle Anson asked me if I'd like to be a director, because they had a vacancy on the board. That didn't mean anything: he'd send me the reports of how they were doing financially. I think he wanted a director who wouldn't pay any attention to the place. He ran it. I'd come down to the annual meetings, annual directors meetings, where we'd re-elect ourselves. I guess the stockholders had to sign their proxies, but they always ended up in the same gang.

Business and Home Life, Separate

G.T.: The business and home were completely separate. Aunt Anita visited the quarry once, I believe, and the only reason I know that is because the old blacksmith out there said, "I saw Mrs. Blake one time. She was out here with Mr. Blake, and he was showing her this, and showing her that. She didn't seem to be very interested." [laughs] And when they had their fiftieth anniversary dinner, there was a terrible fight, according to my brother who happened to be out there working weekends, about whether they should include the wives in the celebration, which was to be a dinner at the Claremont Country Club. They asked me, and they said that if I said to do it, why, it would be all right. I said, well, I think it's the modern thing to have the wives. [laughs]

I remember one of my sisters was at the meeting, and she asked Aunt Anita who these people were. She said, "I haven't the slightest idea." She didn't know any of the people that worked in the quarry. Well, there weren't very many of them that were invited, that would be acceptable even to Uncle Anson. You were there, weren't you?

H.T.: Yes.

G.T.: I know Gus Kuppe, the secretary and accountant, and Henry Steinbeck, the president, Ronald Nelson, the bookkeeper—he was single. But she'd never seen them, never met their wives, didn't know whether they were married or not, didn't know who they were. It was different.

Riess: I'm trying to think when their fiftieth anniversary would have been.

G.T.: In 1954.

Riess: I guess they were so far along they were allowed to be kind of cranky characters.

G.T.: [laughs] Aunt Anita was a cranky character from the beginning of her life, I think. She wasn't cranky, there was just one way to do it that was correct, and that was her way.

Riess: And yet that way was not in conflict with your grandmother's way? To have her up in the Edwin Blake house and Anita down in the other house—sounds like they were the two queen bees.

G.T.: I don't think she bothered Uncle Edwin very much.

Riess: But she could not have lived in the same house with Anita, I wouldn't think.

G.T.: Probably, that's why she was at Edwin's. I wouldn't know that. That was intramural and I wouldn't have been in on it, certainly. I might have heard rumors afterwards.

Riess: [to Helena] Were you very much welcomed into the family by Anita?

H.T.: Oh, yes. Uncle Anson came to call on Mother in Palo Alto while I was there. Evidently we met with his approval.

G.T.: Oh, yes, sure.

Riess: What were your first impressions of them and of the house when you met them?

H.T.: I was frightened. She was austere, and I was afraid I'd trip on the rug or do something, because she was a very, very proper person. Uncle Anson wasn't at all, he was just so pleasant. But she was not unfriendly at all.

G.T.: No.

H.T.: And I think she began to like me because she knew I was very interested in wildflowers and she was also. She'd take me around the garden lots of times when we lived in San Francisco, and also many years later, after we'd come out of the woods. About twenty-five years, wasn't it?

G.T.: Yes.

H.T.: We'd see them now and then in between jobs or when I was in Palo Alto.

H.T.: I want to go back and say that I have understood that the reason that their houses were so elegant was because the University had given everybody that had to move from the future stadium site enough money for land and a modest house, but they had already had this land on a bad debt or something so that they didn't spend any of the University money on the land, they already had it. So they spent everything on the house.

G.T.: Well, the University took the house under eminent domain. They gave them a good price for it.

Mabel Symmes' and Anita Blake's Horticultural Interests

Riess: You say that she had a fondness for you because you both had an interest in wildflowers and flowers. Was that Anita's interest as much as Mabel Symmes'? Who came first in all of that, do you think?

H.T.: I think that Aunt Anita was the botanist.

Riess: By training, or just a hobbyist?

G.T.: Just a hobbyist. She never did anything.

H.T.: I don't know what her major was in college.

G.T.: I think it was botany, but I'm not sure what it was.

H.T.: And Mabel was a landscape architect, and she did that.

G.T.: Mabel Symmes landscaped the Blake House.

Aunt Anita always impressed me with her knowledge and the way she would go out and get things.

H.T.: Mabel never said a word when Aunt Anita was there.

G.T.: No. She lived there I don't know how many years, and they made her pay board and lodging too.

H.T.: We just learned that a little while ago.

G.T.: She had a room, and she said, "That is my room and no one else ever goes into it," and nobody ever did during her lifetime--which was fine, she needed it.

Riess: Why is it that Anita and Anson didn't travel?

H.T.: I don't think people traveled so much then.

G.T.: No, they didn't.

H.T.: Actually Miss Mabel and Aunt Anita went twice to England to furnish that house.

G.T.: I didn't know that.

H.T.: I told you that just the other night.

G.T.: Well, maybe so. If you'd told me forty years ago I might have remembered it. [laughs]

H.T.: I think that's what I understood from Aunt Anita.

Riess: Horticulture was an interest that could be carried on by correspondence, with a great deal of sending of seeds back and forth, rather than actually traveling from place to place?

H.T.: Yes, that's right. She was the only one in the United States--or at least this is what she told me--that could grow a mate plant from South America, and she was very, very proud of that, because no one else had been able to.

G.T.: I know she got journals and seeds from all over the world, because I remember one time she sent me over to the Crocker Bank to get whatever kind of checks made out in the currency of the country where she wanted to get the magazines. The man said, "What in the world is she doing this for? She could send dollars over and let them change it." But no, she wanted them in pounds or whatever they might be. I remember South Africa was one of them.

H.T.: Yes, because she had quite a lot of South African things.

Riess: Once she discovered you had an interest in her interest was she much friendlier to you?

H.T.: It augmented her friendliness.

G.T.: I think she got very fond of you.

Riess: It's such a wonderful passion, the passion for flowers and plants.

H.T.: I remember once when we lived in Vacaville they all three came up and we went on a picnic up to what's now the bottom of Berryessa Lake--it was Monticello Valley then--when the redbuds were blooming and all that. They both of them practically rolled under the fence to try to find some flower that was up there. I said I'd get it for them, but no.

G.T.: Mabel Symmes spent the whole time with a magnifying glass trying to identify what the flower was--it was completely invisible to me.

H.T.: It was fun.

G.T.: They were crazy about flowers, plants and things, and that was a beautiful place to take them. Quite a shame they flooded it.

Riess: Can you think when Mabel and Anita might have gone to England to do the shopping?

H.T.: It was before the war, probably. I know they didn't have anything over the fireplace for a long time, because until the second time they went, they couldn't find the right portrait to put over the fireplace.

Riess: Yet it wouldn't have been right in the middle of the Depression, so it must have been even before the thirties.

H.T.: Oh, I imagine so. I imagine toward the very beginning of when they were first there.

Riess: But the two of you weren't married until 1934.

H.T.: It was before I ever went there that they took these trips. It was just that she told me about the portrait, and that's how I know that there were two, because it was on the second trip that they found it.

Family Photographs, Family Memories

Riess: Tell me more about the social life up there, when you were in tuxedos and dinner dresses.

H.T.: That would be just us, there wouldn't be anybody else there.

Riess: Just the two of you for dinner on a Sunday night?

H.T.: Yes. But George warned me, he said, "You've got to wear an evening dress," because he'd been there before we were married and he'd had to wear a tux.

Riess: How often were you there for Sunday nights? Was that a regular thing?

G.T.: Maybe three times. They did have guests in for dinner, that was a way of entertaining, and they called on people.

H.T.: You did, you called on people instead of telephoning.

Riess: He would drive her, or did Mabel drive?

G.T.: I don't know how she got around. Grandma always had a chauffeur when she lived in Berkeley. I just don't know.

[tape interruption]

H.T.: I remember a time when our little boys were about six and four, something like that, and I was really worried about taking them there because there were all these beautiful antiques and things they had. Well, we saw that wolfhound [borzoi] slide on the oriental rug and bash into that marvelous piano, and my children mentioned that to me afterwards. [laughter]

Riess: They had a "marvelous piano?" Where is that?

H.T.: It's now at the music department at Cal.

Riess: Who played it?

H.T.: I think Aunt Anita did, but I don't know. I never heard anybody play it. She went to the Symphony, I know.

Riess: With whom?

H.T.: I don't know.

Riess: [looking at a photograph] This is Anson and the Russian wolfhound, a greeting card from 1934.

H.T.: And these are the only pictures I have of Aunt Anita, and these are from much later.

Riess: This is an interesting choice of picture for the greeting card.

H.T.: They're all of the house.

Riess: Here is a very dramatic view of things, through the rock: "Best Wishes." This is 1936. And the plantings are looking a little more established in these.

H.T.: Bancroft Library has a picture I sent them of the Blake House when it was first built, absolutely barren.

Riess: This one is from Edwin and Harriet Blake in 1934. Quite a charming entrance to their house.

G.T.: That is the house that's livable.

H.T.: Yes, much more livable than the other.

G.T.: Also they weren't so formal.

Riess: The house was less formal and the people were less formal?

G.T.: Yes. Well, Aunt Anita was formal.

Riess: Did she and Harriet get along?

H.T.: As far as I know. After Uncle Ned's wife died her widowed sister was living with them, and she stayed on. After that time they were never invited down to the other house.

G.T.: Anita never spoke to her.

H.T.: And never spoke to her brother-in-law since.

Riess: That's because of the impropriety?

H.T.: You bet.

G.T.: You don't do that. You can't believe it, but it's true.

Riess: She sounds very unforgiving.

H.T.: She wasn't forgiving at all.

G.T.: Oh, heavens no, not at all.

H.T.: And she was quite critical of several people.

Riess: Where is this picture taken?

H.T.: At the Anson Blake house, and this was later made into a room, glassed, there. The front door is over here.

Riess: This is now the solarium. Beautiful ceiling.

H.T.: It's a beautiful house, but it truly wasn't very livable.

G.T.: I didn't think it was. I never felt at home in it.

Riess: Why do you think that was?

G.T.: Oh, formality.

Riess: Lovely views--1938 Christmas greeting--this is one of their pieces of statuary, a Kuan Yin.

H.T.: Oh, yes, she loved those. I always forgot which one was which.

Riess: How did she acquire them, do you know?

H.T.: She just knew all about oriental art, and she had friends over in San Francisco who would get things for her, or if they got things, they'd tell her immediately because they'd think she might buy them. She had marvelous things.

Riess: Friends who were dealers?

H.T.: Yes. Later on they and their families, some of them, were sent to internment camps, and she kept track of them, and they wrote to her. The letters to her I think The Bancroft Library has now. It's funny, I just don't know whether she would have ever asked them to dinner or not.

G.T.: No. I'm sure not.

H.T.: But she thought these people knew a lot, which they did, and through them she knew a lot. She gave scrolls away—this may be after Uncle Anson died—marvelous Japanese scrolls, to the University, \$2,000 worth each year.

G.T.: She didn't, she gave them all in one year. If she'd spread them out she would have gotten more deductions, but Uncle Anson never understood that the income tax was taking all his money away—never understood it. For years he refused to make out a joint return because Anita would have to sign it and then she'd see what the finances of the family were.

Riess: So even though he had perfectly astute treasurers down at the quarry, nobody could advise him.

G.T.: He didn't trust Anita. When he gave her money she'd spend it on these things.

Riess: She didn't have an income of her own from her family?

G.T.: She may have had a little.

Riess: How did Mabel Symmes, for instance, get along? How was she able to pay the rent?

G.T.: She had a little income of her own. When she died I think she had \$125,000, or something like that.

H.T.: She worked.

Riess: She was supposed to be quite astute about the stockmarket. Wasn't that one of the things that she did up in her room, follow the market?

G.T.: Oh, yes, she always followed all the stocks, and she went to all the shareholder meetings. I guess when her father or mother died she settled the estate without a lawyer. It was easy. She was a businesswoman, all right.

Riess: But Anson felt that Anita would have just lavished this money on plants and on art?

G.T.: I think so, yes.

Riess: [looking at photographs] "Aunt Nita"—who was allowed to call her Nita?

G.T.: I called her Nita, and you did.

H.T.: I did, yes.

G.T.: I think that was a baby name.

H.T.: Didn't Uncle Anson call her Nita?

G.T.: No, he called her Anita.

H.T.: That's right.

G.T.: But I called her Aunt Nita always.

H.T.: And Miss Symmes called her Anita.

Riess: She looks a good deal more approachable here, as a matter of fact. [photograph from 1954]

H.T.: She became more approachable, I thought, or maybe I grew older. But I didn't truly like her.

G.T.: She was a difficult person to like.

Riess: You always felt on guard around her?

H.T.: Yes.

Riess: She didn't mellow in her old age?

H.T.: I think she mellowed, yes.

G.T.: Some, but she still--

H.T.: I walked lightly.

Riess: Do you think Anson walked lightly?

H.T.: Oh, no.

G.T.: With her? I don't know. He respected her views, I know that. He said once, "You know my wife is the last Victorian." He started to say something else, and he realized that you don't say things like that about your wife, and he stopped. I always wondered what he was going to tell me. [laughs]

Riess: She certainly is clear-eyed and with her head held high here.

G.T.: Though she got almost blind before she died.

Riess: It's interesting. The Edwin Blakes' greeting card shows plants with quite a different feeling from the Blake Garden's look.

H.T.: This willow tree was sort of between their yards. They had a rose garden together, which was between the two houses. I've forgotten what happened when the nuns got that place. Did they divide the rose garden?

G.T.: The nuns stopped their wall on their side of it and started it again on the other, and they wanted to buy that little corner of land but Anita would not let them. The Mother Superior said, "Well, the church will last longer than you do." I don't know whether they have that now.

H.T.: They didn't the last time I went over there, which is probably about five years ago.

In a very short hallway between the living room and their bedroom was a display—I've forgotten whether in wall niches or in a narrow glass-topped table—of tiny treasures of ancient oriental carvings. On the wall above were small, framed ancient etchings, paintings, etc. A new addition, since Uncle Ned Blake died and the nuns moved in, was a blessing sent to Aunt Nita by the Pope, via the nuns. The only time I can remember a real twinkle in her eyes was when she told me about it. She just knew the nuns were trying to get that extra corner of property that had been the rose garden jointly owned by the Anson and Edwin Blakes. She had told the nuns she would not sell it. (Besides, she was a Unitarian.) But the Mother Superior said the church would eventually get it as it was forever and would outlive her. We have often wondered what became of that piece of land, University of California, Berkeley, or the Catholic Church?

When I was clearing out the Blake House, the Mother Superior offered me from the Edwin Blake house a one-foot high plaster statue of a naked baby boy listening to a conch shell. I have it now. (We saw a similar one on a fountain in Charleston, South Carolina.)

Riess: What did Harriet Blake do? Did she have any special interests?

G.T.: Birds, she was a bird watcher. She used to trap them and band them. That's all I remember.

H.T.: That's all I remember too. A very pleasant person.

G.T.: Oh, yes, she was an awfully nice person. It was a shame she didn't have children.

Riess: You wouldn't say that of Anita?

G.T.: I would certainly have pitied the child. I'd hate to be brought up by Anita.

Being Entertained at Blake House

Riess: Tell me about the tea parties. What would you eat? Who would be there?

H.T.: I'm just thinking about when we went there for tea. I went to a great "do" one time, the only time I ever saw Uncle Robert [Pierpont Blake].

Riess: Yes, when he was there she had a reception.

H.T.: It was crowded with people.

G.T.: They were all over.

H.T.: And I didn't know any except your siblings.

G.T.: I remember they served drinks; wine, I think, and probably tea too.

H.T.: I don't remember anything but seeing Uncle Robert loom up above everybody else. She served tea just to the two of us, or maybe with our children, or somebody else, often.

G.T.: Miss Symmes.

H.T.: She sat in the window, up by where Aunt Anita always sat, lots of greenery, indoor plants, which practically crowded out the view. Miss Mabel would come and sit behind the greenery and doze.

Aunt Nita served tea on an East Indian, carved sandalwood table about this big, and it sort of tipped. Sometimes, if the cook or the maid wasn't there, later on, she'd ask me to bring in the tray because she couldn't.

G.T.: And we had sandwiches or something.

H.T.: Tell about the cigarette case.

G.T.: Oh, yes! They asked me if I would like a cigarette after dinner one time. I don't know when it was, probably fifteen years after the Second World War. It was a Lucky Strike in a green package. "Lucky Strike Green goes to war"—that was the slogan at least fifteen years before. It was the stalest cigarette I ever smoked in my life—the package had been opened during the war!

H.T.: Uncle Anson didn't smoke, did he?

G.T.: No, Uncle Ned did.

Riess: All the greenery would have been on the western side?

H.T.: It was sort a bowed place, and Anita always sat in a certain place on the side of that.

G.T.: It was fine for her because the light bothered her eyes. She had cataracts.

Riess: Did they have fires in the fireplace?

G.T.: Every evening.

H.T.: Let me tell you about the first dinner that I went to there. For dessert they served persimmons with whipped cream in these very tall, elegant Venetian glass goblets, with color that went down the stem and all that. Well, the cook hadn't really chopped the persimmon up enough, so that I would lift up this huge gob—I love persimmons—and I couldn't make it into a bite size. I sort of poked around, but I didn't want to really push down on it very much because of that beautiful stem. I never did eat the dessert, because of that glass stem. That was when the cook was the waitress also, I'm sure.

Riess: Were the cooks Chinese?

H.T.: No.

G.T.: She had Chinese cooks at one time, but not then.

Riess: Did she invite other garden people to see the gardens, and did she have garden events there?

G.T.: I don't think she had garden events.

H.T.: I don't know. You see, we were gone a long time.

Anson Blake's Business and California History Interests

Riess: It was twenty-five years that you were up in the mountains?

G.T.: Yes. Then we came down here in 1959, and Uncle Anson died in '59. She died in 1962, because we sold Blake Brothers Company in 1963.

H.T.: Every now and then we'd be down here, between jobs or something like that, and then we'd see them. It wasn't an absolute twenty-five years without seeing them.

G.T.: You saw a lot of her when she was ill, in the last years of her life. You were over there at least once a week.

H.T.: Oh, yes, I went over often.

Uncle Anson asked George to join the company a year before he died, and George said that he would after he finished a certain underground powerhouse that he was building for PG&E, and that's what he did. He quit PG&E and—

G.T.: Started to work for Blake Bros. But Uncle Anson was never there after I got there, he never went to the office except I think he was out there once—he was ill at the time. He said, "Did you settle with Henry—Henry was the president—how much your salary would be?" and I said yes and told him what it was. He said, "I don't believe you'll be worth it to the business."

Riess: But he was joking.

G.T.: No, he was not.

Riess: I think it's funny that he kept Anita so in the dark about the business.

G.T.: Women had no place in the business, I can tell you that.

H.T.: Well, you had a secretary.

G.T.: Oh, yes, a typist.

Riess: But Anita let him in on the gardening part. He was keen about the gardens, wasn't he?

H.T.: Oh, yes, bushes, that kind of plants, not necessarily flowering things.

G.T.: California shrubs. As for California history, he knew everything, he was marvelous. If you got him started talking about history,

G.T.: and about the early days, he was a marvelous storyteller.

H.T.: Yes, I suppose that's why I joined the California Historical Society.

G.T.: That's the reason I joined the Pioneers.

Riess: Why was he so interested in California history?

G.T.: He got it from his father. He gathered all the letters together that his father had sent back east, and edited quite a few of them and published them in the California Historical Society Journal. And then he had some of the diaries of the two fellows that came out with Grandfather. He didn't send those in because they were a little too frank.

Riess: It started out as an interest in family history? I suppose that's why people get into historical societies and so on.

G.T.: Yes. He always was interested in it, though. It started at a very young age—as far as I know.

H.T.: He wrote a lot of things.

G.T.: He wrote a few good books. He wrote a story about the early days in San Francisco, when he was young.

Riess: The letters that are too frank—?

G.T.: It was a diary that was too frank.

Riess: Too frank for what?

G.T.: Oh, they'd say they'd gotten drunk the night before and felt terrible. He didn't want anybody to know that about his father.

There was a good story my mother told me about Grandpa: When he came out here he wasn't going to stay, but of course he did, and he died out here. The people back east sent a preacher out here to look him up and report on him. This preacher never found Grandfather, but he found these really disreputable friends who'd say, "Oh, Charley Blake, sure, that old drunk," and this one guy told him some terrible stories about Grandpa, and he went back and reported what he'd learned. And Grandpa didn't know anything about this for years, and he wondered why his family and relatives back there were so cold toward him. Some years later he found out, but he never disillusioned them. Mother said, "But Papa, why didn't you tell them about this?" He said, "They wouldn't have believed me."

The Estate

H.T.: For a few years before, and after we moved to Orinda, Mrs. [Igor] Blake helped Aunt Anita buy her clothes.

When her younger sister Mabel Symmes died about a year before she did, her lawyer said that Aunt Anita had to make a will--she had not made a will.* She asked me to mark her possessions that she wanted to give to certain people. I went over every single day with a whole lot of tags and what-not, and then she couldn't talk. So except for certain things that she'd told me about before, I didn't find out anything else. Except the last day--I don't know how she could talk the last day--but evidently the day she died Dr. Christensen was there, and Aunt Anita asked her to write down certain things for certain members of the family.

So when the will came out I was willed all her personal possessions "knowing she would distribute them according to my wishes." [laughs] So that's all I had, with the doctor's list and what she had told me before. It was awful, dreadful, you just have no idea how hard that was. Well, her relatives were pretty feisty about things. The Thatcher and Blake families were reasonable, but they were certainly sort of mad about some of the things that the University took--like monogrammed silver.

Riess: It was the Symmeses that you're thinking of?

H.T.: Yes, the Symmeses were pretty hard, two nephews and a niece.

G.T.: They fought over everything.

H.T.: They fought over things among themselves.

Riess: You had to divide it between them and you?

H.T.: And Liz and Igor. Well, we got sort of mad because the rugs were Aunt Anita's mother-in-law's, and the monogrammed silver she'd inherited, and the University took that and the rugs. The interior decorator, a teacher at Cal, they called him "Duke" Wellington, he took a lot of things that really shouldn't have been taken.

Riess: How did that happen?

*For a further note on the will, see Appendices. Appendix W.

- H.T.: Mrs. Strong and Mrs. Kerr came in and we sorted out lots of things. I had a whole house of things to do, and I took the things to give to the people that the doctor had written down. It was very awkward.
- G.T.: "Personal effects" was what she said—jewelry is a personal effect. The lawyer said that in law a lot of things that I would have thought were personal effects, like monogrammed silver, were not, but I think the University got to the law firm that settled it, Chickering and Gregory—I'm sure they did.
- Riess: Chickering and Gregory were the Blakes' lawyers?
- G.T.: Yes.
- Riess: But they certainly are University-connected, you're perfectly right. Did anyone contest that?
- G.T.: No, of course not. It isn't worthwhile contesting.
- Riess: There is a copy of a will in the papers, and I don't know if it was Anita's or Mabel's, but there's a division of things among five members of the Symmes family.
- H.T.: That was all done for Miss Symmes.
- Riess: That was Miss Symmes' will, not Aunt Anita's then?
- G.T.: Yes.
- Riess: She had a woman doctor?
- H.T.: Yes. Dr. Christensen.
- Riess: That's interesting.
- G.T.: Good heavens yes! [laughs] I once asked her if Dr. [Wayne] Chesbro, who was Anson's doctor, was hers too. "Certainly not!" [laughs]
- Riess: Well, for someone who was active in the campaign against suffrage--
- G.T.: Was she?
- Riess: Apparently she was.
- H.T.: I didn't know that.
- Riess: Yes, and so was Anson. They gave a good deal of money to defeat suffrage.
- G.T.: I think that would make sense.

Riess: I'm thinking that a woman doctor is in what she may have thought to be a man's province.

G.T.: Maybe so, but you get a little intimate, and that was it.

Riess: That's nobody's province. [laughs] This business about the Taft bed—the family was very proud to be connected to the Tafts?

G.T.: Oh, yes. Grandma had him to lunch one time when he was President.

H.T.: Seems to me I remember something about the Taft bed, but I don't remember what.

G.T.: I don't remember about it either. Was that the four-poster?

H.T.: Yes, and they sent it up to Ohio.

Riess: It's interesting to hear that there was a beautiful piano. What are some of the other objects in the house that you think of right away when you think of the house?

G.T.: I think they're all still there.

H.T.: A lot of them are there. All the bedroom furniture went to the greatniece, Kuechler's girl. A piece of jewelry, white sapphire jewelry, that all the Symmeses fought about, I finally gave to Aunt Nita's niece, Carol Symmes Kuechler. I had to do something with it, we couldn't carve it in two like Solomon.

G.T.: She took it to a jeweler first, and he looked at it, and he said, "It's paste."

H.T.: That wasn't first, was it? Did I take it to the jeweler first?

G.T.: Yes.

H.T.: I know I learned it was paste.

G.T.: He said, "It's very good paste, but it's paste—Spanish paste—not sapphire." Good lord! It would have been priceless if it had been sapphire, it had stones all over it.

H.T.: It was an enormous broach.

G.T.: It was a necklace, wasn't it?

Riess: Did Anita wear it?

H.T.: No, I never saw it before, but that was one of her personal effects.

- H.T.: I gave to the University drama department hats, clothes, and shoes that they wished.
- Riess: Did you see Anson at Historical Society meetings? Did you go to meetings when he was there?
- H.T.: No.
- G.T.: No. I never did. I didn't join the Pioneers until after he died. I couldn't afford it.
- Riess: We talked about the Piedmont Avenue house. Did they bring furnishings from that house, do you know, in 1922?
- G.T.: I was seldom in Anson Blake's house. I did stay for a while with Uncle Ned. When this family got too big we overflowed into Uncle Ned's, but I was in Anson's house seldom. I wouldn't have noticed the furniture anyway.
- H.T.: I can tell you about some of the furniture that was in Grandma Blake's apartment. It had this big desk in here [referring to furniture in Thatcher living room], and this table, and—what else came from Grandma Blake's?
- G.T.: From Uncle Ned? Some of the rugs.
- H.T.: When Uncle Ned died he left some money, and Uncle Anson said, how would we like to take out our money in Uncle Ned's furniture? I said, "Marvelous!" So these chairs, that sideboard, this—
- G.T.: We got a lot of furniture. Helena picked it out. Also we got some rugs.
- H.T.: Yes, we got some rugs, that rug there.
- Riess: Did you take family portraits? Are any of the portraits around here from there?
- H.T.: That's my family.
- Riess: Your maiden name is Duryea.
- H.T.: Yes.
- Riess: From the east or from the west?
- H.T.: From west of the Hudson. You understand that that's not good, that's west. From Ithaca, New York State. My father was from Craigville, New York—I bet you don't know where that is.
- Riess: No.

G.T.: Orange County, Goshen, New York.

Riess: You've just come up with some more pictures; I want to see what you have there.

H.T.: Both of those are of Grandma Blake, Anson Stiles Blake's mother.

Riess: And this nice, fat baby?

H.T.: Yes, that's Aunt Harriet Carson Blake. And this is Grandpa Blake, Charles Thompson Blake.

Riess: Well, now that looks like the sort of person who settled the west.

G.T.: He was.

Riess: Tell me more about him.

G.T.: I don't know too much about him, actually. I know he was blind as a bat, terribly near-sighted. He wore glasses when he was five years old. They didn't know he was near-sighted, but he put on somebody's glasses who was also near-sighted, and he said, "I can see the leaves on the trees!"

H.T.: Did you know anything about the Tajo Mine?

Riess: No.

G.T.: That wasn't the Blakes', that was Grandma Stiles', I guess. That was a mine in Mexico that they invested in that paid off. According to Igor it was the basis of their capital. Tajo is the Spanish word for "deep." The mine's gone now, flooded and caved-in.

Looking At Photographs--Memories

H.T.: These are all of Uncle Anson, I think. George's mother said he grew a beard because he had a very little chin.

G.T.: That's right.

Riess: What's the key that he is wearing here in this 1954 picture?

G.T.: I don't know. I think it's just a watch fob.

Riess: In 1897 he had no beard, and whenever this was taken he'd gotten a mustache with a little waxed curly tip on it.

- H.T.: This is another one of Grandpa Blake when he was older. I presume you saw that at Igor's.
- Riess: I haven't been to Igor's, and he didn't bring it with him. Oh, this is Asa Waters [grandfather of Harriet Water Stiles]. And then you have this collection of letters and articles.
- H.T.: These are articles that he wrote.
- Riess: "The California Centennials," "The Hudson's Bay Company in San Francisco," "A San Francisco Boyhood," "Berkeley in Retrospect."
- G.T.: He would have been twelve or fourteen when he moved there.
- Riess: "My San Francisco," "The Land on Which We Live."
- G.T.: He wrote a lot of things, and he wrote well.
- Riess: Did he do that at home or in his office?
- G.T.: I don't know.
- Riess: California Historical Society luncheon program, where he is the speaker on "California Life in the Mines, 1851-1852." That would have been a research paper?
- G.T.: No, I think that was probably mostly based on Grandpa Blake's letters.
- Riess: These are interesting little [1 3/4 inch by 2 1/2 inch] photographs; what were these for?
- H.T.: Isn't that wonderful--that top hat there--I don't know. There are no dates on it.
- G.T.: He had thousands of photographs in that house, none of which had the names or the dates on them.
- H.T.: Igor and Liz and George and myself and one of the Symmeses were over here; there were people we'd never seen, and the photographs were certainly not dated.
- G.T.: They had no names on them, either. They said that Uncle Anson, if you asked him who they were, would tell you not only the last name but the first and middle and what they did. But he wasn't alive then.
- Riess: "Seventy Letters of Charles Thompson Blake, Mostly to His Parents, from Nicaragua, California, Oregon Territory." [1849-1864]

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H.T.: The handwritten originals are in the California Historical Society. I did that because I thought that that's where Uncle Anson would want them. As a matter of fact, I was terribly surprised that they weren't already there. I was surprised to find a hand-written holograph at Blake House.

Ties with the University

H.T.: I don't remember what arrangements were made about giving the house and garden to the University.

G.T.: Oh, he gave it before he died.

Riess: In 1957 it was given over.

G.T.: They had a life tenancy. He was delighted to do that because it was a tremendously valuable piece of property and his estate was very short of cash--all he had was the quarry. You couldn't have sold that for what it was worth, and you couldn't have realized what it would have been appraised for, and the tax on it would have been prohibitive in those days.

Riess: Did the University compensate them in some way during their life?

G.T.: Oh, no. He was delighted he gave it, and they took it without an endowment. He wanted to keep it the way it was, too, especially Aunt Anita did, after all the time she'd spent there.

Riess: Had they been very close to the University? Had they had a lot of ties with it?

G.T.: He had a lot of ties with Stiles Hall, and with the University. She was good friends with Willis Lynn Jepson, who wrote the book about flowering plants of California. I know he used to go to dinner because I met him there one time. Before we were married.

Riess: Did you ever meet any of the students who apparently lived with them periodically?

G.T.: Yes, I certainly did, and I couldn't tell you their names or anything about them, but I know there were some that I would see once in a while.

H.T.: I remember a gardener they had. The University would have nothing to do with him. He was an Indian, and he was a wonderful shot. You could get a permit to shoot deer if they were ruining your

H.T.: garden and all that, which is what was happening. But the University didn't think much of him, and they got somebody who is still there, I guess.

Riess: Walter Vodden. He came in 1957 when the University acquired the grounds.

G.T.: I know he didn't know anything at first.

H.T.: No, he didn't. He studied every noon, and she said, "He doesn't know anything, but he's learning and he's trying," and she thought that was very good. But she liked her old American Indian because he got rid of the deer.

Riess: He didn't do it with a bow and arrow, did he?

H.T.: No, he didn't. He was a good shot.

H.T.: Aunt Anita and Miss Symmes gave me plants for this yard, mainly the clivia. I said I would never remember that name, and Aunt Anita said, "Just remember Lord Clive." I thought, "Why should I remember Lord Clive?" But I have never forgotten it.

G.T.: He was quite a famous man.

Riess: Did they come out to this place and help you decide what you should have here?

H.T.: Oh, yes, and Miss Mabel said, "Just shake all of those leaves down out of the poplars and take them and put them on your mulch and make a mulch pile as green as possible." Oh, yes, they came out. I wonder whether Uncle Anson ever came here.

G.T.: I don't think he did, no. He was too ill.

Riess: Did they actually dig things out to give to you?

H.T.: The gardener did, yes.

Riess: Well, thank you. Our tape is just coming to an end.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Elliot and Elizabeth Evans

FRIENDS OF THE BLAKES

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

ELLIOT A.P. EVANS

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

I interviewed Elliot and Elizabeth Evans in order to learn more about Anson Blake. Dark-suited, forever agelessly bearded, Anson Stiles Blake gazes pleasantly out of yellowing photographs. He was, by all reports, a good husband and a good businessman, and a good friend of the University of California. The family rock-quarrying business engaged him, but he joined in his wife's interests in gardens. He and his wife Anita loved each other dearly, as testified to by their letters in The Bancroft Library. They gardened together on weekends. He pursued family history and California history. He was a lifelong supporter and member of the board of Stiles Hall. But throughout the oral history he gets overlooked: Mrs. Blake and the Gardens steal the show.

Fallacious as such conclusions might be, they were good reasons to seek out as interviewees men friends or acquaintances of Anson Blake's. But that was difficult to do for a man who died in 1959 at a fine old age. If I could find some member of the Society of California Pioneers or the California Historical Society who recalled earlier years of those groups and could tell us how engaged Anson Blake was with them--he was the author of many papers read to the latter society--it would color in the picture somewhat. Elliot Evans, curator of the art collection at the Society of California Pioneers, was recommended for an interview.

I met with Elliot Evans and his wife Elizabeth at their ridgetop home in Orinda. Both of them had memories of the Blakes. Elizabeth Evans's mother, Mrs. Charles Janin, had been a friend of the young Anita Blake and a member of the Fortnightly Club, of which Anita was a founding member. The Fortnightly Club had been mentioned by Gladys Wickson in her "In Memoriam" piece written for the California Historical Society Quarterly and I wished to know more about it. Thanks to leads from Mr. and Mrs. Evans, this interview and the appendices that follow include notes on the club.

Mr. Evans's health was not good, and it took some arranging to find a day that was just right for interviewing. But with the help of the Evans's daughter everyone was comfortably arranged around a table and the recollections flowed. As Mrs. Evans said, "The visit with you made a very pleasant interlude in our day...we are happy that we could add a few 'crumbs' to your research project."

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 29, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Elliot Arthur Powell Evans

Date of birth Sept 2, 1907 Birthplace Santa Cruz

Father's full name Samuel Arthur Evans

Occupation City Clerk + Treasurer Birthplace England

Mother's full name Sarah Maud McKay

Occupation Housewife milliner Birthplace Santa Cruz

Your spouse Elizabeth Janin Evans

Your children Carol Elizabeth ^{Ibald} Edith Ann ^{Evans} Allison Jan

Where did you grow up? Santa Cruz

Present community Drinda

Education MA PhD Stanford Art History

Occupation(s) College Professor - Curator

Areas of expertise Art in Calif -

Other interests or activities Gardening -

Organizations in which you are active Society Calif Pioneers
Oakland Museum

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Elizabeth Janin Evans
Date of birth Sept 4, 1909 Birthplace Berkeley
Father's full name Charles Henry Janin
Occupation Mining Engineer Birthplace Berkeley
Mother's full name Erwin a Dunbar Smith in Janin
Occupation housewife Birthplace Berkeley
Your spouse Elliot Arthur P. Evans
Your children Carol Ann Ibold (d) Edith Ann Evans
(Frances) Allison James
Where did you grow up? Bay Area
Present community Orinda
Education Mills College SF State

Occupation(s) Taught school till husband had job
in Colorado, Boulder University)
Areas of expertise

Other interests or activities interested in antiques -
mental health

Organizations in which you are active Till husband's illness -
Mills College Remembrance Store - Daughters of Caly Pioneers

Anson Blake and the Society of California Pioneers

[Date of Interview: April 1, 1987]

Riess: I've come to talk to you about Anson Blake because I understand you worked at the Society of California Pioneers. When was that?

Evans: There's a tiny story there, I suspect. When did I go to work for the society, Mama?

Mrs. E.: I have a blank on that.

Riess: What were you doing before that?

Evans: I taught at Santa Barbara and at the University of Colorado, art history and so on.

But the story I was thinking of was that Mr. Blake had a preference in favor of two-and-a-half percent American treasury bonds for the Society of Pioneers' income fund. Well, that produced just half the interest they were capable of, and it seemed very wasteful, and the board really forced the issue. He promptly resigned and never went back. It was too bad because we all liked him, were very fond of him.

Riess: That's a man of great principle?

Evans: In the first place, it wasn't his money, it was the society's money. No one ever did discover, including myself, after a diligent search of my uncle's quirks, why he too liked those two-and-a-half percent bonds--because he had the same, and I did his affairs when he was infirm. Why didn't Uncle [Reginald Bertram] approve of the five percents, Mama?

Mrs. E.: Was it the length of holding?

Evans: I don't think I ever found out.

Riess: I've entertained and enlightened myself by spending the morning reading some of Anson's writings. His father took him, when he was four years old, in 1874, to a celebration of the twenty-fourth anniversary of the admission of California to the union. It was a Society of California Pioneers excursion on the bay. Anson said there was, as in all subsequent events, an abundance of food, more bottles on the table than plates, and afterwards a good deal of oratory. I would really love your recollections of the earliest kinds of events that the Society had, and what the quality of that oratory was.

Evans: I don't know; I wasn't connected that early. See, I'm an honorary member. I became one of the rare things, which is an honorary member.

Mrs. E.: It must have been in the sixties.

Riess: That means you don't have to have been a Californian by birth?

Evans: Yes, you don't have to have it because you've already got it. They've always been pretty careful about their membership.

Mrs. E.: You did go on a lot of their excursions, didn't you?

Evans: No, because in my time there weren't so many.

Riess: You were in charge of pictures at the Society?

Evans: Oh, yes.

Riess: What does that mean?

Evans: Curator sort of thing.

Riess: People would give their collections to the Society.

Evans: Yes, and I looked after 126 collections and the exhibits and so on. We also had the librarian, who was Mrs. Helen Giffen, such a remarkable person. She knew them well, because she had--is Helen a hundred?

Mrs. E.: No, not that old, but she's going along I know.

Riess: Was Anson Blake coming to meetings when you had your job as curator?

Evans: No, I can't remember that he came to a single meeting after that difference over the percentage point.

Riess: In what year did that difference occur?

- Evans: It was the year that Ed Keil was elected president. [Keil president 1948-1952] His brother was also president, so it would be the Ed Keil connection there, because I don't think Mr. Blake really cared very much for Mr. Keil.
- Riess: Had Mr. Blake been a real leader of the Society up to that point?
- Evans: I'd say a sitter, rather, [laughs] and that's what blew the fuse over the finances.
- Riess: In other words, he wasn't pushing the organization forward.
- Evans: He was just like my uncle, who had, for his retirement, a damn poor portfolio. It was topping off at around fifty thousand, when with a few gentle scratches of the pen we got a quarter of a million out of it. He had just sat, as Mr. Blake had, on the most comfortable things--except handling the scissors for clippings was not convenient, his rheumatism was a little troublesome. [laughter]. But it seems to me that Mr. Blake never came back after they voted to loosen up on the two-and-a-halves.

Mr. Blake was very much more a solid businessman than my uncle was, and they were well known to be leaving the University a bite, which they did. There is a little incident there: How in the hell I happened to get there in the garden on the morning Anson got his honorary doctorate [September 29, 1958], I don't know. That's cloudy. But I was there. When I got admitted--we never went in the house, you wandered around the yard where it was flat--Mrs. Blake said, "Dr. Evans, have you greeted Dr. Blake this morning?" I said, "No, I haven't seen him, but I was looking for him." She said, "Well, he is--" wherever he was. I said, "Well, I think it's just very, very nice for him," because I had recently gone over the things that had happened to him.

Mrs. Blake said, "Well, they didn't hurry it, Anson will be ninety at his next birthday"--or something of that sort. She was not bitter--but I couldn't say I blamed her much because the Blakes had given to the museum and University, and I guess the municipality too.

- Riess: Did the Blakes give any of their pictures to the Society of California Pioneers?
- Evans: I can't remember.
- Riess: These papers I have, Anson's writings, some of them were printed for the California Historical Society Quarterly, so clearly that's where they appeared. But some of the other typescripts--did the Society of California Pioneers have it's own quarterly or publications?

- Evans: Yes, from time to time, and I suppose he must have written for that.
- Riess: Was that something that the members did, assign themselves to do a report on some subject?
- Evans: I don't think so. I can't recall anything of the sort.
- Riess: The impression that I'm getting is that there was a lot of good fellowship and food in the Society of California Pioneers, whereas the historical society was more academic?
- Evans: I think so. The Pioneers liked a good table, and a good bottle, but so did the California Historical Society. [laughter]
- Mrs. E.: They shared the same building for a while.
- Evans: Oh, for years.
- Riess: So what niches did they occupy that were separate? What did they stand for, each of them?
- Evans: The Society of California Pioneers was much less taken with its historical mission, I think. You had to be born with it. The Historical Society was always a little--I shouldn't say pushy, that isn't the right term--concerned over its historical reputation. And I should say that Anita and Mabel, her sister, were concerned for it.
- Riess: Other than being a Californian, did you have to have money or a certain social class to be a Pioneer?
- Evans: No. You had to be reputable, I guess, and that was expected. Elizabeth's rife with it, their family in all directions is eligible, but mine's not, I'm only honorary.

Family Friendship with the Blakes

- Riess: When did you meet Mr. Blake?
- Evans: Along with Mama, in 1957. They were friends of her [indicates wife] parents.
- Riess: [to Mrs. Evans] Your parents?
- Mrs. E.: My mother [Mrs. Charles Janin], who was brought up on Claremont Avenue near the Blakes, lived in Berkeley. She also had known Mrs. Blake as a young girl, I believe. Didn't you know them beforehand, Elliot?

Evans: I may have met them through Aunt Mary [Mrs. George R. Greenleaf].

When our daughter Caroline [Carol Elizabeth Ibold] gave us our twenty-first anniversary party she asked the Blakes, and Mrs. Blake said she'd be delighted to come. Some of Anson's relatives were visiting at the moment, so Caroline said, "Bring them." Turned out it was their sixty-third anniversary--and our twenty-first. (We were then living in a hovel over on Parkside, in Berkeley. We've had much pleasanter places since then.) So the Blakes came.

Mrs. E.: Did Joseph Ewan know the Blakes?

Evans: Certainly, and Mrs. Blake's sister, because of their botanist friends.

Riess: Who is this person you mentioned?

Mrs. E.: This was Joseph Ewan. He's quite a well-known botanist. I know he must have spent quite a bit of time with them.

Riess: At what occasions would you see Anita Blake?

Evans: Oh, like at his sixty-third wedding anniversary, our own party.

Why did I meet them?

Mrs. E.: Did you meet them through Joe [Ewan] maybe?

Evans: No, I think I had met Miss Symmes through Joe, but that was later. When Auntie Helen's granddaughter Barbara Bachman got married, "I got stuck with Anita." We always got along nicely, if somewhat slowly. [laughs].

Riess: Your little asides need explaining.

Evans: She was making her way rather tortuously up the stairs, the brick steps on the front porch, and I said to her, "Can you use an arm, Mrs. Blake?" I knew damn well what she needed was a wheelchair. I was wondering what was going to come of that. She said, "Yes," wheezily, "Anson is so independent in these matters." I had merely grabbed hold of the old lady, knowing she was ninety, and feeling that she needed a chair for the ringside activities which she was certainly entitled to witness.

Riess: And Anson had charged up ahead?

Evans: He had abandoned her completely. She was so cute and with such dignity and apparently no hard feelings. "Anson is just that way on such occasions." I think I must have witnessed a similar thing

- Evans: on a different occasion, because over the years we have been living north, as it were, his independence was always noticeable, if not conspicuous.
- Riess: Yes, what were you impressions of him?
- Evans: Well, in the first place I guess I liked Anita better. I found Mr. Anson a little stuffy, and Mabel very pleasant. But they were really always so nice, and they were patient. Our children were very fond of them, as little kids, and Blake was a name to be considered favorably.
- Riess: Were you ever invited to garden parties up at the house?
- Evans: Yes, Edith [daughter, Edith Ann Evans] says we were, and on occasion she recalls the sprinkler system got turned on and sent everybody scurrying for cover. I don't remember that at all, do you, Mama?
- Mrs. E.: I don't. I think sometimes you might have gone when I didn't go.
- Evans: We went sometimes I think with Erwina [Mrs. Charles Janin] because she always enjoyed going—Erwina being Mama's [Elizabeth Evans] mother, and friend of Anita's and Anson's.
- Mrs. E.: Mrs. Blake was very kind and invited us up to have tea very shortly after my mother passed away. I thought that was a very kind thing to do because it was nothing one felt like doing in a moment of sadness.

The Fortnightly Club*

- Riess: Was Mrs. Blake connected then with the town and gown of Berkeley?
- Mrs. E.: I think she was mostly, as my mother was, in a circle of old friends.
- Evans: See, their people had lived in Berkeley since the early 1850s.
- Mrs. E.: Might have been in Fortnightly Club.
- Riess: She was one of the founders of it. I'm so glad you brought that up. What was that?

*Additional material on Fortnightly Club in Appendices, K, L.

- Mrs. E.: It was a club of rather intelligent women, I believe, and they met fortnightly. It was mostly old-time Berkeley people. They had plays, readings, that kind of thing--it was intellectual. Didn't you speak to them one time, Elliot?
- Evans: Yes, I was just beginning to remember that I did. I don't know what about or when, but I think we were living south then.
- Riess: I thought the Fortnightly Club was a San Francisco group, but you're saying it was Berkeley.*
- Mrs. E.: Yes, it was Berkeley, definitely Berkeley.
- Riess: Berkeley town?
- Mrs. E.: Berkeley town, I believe. It might have had its base in Anna Head School graduates, or some of them might have been women that attended Cal early, too--I know my mother did early--it might have been based on that.
- Riess: Do you think they would discuss political issues? Or was it more literary?
- Mrs. E.: I have a feeling they wouldn't have discussed political issues too much. I think in those days people didn't bring up political feelings with friends.
- Riess: I was wondering, for instance, whether these women might then have become suffragists, eventually.
- Mrs. E.: [laughs] I don't think so, they were more or less a passive type of people. Was it Miss Locke who was a dramatic person--that type? She often gave readings, things like that.

*"A year after her marriage, Anita was one of the seven "organizers" of the Fortnightly Club of San Francisco. Twenty years was the minimum age limit and the membership was limited to sixty in addition to honorary members. The "objects" of the Fortnightly Club were "mutual sympathy and counsel in all further development," and were to be carried out "under the direction of sections." Included were such studies as French, English, history of religions, music, and art. One program, two years after the founding of the club, was to be devoted to a debate: "Resolved that study and society are compatible." Apparently the affirmative won, because the club continued its existence for some decades, Anita and her co-organizers bearing witness to a thoroughly flourishing "compatibility." (Gladys Wickson, in California Historical Society Quarterly "In Memoriam," Vol 42, No. 2, June 1963, p. 178.)

- Riess: Your mother and Anita--can you think of the names of any other women who were part of that group?
- Mrs. E.: There was Mrs. [George R.] Greenleaf, but she became a member later, didn't she?
- Evans: Yes, because she lived down in San Jose.
- Mrs. E.: But maybe when she was first married she was in Berkeley. Her daughter is living, and she was a member of the Fortnightly. She's in Sacramento now, Frances Helmke. She might be able to tell you quite a bit about all that.
- Riess: I wonder if they kept minutes, and whether all of those minutes were put anywhere.
- Evans: They'd be in Bancroft, it seems to me, if anywhere.
- Riess: Do you know why it ended, whether it became something else, whether it drifted into being another group?
- Mrs. E.: No, it definitely ended, and we had one of the last meetings at our Parkside home. My aunt was a member, and by the time my mother passed away the membership was dwindling, and the people were elderly, and it was quite a chore to entertain. She asked me if I would do it for her--she was in an apartment then. So we had them over for their last meeting, and I don't think they continued. Mrs. Elizabeth Malozemoff, I remember she was a member too. She was taken in more recently than some of the others, and so was my aunt, Miss Annabelle Carney. I think she hoped that maybe they'd pick up new members and keep on going, but I think it just kind of petered out.

Transcriber: Johanna Wolgast
Final Typist: Shannon Page

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Louis Stein

THE BLAKES AND THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1986

Louis Stein, hand on the Berkeley horsecar that was in the backyard until acquisition in 1987 by the Society of California Pioneers.

Photograph by Suzanne Riess

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

This short interview is quite literally excerpts transcribed from a tape of conversation with Kensington, Berkeley, and El Cerrito's font of local history, railroad buff, and general community resource, Louis Stein.

Mr. Stein and I met at his home where he had at hand a part of his treasury of maps and scrapbooks dating back sixty years or more. Frustrating as it was for him not to have everything to turn to--he has given some of his collection to the Contra Costa Historical Society--it was probably just as well we didn't have more data! It was his memories I was after.

What I wanted to tape was Mr. Stein's recollections of the people who lived at Blake House. Perhaps Mrs. Blake or her sister Mabel Symmes had visited Louis Stein's Kensington pharmacy on Arlington Avenue, or he could recall the conversations he had with his comrade-in-devotion-to-California-history, Anson Blake. My questions led off into interesting tangents, and while there were not quite the anecdotes that Mr. Stein and I would have wished, there is a feeling of what the small town of Kensington was like in the early years, and the involvement of Anson Blake in the community.

Elsewhere, in the Contra Costa Historical Association and Berkeley Historical Association archives, and in the Berkeley Architectural History Association files, Mr. Stein has answered the Who? What? Where? How? and Why? questions of generations of students of local history, from grade school to graduate school. His collection of historical photographs is well known. When he and I reviewed the transcript after his editing we were seated in the office of the director of The Bancroft Library, where Mr. Stein was warmly greeted by friends who know him and his admirable archives.

Mr. Stein's home is on a very ample lot in Kensington. My photograph of him on board his streetcar hadn't been planned--he was ready to give me the photograph, included, of Anson Blake and himself at the historical society meeting--but I had my camera, and when we were taking a look outside, after the interview, at his trees and his garden, he asked whether I'd like to see what was housed in the rather large shed in the back part of the property. It was a streetcar! This streetcar has since been donated by Mr. Stein to the Society of California Pioneers. And so, the photograph of the streetcar, the man, and the garden now constitutes another piece of history.

Suzanne B. Riess
InterviewerEditor

November 11, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name LOUIS L. STEIN Jr

Date of birth Aug 21 1902 Place of birth Berkeley Cal

Father's full name Louis Lorenz Stein

Birthplace Germany

Occupation Butcher FARMER

Mother's full name Dorothea Reismann

Birthplace Oberjossa Germany

Occupation House wife Millinery

Where did you grow up ? North Berkeley

Present community Berkeley

Education Chemistry San Francisco
2 years at Cal Berkeley One year Pharmacy School S

Registered Pharmacist Drug STORE OWNER 40 years

Occupation(s) Farmer, Drugstore Owner

Special interests or activities History ,of Pharmacy, Railroads, Berkely
Contra Costa County, California. Gave Drugstore at Columbia Sta
Boble Grand Fumbug Yerba Buena Chapter E CLAMPUS VITUS Park.
JOHN MUIR HISTORICAL NATIONAL SITE MARTINEZ CAL.
RESTORED VICENTE MARTINEZ ADOBE MAERTINEZ. Cal.

Excerpts from a Conversation about the Blakes in Kensington

[Date of Interview: December 10, 1986]

Riess: You said on the phone that you used to drive Anson Blake to meetings on occasion.

Stein: Here's a picture taken in 1958. We went to the famous Paul's Restaurant in Martinez. This picture shows myself, Justice Bray, George Harding, past president of the California Historical Society, and Anson Blake. I don't recall just what that talk was about, but I took him to many regular meetings of the Contra Costa Historical Society, he and George Louderback usually. Louderback was from the geology department, and they were classmates at the University of California.

We used to enjoy talking and reminiscing about early Berkeley. (I happen to have been born myself in Berkeley.) I also have pictures from when Mrs. Stein and I purchased the Martinez adobe, which is now part of the John Muir complex [John Muir National Historic Site], and we had a dedication of the plaque on the building. Mr. Louderback was there; also Anson Blake. I have some beautiful shots, but they're over there now in the Contra Costa County Historical Center—we call it the library—in Pleasant Hill.

Riess: Was Anson Blake very scholarly?

Stein: Yes, very scholarly. A very quiet man, very quiet. But he could give you lots of information about early Contra Costa County. He told me about purchasing the Schmidt and Fink tract down in El Cerrito. And there is a street in El Cerrito, out near Potrero Avenue, called Blake Street after him. This was in 1894, the first subdivision in El Cerrito. [looking at subdivision map Stein unrolls] He later had his quarry out there.

Riess: In 1894 he was quite a young man, twenty-four.

Stein: This date, 1894, is the Schmidt and Fink tract. Later he went in with George Schmidt and purchased most of this tract here. That's where the famous French Lafayette Park was located, a very popular picnic ground. [continue to look at map and discuss turn of the century El Cerrito]

This is Moeser Lane, and this is Fink Lane. I went to high school with Mr. Fink's daughter. It's now called Portola. They didn't like the name [Fink]. It wasn't unionized. [laughter] Here's Schmidt Lane, named after George Schmidt. His family came to Berkeley in the 1860s and got a lot of the Domingo Peralta land down by Sacramento Street. They were in the construction work, building streets, and they had a quarry up on Grizzly Peak when I was a boy.

Riess: Was Anson Blake a good investor? Was this a good investment on his part?

Stein: Well, you can see here that in 1894 the lots sold for \$375. But he just speculated. Maybe he was interested in the quarry. There's a quarry up on the top of the hill there. It was Hutchison Quarry.

Riess: I wonder if he studied geology.

Stein: I don't know. I have an old Blue and Gold, and I see he was interested in sports. Usually was the manager or something. Edwin Blake, his brother, was the athlete, and Anson was the engineer. Ed was the more loquacious one than Anson. Anson was very quiet until you got to know him.

Riess: Did he always have a beard?

Stein: All the time that I knew him.

He got me to join the California Historical Society, and I've been a member over thirty-five years. I used to go once a month over to the Palace Hotel where they had their luncheons at that time.

Riess: How did you first meet Anson Blake?

Stein: Oh, through my drugstore. I had a drugstore in 1928. Down in Kensington. I was the second businessman out here. It was the Arlington Pharmacy, Louis B. Stein. (My Kensington book is out at the Contra Costa Historical Society. I just loaned it to them to copy.)

[discussion of early railroads in Berkeley-El Cerrito area, 1890s, and where the rail ran through property in the Schmidt and Fink tract that was owned by Anson Blake]

Riess: You met Mr. Blake because of the pharmacy. He and Mrs. Blake used it?

Stein: Yes. And Mrs. Blake, his mother, was still alive, and she had a chauffeur who had been a delivery man for Sills Grocery Store, which was a very fine grocery store, like the Goldberg Bowen Store [San Francisco].

Riess: Where was Sills?

Stein: The corner of Allston Way and Shattuck. Later the location of Edy's, the creamery.

The chauffeur would drive her around in a nice, fancy car. Then when the Depression came along he [Anson] drove an old Dodge-- we had one too--one of these old four-wheel hard Dodges that you couldn't wear out. And you'd see him every morning driving to his quarry out in Richmond.

Riess: Were the Blakes a real part of the Kensington community?

Stein: Yes, they were. They were very interested in politics. Later he got control of the cemetery [Sunset Cemetery]. He got there because of keeping up the roads and selling them aggregates and so on. Anson did, and Ed.

[looking at a 1936 map that shows the Blake lands in Kensington] E.T. Blake, Ed Blake, had 11.9 acres; R.P. Blake, 9.926; E.B. Thacher. And then here's Anita Blake.

Riess: Why is this land in Anita's name and not in Anson's name?

Stein: I don't know. Maybe it was homesteaded. They homestead it to the woman, and they can't sue them if anyone tries to take it away from them. That's the Homestead Law. The wife can be assigned a property and nobody can seize it for debts or anything. Could have been that. He was a smart fellow.

And this shows how the Sunset Cemetery was located. That swung along Franciscan Way up to the E.B. Thacher part here. This part, after they developed it after the War Number Two, was known as Blakemont. It was all subdivided, and it was very poor land, kind of clay and big boulders in it and so on. And it had all these wet spots on it. It had been a cattle ranch. A man named John M. Balra had a dairy there.*

*Recalling the spring day in 1922 when the family went out to choose the site of their new home in Kensington, Mrs. Blake wrote that the property at that time "was a mile from where the little street car ended, and it was open land, largely pasture land, but sloping down

Riess: Did Anson have to do with locating the Sunset Cemetery there?

Stein: I don't know. I do know he sold them the aggregates and so on.

Riess: Back to Anson Blake's historical society interests. He was involved in Contra Costa?

Stein: Yes.

The California Historical Society met where the Society of California Pioneers met--there weren't too many--and then Mr. George Harding came along and they bought the Whittier Mansion where they are now.

Riess: And did Anson discuss any of the talks he gave with you?

Stein: No, he didn't like to show off. A very quiet man. Shy.

Riess: Was it that they were quiet, or were they rather above things?

Stein: No, no, just shy. Ed [Edwin] was the more outgoing one. He was younger and he ran the plant out there. He did all the engineering and so on and so forth.

Riess: Did the two of them, Anson and Edwin, go to work together?

Stein: I don't recall. I imagine Ed went separately, because he might have to take his car to go to downtown Oakland. You see, the original quarry was Blake and Bilger, across from Oakland Technical High School, where the big shopping center is there now [Rockridge]. There was a big canyon there, a big lake in there where the old quarry was, that was called Blake and Bilger Quarry.

from the top of the ridge above us to the more level land below. It was bounded by two little lines of drainage, really streams at that time, and there were wild flowers everywhere: houses were not in sight. Down below we faced El Cerrito, that big mound on the shoreline, with an adobe of the Castro family which was still there. Down at the foot of the grade not far away was the 'metanza', a slaughtering field for the cattle owned by the Spaniards. Along our southern stream was a trail...followed by the coyotes...When we got there we heard almost the last howls of the coyotes. There were not many left, but everything else was left, and it seemed as though we would never have a garden." [From Blake House files]

Riess: What were your impressions of Anita Blake?

Stein: Oh, she was very quiet. But later I got better acquainted, after Anson passed away. They had prescriptions at the drugstore, and they had a Chinese cook, and the Chinese cook had a young boy who they sent to the local schools there, sent him through school. And during the Depression he had one niece living there--her married name was Hooper. She had a little Ford coupe that she used to go to Cal in, a little Model A. She'd stop in the store all the time.

And there was a nephew there, a relative there who was in the lighting business. Is there a Day Lighting Co. in San Francisco? He had something to do with that. And they all lived out there with them during the Depression. All lovely people, very friendly.

They had a man out there named Mr. [George] Isola who was sort of the groundskeeper. He lived on Temescal, in north Oakland, and came out to work. He'd water down the old macadamized road, and it would get dusty every day. You always wondered why he didn't ever pave it with tar, so it wouldn't be dusty all the time. [laughter] Of course Anson was in the rock business, see!

I've been into the house. Of course you had that beautiful Italian pool there, in front of the place. And he planted all those redwood trees there. That beautiful grove.

Riess: Yes, but I think of it as her doing, not his.

Stein: Probably Anita.

When I was at the house I found a lot of stationery. I don't know why I didn't keep it. She corresponded with different flower groups, getting seeds. And Anson also had a privilege of getting from the United States Agricultural Department, or whatever it was, all the new, exotic plants as soon as they came out. They farmed them out, to see how they would grow.

Riess: Where did you see the correspondence?

Stein: I think in some old letters laying around. There was stuff there in his old library that I went through with the groundskeeper. He was just watchman for the place, a very friendly fellow. This was after they had died. He had a German name, as I remember. [Walter Vodden]

Riess: Apparently she had gotten seeds from many people. There would have been a lot of correspondence.

Stein: That's right. I remember it there, but I never had sense enough to keep it.

Riess: Was this in a library, or in her bedroom?

Stein: A library. It was on the east side, and there were a lot of glass doors there in front of it. Books and so on, and all kinds of papers lying there. There was a lot of stuff just laying there. They just didn't want it. But everything was gone, except some stuff in piles there. They had weeded through it. All of those letters--most of them addressed to Miss Symmes.

She [Miss Symmes] showed me--they had a cactus garden just below the house, where it was sunny, the south side, and there were all these quail down in there, lots of birds and so on. But kids would get in there, and they finally put in a cyclone fence around it that went all the way down to Franciscan Way. [Mr. Stein also noted that a nephew, Lester Symmes, lived with the Blakes in the 1950s.]

Riess: Who did they socialize with in Kensington?

Stein: Anson knew Walter Baxter very well, who ran the cemetery. The Baxters were very close to the Blakes. Anything that Anson wanted--Kensington was unincorporated then, and they wanted to take the cemetery in, for taxes I dare say. So Anson would get into a little politics once in a while.

Riess: Apparently Anson spent a lot of time, early in his career--before they moved to Kensington--in Venice, in the Delta.

Stein: I know that the Napoleon Byrne family was in Venice. They owned Venice Island and lost their shirt on account of the flood. They had a beautiful house in north Berkeley up on Oxford Street, just caught fire, the oldest house in Berkeley. [discussions of oil speculations in Wildcat Canyon, ca. 1906]

Riess: I'm interested in the names on this map of owners of land adjacent to the Blakes in Kensington. Here we have Stebbins.

Stein: That's Lucy Stebbins.

Riess: Did they live up there?

Stein: No, it was an empty tract for a long time, and then it was sold to the Mormon Church around the late 1960s. They were going to put a church out on that hunk of land there. It was very poor land, very unsteady land. There have been a few houses put up there now.

And this is Reverend Westwood. He was with the Episcopal Church.

Riess: And Annie Maybeck. The wife of Bernard Maybeck.

Stein: The Maybecks owned land up along the ridge there, the extension of Purdue Avenue, and they would sell you a lot, but you had to have a house that he would design. One of those houses out there is made of slabs of concrete with rice hulls in it, and it has a tin roof on it. It's still there.

Transcriber: Suzanne Riess
Final Typist: Elizabeth Eshleman

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Clark and Kay Kerr

THE BLAKES'S GIFT TO THE UNIVERSITY, 1957-1963

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

Clark Kerr with the family at home in El Cerrito. *Left to right:* Kay Kerr with Caroline; Clark E.; Alexander, on chair with Clark. March 1952.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

When I was planning the Blake House Oral History Project I looked forward to linking three University of California presidents' wives in the story: Libby Gardner, the wife of the present President David P. Gardner, whose enthusiasm for the Blake House got the oral history project going; Nancy Hitch, whose devotion to remodelling, and residence in the house with President Charles Hitch, gave it the face it has today; and Kay Kerr, who championed the house's role as a gracious residence for graduate women in the interim between the demise of the Blakes and the advent of the Hitches.

I met with President Emeritus Clark Kerr and Mrs. Kerr at their home in El Cerrito, about a mile north of Blake House's Kensington address. The Kerrs' is a big, generously-situated modern house of the California indoor-outdoor living school, and they have always preferred, when chancellor and wife, or president and wife, to live there rather than in the official residences--University House, or Blake House.

Dr. Kerr opened the interview with his recollections of visiting Blake House with Mrs. Kerr in 1958. They were the guests of Anson and Anita Blake at tea. The Kerrs remember a pleasant meeting at which a gentleman's agreement was reached as to how the University of California would handle such a gift as the Blake Estate. But four years later, after Anita Blake's death in 1962 when the property came to the University, the house that seemed dark and conservative-looking at that afternoon tea was revealed more accurately to be dilapidated. And the job fell to Mrs. Kerr to do something about it.

After Dr. Kerr left for his office on campus, Mrs. Kerr and I continued our interview, talking further about her response to Blake House, and she gave some background on her role as president's wife in the early 1960s in seeing to completion the creation of appropriate housing for chancellors on the expanding campuses of the University of California. For the story of how the Prytanean Alumnae group took on the project of using Blake House as a women's residence, she referred me to Janice Kittredge, and an interview with Mrs. Kittredge follows.

Busy in those years as president's wife, travelling from campus to campus, Mrs. Kerr was helped greatly by Maggie Johnston, who brought imagination and zip and the proverbial Old Blue Cal spirit to her job as assistant to the president's wife. Between Kay Kerr and Janice Kittredge's interviews, Maggie Johnston and the projects she dreamed up are vividly recalled. Indeed, one of the intentions of President and Mrs. Gardner in initiating the oral history series was to have Maggie Johnston interviewed, but she died before the interviews actually started. It requires no reading

between the lines of the Kerr and Kittredge interviews to see how important Maggie Johnston was to the presidents' wives. The notion of grace and graciousness ties her to Blake House history.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 29, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Clark Kerr

Date of birth May 17, 1911 Birthplace Reading, Penn.

Father's full name Samuel William Kerr

Occupation teacher - farm adviser Birthplace Pennsylv.

Mother's full name Caroline Clark Kerr

Occupation housewife Birthplace New York state

Your spouse Catherine Kerr

Your children Clark Edgar, Alexander William, Caroline Mary

Where did you grow up? Berks County, Pennsylvania

Present community El Cerrito - Berkeley

Education see WHO's WHO and University files.

Occupation(s) _____
_____)
_____)
_____)

Areas of expertise _____
_____)
_____)
_____)

Other interests or activities _____
_____)
_____)

Organizations in which you are active _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Catherine Mary Spaulding Kerr

Date of birth March 22, 1911 Birthplace Los Angeles, CA.

Father's full name Charles Edgar Spaulding

Occupation electricl engineer Birthplace Iowa

Mother's full name Gertrude Mary Smith Spaulding

Occupation housewife Birthplace Poughkeepsie, NY

Your spouse Clark Kerr

Your children Clark Edgar, Alexander William, Caroline Mary

Where did you grow up? Los Angeles - summers in the Santa Clara Valley

Present community El Cerrito

Education B.A. Stanford University 1932

Occupation(s) housewife -

Areas of expertise community leader - public relations - journalism

Other interests or activities See Oral History on Save S.F. Bay Association

Organizations in which you are active East Bay Regional Park District - Adv. Board
Vice-Pres. Save S.F. Bay Association

formerly active with Univ. groups such as YWCA, Mortar Board, Theta Sigma Phi (honor
journalist)

Meeting with the Blakes to Discuss Disposition of the Estate

[Date of Interview: March 3, 1987]

- C. Kerr: Our meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Blake was probably about the spring of '58, wasn't it? Is there any record of that?
- Riess: No, there are very few records, and that's exactly why we're doing this.
- C. Kerr: My remembrance is as follows: I think the Blakes asked us to come to see them. My impression was that there had probably been some comment in prior years by the Blakes to Robert Gordon Sproul about the desire to make a gift to the University.* They were good friends.
- Riess: I know that Ida and Mrs. Blake were friends.
- C. Kerr: Sproul had been a member of Stiles Hall, hadn't he? as an undergraduate, and shown some interest over the years, and I just assumed there had been some contact there.

As well as I remember the occasion, the Blakes asked us to come to see them, and we went one afternoon—I was on the way back from the office, and Kay came in. I had met him before, I knew him somewhat, but if I'd ever met her before, it was just to say hello. It was a very dark house in those days, with very subdued lights and very conservative furniture and so forth, and we sat there and had tea in the big room. I guess the fireplace was going.

Anson Blake said something about having been devoted to the University all of his adult life, and they wanted to give their house and their garden to the University. They wanted two

*The deed of gift of the Blake Estate is dated December 4, 1957. See Appendices, U, V.

C. Kerr: assurances, which I gave: one was that the garden would be retained and kept up properly--Mrs. Blake in particular had spent a lot of her life developing the garden--and that the house--they didn't, as I remember, say anything about maintaining the house, and they didn't make any specific request about it, except that it be used in some worthwhile way, for the sake of the University. Kay can take up on how we did initially use it, and then it became the president's house after that.

Anson never asked us how we would use it. He just asked for a commitment that it be put to a good use, and we said "Well, there are lots of ways it could be used, and we have to consult various people," and we could assure them it would be called Blake House. I don't know whether he asked that; I don't think he did. He was a rather shy person, but I made some comment that we would of course want to recognize the Blake name. Because it was the Blake estate, and the area around there was called Blakemont.

Riess: Yes, Louis Stein said that it was called Blakemont.

C. Kerr: Yes. And he'd had such a long connection with the University. He was a very nice and sincere person, not asking anything for himself, or for the family; he just wanted to be sure that the things that I've mentioned, the garden, and then the house would get some good use. It was polite, and friendly, and that was that.

I don't know if there's any follow-up correspondence or not. There may have been, but he didn't ask for anything in writing at all; he just wanted personal assurance. If I remember correctly, that meeting would have been after I had been appointed as the incoming president, but before I was president. It was more as the incoming president, as I remember it, than it was as the outgoing chancellor, at Berkeley. It is easy to remember situations. I can see the room, and see them sitting there, and so forth. But to remember what the dates were is another matter, without looking at the record. He certainly didn't ask for any commitment by the University. I guess at some point we took it to the Board of Regents, as a kind of a routine matter, but I don't remember having been involved in drawing up any contract.

K. Kerr: I think after he died she took over, and it went through the landscape gardening department, and I don't think much was done until she died.

C. Kerr: That could very well have been. As far as I remember, it was done very much on the oral level, and there were no commitments by the Regents or by the University except what was said alone.

Riess: But you certainly thought it was a good thing?

C. Kerr: Oh, yes, sure. Well, it was a wonderful garden. [laughs] We didn't--

K. Kerr: We didn't know anything about the house. [laughs]

C. Kerr: It didn't occur to me at that time that it might become the president's house. Or if it did occur to me, I don't remember it, because we had our own place here, where we had lived as chancellor, because the Sprouls lived in the main house on campus, and we were perfectly content to keep on living here—in fact, wanted to. University House was reserved for the chancellor, and as the incoming president we were content with where we were. It was when Charlie Hitch came along, and he didn't have a facility which could be used as a president's house, then we developed it.

Riess: When the Blakes were giving it, do you think they were thinking in terms of a University-wide or Berkeley-wide use?

C. Kerr: I don't think that was a distinction that they made. In those days the University was Berkeley. Since then there's become a whole University-wide system, but when people—particularly Berkeley alumni—thought of the University, they thought of Berkeley. I don't remember any distinction drawn between the Berkeley campus and the University. It was to be given to the University of California, that was clear, but the University of California in his mind was Berkeley. It was said "to the University of California;" it wasn't said "to the University of California for the use of the Berkeley campus."

Riess: Mai Arbegast said that she "babysat" Mrs. Blake towards the end, and kind of fostered—something. Had you felt that it had been fostered by the landscape architecture department, this whole relationship?

K. Kerr: With the landscape department, sure.

Riess: The whole gift?

K. Kerr: I don't think they were interested in the house at all.

C. Kerr: My impression was that it was an unsolicited gift, that they wanted it done of their own accord. Did they have any children?

Riess: No.

C. Kerr: That was my impression: that they had none. The institution they were closest to was the University of California. In my opinion, it was done out of their own initiative, out of their devotion to the University, and with the hopes which I have expressed.

K. Kerr: But there really weren't any strings.

C. Kerr: No.

K. Kerr: They didn't say, "You can't sell it," and they didn't say, "You have to use it for this," it was just: "This is for the University." It was very casual.

C. Kerr: As I say he was a very gentle, reserved person.

K. Kerr: Very much a gentleman of the old school.

C. Kerr: The University wasn't out there soliciting it, and he was sort of hesitant: "Are you sure the University will want it and make good use of it?" Most gifts come in other ways [laughs], with people having demands, and they are solicited, but this they did on their own and just with a sense of goodwill.

The other brother had had his house become a nunnery--is it still with the Carmelites?

Riess: It is, yes. Noel Sullivan apparently purchased that and then gave it to the Carmelites.

C. Kerr: I carried the impression that they didn't want anything done there which would disturb the Carmelites. They didn't visualize having a big dormitory put there, you know, or a lot of faculty housing. They hoped it would be kept somewhat as it was, particularly the garden--less the house.

Riess: It sounds like he dealt with you as gentleman to gentleman.

C. Kerr: That's right, it was.

K. Kerr: And somebody else carried the ball afterwards.

C. Kerr: Afterward we all must have said something.

K. Kerr: Maybe not until it was done.

C. Kerr: It wasn't even done in the sense of a formal handshake, as some things are, where you shake hands after you make an arrangement; we shook hands when we left, but that was as friends, not as somebody who had made a deal.

Riess: Did Anita have any input in this conversation?

K. Kerr: I don't even remember her saying anything.

C. Kerr: I don't think she said very much, I think he carried it, and carried it for her, about how devoted she was to the garden. She certainly was polite and friendly, but it was his conversation.

Riess: Was Mabel Symmes, her sister, there?

K. Kerr: No.

Stiles Hall

Riess: One other thing: you said that he was certainly a friend of the University. I do know that Stiles Hall was such an interest of his, and he was an Old Blue, but in fact had he been a donor and an active friend of the University? Why is it your impression that he was a great friend?

C. Kerr: Through Stiles Hall, and wasn't he on the board for fifty years or something?

Riess: Yes. Did you have dealings with him in Stiles Hall?

C. Kerr: I would see him, yes. Stiles Hall played a much more important role then in the life of the Berkeley campus than it has since. There was something called Rule 17, which I did away with, and for my pains in doing away with it, I paid some costs, both left and right--but that's a separate story. Rule 17, among other things, said you could not have controversial speakers on campus, and it was ruled that anybody running for public office was controversial.

But anyway, Stiles Hall took the burden of the controversial speakers. I always thought that Robert Gordon Sproul supported Stiles Hall in part because it was the safety valve. But Anson Blake, all through those years, supported the right of people to speak, and he was a fairly conservative person and a leading businessman in the community, and owner of property, etc. He was always absolutely 100 percent behind having Stiles Hall open to the expression of any point of view. He, to me, represented the spirit of that board.

Riess: This was just tacit, or was he actually outspokenly for freedom of speech?

C. Kerr: No, he was just always there, and would join in any statements in its defense. He was not an aggressive person; he just took his position in a quiet way, but it was always known that Anson Blake was there. I admired him greatly.

- Riess: Actually, one of the things that he felt very strongly about, and put some money into, was the idea that women should not vote.
- C. Kerr: Oh, really? I didn't know that. [laughs]
- K. Kerr: That doesn't look well for his sister-in-law and his wife. [laughs] I think he was a very conservative person in certain respects, the "old school" type. But the "old school" would also be very much in favor of American freedom.
- C. Kerr: Yes, sure, the Bill of Rights and all of that. He was a very upright, principled person.
- K. Kerr: Very conservative in dress, was how I--
- C. Kerr: Oh, yes, and the house was just sort of out of the 1890's.
- Riess: Did they walk you around to look at any of the paintings or scrolls, or the things that they loved in the house?
- C. Kerr: No.
- K. Kerr: We weren't there very long. We were there an hour at the most, probably.
- C. Kerr: Well, the conversation was about a half an hour, and with the pleasantries and so forth we were there about an hour or so.
- Riess: That's quite a good picture of the whole thing. Thank you.
[Clark Kerr leaves]

The Condition of Blake House

Riess: Your impressions of that first meeting were the same? Did Mrs. Blake take you aside?

K. Kerr: No, we all sat together. I was trying to remember, but I don't recall that she had any help. She must have had live-in servants at some point, but I don't remember any help, and I don't remember having any great impression of the tea. I know we sat around and had tea, but I don't think we had anything else, in other words. The house was, as Clark said, very dark and dingy inside, and not inviting. We had a feeling that they lived for the garden--or she lived for the garden.

After Maggie [Johnston] and I got in there, after Mrs. Blake died, we had Mr. [W.A.] Parish in the crew from the University looking at it and we found the structural problems--you know, the foundation had sunk, and the front hall was maybe one foot lower from the front door to the window. As you walked, you were sure you were on a boat. [laughs] That whole side of the house had sunk. There was nothing in the sunroom, it was just kind of a hole, which was later turned into a nice sunroom.

Riess: It was just an open loggia, wasn't it?

K. Kerr: Yes, just an outside patio kind of a thing, under the overhang. The condition of the house--it's awfully hard to tell because she was so old, whether it was the result of being old, or whether she never had any interest in keeping up the house anyway. I mean, I can't imagine living in a house, even old, where everything was wrong. The furnace didn't work, the plumbing had to be replaced, the lighting was no good, the foundation was off, the curtains had to be--everything had to be done. Whether that was because she was really only interested in the garden, and had never been interested in the house--because I never knew her--or whether it was because she was old, I don't know.

Riess: Or, is it possible they didn't have money to put into it?

K. Kerr: Oh, I think they had plenty of money; all that development down below the house brought in lots of money.

Riess: I know money didn't come with the gift of the house; the gift to the University was not endowed.

K. Kerr: I don't know where that money went because they owned so much land. It would be interesting to find out what happened to it; they must have given it to somebody. You might call Ruth Kingman--do you know her?

Riess: I have talked to her.

K. Kerr: And see if she has any idea where the Anson Blake money went.

Riess: The will I saw was Anita's will, I think, and I haven't seen Anson's.

K. Kerr: What happened to her will?

Riess: There were nieces and nephews.

After this first meeting, then, you had no reason to return for further teas or anything in that five-year period?

K. Kerr: Never did.

Riess: In fact there was just no thought about it? It was just being taken care of by the landscape architecture people?

K. Kerr: All we knew was, as Clark said, that the house and gardens were to go for the use of the University, but I didn't even know Mai Arbegast was that involved until you told me.

Riess: Then I take it also that in the years before, the house hadn't been a place where Mrs. Blake would have teas, or invite people to come and look at the garden?

K. Kerr: I don't think they entertained even when he was alive; I didn't get the impression it was that kind of family. But Hunky [Helena Thacher] could tell you more about the social life, maybe.*

Riess: You were saying that you and Maggie went in, and then what?

*Before the taping began Mrs. Kerr explained to the interview that Helena Thacher and she had been classmates, and that Helena's nickname was "Hunky."

K. Kerr: Well, everybody came in. As soon as it became the property of the University--the garden had already become the property of the landscape architects, as I recall, because as soon as she died, they came in with an enormous crew and cut, cut, cut, cut. As Maggie and I said, she'd turn over in her grave if she could see what they were doing. But nothing had been done for a long time, and it took about three years for it to look normal again. There was so much taken out, and so many shrubs cut way back, and so many trees removed. They could hardly wait to get in there and fix that garden up. [laughs] I'm sure Mai has told you.

Riess: Yes, and Geraldine Knight Scott, who was in charge of that, has talked about it. Did you, as president's wife, hear from the neighbors about this? Apparently the neighbors were in a great state of shock and alarm to see it all cut back. I wondered whether any of that had come to you.

K. Kerr: All we knew was that there were crews out there working.

Actually, there was such a problem with the house--. You see, it was rather unfortunate that this followed after the Sproul house, University House, was vacated. I don't remember--what year was it that the University got Blake House?

Riess: In April, 1962, when she died.

K. Kerr: So about '58 Maggie and I went into University House, where the Sprouls had lived for twenty-eight years and had done nothing, and so for two years Helen Seaborg and I and the University crew took that house to pieces. All the plumbing, all the wiring, everything had to be completely changed and redone. The furnaces, the kitchen, the downstairs, the ballroom, the attics--anyway, it took two years, and we were sort of fed up with old houses.

Then here comes the Blake House, which was even in worse condition, and Maggie's reaction was, "Just tear it down! There's no reason to keep it: the amount of money that you would have to put in to salvage it could make something a lot more useful, because it was never designed to entertain in." But the Regents, or the University, or whoever made the decisions--. I think by that time I suppose it was Regent [Dorothy] Chandler because she was most involved in redoing University House and she liked this authority, although her concern was usually not the "best" but "taxpayer's gothic."

Riess: Yes, she was actually all for it.

All of the work that you did on University House, I imagine money had to be appropriated by the Regents.

K. Kerr: The Regents had already put out a lot of money for University House. I don't think they were very much interested in putting out a lot of money for another old house that they weren't sure anybody was going to use.

Riess: There was no public fuss about that in the way that there was about the cost of renovating Blake House?

K. Kerr: No. The reconstruction was done by University crews and the budget for interior furnishings was so meager that each chancellor added to theirs--for a new stove, or chairs, etc.

Riess: In refurbishing University House, you knew that it would be used as an official residence? In fact it was already being used?

K. Kerr: Well, no, because when Clark was made president he made a policy decision which was approved by the Regents, that the president should not live on any one campus, because there was a lot of dissatisfaction at UCLA over the fact that Sproul lived in the north, and they thought that they weren't getting proper treatment. University House was primarily for the Chancellor.

Since we were already living here [El Cerrito], the possibility of using Blake House by the President didn't arise. Since the policy was that on every campus there would be a University House, we worked with the chancellors' wives at Santa Barbara and Riverside and San Francisco, and with the various architects to design a kind of a University House that could be used for both entertaining and living in. The idea here was well, if the chancellor didn't want to live in it--and neither Mrs. Strong nor Mrs. Seaborg wanted to live on the Berkeley campus--it would still be "University House," and it would be for entertaining, and we could use it or they could use it. And that's the way it was set up.

Riess: So one old house was all pulled together, and then suddenly it was 1962 and you had another one to deal with.

K. Kerr: Blake House, right.

The Treasure in the House

Eless: I said on the phone that I was interested in what had happened to various items that are considered to be lost from the house. There's a first edition of David Copperfield that disappeared, some letters, letters from James West, some stories. Max Arbogast has been shown them by Mrs. Blake, and Walter Towner apparently knew that Mrs. Blake kept everything that she valued under her bed. Towards the end the old stool apparently was being dripped on by the leaky roof.

L. Herr: Everything was falling apart. [Laughs] It's a wonder the house didn't fall down, it really is.

The only things I remember that Maggie and I found of any value—we didn't see any papers or any books; all that kind of thing left before we got in the house—all we saw were rugs, in pieces of furniture, and two or three sets of china. I remember one Winston set that we thought maybe could go to Santa Cruz. They were furnishing some of the cancellors' houses at that point.

Eless: Yes, there were some bowls, vases, serving pieces, Canton dishes, silver and linen that went to University House on the Berkeley campus in 1961.

L. Herr: Some went to University House, and we could ask Mrs. McHenry if some went down to Santa Cruz.

Eless: I think so, yes.

L. Herr: I think she said she wanted that pink Winston, but I'm not sure whether it's still there.

Eless: How did you work with "Wuke" Wellington, Winfield Scott Wellington?

L. Herr: Well, he'd make an appointment, and Maggie and I would be at the house, and he would come and make an inventory of the stuff that we had found, and then he would decide—I don't know whether it

K. Kerr: was with any consultation--which things ought to go where, whether to the art history department, or the design professors, or whatever. I remember he would say "There's no intrinsic value in this piece, but it's a good teaching device." And so off it would go to some department for teaching.

Rass: The whole arrangement, in your report of it, sounds very unstructured.

K Kerr: It was, but after all we were supposedly using very good experts; nobody ever questioned his judgment, as far as I know, and Maggie and I never made any decisions.

Rass: But without going back into the documents--which isn't easy to do--what I don't understand is whether "Duke" Wellington had been appointed to this position, or whether he thought, "Aha, this looks like an interesting collection of stuff; I think I should make myself visible."

K Kerr: Probably--I'm just guessing--the building department, the carpenters and all of those people there, didn't want to touch it until they had had some expert advice. They probably just went to the art department, and it was just done that way: "We aren't going to tear up the floor or do the roof or anything until you get everything out of here that's worth anything." I remember once we had Hunky come and asked her if she had any ideas about anything. I can't remember whether she said she didn't want to come, or that there wasn't anything that she wanted. I got the impression that everything the family wanted, they had taken. So I imagine that's where the books went, and the papers, and everything else, because I'm sure they weren't there by the time Maggie and I got in the house. But it's interesting that they apparently don't know what happened to them.

The Valuables in the House

Riess: I said on the phone that I was interested in what had happened to various items that are considered to be lost from the house. There's a first edition of David Copperfield that disappeared, seed lists, letters from James West, some scrolls. Mai Arbegast had been shown them by Mrs. Blake, and Walter Vodden apparently knew that Mrs. Blake kept everything that she valued under her bed. Towards the end the bed itself apparently was being dripped on by the leaky roof.

K. Kerr: Everything was falling apart. [laughs] It's a wonder the house didn't fall down, it really is.

The only things I remember that Maggie and I found of any value--we didn't see any papers or any books; all that kind of thing left before we got in the house--all we saw were rugs, and pieces of furniture, and two or three sets of china. I remember one Minton set that we thought maybe could go to Santa Cruz. They were furnishing some of the chancellors' houses at that point.

Riess: Yes, there were some bowls, vases, serving pieces, Canton dishes, silver and linen that went to University House on the Berkeley campus in 1962.

K. Kerr: Some went to University House, and we could ask Mrs. McHenry if some went down to Santa Cruz.

Riess: I think so, yes.

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Prytanean Undertakes Making Blake House a Graduate Women's Residence, 1963-1964

- Riess: Regent Catharine Hearst and Regent William Coblentz apparently were taken on a tour of the house in December, 1965 and they felt that \$25,000 a year was too high a cost to keep it operating.
- K. Kerr: Was this at the time of the students living there?
- Riess: That was after the Prytanean students had been there. I wondered whether you had any dealings with these Regents. You had mentioned Mrs. Chandler. She was helpful in finding some funding from the Regents, but apparently Catherine Hearst thought it was a great drain.
- K. Kerr: Yes, I'm sure there was division in the Regents about whether any more money ought to be spent on it. I think that all I remember about that discussion was what I heard from Maggie, that maybe they'd tear it down, and maybe they wouldn't. [laughs]
- Riess: That's what Mrs. Hearst suggested, to tear it down and build a new, more practical house.
- K. Kerr: Well, it cost a fortune when they did decide to keep it. It was unbelievable, I think. And then of course every president's wife that's lived there has redecorated in a very expensive way, thrown out all the china and all of the regular things and secured their own preferences.
- Riess: The Prytanean residence plan, November, 1963—who pulled that together? Was that your idea?
- K. Kerr: We were trying to think: here was this empty house in poor condition, which nobody wanted to spend any money on at that point because the Regents were certainly not going to fix it up any more than just to make it livable. I think that the roof was fixed so it wouldn't leak, and I don't remember if the furnace was fixed—I don't think so, maybe a little bit. But at that time there was a housing need, we thought, for graduate women. There wasn't any

K. Kerr: way of having undergraduates out there, and there wasn't any way of anybody in the University taking charge of it, so we went to Prytanean. Maggie was a Prytanean, and I was an honorary, but I seldom participated.

We asked Imogene [Mrs. Eric C.] Bellquist, who took charge really, whether they would have a committee that would look at it and see if there was any way it could be operated. So they were, I guess, enthusiastic at first, and they provided the sheets and the towels. As I recall they got less expensive china and things that the girls could use. It was a surprise to me when after two or three years Imogene and the committee announced that it wasn't worth it, that the girls had transportation problems; they had a hard time finding enough girls who wanted to come out that far, and the alumnae women who were being housemothers really were fed up. So that's why it was stopped.

Riess: It sounds like a nice idea, though, doesn't it.

K. Kerr: It sounded great at the beginning, but I think it was very difficult transportation-wise.

Riess: The University hadn't provided a shuttle?

K. Kerr: No, no. A bus went out to The Arlington, but a graduate student spends a lot of time in the library, and that meant that they came back at night. The buses didn't always run very much at night, so that there were real problems, partly I think because they didn't have cars. If they had had cars it would have been easy. I think today you wouldn't have had any problem at all, because there's such a terrible shortage of housing. But in those days you could get apartments in Berkeley. Graduate students weren't really completely left out of housing like they are now.

Riess: Yes. The phrase in one of the publicity releases is that "a noble Spanish house had been secured as a home for women scholars."

K. Kerr: I wonder who wrote that one. [laughs]

Riess: The Berkeley Barb later said that the house was once used for women students but was so poorly maintained, it had to be abandoned. I think that's perhaps their interpretation. That isn't what your impression was?

K. Kerr: Well, it was poorly maintained because in the first place nothing had been really fixed up by the Regents. The Prytanean house mothers raised enough money to put in sheets and pillow cases and towels, but it wasn't any luxurious living. But it certainly wasn't poorly maintained, except for the fact that it had been poorly maintained for twenty years before the girls came in.

Riess: After putting some time into arranging that, you didn't remain involved?

K. Kerr: I didn't have time. I was spending my time going back and forth to seven campuses and trying to raise a family at the same time. There would be teas and lunches, and I'd get on the plane in the morning, go to lunch, and come back; or go down and have tea at UCLA or Riverside or Santa Barbara. That took a lot of time.

Riess: It seems to me that of all people you really would have had an important point of view about whether Blake House should be brought up to a condition to be used, or whether it should have been razed.

K. Kerr: I think I was really trying to distance myself from any more old houses. I had really spent entirely too many years of my life on University House on the campus, and I did not want to go through that again. It's no fun. You operate daily with painters, carpenters, interior decorators, everybody; it just takes an enormous amount of time, and when the Regents have to be involved for funds--well, once was enough.

Riess: It wasn't that you anticipated the difficulties with the Regents about it, or the difficulties with the community?

K. Kerr: No. I didn't even know there were difficulties with the community. The only difficulties we ever heard about were the fence and the deer. The community complained because a couple of times the landscape department would call the sheriff to come and shoot some deer--that seemed to upset people. Other than that I didn't know anything about the community.

Turning Blake House into a Livable President's House

K. Kerr: Was Blake House made into a president's house after the Hitches were made president, or just before? In other words, did they move into a completely finished house?

Riess: They moved into a mostly finished house. He was named president in September, 1967. By October and November Norma Willer, the University project architect, was already having meetings with the Hitches and with an appointed architect to work on the renovation of it, and Nancy Hitch was saying what it was that she would require for the house. Then she spent the entire next year and a half at least doing what you're talking about.

K. Kerr: I remember early on, or maybe after Nancy had taken over, when I talked with Nancy and Maggie about the circulation problem, and it was my idea to put this outside room on the front--the gallery--so that you could get to the dining room. I thought what they did was very minimal; they could have added another two feet in width without making it that much more difficult, and much more useful.

Riess: Because your idea was that there could be tables out there too, and seating, which there really can't be now.

K. Kerr: Right. The dining room was too small, and there was no way to get to it, really, and by the time they closed off some of the other rooms--Maggie had a telephone, in a little office on one side, so that you couldn't go around anyway. The way it was designed, there wasn't any way to make use of that room, so it looked like there just had to be an outside room. This was agreed to--I don't think there was ever any problem, except that it costs money.

Riess: But that was the major structural change in the house, that addition?

K. Kerr: We probably wouldn't have even been able to do that, but they had to completely take out and redo the foundation on that side anyway, so it wasn't all that much more difficult.

Riess: Norma Willer in a file note says that the first mention of having the gallery is in the conversation that she had with you in September or October.

K. Kerr: I don't remember whether she was there when we were talking about the impossibility of using the dining room the way it was.

Riess: Did Nancy Hitch consult you in any way?

K. Kerr: We probably talked, but I don't remember. As I said, I didn't encourage it because I thought she was going to live there, she would know, and it's really not anything I particularly enjoy doing—redoing old houses.

Riess: And yet it has been very much your role, as the president's wife, I can see. In fact, I didn't realize there was a University House, or the equivalent, on every campus.

K. Kerr: Well, I learned a great deal. That's one reason why the circulation problem here was so obvious, because by the time you've built a new house at Riverside and one at Santa Barbara, and the disaster at San Francisco--because the chancellor's wife there was a very stubborn and peculiar woman who had to do it just her way, and it had to be completely redone after she left. Both Mary [Mrs. Vernon I.] Cheadle and Evelyn [Mrs. Herman T.] Spieth were very wise ladies, and we talked a lot of times, because in those days the Regents meetings included the chancellors' wives. We had Thursday together when the chancellors were meeting before the Regents would meet on Friday. I always went down, and we'd go over the architect's plans.

In fact I remember when Evelyn Spieth's husband was appointed chancellor of Riverside. We were meeting before a Regent's meeting, at the Beach and Tennis Club in La Jolla. She told me that just casually somebody handed her the plans for her house. She said, "Kay, you can't believe it; they're just impossible." So we spent the day and we made a long list of all the things that were impossible. The Regents and architect finally decided that since she was going to live in it they'd listen, but nobody had even thought to ask her, and the architect hadn't thought to ask her what ought to be considered about the house. So that was the beginning, and after that we had no problems except with San Francisco.

Riess: Well, it's interesting. If I had been able to talk to Nancy Hitch I certainly would have asked her how much she had the future in mind, as well as the short term--I mean, how you do both things.

K. Kerr: There wasn't an awful lot more that you could do to the Blake House. The study in the back--well, the sunroom was a great addition, because that meant another spot for entertaining: you

K. Kerr: could put the bar out there, and so the living room wasn't too small. But it's still a limited house in terms of the number of people that it's convenient to have.

Riess: But perhaps a house can be furnished once and for all, or is that not possible? You always have to think of the furniture as changing?

K. Kerr: Well, it depends how much money you have. When we did University House, Regent Chandler was there with her eye on the budget, and so everything was done in the least expensive way, and we used the oriental rugs that were there, and we had inexpensive drapes, and put grass cloths on different areas and so on. The first person who came to live there was Esther Heyns, and she took a look around and said, "I won't live in this dismal room," so down came the drapes, and the rugs became orange, and there was a lot of color--the whole thing was changed.

Well, Nancy Hitch always did believe in the most expensive and the most beautiful things. Maggie would come and say, "You can't believe how much money it's going to cost to upholster one chair," but Nancy wanted to have everything just the best. She was able to get the money from the Regents, and so as long as you've got the money--. But then she brought some of her things; she had several antique pieces of her own which were recovered, and so she took them back with her. Mrs. Saxon was completely different: I don't think she even looked at the furniture, or cared.

Maggie Johnston

Riess: It's too bad, obviously, that Maggie Johnston isn't around to talk. This project started with the wish that Maggie be interviewed, and then Maggie died. [June 29, 1986]

K. Kerr: Oh, Maggie would have been able to give you all of the history.

Riess: How did you first meet Maggie?

K. Kerr: At the time Clark was appointed chancellor in 1952, I was in the habit of frequently having afternoon coffee with my neighbor, Marjorie Galenson. One day she included Maggie Johnston, whom she had met at nursery school. Maggie had volunteered to take care of a neighbor's small boy whose mother had died suddenly. Our coffee hours were incidental to supervising our youngsters and nursing our babies. (Caroline Kerr was born in October 1951.) Maggie came frequently.

After Clark's appointment and our coffee-hour discussion about how this was going to change my life and how I needed help, Maggie volunteered on a part-time basis. She was paid through the Chancellor's Office and not only arranged social events but kept the records and paid the bills which were incurred within the chancellor's budget.

Riess: Did she work for the president's wife or was it president's and chancellors' wives both?

K. Kerr: When Clark was made president, Maggie continued with me and with all future president's wives. The chancellors' wives made their own arrangements and these jobs differed among the campuses, some having more responsibility within the chancellor's staff.

Maggie was a very likeable person, good friends with all the wives, and the public ceremonies staffs. She was generous with her advice and she had the responsibility for all the activities hosted by the president or the Regents regardless of which campus they were held on. She was the social secretary of each wife and

K. Kerr: worked with public ceremonies, really, on all the campuses, not just Berkeley. She did the inauguration for the new chancellors. The last thing she did, I think, was at Irvine, the new chancellor there now. She took it as a profession--we worked on it as a profession. She worked for me first, and we worked out all kinds of office procedures and record-keeping, and policies for whom you invite to what kind of thing, and how you mix up the community and the alumni and the students, and whom you invite to what, and do you need a list of the principals of the high schools and when--this kind of thing. So we had a real professional attitude toward it.

Riess: Did Mrs. Sproul have anyone?

K. Kerr: Mrs. Sproul never made a decision on her own; Robert Gordon made the decisions, and Miss [Agnes] Robb made the arrangements and decisions. Ida had a wonderful personality and she survived. I would never have been able to under those circumstances.

Because Maggie was such a professional, I don't think she was close friends with anybody but me, and we were very good friends all the time. She used to come over in the morning for coffee, no matter who she was working for. She'd call and come over for advice and to let off steam about how so-and-so had to have her sheets ironed in a laundry; she couldn't have them hanging out, and they had to be a certain type--I won't go into it [laughs]. So every chancellor's wife and the staff of each campus's public ceremonies departments had their foibles, and Maggie adjusted to them.

Riess: On every campus, it wasn't just Berkeley?

K. Kerr: Maggie started when Clark was chancellor of Berkeley. Later, the principal things she did on the other campuses were the public ceremonies, such as Charter Day and the meetings of chancellors and Regents. Each chancellor's wife had help with her own campus events.

Riess: Drawing up these procedures sounds like it was an essential thing to do.

K. Kerr: We were both very concerned that this should be a professional type of operation.

Maggie got asked to go back to Pennsylvania State when Rose [Mrs. John] Oswald became the president's wife there, to set up her records and talk to her staff to get it started. And she was giving somebody help at some other college whose president's name was Spaulding—I don't remember which college it was. She always was going to write a book on how to do these things, but Maggie was much more interested in doing than in writing, so it never got done.

Riess: She made your job considerably easier.

K. Kerr: Much easier, and much more fun. We both had a lot of fun, both of us were activists. I'd get an idea about what was wrong with foreign student hospitality, and she'd inquire around, and we'd decide that we could do this, and we could try that, and we'd have all of the faculty wives that might be involved out here for a big breakfast in the morning. We'd say, "We've got a problem. Foreign students come, and they don't ever meet a family, or they meet a family when they come for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner but they never get to know them." So we set up a whole new foreign students' hospitality system.

And we decided that the faculty was not treating well the famous visiting foreign celebrities that come to Berkeley to talk to our famous professors, who would say, "Well, we've got fifteen minutes for this guy"--this would be a Nobel Prize winner--but "we can't spend all day with him, we can't show him the campus." So we started another group called Alumni Hostesses, where we asked women who were alumnae of the Berkeley campus to be the hostesses for the campus and entertain and take around these famous visitors. That still goes on today.

But I never would have had as much fun, and we wouldn't have had all these ideas come to fruition without Maggie, because it takes two. You get an idea, but somebody else has to help you implement it.

Riess: And then Maggie continued to keep those good ideas alive and well so long as she was able to work.

K. Kerr: Right. And added new ones of her own. She played a very important role in the University Art Museum. Maggie had a great number of friends on the Berkeley campus. These things that we started when Clark was chancellor only related to the Berkeley campus.

In addition to public ceremonies and the routine arrangements, we did things on the other campuses mostly in relation to how the chancellors' and Regents' wives could get to know each other. Nancy Hitch and Shirley Saxon didn't like large groups of people.

Nancy was an artist, and Shirley liked to cook and didn't like large groups, so that the kinds of things that Maggie and I enjoyed doing were not done, and weren't carried on. Mrs. Gardner is much more interested in reviving these interpersonal kinds of relationships.

The chancellor's wife at Irvine was so excited when I saw her last week because they were going to have a chance for the chancellors' wives to meet each other, and talk together, and

K. Kerr: discuss their problems.* It takes a president's wife who wants to get involved. Blake House is now being used for many more University activities.

*"While the Regents met at Santa Barbara February, the spouses of UC's president and chancellors held a meeting of their own, arranged by Libby Gardner. In addition to talks on the 'Spousal Role and Expectations,' led by Mary Regan-Meyer [Davis] and Karen Sinsheimer [Santa Cruz]; 'Recognition for the Spousal Role,' by Sue Young [Los Angeles]; and 'Achieving a Separate Self Identity,' led by Rita Atkinson [San Diego], the group also discussed pertinent University issues and policies with Senior Vice President Ronald W. Brady." UC Focus, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1987.

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Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Janice Kittredge

MAKING BLAKE HOUSE INTO A
GRADUATE WOMEN'S RESIDENCE, 1963-1965

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

In such a multifaceted undertaking as this Blake House Oral History Project, the best results often come from one thing, one person, leading to another. Mrs. Clark Kerr referred me to longtime Prytanean Alumnae Association board member Janice Kittredge for the particulars of the Prytanean Alumnae Association's project of using Blake House as a residence for graduate women. In this interview Mrs. Kittredge talks about why the project, first considered at the suggestion of University President Clark Kerr's wife Kay at a meeting in September 1962, didn't work. Certainly there was a real lack of appropriate housing that the University could offer graduate women, but the freedoms of the sixties were apparently in some conflict with the givens of a "dorm" at Blake House. The place, and in some ways the time, was not right.

Janice Kittredge, Kay Kerr, and the late Maggie Johnston whom Janice Kittredge admires and speaks of—these women took on roles in the University and in the Berkeley community that went a long way beyond that expected of wife, mother, or faculty wife. Their intention was to improve the quality of the school experience for University students, to enrich the time spent here by foreign visitors and their families, and to salvage and improve the environment for residents of the San Francisco Bay Area. And these things they did effectively and with style. Specifically they created housing, formed the Alumnae Hostess Committee, and created an entity to save San Francisco Bay. [In a recent oral history, Save San Francisco Bay Association, 1961-1986, that organization is documented through joint interviews with the three women who founded it: President's wife Kay Kerr, Regent's wife Sylvia McLaughlin, and Professor's wife Esther Gulick.]

I met with Janice Kittredge in her office in downtown Berkeley where she is the paid staff person for Save San Francisco Bay Association. July 3rd was a holiday for most everyone else in town, but for her a good day to get things done. Prior to setting a date for the interview Mrs. Kittredge had reviewed all the minutes of the Prytanean boards for the years in question, in order to bring the most precise information to the interview. And she offered additional comments that filled in the picture of how a core group of enthusiastic women came to volunteer for the University. I left with my questions answered. The Prytanean Alumnae Association's project at Blake House was clarified. And in my wallet there was a receipt for a renewed membership in Save San Francisco Bay Association!

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

November 11, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name (Leah) Janice Rivers Kittredge
Date of birth 3-30-26 Birthplace Oakland CA.

Father's full name Paul Stewart Rivers
Occupation Railroad Engineer Birthplace Berkeley, CA.

Mother's full name Grace Good Rivers
Occupation housewife Birthplace Brownville, Indiana

Your spouse (Harland) Craig Kittredge

Your children Lisa, Gena + John

Where did you grow up? Berkeley

Present community Berkeley

Education BA in 1947 Univ. of California, Berkeley

Occupation(s) Membership, office mgr, etc. etc. - Save SF Bay Assoc.
Sales & office for sister's childrenswear business - ^{part} advertising, production

Areas of expertise office & organizational,
advertising, production,

Other interests or activities reading, travel, music

Organizations in which you are active mostly UC alum groups -
Alumnae History Committee (chairman), Professor alumnae
Class secretary class of '47, class gift committee, etc.

Prytanean Alumnae Association Approached to Run Blake House as a
Residence for Graduate Women

[Date of Interview: July 3, 1987]

Kittr: The very first mention of Blake House in the minutes is in September of '62, and evidently Kay Kerr came to the Prytanean Alumnae Association meeting and "gave a complete explanation of the Anson Blake property and residence that had been willed to the University."*

Sometime in the summer of 1962 Maggie Johnston had gathered up a lot of Prytaneans that she knew. We went out and looked at this house. Evidently nothing had been done to it since--it was full of Mrs. Blake's furniture, and the curtains were drawn. It looked like she'd probably been living in this very dungeon-like place throughout her last few years of life, maybe.

Kay and Maggie stood up there and said, "What are we going to do with this?" I wouldn't be surprised if Maggie had a great deal of input in it, because she was familiar with our working on

*Quoted material is from Prytanean minutes. Mrs. Kittredge notes: "I had really sort of forgotten that at that time Prytanean had two boards. There was Prytanean Alumnae Association, and there was an incorporated board, Prytaneans, Inc. They decided they needed to incorporate to do some of the business things they did, one of which was running Blake House, so they had two different boards. (There was a lot that I really couldn't remember from my own memory until it was brought back by reading the minutes.) There were a lot of disagreements between the two boards, and they eventually were merged. Prytanean only has one Alumni Incorporated board now. But to review the history I found that I needed both of these sets of minutes, but especially the Incorporated minutes because they are the group of women who actually ran Blake House."

Kittr: dormitory things. Prytanean had Ritter Hall, which was a co-op, and fairly low cost. It was to help girls with financial difficulties and so forth. The Prytanean Alumnae Association had started Ritter Hall in the '30s.

I think Maggie thought that there never had been, up to that time, any kind of residence for graduate students. They must have started before the married student housing before '62, but for single graduate students I seriously doubt whether there was any kind of university housing. They thought, well, here this was way out there in Kensington, and they couldn't put undergraduates there, but they could use it for graduate women.

At this point it was just before the years when everybody stopped wanting university housing; they felt that there would be quite a need for this. Later, in the mid to late '60s, they couldn't even get people to fill the dorms, and Ritter Hall had to be sold because we couldn't get enough people even to go into a subsidized co-op. Everybody wanted to live in apartments, and they didn't want university housing. I think, if you look back, they were running all those big dormitories that they had built right after the war--they were running those not completely full. It's absolutely incredible now, of course, because people are standing in line, and there are waiting lists, and what have you to get in them, because there's no other place to live. But at that point, I guess, it was still reasonably priced enough to get rooms in apartments elsewhere, and so forth, so kids would much rather go three and four to an apartment and live on their own than to have university housing.

Riess: When Kay said, "What are we going to do with this?" was she saying, "What are we Prytaneans going to do with it?"

Kittr: No. "What are we, the University, going to do with it," because she was the wife of the president of the University, and one assumes it had sort of been handed to her. The University at that point didn't want to put any money in it, or any more money than they had to. Actually, it was pretty obvious from some of the minutes that Kay's interest diminished after the start. After all, Clark was president of all the universities. Gertrude Strong was more involved then because Chancellor [Edward] Strong was the chancellor then, so she was active throughout the two years that we operated it and was the one that, when we finally gave up, we were giving it up to. We notified her. Oh, I guess they notified Kerr too.

Anyway, Kay and Maggie said, "What are we going to do with this?" and "What do you think about this idea? You are all Prytanean board members, or past board members, or what have you. How about running this as a graduate dorm like you've been running Ritter Hall as a student co-op?" So it was taken under advisement.

Kittr: The original thoughts, I gather, were even that we would provide the money to renovate and buy furnishings and everything. My feeling is that we did some of that, because we had a rummage sale evidently at Mrs. [Eric] Bellquist's house, and we put together a couple of teas that raised money. Then, of course, the first year at least, we had money from the residence.'

There's a letter here, a copy of a letter from Joe Mixer [Chancellor's Office] to Mrs. [Parker] Trask, who was on the Incorporated board, as to what it would cost, and the way's and how's of raising money [letter dated January 31, 1963]. To the best of my knowledge, nothing about this was ever carried through from Prytanean anyway. At some point originally they thought they would have to come up with some thousands and thousands of dollars to equip it for a future, take out a thirty-year loan, you know, all these kinds of things for what was really an experiment, and I guess they [Prytanean] sort of realized pretty quickly that they couldn't really obligate themselves to such an incredible degree.

Riess: But at first it must have seemed rather exciting.

Kittr: Oh, yes! There were things in the minutes about leasing the house, and having so many, twenty graduate women, each paying four hundred dollars a semester.

Riess: That was for room and board?

Kittr: Yes, and all kinds of things. They had to have a house mother, and maids, and a cook, and so forth. Anyway, the beginning was that summer meeting, and then the next step was that Kay came to the first meeting of the fall semester of '62, on September 25th, and gave the official proposal to the board. They agreed to take it on.

Riess: Who drew up the official proposal then?

Kittr: I don't know, and I could find no record in the minutes. I'm kind of inclined to think that if there is one, it's in the University Archives.

Difficulties with the Experiment

Riess: I wonder if the whole thing was modeled on anything else that was fairly closely detailed.

Kittr: I don't think so. I think the whole thing was an experiment, and as it turned out, a somewhat disastrous one. It really never served the original purpose. They thought it would serve twenty graduate women; they never got twenty. Even the very first semester in September of '63 nineteen was the most they could get, and it dropped very quickly by the end of that semester to something like sixteen or fourteen. There were several rooms upstairs, one room downstairs, and those girls downstairs felt isolated. They set it up originally for four or five girls to a room, if you can imagine. So study desks had to be out in the hall.

I'm sure you've been to Blake House. You know what a gracious place it is, but it wasn't as nice then. That lovely hallway where you go to the dining room, that didn't exist, that's been added on. Two little doorways were the way you got from the hallway into the dining room-kitchen area. That I remember very well because I was one of the people in charge of the first big fund-raising tea we had in the fall of '63. We got a tremendous crowd because everybody wanted to see what Blake House looked like. So we had tours of the house, and we had this tea. But trying to get people from the big living room areas into the dining room through these tiny little doorways was a mammoth traffic jam. It was just really incredible.

Riess: What kind of redecorating had been done then?

Kittr: I don't think they really did anything. As it turned out, the University did do some structural work. As I went through the minutes, there were several places where they suggested that Prytanean buy this or do that. But Prytanean didn't own the house, and it's really the owner of the house that should make these kinds of expenditures, so some of the things were done by the University.

Kittr: I remember that we did spend four or five hundred dollars on a gas heater for the study hall because the girls were absolutely freezing. I think the heating facilities in the house were pretty antiquated at the time. Mrs. Blake probably lived in one room with a little tiny heater or something. It just really was not good heat for winter time there, and it's a pretty big house with not very many bedrooms, which was part of the problem. It was a problem, I think, for some of the presidents who lived there, not having enough bedrooms.

You have this enormous living room-study-lanai area, and this tiny little dining room. Maggie always used to say what a problem it was. Maggie was instrumental in the purchase of what they now call Morgan House, that marvelous house that was designed by Julia Morgan [2821 Claremont Avenue].* I remember being there very early on when the University first took it over. She said, "You know, the best thing about this house is that the dining room and the living room are exactly the same size. So if you have x-number of people in the living room, they can all sit down in the dining room."

Blake House was better, of course, after they built that sort of porch, gallery, whatever they call it. You could stretch dining tables along there as well as in the dining room, and that helps. But you still can't seat anywhere near the number you can have milling around in that enormous living-study-lanai area. I think we used the lanai area as the study hall. I think that's where Prytanean needed to buy the heater because it was so cold. There was no heat at all in there, and the girls couldn't stay in there without turning blue, I guess, in the winter time.

Anyway, just as a quick run down, we did raise money, and they did get nineteen girls. There was a lot of changeover.

Riess: Do you remember how it was advertised? What glowing words?

Kittr: They didn't do much advertising. I think it was just through the University, really.

Riess: Just offered as an alternative?

Kittr: Well, as the only housing for graduate women. You see, at that point it was still a question of--you know, if graduate women were coming, there was no place for them. The University was still a little bit in the "mother" business even though graduate women, of course, were over twenty-one, and they didn't have to do the same sort of things that they did for undergraduate women. I mean, all the time I was in school I had to have my father sign a permit for me to live at home. It was so silly. You couldn't live at home.

*Julia Morgan, Her Office, and a House, an oral history interview conducted 1976, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1976.

Kittr: You had to live in an approved house, you had to have a signed permit even if you lived in your own home with your own family. It was a ridiculous situation.

I'm assuming graduate women were sent housing options, and I suppose this was one of those. But, as I said, they had nineteen instead of the projected twenty. So they didn't get the maximum amount of money even from the very beginning.

Then they had some difficulties with house mothers and cooks. They sort of came and went. Then very soon it was down to fourteen or twelve. Then by the second year eight was all they had, which didn't even make it pay. So Prytanean was subsidizing it, although by then they were making economies, and one of the members of the board was doing the books herself instead of hiring a bookkeeper. It was too small to buy food in quantity. It had to be bought at retail sources. So that was more expensive.

One of the main problems was that even though there was a bus connection, the No. 7 bus came right downtown so there was fairly direct bus transportation, still it was pretty far and it took quite a while. So that wasn't too convenient.

Then the idea of having four and five girls, especially graduate women, in a room was terrible. So when they finally finished up I guess the six or eight or whatever that were left by that time were only two left in a room, and they could have their desks in their own rooms and that sort of thing. But you couldn't make it pay. There just weren't enough rooms.

Somebody who knew something about it should have looked at the physical layout in the very beginning and said, "You never are going to do this. This is not going to work." But it was an experiment because nobody had done any graduate housing before. So they really didn't know what it was. We gave it the good try, and we did it for two years, raised money, and spent money. Prytanean probably spent a good couple of thousand over what they took in, running it for that time.

Riess: But it wasn't really a financial disaster.

Kittr: It wasn't terrible, but a thousand dollars was a lot of money in those days. The \$750 we raised on that tea, I think, was the first time we had ever raised anything like that amount of money, and the tea tickets were \$1.50. (You can't imagine going to a tea or anything for \$1.50 today.) So a thousand dollars was a lot of money in those days.

Prytanean Alumnae Association Projects and Relationship to the University

Riess: What is Prytanean Alumnae's basic commitment to the University?

Kittr: Some of the original Prytanean members started the Prytanean Alumni Association in the mid '30s in order to help the students by running some kind of low-cost housing. Then they bought the building where Ritter Hall was (the Alpha Delt House now) and ran that. By the time I was in school in the '40s, the Alumnae Association was already ten or twelve years old, and it was a going concern, and I've been off and on the various boards for most of the forty years I've been an alum.

Riess: So the bylaws require that Prytanean alumnae do some project for the University?

Kittr: I haven't seen the bylaws for years, but since the Prytanean Society was founded for service to the University, I'm sure the Alumnae Association has that same creed, and it started out being housing. Earlier on, in the early 1900s, the Prytanean Society helped found the first student infirmary, which then was turned into Cowell Hospital. So they've done all kinds of things like that. Since leaving the housing efforts, we put up the funding and did some of the major work to start the Women's Center. Now we're doing this faculty enrichment project where we're raising an endowment so that we can give a \$10,000 grant every year to a non-tenure faculty woman.

In between, when they finally found they could not run Ritter Hall--there wasn't the demand, and this was in this period I told you about when the demand for dormitory housing was nil--they sold the physical building for \$80,000 and then invested that money and used the income. There are strict rules about what kinds of things you can do with this income because Prytanean is non-profit. We had incorporated previously, as I explained, so there were many years there where we were giving grants anywhere from very small hundred

Kittr: dollar grants to several thousand dollar grants to any and all who applied, as long as it had something to do with students and with the University.

A couple of years ago, we agreed to start a faculty enrichment fund and raise an additional endowment of \$100,000 whereby we hope we can get about \$10,000 for an annual grant. We have been using our regular interest money so far for this because they wanted to start giving this gift right away. So that's what we have done recently. Once the fund raising for this endowment is finished, I'm pretty sure we will go back again to projects.

But there's a lot of change. Whereas one year it was nice to give many small, five hundred to a thousand dollar grants, then somebody said, "Are we frittering away our money? Shouldn't we look for something really big?" When we did the Women's Center, for a couple of years we concentrated our efforts and did a large project instead of having small little grants. But those small little grants were very helpful too. It just met different needs at different times. I'm sure we will go on to doing something else like that.

Riess: [Reads from notes] "November, 1963. Prytanean Alumnae Association delegated to direct operation of Blake House. Chancellor Strong's decision. Mrs. Strong and Kay Kerr secured the noble Spanish house as a home for women scholars."

Kittr: My recollection--I mean, it wasn't a chicken and an egg thing, you know, which came first. What happened was the University had this white elephant, and they wanted something to do with it that would be useful. Maybe "conned" is a little strong, but in a way, they really convinced those Prytaneans into saying, "We will do this," without really giving them much of any support.

At some point in the minutes, when something major needed to be done, there was some mention of Prytanean board members saying that they didn't think that we should put that sort of money in because we didn't own the house. At least everything that we did at Ritter Hall presumably we could get back in the selling price eventually.

Riess: Ritter Hall was undergraduate?

Kittr: Ritter Hall was undergraduate. It was a women's co-op run by Prytanean.

But there really wasn't much remodeling done at Blake House until the Hitches decided to move in. I think maybe the Blakes thought this would be a nice house for the University president. The Kerrs were not the least bit interested in moving from their home. (Well, when he was chancellor they couldn't, of course, because President Sproul was still living in the President's House--

Kittr: University House now.) But when Clark became president he certainly didn't want to move into the President's House on campus--which has since been turned into University House, and no chancellor wanted it. The next two chancellors all lived around here, [Glenn] Seaborg and Strong, and didn't want to move in. It was only when we finally got a chancellor from someplace else who didn't already have a house that they turned University House back into a residence.

Save San Francisco Bay Association had its beginnings in University House in those days. When I first started working for Save the Bay I had my own key to University House because there was so much stuff still stored there. They had moved the office out at that point, but there were still things stored there that I was trying to move out. University House was only used for entertaining and housing an occasional Regent, or something. They had a housekeeper and that was it.

But Blake House, there again President Kerr didn't want to live there, and nobody did. When Kerr left and Hitch came in as president, he had a very small house on Cragmont, and they needed the entertainment space that the Kerrs had in their own home. So that's why they made the decision. I just remember this from conversations with Maggie, because I wasn't involved in that, of course.

Efforts to Salvage the Experiment

Kittr: At the end of the first year they discovered that they could run it with less than the maximum twenty they thought to have, and they could cut it down so that there wouldn't be so many girls in a room. The graduate women objected to a house mother, so they went to a graduate manager, which most of the board members agreed to. One that didn't, and I was astounded to read this, was Ruth Donnelly, who was a former dean and a very good friend of mine. She was just determined that these girls, even though they were graduate women, had to have a house mother! It's really interesting, the girls themselves wanted a graduate resident manager, which of course is obviously what the University has gone to long since. They don't have house mothers in any of their dormitories.

There was some question about whether there should be a non-resident manager too. I think for expediency and for financial reasons Imogene Bellquist, whose husband was a professor on campus, took it on. She was a marvelous woman, and if it hadn't been for her the whole project would not have lasted one year, much less the two years that it did. She did the books herself, so they didn't have to hire a bookkeeper. She was doing all the sorts of things that maybe a house manager did in assisting the resident graduate student. I think she was very important to the project the whole two years.

Riess: Did they have cleaning services and all of that for the girls?

Kittr: The minutes say they hired maids. They had two maids, so they obviously had maids cleaning rooms.

Riess: Did they ever consider having the girls clean their own room and do co-op cooking or something like that?

Kittr: I found no indication of that. So it sounds like maybe they didn't want to. I don't know. It's really interesting, they even had somebody who stayed there one night a week, because she came down for a seminar one night a week, and they charged her so much to sleep there and eat breakfast and dinner there. Then they had

Kittr: somebody on a month-to-month basis. There was one notation in one of the minutes that they are now down to seven girls. One had left, "the one that had such interesting ways." [November 16, 1964] I thought, "Oh, I wonder what that meant." I gather she was some sort of a problem, but that's all that was mentioned in the minutes.

Riess: Just what were the dates of operation of Blake House by Prytanean?

Kittr: It started in September 1963 and closed in July 1965.

Riess: Did Kay Kerr remain involved?

Kittr: I do not see any of that in the minutes. Almost all of the references about that have to do with Gertrude Strong. Gertrude was an honorary president of Prytanean, and she's been on the board a number of times. I don't remember offhand whether she was actually on the board, but she was evidently more the liaison with the University.

Riess: Did Maggie Johnston remain involved?

Kittr: Maggie was involved only as all of us were as Prytaneans. I remember her helping at this tea that we gave, and I don't think she was actually on the board during those times. I think Maggie and Kay then went on to other things. You know, the '60s were a very busy time.

Evidently there was some question that the Department of Landscape Architecture would use Blake House for their graduate students as housing. This was mentioned several times, but then obviously that never came to fruition.

Maggie Johnston, Kay Kerr, and the Alumnae Hostess Committee

Kittr: I would call Maggie my mentor. I graduated in '47, she graduated in '43 but she was still around here, and I immediately went on both the Prytanean Alumnae board and Mortar Board Alumnae board because I was in both of those undergraduate organizations and so was she. Mortar Board was a much smaller organization so somehow it was much closer, and I think it was because of the Mortar Board alumnae situation that Maggie and I got to be the good friends that we ended up for the rest of her life. Even after I married and moved away for a couple of years, when I came back we just carried right on.

She was very active in some of the projects that we did in Mortar Board in those days. The war was just over, and we sponsored a school through Save the Children Foundation. When that was no longer necessary, she had relatives and a great interest in the Southwest. (I don't know if this has come up in any other thing.) We raised money and sent Christmas presents and things to the Hopi Indian children in Second Mesa, Arizona.

We both were very involved with Mortar Board alumnae for many years, raising money for various projects and so forth. Then they finally ran out of a project and the alumnae association sort of fell apart. I think Maggie and I, and a lot of us who had been so active in the Mortar Board group when Prytanean sold Ritter Hall--we were so determined that we had to have projects because otherwise Prytanean Alumnae, which was much much larger because it was a much larger organization, would fold. If you don't have anything to meet about, or have teas about, or raise money for, or what have you, there isn't a reason for being in existence. That's why I think Maggie was one of the chief people instrumental in starting the Prytanean project process to give grants in the years after we stopped having Ritter Hall.

Maggie was so involved in every facet of the University. I I don't know if you're familiar with the Alumnae Hostess Committee. Kay and Maggie started that in 1960. (I had known Maggie very well through the years, and I knew she had gone to work for Mrs. Kerr, even before she had her little girl, Peggy. She retired and then

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Berkeley, 94720

university of california

Marguerite K. Johnston, chief social advisor and administrative secretary to five University of California presidents, died Sunday, June 29, after a short illness.

As the principal social affairs and protocol advisor to former UC Presidents Clark Kerr, Harry Wellman, Charles Hitch, David Saxon and current UC President David P. Gardner, Mrs. Johnston organized countless social events and welcomed thousands of prominent guests to the University, including Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, Prince Philip and Prince Charles of Great Britain, and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren.

Her expertise on protocol was sought by many other colleges and universities around the country.

Mrs. Johnston, a resident of Berkeley, had worked for the University for more than 30 years. A memorial service will be held July 29 from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Alumni House on the UC Berkeley campus.

She was a 1943 graduate of UC Berkeley. Mrs. Johnston served three terms as vice president of the Class of 1943 alumni organization and was elected president of the group in 1985.

Mrs. Johnston was a member of the Prytanean Alumnae Association, a women's honor society; the UC Berkeley Alumni Association and the University Art Museum Council. She served as president of the museum council from 1977-79.

An avid conservationist, Mrs. Johnston served on the board of People for Open Space and was a member of the Sierra Club and the Save San Francisco Bay Association. She was also an active supporter of the arts.

Mrs. Johnston is survived by her husband of 45 years, Ted D. Johnston; sons, Mike of Berkeley, Stan of Los Angeles, and an adopted son, Armando Hurley of Australia; and a daughter, Peggy of Concord. She also leaves a brother, Stanley Kulp of Santa Cruz.

The family requests that any remembrances be sent to the Class of 1943 UC Berkeley Fund, 2440 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, 94720.

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ELEY DAVIS IRVINE LOS ANGELES RIVERSIDE SAN DIEGO SAN FRANCISCO SANTA BARBARA SANTA CR

Kittr: went back again later.) Anyway, the Alumnae Hostess Committee is an interesting group. I seem to be chairman, and I've been chairman of it for twenty-seven years. It's a kind of a weird thing to say, but obviously nobody else wants to be chairman of it.

Mrs. Kerr discovered that foreign VIP's were coming to the Berkeley campus, and nobody was taking them anyplace. This is an interesting thing: she and Clark were going to go to Peru so she asked somebody at the Bureau of International Relations, or whatever it was, "If you have anybody from Peru, call me. I'd like to take them to lunch. I'd like to learn more about Peru before we go." Well, she did, and took him on a tour, and had lunch, and talked to him. When she and Clark got to Peru, it turns out this man was very important. She didn't know. She thought he was just somebody visiting on campus. When she got back from that trip she got to thinking, "Here all these people come on campus, and there is no setup for anybody to greet them." They came to visit a particular professor and if he had time to take them to lunch, fine. If he didn't they were just left.

Out of that eventually evolved the International Visitor Bureau at the University. Back in 1960 Kay and Maggie decided there needed to be some personal contact, so they got to thinking, "Well, the faculty wives are already taking care of foreign students." They decided that alumnae women were not being used as much as they could be. So they invited a whole group of alumnae women to work on this idea. Maggie called me because we were good friends, and I knew Kay, but not well. She said, "Come and do this." Well, I had a three-year-old and a one-year-old, and I was pregnant. I said, "Maggie, I need another project like a hole in the head. This is ridiculous." She said, "Oh, come out. You have never been to the Kerr's home, and the bougainvillea in the garden room is lovely." At that time the bougainvillea covered the entire ceiling. It was absolutely spectacular. This was in April of 1960.

I don't know why, but when I walked in the door with this large group of women of all ages, mostly older than me, they handed me a note pad and said, "Why don't you take notes, Janice." So I took notes and ended up helping to write the original draft of what we call Questions and Answers of what foreign visitors would like to know, and so forth. We called it the Alumnae Hostess Committee, and it's still functioning through the auspices of the International Visitor Service. There are alumnae women who donate their time and their automobiles to meet foreign visitors and take them to and from appointments, take them on tours of the campus if they want it, or pick them up at bus stops and take them to their appointments and what have you.

In those years in the '60s there was plenty of government money, and the USIS, the State Department, was sending lots of people from the other parts of the world on tours of the United States. Berkeley and Cal were always on the itinerary, so we had

Kittr: many visitors, singly and in groups. It was very interesting. We also meet with each other several times each year and have tours or talks about particular places on campus. We just compile as much knowledge about Cal as possible to use when we take our foreign visitors around.

Anyway, Maggie and Kay started that, and Maggie was extremely involved all the years even after Clark was no longer president of the University. Kay has remained a member of the committee and occasionally will come to a meeting. I don't know that she's actually done a tour for quite a while or met with a visitor, but she would if the occasion arose, I'm sure.

Riess: What is the official connection of organizations like Alumnae Hostesses and Prytanean and Mortar Board to the University? Is there always one member of the group who is the liaison? To whom?

Kittr: Well, Mortar Board Alumnae does not exist anymore. Prytanean along with probably Golden Bear Alumni, etc., really has only a social connection, I would say. I don't think there's any official connection. Alumnae Hostess Committee is just a group of volunteer women that operates out of the International Visitor Service, which is under Public Relations. Professor Ollie Wilson has recently been put in charge.

I became more familiar with Kay Kerr through the Alumnae Hostess Committee. Kay was also one of the three founding women in Save San Francisco Bay Association in 1961. In 1964 I was sort of interested in a part-time job, and so when Kay and others felt they needed a paid person, they hired me at Maggie's suggestion. The pay was very small and I only worked part-time. I think all volunteer organizations sometimes get to this point where they like to have somebody they can tell to do something, because if everybody is a volunteer you can't tell anybody to do anything. You have to ask them to do things. I've been working for Save the Bay ever since. For a long time I was the only employee.

As you see, Maggie was directly instrumental there; it wouldn't have occurred to me to ask for the job. Kay might not have known that I was interested in having a part-time job. It was just totally happenstance with Maggie as the main person. Maggie worked on a number of conservation efforts. She was always willing to help with the Save the Bay project. Then she went on to be secretary to the other presidents' wives. She was always interested and involved in the Alumnae Hostess Committee, and was always interested in helping me and brainstorming about who would be a good speaker, and where could we do this, and so forth.

As a matter of fact, we [Alumnae Hostess] had our twenty-fifth anniversary in 1985 and I said to Maggie, "Well, we haven't had a meeting at Blake House for a long time." (Blake House isn't

Kittr: technically a place we take a visitor to, but it's a nice, gracious place, and we hadn't seen the gardens for a long time.) Maggie said, "Well, this is special. Why don't we make it a potluck luncheon?" I would never have presumed to ask to use somebody else's house, even though I knew that Mrs. Gardner didn't live there. But still, you know. So she talked to Libby Gardner and we worked together, the three of us.

Riess: Did Mrs. Gardner attend?

Kittr: Oh, yes. It was just a marvelous event, all really due to Maggie who had said, "Well, let's do something special," because it's been twenty-five years of this committee, and we're still going strong helping the University. It's the old Prytanean attitude of giving service to the University, which we're still doing as alums for all these years and years.

Riess: And linking the town and gown, it seems to me.

Kittr: Well, I don't know. An awful lot of the women on the Hostess Committee, a lot of the women on Prytanean are connected with the University a lot more than I am. I'm only connected with the University through alumni activities such as this. I've never worked on the campus, which almost everybody else has, it seems like. My husband has no connection with the University, and only one of my three children even went there.

Whereas that's not true with many of the other people on both the Hostess Committee and Prytanean. For example, Maggie. I mean, Maggie went to Cal, and Maggie has continued to work, have many connections, alumni connections as well as job connections and so forth, with the University all these years.

Riess: Was there anyone ever like Maggie before Maggie?

Kittr: No. I don't think there was ever. I haven't the vaguest idea what President Sproul had in the way of social secretary or someone to do entertaining. I have no knowledge of that. I would have been at school at the time. There would have been nothing I would have known about that.

Riess: So Maggie and Kay kind of created Maggie's position in the University.

Kittr: Yes. Definitely. Then it carried on after Kay left. Maggie didn't know if Nancy Hitch would want her, but of course she did. Then she did the same thing for all of the others.

Transcriber: Catherine Woolf
Final Typist: Elizabeth Eshleman

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Norma Willer, Anthony Hail, Ron and Myra Brocchini

REMODELLING AND DECORATING BLAKE HOUSE, 1967-1968

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

In 1962 Anita Blake died and the vast Mediterranean-style house that she and her husband Anson had built on Rincon Road in Kensington, California came to the University of California. By the terms of the Blake's 1957 gift, the house could be put to any use the University chose, and an idea occurred to Mrs. Clark Kerr, the president's wife. She urged the Prytanean alumnae group to undertake transforming Blake House into housing for graduate women. Minor remodelling was done with an eye to the immediate logistics of turning a three-bedroom house into a women's dormitory, and accommodations were ready in the fall of 1963. For many reasons, however, Blake House failed to attract enough residents to make it viable, and the residency program was discontinued after 1965.

The deferred maintenance that the University inherited with Blake House had not by any means been faced in the 1963 "remodelling." When the Board of Regents decided in 1967 to upgrade Blake House to the status of official residence of the President of the University of California--Charles Hitch had been named president in September 1967--major renovation was in order. No longer a property solely associated with the University at Berkeley, Blake House would be the statewide University's White House. But considerable work would need to be done to make it equal to the honor, and the new president wanted to occupy it as soon as possible.

The design challenge was to allow for a gracious pairing of functions: a private place for the University's top executive to relax in after a hard day, a home in which his wife could carry on her creative and social life, normal surroundings for their daughter to grow up in, as well as a public place where Regents, visiting dignitaries, delegations of one sort and another could park their cars, find a chair, have a conversation, eat a meal, use the towels, enjoy the view, and conduct official business. It was a challenge that was carried out with great spirit by the four professionals here reunited to recall that year together, architects Ron and Myra Brocchini, interior decorator Anthony Hail, and University architectural liaison Norma Willer.

By all testimony the undertaking was great fun, gratifying, appreciated, and full of anecdote, as the interview will show. The Brocchinis and Tony Hail acknowledged Norma Willer's essential role in articulating the needs of President and Mrs. Hitch, coordinating the work of the architects and contractors, and following through on the ultimate decorating decisions. Mrs. Willer, who suggested the joint interview, arranged for us to meet at the Brocchinis' San Francisco office. We were joined there by Mr. Hail to record this roundtable conversation—a vicarious look at how design people get things done, as well as valuable documentation of Blake House.

Editing the oral history was done by passing the transcript from one interviewee to the next. There were few changes. The editing, like the interview, went smoothly despite the involvement of more than the standard two persons. Mrs. Willer had been interviewed for another Regional Oral History Office interview, a history of the Women's Faculty Club at the University, and on several occasions has been able to offer valuable advice in planning architecture-related interviews. Her familiarity with the oral history process made her at times seem a co-interviewer, which gave a particular strength to the interview.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

November 20, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BERKELEY'S ALUMNA

■ MORE THAN 1,000 foreign businessmen, teachers, government officials and students visit the Berkeley campus each year—and the number is increasing. Many of them come on business, and many of them often find themselves—business completed, or between appointments—with nothing to do, and nothing planned.

Such was the case four years ago with a young Peruvian official with whom Mrs. Clark Kerr was discussing University President Kerr's anticipated trip to South America. During the conversation, Mrs. Kerr discovered her companion was interested in flowers and that he had an entire afternoon with nothing planned. Although she was extremely busy with her own heavy schedule, Mrs. Kerr invited the young man to visit the beautiful garden which surrounds the Kerrs' modern, glass-front home high on the

El Cerrito hills, overlooking the Bay. Later, she drove to his San Francisco-bound bus.

When the Kerrs arrived in Lima, Peru, a few months later, the official welcoming committee was headed by the young guest, and it was apparent that at least one Peruvian official's opinion of Berkeley—and of the U.S.—had been strongly influenced by Mrs. Kerr's hospitality that afternoon.

Mrs. Kerr also was strongly influenced by her guest—more precisely, by the fact that foreign visitors to Berkeley were not “being taken care of” while they were here. The Bureau of International Relations had, on occasion, used student guides for campus tours, when requested; however, students proved too unreliable—some did not even show up. No funds were available to hire guides.

Photos by Don Kechely

HOSTESSES

Undaunted, Mrs. Kerr asked a group of 21 Bay Area University alumnae to her home in April 1960 to "discuss" the problem. Mrs. Kerr already knew how she wanted the problem solved; before the women left, they had formed a unique, little-publicized organization—the Alumnae Hostess Committee—which, during the past four years, has escorted some 800 foreign visitors on one- to two-hour campus and community tours. Some hostesses have assisted their guests on shopping expeditions. Some even have invited their guests home for dinner and "to meet the family."

The Hostesses are a loosely-knit, informal organization of approximately 30 former Berkeley students who meet as a group three to five times a year. They have no official status. All are volunteers. Most are housewives with grown

ON A TYPICAL assignment, a hostess may find herself, as did Mrs. Marjorie Watt '33 (at right in photo at left), showing the campus to a group of Ryukyuan science students from the top of the new chemistry building. Often, however, a hostess is asked to escort only one or two visitors. Such was the case with Mrs. Helen Weis '33, shown at right greeting George Spentzas, deputy director of the Bank of Greece, as he arrived at the School of Business Administration office. During an hour-long tour, mostly by automobile, Mrs. Weis showed her visitor the Campanile (below), where both were startled when

chimes began to play, and the Greek Theatre (left). Returning past Memorial Stadium and International House (below), Mrs. Weis delivered her charge on the doorstep of his next appointment. Hostesses drive their own cars—often pay for their own meals—but may park on campus while escorting visitors. Just prior to his return to Greece, Spentzas wrote Mrs. Weis: "America is . . . now the country where many of our friends live. We leave much richer in experience, and more optimistic about the future of the world and better international understanding. Farewell and thank you."

HOSTESS COMMITTEE meets three to five times a year. Each meeting usually includes a special orientation program—a Library tour, for example. The first meeting each fall, however, is held at University House (above). During this meeting, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Janice Kittredge '47 (above, right), the Committee is organized for the coming year, new members are welcomed, and each member is provided with the latest information and resource materials. The Committee's sponsor, Mrs. Clark Kerr (below, right), attends most meetings; sometimes bakes bread or cookies to be served. Day-to-day coordination between visitors and hostesses is capably handled by Dora Seu (below, left), of the campus' International Visitors' Bureau.

or teen-age children. Hostesses provide transportation in their own cars, often pay for their own lunches, since expense funds are provided in the campus budget.

The Committee's activities are coordinated by an effervescent bundle of energy, Janice Kittredge '47, wife and mother of three school-age children, and one of the original group called on by Mrs. Kerr. Scheduling of tours and assignment of hostesses is handled by Dora Seu at the International Visitors Bureau on the Berkeley campus.

Lest one think the hostess' life is an easy one—filled with suave, sophisticated dignitaries and businessmen—the hostess can describe incidents which made her wish she were back in the kitchen, working over a hot stove with children running rampant through the house. One hostess, for instance, recently guided a group of Japanese families—complete with children. As she was pointing out various local landmarks from the top of the Student Union, she was horrified to find several of the youngsters doing a balancing act on the platform railing—four stories above pavement below!

Another hostess recently led her group of visiting students into the middle of a prohibited construction site.

Perhaps, however, the fear of many hostesses was realized one day last summer when, as is the hostesses' custom, one hostess casually mentioned that there were two students at Berkeley from her guest's country. "Fine," she said. "Let's find them!"

Fortunately, both were soon located at International House.

As the number of foreign visitors coming to Berkeley increases, the Alumnae Hostesses will be called upon more and more. And it will be largely through their efforts in years to come, these visitors will remember Berkeley as a "friendly place to be."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name NORMA FLORENCE PIDCOCK WILLER

Date of birth 10/23/22 Place of birth RICHMOND, CA.

Father's full name WILLIAM BURTON PIDCOCK

Birthplace OGDEN, UTAH

Occupation RAILROAD ENGINEER

Mother's full name FLORENCE ADA GIBBONS PIDCOCK

Birthplace OGDEN, UTAH

Occupation WIFE & MOTHER

Where did you grow up ? RICHMOND, CA.

Present community BERKELEY, CA.

Education RICHMOND HIGH SCHOOL

UNIV. OF CALIF., BERKELEY, BA IN ARCHITECTURE

Occupation(s) ARCHITECT

Special interests or activities DRAWING AND PAINTING (WATER-
COLOR), SINGING, SWIMMING, ROWING, JOGGING,
WEIGHT-LIFTING

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name MYRA M. BROCCINI

Date of birth 26 JULY 1932 Place of birth PALO ALTO, CAL

Father's full name RALPH WESTBROOKE MOSSMAN

Birthplace LOS BANOS, CAL

Occupation ENGINEER

Mother's full name KATHRYN BUTTON MOSSMAN

Birthplace ROCHESTER, N.Y.

Occupation HOUSEWIFE

Where did you grow up ? BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA, BAHREN IS

Present community BERKELEY

Education B.A. ARCH UCB
M.M. ARCH. UCB

Occupation(s) ARCHITECT

Special interests or activities HEAD ROYCE SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY
ART MUSEUM, TRAVEL

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name RONALD GENE BROCCCHINI

Date of birth NOV 6 1929 Place of birth OAKLAND CA

Father's full name GINO MARIO BROCCCHINI

Birthplace SAN FRANCISCO

Occupation GROCCER

Mother's full name YOL LOUISE BROCCCHINI

Birthplace LUCCA, ITALY

Occupation HOUSEWIFE

Where did you grow up ? BERKELEY / OAKLAND

Present community BERKELEY

Education BAY AREA HONORS UCB

MARCH UCB

Occupation(s) ARCHITECT

Special interests or activities UCB ATHLETICS / AUTOMOBILES
CONTINUING EDUCATION IN ARCHITECTURE

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name ANTHONY GODWIN HAIL

Date of birth OCT. 23 1924 Place of birth HOUSTON

Father's full name EGBERT O HAIL

Birthplace KENTUCKY

Occupation INSURANCE

Mother's full name ELIZABETH DARREN HAIL BAAGOE

Birthplace MEMPHIS TENN

Occupation HOUSE WIFE

Where did you grow up ? DENMARK & TENNESSEE

Present community SAN FRAN

Education B.A & ARCH SCHOOL HARVARD

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

Occupation(s) INTERIOR DECORATOR

Special interests or activities HISTORY - ART - FURNITURE
ANTIQUES ETC -

Renovating Blake House

[Date of Interview: February 19, 1987]

The Condition of the House in 1967

Riess: What did you think of Blake House when you first saw it?

Myra: I thought it was just great.

Ron: I think it's a good example of that period of architecture.

Norma: Yes, but it was pretty shoddy when we got it.

Myra: It was in bad shape.

Ron: It had collapsed. I think the garden was stronger than the house because Mabel Symmes apparently had traveled the world and collected plants. I recall that the first time that I ever saw a kiwi was in that garden out there by that loggia, and it was bearing fruit. I thought it was a walnut because it looks like a walnut in growth. There was one of everything. There were redwood groves--

Myra: And hose bibs in the closets.

Ron: To take care of indoor planting. It was just a hose bib like on the outside of the house, so you had to be very careful. Those were inside all of the upper bedroom closets, but there were no drains, so if it leaked it would go all over the hardwood floors.

Riess: Had alterations been made at Blake House by the Prytanean group when they moved the women graduate students in there in 1963?

Norma: Yes. Ron, you remember what it was like.

Ron: They did a lot of wallpapering and painting, and cosmetic remodelling to the building.

Myra: Didn't they partition off a toilet? Wasn't there a toilet with stalls in it?

Norma: I remember that. It had a kind of barracks look to it upstairs.

Ron: They had remodelled the house in a distressed situation because the house had sunk about seven inches in the middle, right opposite the grotto. One of the major things we had to do was to try to level the house. When we did that, then put new foundations in--there's concrete columns that support the ground living floor. We had to lift the house, and when we did that it popped a lot of the remodelling that had been done by the Prytaneans because we were restoring it to its original shape. So walls cracked and wallpaper came off--that was expected to happen. And we raised the house to within three quarters of an inch of level. But it took about two months to do that, just to raise the house.

[Tony Hail arrives]

Riess: Women were not in residence, I guess.

Ron: The house was vacant, I believe, when we went in. The stories that we heard were that they moved out because it was a scary situation to live out there all alone in the building at nighttime.

Myra: It was too far away.

Ron: They would hear noises at nighttime, probably deer or raccoon, things like this, and call the police. And the University police and El Cerrito police both got a little tired of driving out there and finding nothing. I think because of the distance, plus the separation from campus activities, plus the scare factor, they had moved out.

Selecting the Architects

Riess: Norma, what is your recollection of the beginnings of the work at Blake House?

Norma: I can't really remember the very beginning. I think that we got word in my office from University Hall. Bob Evans called and wanted somebody assigned to the project from our office, and I was the one. Then we met with the Hitches, and the first thing we did was to select an architect, and we interviewed Ron and Myra. [to Ron and Myra] Do you remember that?

Myra: Vividly.

Ron: Yes.

Riess: Why vividly?

Ron: It was an interesting interview. I think we ended up having a one o'clock interview on Saturday scheduled at the house site. I called up and got it changed to eleven o'clock, the reason being that I'm involved in Cal sports, Men's Intercollegiate--more so now than I was then--and it was a football game day. We had an appointment to go to the football game. It was the starting time for Golden Bear Athletic Fund--

Myra: The truth of it is that he hasn't missed a Cal football game since 1938, and he wasn't about to miss one for this occasion either.
[laughter]

Ron: And it amazed me when Norma said we got the job. As I was leaving, somehow Charles Hitch asked me why we changed the meeting, and we were talking about that, and I said that it was very important to me not to miss a Cal football game. As we walked out then I think [Dan] Warner was walking in to be interviewed. He was one of the other architects, I guess. We switched times. That was an interesting anecdote about how to be selected or not be selected for a commission. I don't know that it appealed to Charles Hitch at the time, but I think it did.

Myra: I think it probably did. You certainly were an Old Blue.

The other funny thing was that I had lived part of my childhood about two blocks away and never seen the house. It was fun to actually see it.

Riess: Norma, how did you decide who you were going to interview?

Norma: My memory is a total blank. I can't even remember the other people we interviewed. I'm sure they were selected from a list of people who had experience in residential remodeling.

Ron: Dan Warner. They were the heirs to Gardner Dailey's office. I think Gardner Dailey had just died, and it eventually became Warner, Yuill-Thornton & Levikow. That was the firm. We didn't know the third one, but we knew the second one because we passed each other in the garden.

Riess: Are you aware that Catherine Hearst thought that it would be a waste of time to put thirty-three thousand into the house? She thought it just should be razed.

Myra: Really?

Ron: No!

Riess: That's in the files. [July 16, 1966]

Regent Dorothy Chandler

Ron: We went through two interviews with the Hitches, and I think the third one was a lunch at their house. Myra can't forget the salmon on pewter plates. We met Buffy Chandler, who was the Regent who was put in charge. This was a Regents' project, as I understand it, not a Berkeley project.

Norma: No, it was a University-wide project.

Ron: I know Bob Evans [University architect], when we met him, was filling in for Elmo Morgan [University vice-president], who was on a one-year sabbatical. I think Buffy Chandler came to one or two of the meetings, and then she sort of disappeared from the scene.

Myra: I remember that differently. I thought what happened was we were going along in the preliminaries and somehow it came up that there wasn't going to be room for the help.

Myra: She said, "Come on you guys," and I thought that meant somebody was going to cough up some more money. And as soon as she said that, there was money to do that addition.

Tony: For the servants' bathrooms mainly, that's what she said. I didn't know who she was; nobody introduced anybody. I said, "We have very nice bathrooms planned for the servants." She said, "Have you ever given a spur-of-the-moment lunch for four thousand people?" or something ridiculous like that. (I've told this so many times and it gets bigger.) [laughter] She said, "I have." So I said to somebody, "Who is that woman?" and they told me who she was. She said, "They don't like using each others' bathrooms." Do you remember that?

Myra: Yes, right.

Tony: "Permanent servants don't like having someone come in from outside to use their bathrooms, and men certainly don't want women--or vice versa--using the same bathrooms, and you'd better provide them now because you won't be able to do it later, and find the room for it." She was very firm about that. She asked me a great many questions, Mrs. Chandler. Mrs. Hearst didn't say anything--I knew who she was, she spoke with a southern accent. But Mrs. Chandler was very strong, just what you'd expect, and knew exactly what she was talking about.

Riess: She was very much in favor of the project too.

Tony: Very much in favor of the project, but also a very strong woman who intended to have her thoughts listened to, let's put it this way.

Riess: That must have been very hard for Nancy Hitch, I should think.

Norma: No, she was quite open to it. She was soliciting ideas from Mrs. Chandler and anyone else who had experience in running a big house.

Tony: She had no false pride about that, and she was very intelligent not to, because very few people are accustomed to running a house on that scale, and also very few who would be expected to give lunches like that, and she was to be expected to, wasn't she?

Norma: She was, and she really didn't have that much experience, but she knew Mrs. Chandler did, and she had invited Mrs. Chandler to give advice.

Keeping in Mind the Multi-Campus Presidency

Riess: In the files there are many of Nancy Hitch's notes. She was planning constantly, it appears. I wonder how she communicated with all of you.

Tony: All the time. [laughter] All the time, and she took it as a personal chore, as if it were to be her house. She chose the china, the silver, the glasses, the napkins--well, let's say we did. She was interested in every detail of a pepper shaker, right down to the kitchen things and where the family was to sit.

Riess: This is a good thing?

Tony: It's an excellent thing from my point of view. She told us what she wanted, and then we got it.

Myra: But also I always had the feeling that it was slightly turned towards the fact that it was University-owned. It wasn't like she was picking out what she wanted.

Tony: It wasn't selfish, or that she was interested in her personal aggrandizement at all. It was just to make sure that if it was done under her auspices, it was going to be a job done correctly. That's the way I felt.

Myra: Wasn't there something about the china? I forget what that was all about.

Tony: It was about the gold emblem.

Myra: Yes. You had to search all over creation to find somebody to do it.

- Tony: That's it. She wanted the seal of the University on all the china in Blake House. Nobody knew how to get that made. I had to scrounge to get it done.
- Myra: You got it from North Carolina someplace?
- Tony: Something like that, another college, North Carolina, or Vanderbilt. I got it to show Mrs. Hitch what it would look like. It wasn't on everything then. Now you see it everywhere, but you didn't see it then. It was a good-looking thing, wasn't it? Mrs. Hitch loved it. Rather than their initials--and you had to have something on it. But it was supposed to serve all the campuses, not just Berkeley.
- Riess: What number of settings did you decide on? Not four thousand I take it.
- Tony: No, but a great many, it was a very big service.
- Myra: I remember that we had to have place settings for fifty-four people, and the reason I remember it is--
- Tony: That's how many you could seat.
- Myra: Yes, and the reason I remember is that we had to figure out where to put it. Remember how I went around and measured how tall the plates were going to be?
- Tony: We chose every single thing, and they made provisions to store it. It was a vast amount.
- Norma: That was Italian china, Ginori.
- Tony: That's why it was so difficult to get that coat of arms [seal of the University] on it.
- Riess: That point keeps being made that the University is not Berkeley. In recalling Mr. Hitch's term there, and some of his wishes when he came on as president, people mention that he was very clear that he didn't want even to set foot on the Berkeley campus unless he was invited to, that he was head of all the campuses.
- Tony: The Hitches wanted that point to come across all the time, in everything, that it was not just a Berkeley thing, and it certainly wasn't anything to do with them.
- Norma: However, I don't think there were any other labels where the University seal was placed, other than on the china. I can't recall that there was any place where we could make that statement, other than verbally.

Tony: No, but I do remember that the absence of initials is odd on napkins and silver, so that was their way of getting around it. I thought that was very nice of them not to want their name on anything.

Riess: Whoever supplied the Stieff silver offered to initial the back of it free. Was it initialed?

Norma: I think that was one thing we decided not to do.

Tony: We sat around at Mrs. Hitch's house on all these little things and decided, and she never, ever put her personal stamp on it, never pushed herself forward.

Norma: She was really a very quiet person, so quiet in fact that it was difficult to hear her often.

Myra: That's right, I'd forgotten that. She spoke so quietly.

Norma: And she had laryngitis to begin with. I remember that very clearly because she used to call me on the phone, and it was very difficult to understand what she was saying. About that same time I was dealing with Bill Wurster, who also had problems speaking, and I was a nervous wreck. [laughter]

Budget

Riess: That \$458,000 budget, how was that determined? On July 5th, 1966—Cliff Dochterman gave President Hitch three proposals for different ways of handling the renovation costs. Big money was involved, but not anything like \$458,000; it was more like \$200,000. Did you make up the budget, Norma?

Norma: It originated in the office of the University architect and was based on an assumed program, not knowing really what had to be done to jack up the house or about the additions.

Riess: That was before you found Ron and Myra.

Norma: Yes. An outline program and a budget was always developed for every project before we ever hired an outside architect or any outside consultants. There had to be Regents' approval given of that budget and program before we started. Later it would have been turned over to Ron and Myra to develop a budget, and they would have come up with the first real estimate based on the program that developed.

Ron: I think it's important to understand the difference between the construction budget and the project budget. What we were involved with was the construction budget. Beyond that is the project budget

Ron: that takes in all the costs involved, and having A & E [Architects and Engineers] on it--and Tony on it. We would only be involved in restoring the house and adding onto the house. It's not unusual to have a \$300,000 construction budget that might be a \$400,000 project budget, depending on what goes into it after it's completed.

Riess: In choosing the architect, is that a competitive bid?

Norma: There are no bids, no discussion of fees at the time of the interviews, but it is competitive.

Ron: In the past few years, I have been involved in selecting architects for the state and for the University, and I think it has always been traditional to select on talent and experience--if you have a building type--yet you don't want to leave anybody out that doesn't show experience but does show creative talent that could develop that experience. Otherwise we never would have done Bodega Marine Biology Lab for the University because it was the first one of its type. You don't go out and bid competitively for it.

Everyone going in and working with the University realizes that they have a fee schedule. So if you're doing a lab building, and you know the approximate cost, you know what your fee is going to be. It's pretty straightforward: I think basically professional talent and capabilities.

Myra: Theoretically that's the way any job is supposed to be done, not just University work.

Riess: Was the bid for construction also very straight-forward? Was Al Heffley--

Ron: That was a competitive bid. Al was on the bidder's list.

Myra: He'd done a lot of work for the University and everybody liked him.

Norma: He had done some work for the Hitches, on their house on Hilldale. Prior to the actual house remodeling and addition, we leveled the house, and did some work on the foundation. Another contractor did that work.

Ron: I don't remember who bid against Al. Mario somebody. He's an expert in lifting buildings.

Working with President and Mrs. Hitch's Requests

Ron: Even before that aspect of the project, I recall that the Hitches were some of the easiest clients that I'd ever had.

Tony: I was going to say that, too. The nicest.

Myra: It wasn't that they went along with everything you said. They weren't easy that way.

Ron: They were nice, they were easy, but when we went to meetings--and we had frequent meetings in University Hall--we would present three alternatives, and Charles Hitch would ask us what we thought was the best, and we'd try to justify it, and then he'd make a decision. So when you left, you knew where you were going, there was no vacillating. After the decision was made, that was the decision.

Our contact with them was extremely easy. We didn't work with a committee, we worked with the two of them, and I imagine Nancy did a lot of the background and notes and gave it to him, and said, "This is what we want to do," and he digested it. He was a very busy person. Just like he had a staff person do his reviews and hand him conclusions and directions, I'm sure that it worked that way with the house. It meant that it was extremely easy for us. We sort of went from A to B without a lot of going sideways on that project.

Myra: A good part of that is right here. Norma's the one who orchestrates that.

Ron: Norma took the brunt of most of that.

Tony: I've never had that middle person on any other project I've done.

Myra: You always have the person in Norma's position, but most of the people in Norma's position are not Norma. A lot of times the jobs just get--

Ron: I think we established a sort of system in the day-to-day dialogue that went on between Nancy and Norma. Our contacts were only at those meetings, about every other week. A lot of the resolutions and options were handled by Norma before they got to us.

Riess: I'm a little surprised that Mr. Hitch was involved.

Ron: He was. I think we had a half dozen meetings with him in the conference room at University Hall. We worked rather rapidly on this job because they wanted to get in before he was no longer president.

Tony: That's it. [laughter]

Ron: The job moved rather quickly.

Myra: How long did they live in the house?

Norma: Probably seven or eight years.

Ron: The only concern besides the house itself was security.

Tony: And the child.

Ron: Also their ability to live there and have a private life in the building as well as the life of a university president.

Tony: That was very important to her.

Ron: It had to do with the scale of some of the spaces: a small kitchen, a small dining room--

Myra: We put the elevator in for that reason too.

Ron: The elevator so that they could communicate without going down the main stairway. But also the garden itself. We added that entry gate around the grotto particularly to keep that part more or less as a private garden. The remainder of the garden was to be left open and accessible to public and public tours. We worked with Walter Vodden who was in charge of all the garden, and decided where we could develop an exterior use space that was enclosed. We worked with Gerry Scott, landscape architect, as well. The whole back area was lifted. There's about fourteen feet of fill out there where that lawn area is, so that there'd be an outside area. And then we built a crafts room downstairs for Nancy and Caroline.

Riess: This memo from the conference on October 12, 1967, at which Mrs. Hitch and Mr. Evans and Frances Essig were present--

Norma: Fran Essig was Dr. Hitch's executive secretary or administrative assistant.

Riess: At that time Mrs. Hitch was outlining the things that she particularly wanted. One of the things was an outdoor roofed dining terrace with a fireplace.

Norma: She didn't get that. [laughter]

Riess: And a game room or play room downstairs to accomodate the children.

Norma: That was done.

Riess: Is that what is now the housekeeper's apartment?

Ron: No, this is down below in the back side, adjacent to the new west loggia that was added. The house was a very large house, but it was designed as a very small house, and you had to circulate through spaces.

Myra: It was your basic three-bedroom house, wasn't it?

Ron: That's right, and you couldn't get in and out of the living room except by one set of doors.

At first guess I can see why Catherine Hearst might say that it was totally unsuitable as a house where you have to give teas for five hundred and hold receptions. There was no way of moving people gracefully through the house. This was a major reason for developing the west loggia, which was all added on, so they could come through the receiving line, go back out and circulate through the dining room. That was a major problem. It was just a three-bedroom house, not designed for that kind of social use.

Norma: It was Mrs. Kerr who suggested that loggia. She [Nancy Hitch] said that others had been given credit for that idea, but she wanted it to be noted that it was Mrs. Kerr who suggested it.

Myra: She was right; it was the right place to do it.

Selecting a Decorator

Riess: [to Tony] When did you first see the house, and what did you think of it?

Tony: I don't remember. I remember I went to Mrs. Hitch's house. You'd gotten me to come, hadn't you?

Norma: Mrs. Hitch and I came to see you at your house and talked to you a little bit before you came over to Blake House. And then I think we walked through Blake House together and then went to the Hitches' on Hilldale.

Tony: Yes. I don't know when that was. It was very near the beginning. [to Myra and Ron] You'd just been chosen, I know that.

Norma: Because we did talk about furniture layouts and arrangements at a very early stage. You people did some furniture layout plans, didn't you?

Myra: We usually do, although I don't remember.

Norma: Tony gave you his ideas on that and you laid it out for them.

Tony: We never had any problems professionally with any of it.

Myra: Right.

Riess: The business of having furniture layout plans: was that because this was more of a set piece, or do you do that anyway?

Tony: You always do.

Myra: You can't design a conference room unless you know where you're going to put the furniture because you don't know what to do with the lights or plugs or doors or anything, so you do it for everything.

Riess: Including residences?

Myra: Oh, absolutely.

Riess: [to Tony] Anyway, what did you think of the house?

Tony: I'm used to working in California on houses that aren't necessarily pretty houses. I think we get used to it. You probably build more than you remodel, but I'm always remodeling, called in to change houses that exist. Far more often than I'm asked to build new ones.

Riess: As a piece of architecture you're saying it wasn't--

Tony: It's an interesting location, and a marvelous garden, and it just never entered my mind that it should be criticised. It was a fait accompli by the time I got there. There was no question that that was going to be the case. You were already into your loggia things, and jacking it up. It was going when I got there, so I had no critical views.

Norma: I think we were all caught up in the enthusiasm.

Tony: And the excitement of it. It was quite exciting to be asked to be included. It's a wonderful location, and the gates, the whole thing was attractive.

Riess: How did you and Mrs. Hitch decide on Tony?

Norma: Someone, Regent [William] Coblentz I believe, whose wife is a decorator, suggested several people. We made a list of those people, and I think the only one we really did interview was Tony. We felt that what we saw at his house was just what we were looking for, so we didn't go any farther than that. I think Michael Taylor

Norma: was one of the ones that was suggested, but we thought the warmth that we found in Tony's house, and the kind of informality that was there, was just right for the Blake house.

Riess: You said once that twenty or even ten years later you never could have done what you did at Blake House because of the National Trust landmark implications for a house as old as that.

Norma: The addition of the bedrooms and the gallery were really an improvement to the house. The attitude today with many of the houses considered historic landmarks is that you can't change any part of the exterior, so if it were considered to be an historic landmark, we couldn't have done those additions.

Riess: Was that ever a consideration?

Norma: It wasn't, but it probably would be today, because even little shacks in Berkeley are considered historic landmarks.

Myra: You have to fight tooth and nail not to give it that status.

Making the House Livable

- Tony: I think that they were incredibly lucky to have found a use for this house, and by the same token the people who use the house are lucky to have a house like that. They never would have found such a handsome house and they never would have gotten such a location.
- Myra: Plus the garden which the kids still use. Isn't it a lab for landscape architecture?
- Norma: Oh, yes, that was one of the agreements, that it would remain. Ron, you were talking about people going through the garden, and that the gate was placed there to create an element that would suggest privacy for the Hitches, and that is true. But they allowed people to come through that gate and look at the fountain and at the reflecting pool and then go beyond that to the redwood grove. Mrs. Hitch used to look up and see people who were going on that tour peering in the windows of the living room and the lanai from time to time. She had some screens in the window which she used to pull across when the tours were going on and when she had guests.
- Riess: Some of the other things that she wanted back in 1967 were the potting room for her ceramics, a play yard outside with swings, and a swimming pool.
- Ron: The play yard developed, but the swimming pool didn't.
- Myra: I don't even remember that that was even a cost factor. It's too cold out there. It's sort of in a draw and the fog comes up. I'm sure we said that it was just too cold to build a pool.
- Ron: Gerry Scott probably also said that because that would have been her area, and she wanted to preserve as much of the garden for public use as possible.
- Myra: But I remember we talked about it.
- Norma: I don't think she was too enthusiastic about the pool.

- Ron: We talked about how if the pool went in, it would be very remote from the house, out in the public area where the fill was.
- Norma: There really was only one place to put it, and that was in the fill area.
- Ron: Yes, and it would be difficult to maintain privacy out there, so they'd be very self-conscious using it while people came through. And the hazards of having a pool--
- Tony: I think you ask for everything when you start a project like this and see what you get.
- Norma: I don't think they got the play yard either. There was a space--not swings, but there might have been a sandbox.
- Myra: She was sort of getting beyond that age anyhow. Wasn't she almost a teenager?
- Norma: Caroline was nine.
- Riess: Then a dog kennel and dog run.
- Norma: Beatrice, [laughter] that was the dog.
- Ron: Wasn't that underneath the loggia? And we had the doghouse right at the end of the loggia, with a dog door.
- Norma: The dog door was in the ceramics room.

The Garden

- Riess: Gerry Scott would list these things as the "demands" of the Hitches. Was that because so many of them intruded on the gardens, so they would be seen by a landscape architect as demands?
- Norma: Well, Gerry really felt that the garden was hers.
- Myra: And in fact she had single-handedly been taking care of it for a long time.
- Norma: She had, yes. She was a member of the faculty in landscape architecture, and when she took over the directorship of the garden, she tore out a lot of the overgrown shrubs and things, and she'd taken a lot of heat for that. She improved it greatly, but still, you know how people are when you go to cut down a shrub or a tree. So she had scars from all of that activity, and she really jealously guarded the garden.

Ron: I think Gerry's real concern was the private intrusion into the Blake gardens, and how to control that.

Myra: You mean making it so that it wasn't available.

Ron: Right. Her argument on the swimming pool was that it was such a private use in a public garden. We worked together on the dog run and kept it very close to the house so it wasn't obtrusive, and were able to get the dog in at nighttime. It's coordination and design review between the architect and the landscape architect as to who's going to do what. We talked to her carefully about where we'd put the gate in the wall, and the entry, and how we'd handle the turnaround and how to get service into the building and not make it too obvious at the end of the turnaround.

I think we had several schemes. One of the requirements was additional parking, and we built a parking platform behind the house that served as a turnaround—it goes over the gully. We all wanted to keep that as a non-element in the landscape.

Myra: Didn't we talk about there being an actual garage once, or carport?

Ron: Right off the turnaround we had carports at one time.

Riess: Yes, that was one of her requests.

Ron: It finally rationalized itself that we'd put parking under the new wing and the garage would be inside the house. How do you get groceries in and out? We had a separate entry for the servants, but the landscaping disguised all that when you arrived at the bottom of the turnaround. So we tried to augment the parking requirements by making them non-building elements. We created the parking lot up near the top, and the parking down below on the edge of the turnaround so that it would be adjacent to the formal garden. I think this is just the dialogue that occurs during the design process.

Frequently clients tell you that they want this, but as you talk to them you find out they don't want this, they really want that, but they have difficulty in telling you what they want. So when you look at all of these things you discuss the good points and the bad points. Like the swimming pool: you'd be out swimming in that backyard and you've got all these tourists going through gawking at you. So that's a very uncomfortable feeling. Would you ever use it? Would the next University president have a need for a swimming pool? All of these points were discussed. Where can you put it? Where can it be private? The north side of the house was too shady; the fill area was pretty windy, although it got sun. I think that she just changed her ideas. This dialogue that goes on in the design development should reinforce all these ideas--cast aside all the ones that don't prove to work well, and strengthen the ones that do work well.

Riess: But a client typically asks for as much as possible?

Ron: I don't know if she was asking for as much as possible, but I imagine she was putting down what she thought would be necessary to have a house of that type.

A Private Life

Myra: But also she had to live in it, and they had a dog, so you have to do something about the dog.

Tony: I think she was thinking about that all the time, living in it and raising a young child, and having as normal a life as you could have in that situation, and as many concessions towards that as were possible. So you could get a glass of milk at night, and all that kind of thing.

Ron: Right. Two kitchens, the commercial kitchen and the private kitchen.

Tony: And all of her private furniture in her private dining room.

Ron: And that little extension on the bay where the three of them could eat dinner and not feel that they were sitting in a huge vacant dining room.

Myra: The other thing is that with a house of that size, whether it was the Hitches or anybody, those requirements would be the same.

Ron: I think as history has proven, it's fairly difficult to do that kind of an official residence that's going to be acceptable to everyone. Apparently Gardner feels more comfortable living in Orinda than he does at Blake House, primarily, from what I've heard, because of the social problems of having teenage daughters that would almost be isolated in an island. I think Caroline was isolated out there. To have friends over was a big effort; you didn't just go down the block or next door. It probably does make it difficult to have kids in a circumstance like that.

Riess: It's rather too bad, isn't it, that they were only there for seven years. [1968-75] That's not really enough for the amount of work that went into it.

Ron: Well, I think the other way. If you look at anybody at the corporate level that he was at, they probably move every four years. If you're in government--

Tony: Think of the President.

Ron: The President's in for four years, maybe eight. He was president [chief, economics division] of Rand Corporation [1948-1961]. He was someplace, somewhere for four years [assistant secretary of defense, 1961-1965]. I think people at high corporate levels do move a lot, and maybe seven years is a long time to be in one place. How long does the University keep a president? After all Sproul was there--

Tony: For more than seven years.

Norma: Twenty-seven or eight.

Riess: Maybe doing houses is just the job of a president's wife. Do you think that's how Nancy Hitch saw it, that that was her job?

Ron: Yes.

Myra: It's fun, you know, people like to do it. I'm sure she really enjoyed it.

Tony: She enjoyed the whole thing and liked the results.

Myra: It's not a chore; it's a fun thing to do. Especially when it isn't your own money.

Riess: Well, I guess that has a lot to do with Norma, and all of you, then, that it is a fun thing to do. I don't think it's fun.

Tony: It was really a rather pleasant experience for everyone, I think, including the Hitches.

Norma: Oh, yes.

Tony: Unlike a lot of jobs that are not necessarily altogether pleasant.

Riess: Well, there was the money. But there certainly was some negative publicity about that. Though by now when I mention Blake House to people they don't even know what it is, or where it is.

Myra: Clever old us! [laughter]

Norma: We did have some monetary difficulties from time to time, and we did have to go back for additional funds. So that wasn't all roses. I can remember one meeting that we had with Nancy when I told her that we didn't have enough money to finish the basement. Do you remember that, Tony?

Tony: Yes. Now I do.

Norma: She was very upset with that news, and she went to Charlie who must have talked to the Regents and it was shortly after that that we got a little infusion of funds to finish the basement. That was referred to in the program as the recreation room. And for refurbishing the dumbwaiter that went down into the basement, the wine cellar and storage room for odds and ends, extra chairs and things.

Tony: Well, that's par for the course, isn't it, in the course of a renovation.

Norma: Sure, it's not unusual. But it wasn't that we had money flowing in; it didn't flow; there was an effort that had to be made to get it when we ran short. I think that we did everything we could to make it an economical job. Certainly Ron and Myra didn't splurge on the architecture, and neither did you, Tony, on the interiors. It is a huge house so the square foot remodeling cost was low but when that cost was multiplied by the number of square feet in the house it came to what seemed to be a large amount then.

Riess: Ginori china and Stieff sterling were considered an investment for the lifetime of the house?

Tony: Well, it's just dignified. It is the president of nine colleges, and in a sovereign state like this I think you would expect to go to the President's House and see something rather attractive. You don't expect pottery.

Myra: [to Riess] You've interviewed other people for this? And you've read a lot?

Riess: Yes.

Myra: I get the sense that you have a feeling that there was a very negative thing about this house, about the job. Boy, I didn't feel that. Several times you've talked about demands.

Norma: I think she's getting that from the notes.

Tony: I don't think that was the case at all.

Riess: Well, I'm not in the field, and I see files full of notes, and it is not possible to know what the tone of it all was. That's why we're talking, partly.

Tony: You should read the communications between Julia Morgan and Mr. Hearst. [laughter] It's fascinating. It's a love affair. "What do you know about trees?" says Mr. Hearst. She says, "Plenty, more than you ever will." It's all on the drawings. I think there's an awful lot of dialogue going on between clients.

Ron: There's no way of understanding what you're doing with someone unless you have that dialogue. It takes a long time to do a house. It's a very personal thing. I can do a twenty-story office building, it's totally impersonal, in half the time it takes to do a house.

Tony: Particularly this kind of a house.

Norma: There was one instance also that I remember—I don't know why—but we were talking about what to do with the towels in the master bathroom.

Tony & Myra: I remember that.

Norma: What will we do with the towels? I think finally Ron said, "Well, you dry yourself, and then you throw them into the bin for the maid to take and wash. The bathroom didn't have enough wall space for enough towel racks to put the towels up to dry. So Ron said, "No, you don't put the towels up to dry, you just throw them in the bin after you've used them." It's that kind of detail.

Ron: Yes, and I think some of those things crept into this design. That was her lifestyle, was to hang all the towels on towel bars. That was the way she lived. The next president maybe didn't use towels, maybe they wanted electric dryers. So there is a certain amount of personal lifestyle that creeps into any design you're doing for a public building, which this was.

Bees

Ron: Did you have a chance to talk to Maggie Johnston before she died?

Riess: No.

Ron: Because Maggie came on after we were through. I remember that there was no office in Blake House, and we finally did the anteroom to the dining room, we stuck it in there because she needed an office. She wasn't too happy with that.

Myra: It was tiny, wasn't it?

Norma: It was really a coat closet.

Ron: It was a passageway.

It's unfortunate you couldn't talk to her because I'm sure that she knew more about the on-going situations that developed at Blake House. We took it through construction, and there were a couple of

Ron: funny things that went on in construction, and in the beginning of design. Besides the hose bibs in the closet, every closet had a ventilator in the ceiling, the theory being that in older houses--we don't do this today--but frequently there's a window in the closet in an older house so you can open it up and air the clothes out. In the Blake estate they had these grills in the ceiling, and the attic was ventilated.

The theory was that that would dry those areas. But they had ten thousand bees, and there was honey dripping down from these ventilators. When I walked through the first day, at first I thought it was roofing tar coming through. We looked at it, and I could hear this "bzzzz" going on. I thought, gee, there's rattle-snakes in the attic, or bees or something.

It turned out that Charles Hitch was extremely allergic to bee stings, they were toxic to him, so I remember that one of the first things we did was that Norma's office got a bee killer, a DDT exterminator. We sprayed the house, and we couldn't go into it for a week. I remember walking into the house at the end of the week, and I think every three square inches on the upper floor was a dead bee. It was amazing.

Well, we thought we'd gotten rid of the bees, and then we got into construction. Because of distress in the house, in certain areas that we had to reinforce, we had to remove the stucco, especially around the fireplaces, and put plywood back, and then stucco back in its place. When we took off the stucco, we found that the spaces within the stud walls were solid honeycomb. We had honeycomb fourteen inches wide and six feet high, full of honey, except no one could use it because there had been DDT and everyone was fearful of it.

Well, we figured that everything was solved until the day of the dedication. We knew that the bees had come back, and I think Norma hired this old beekeeper [Mr. John Watson], who was the only guy who would come to the house to get rid of the bees. We kept getting after him to come get them, and he wouldn't come. I guess he was the only beekeeper within many miles, and he would come when it suited him. If the weather was right in the morning he'd come. They had this huge dedication at the Blake House on the lawn, on the opposite side of the turning circle, and in the midst of this this guy comes down the hill in a Model A truck going pop! pop! bang! bang! boom! boom!

All these people from the University--Regents were there, and I don't know who was talking at the time--everybody turned around to look at this guy driving down the road. He parks right in front of the house, and everybody gets back to the ceremony, except--I had my back to the house--as you watched the people up on the podium, they kept looking up like this. [laughter] So everybody turns around,

Bee Expert Has Big Task

**Veteran of 23 Years
Changes Method to
Dislodge Huge Swarm**

BERKELEY, July 29.—C. A. Muller, Berkeley's "Bee Man," used a new tool—a posthole augur—today in the toughest job of his 23 years of eliminating unwanted bee swarms.

The bees, and there are more than 80,000 very angry ones, have lodged in a chimney on the second story roof of the Anson S. Blake dwelling, Blincoan Road and Arlington Avenue.

To make the job doubly unpleasant, a hive of hornets is hanging from a balcony directly below that part of the roof where Muller is battling the bees, and dozens of the insects are mixed in a cloud about him as he works.

10 POUNDS OF HONEY

He resorted to the augur yesterday, after exhausting efforts to reach the bees with his regular equipment, a shovel and hoe. He took more than 100 pounds of honey, pollen, brood and bees from the chimney Saturday with those instruments, and estimates there still is more than 50 pounds to be removed.

The live bees very obviously haven't left their adopted home. A swarm of them keep a buzzing vigil about Muller's head as he works. The presence of angry bees has slowed up the job already.

"You can't believe that old story that bees won't sting a bee man," Muller declared. "I had to postpone the job from Saturday until Monday to give them a chance to quiet down. This is the hardest job I've ever encountered."

GAS LULLS GUARDS

Muller reaches his "job" by a second attempt on the tile roof, car-

HE'S STUCK ON HIS JOB---AND STUNG WITH IT, TOO

C. A. Muller, Berkeley bee man, had to use a posthole augur

left, at the chimney and, right, placing removed honey and

GAS LULLS GUARDS

Muller reaches his "job" by a series of climbs up the tile roof, carrying a can of smoking burlap to quiet the more troublesome bees. An injection of a special gas he has made is usually shot down the chimney first to stupefy the guards.

Then Muller sets to work with his sugar. Reaching his arms full length into the chimney—into the swarming bees—he digs in with his tool and draws out a lump of sticky, sweet honey and hive refuse. This he will feed to the bees in his own apiary here and in Yuba County.

He fills the stuff into two five-gallon buckets, which, when full, he lowers to the ground by rope to be carried home. There were two swarms in the chimney originally, but Muller has cleaned the first one out.

GUARANTEES EXODUS
The bees swarmed last year in the chimney and were cleaned out, but a later swarm. Muller has given his guarantee that when he finishes this time, there will be no bees there for three years to come.

"I could kill them all in 10 minutes with my gas," he said, "but the smell of the dead bees would linger in the house for two years."

Muller closed one case where the owner of the house had misled him to believing the bees had just gone to the place and had him gas them.

Several days later, when the smell started, he was called back, and the owner told him the bees really had been in the walls for a long time. Muller told them the only solution

C. A. Muller, Berkeley bee man, had to use a posthole augur to remove an unwanted swarm of bees from a chimney at Ricon Road and Arlington Avenue, Berkeley. He is shown,

left, at the chimney and, right, placing removed honey and bees in buckets—Tribune photo.

left was to tear the plaster out and scrape the dead bees from their hive.

NEWS 'HOUNDS' STUNG
While the bees seemed only partially angry at Muller, as he stood on the roof peak, they showed definite signs of their anger to a photographer and reporter who accompanied him to the chimney, inflicting head wounds. The two retired to the ground, followed by a string of bees.

Muller remained on the roof, digging his augur into the chimney. He did, however, don a hood.

Ron: and here's this guy, about eighty years old, dressed in this silver suit with a helmet, and he's walking across the roof ridge on the house, on the clay tile, with a box to lure the bees. I thought I'd die. The funniest memory I've got of Blake House was of this guy.

They finally sent somebody up there to get him off, because we were afraid he was going to fall off and kill himself in the middle of the ceremony. People were saying that it was the first ceremony they'd been to with entertainment, this highwire act up there on top of the roof.

Norma: He got the bees.

Ron: I think they're still a problem, aren't they? They come back every time. You just couldn't get rid of them.

Riess: So the honeycomb stuff you just threw away.

Norma: Where we could get at it.

Ron: Yes, where we tore it out, we got rid of it. I don't know where else it is in the house, but we sealed the house up pretty tight.

Riess: That's weird. It must have been buzzing for years.

Norma: Oh, my, yes.

Myra: No wonder those girls were scared.

Ron: We heard another rumor--we weren't actually there, fortunately: At the first Regents' dinner we had put up a thing in the kitchen called an "Instant Hot." They were just new on the market. It's one of these electric units that you can put a cup under and get hot water and make coffee or tea. Apparently, during the dinner this thing started steaming. They were sitting in the dining room, and they didn't know our number--

Norma: Fortunately they knew mine.

Ron: --and the plumber went out at about ten o'clock at night.

Myra: What did you do, give him Heffley's number? And Heffley gave them the plumber's number. [laughter]

Furnishing the House

Riess: [To Tony] You bought a refectory table and chairs from San Simeon; weren't there Hearst rugs and things that the University owned already?

Tony: We were taken to see a whole batch of rugs someplace, where the president of that campus had lived.

Norma: We had rugs in the house that came from the Blake estate.

Tony: That was in the house on the campus, on the top floor of the chancellor's house?

Norma: That's right. It was the chancellor's house on campus, up in the attic.

Tony: I had to choose a whole batch of rugs that we thought were possibilities. We didn't use them all.

Norma: No, but we had them all delivered over there.

Tony: We had them delivered and tried them out. And we had a lot of the furniture that I had to recover.

Norma: Yes, that was from the Blakes' furniture. And then there was furniture that the Hitches moved from their house on Hilldale.

Tony: Yes, but that they wanted to be kept in a separate area, so that they could feel at home.

Norma: They used some of it in the living room, in the lanai dining room, in the study, in the upstairs hallway as well as in their bedroom.

Tony: They had careful plans made, so that we knew where everything was going, and what had to be bought new.

Norma: You suggested the new sofas on either side of the fireplace and the two chairs. What else?

Tony: We tried to get it up to date. Then we did a lot of curtains for that house, and a lot of windows were left without curtains, like in the loggia, the lanai. Didn't we buy new furniture out there?

Norma: Yes. That was McGuire.

Tony: Then we did all the private places upstairs using the Hitches' things--just like a normal job.

Norma: I remember a lot of things about Caroline's room.

ANTHONY HAIL

15 MONTCLAIR TERRACE, SAN FRANCISCO

February 15, 1968

Dear Mrs. Hitch:

Here is the item from Herb Caen's column that you wanted to see:

"Dr. Edward Hitch, the new Pres. of UC, thinks big. He has hired S.F.'s internationally-known interior designer, Tony Hail, to turn his Kensington house into a work of art, or even Tony. On the other hand, Chancellor Roger Heyns lives on campus in a house with beige carpets, beige walls and beige curtains. 'This place,' he explained one night, 'was decorated by a committee - and the only shade a committee can agree on is beige'."

Sincerely,

Tony Hail

Thanks sent
3-12-68
NSA

Tony: Yes, I do too.

Norma: You suggested that little canopy at the head of the bed for Caroline. She had two beds in her room, so that she could have friends for overnight.

Tony: She liked it, I remember that. It all went very smoothly, didn't it? It seemed to me it did.

Myra: Yes.

Tony: Colors were chosen that everybody seemed to agree on. And also Mrs. Hitch was extremely helpful with Norma taking a lot of the conversation, before it ever got to us. I think you talked it over with Mrs. Hitch, and then you'd come tell me what she said, and I'd go looking, and do it.

Riess: Did you have things given by Regents or by families?

Tony: No, I don't think so. We had things that the house inherited, that belonged to the Blakes. Then we didn't have much given, did we? I don't recall we had anything given.

Norma: I think you bought the dining room table and then we had some chairs made to match the ones that you got.

Tony: You said you wouldn't be able to do this house now [because of the landmark constraints] but you wouldn't be able to do it financially either. It would have been a much more expensive project now. Really ridiculously expensive.

Riess: Does the University, because it is the University, get discounts on anything?

Tony: They get it at wholesale cost, but I don't think they get it below wholesale.

Norma: We did buy everything through the purchasing department and that was quite a task. [laughter]

Tony: Enormous task, but it got done, and I think we got always the best price we could, but I don't think we got below wholesale. We did it as economically as we could. We made more sense there than we normally would, at least I think so.

Riess: What do you mean?

Tony: Well, I mean we weren't extravagant because we knew it was University money. There was some furniture that we got from the chancellor's house [University House].

Norma: Yes, we got a few chairs and things.

Tony: Some, but then I insisted on nice, up-to-date upholstery and curtains, which made everything look like it was more up-to-date, and not so old and fuddy-duddy. I think the house was quite dark and depressing.

Norma: I remember that you suggested quite strongly--let's put it that way--that we have very fresh-looking fabrics on everything, and that really lightened the house. And also that the carpets were light.

Tony: You were asking earlier about my first impressions: I remember it being very dark, with dark red bricks, and so I think anything one did to the house to lighten it improved it enormously. Because it was sitting in this beautiful garden, a dark old house from the twenties. I think we successfully got rid of that, between all of us, completely, so it never appeared to be very depressing at the end of the project.

Myra: Right. No, it seemed very sunshiney at the end.

Tony: Yes, very cheerful, and I remember thinking at the beginning it was pretty un-cheerful.

Riess: When was the solarium glassed in?

Ron: That was before we arrived.

Riess: Have you seen the pictures? That used to be just an open loggia.

Myra: We didn't enclose that?

Ron: No, I don't think so.

Norma: I think there was glass in the north end.

Myra: Maybe that's it, it was partly glazed.

Norma: Then you added the glass on the east, and the doors.

Blake House Since the Hitches

Tony: Is the house still the way it was?

Norma: The Saxons lived there. Of course all the Hitches' furniture was taken away, and they never really bought anything to replace it. The Saxons had Danish modern furniture that they moved in there.
[laughter]

Tony: So the answer is no, it's not the same.

Norma: But since Dr. Gardner became president they have had it redone, with Jean Coblentz and Janet Lam as the decorators.

Myra: Nobody lives there now?

Norma: No.

Myra: So what they've done is left the bedrooms upstairs empty?

Norma: I'm not sure how they use it. I haven't seen it since it was redone, but it's possible they may use it as a guest house. I do know that they still use it for large entertainment and that David Gardner works there sometimes in the study. Remember the study where the Hitches had their desks?

Tony: All their desks?

Norma: Yes. Dr. Gardner told me, when I was designing his office in University Hall, that it was his intention to use Blake House when he wants to get some peace and quiet away from University Hall.

Tony: It's a pity it's not being used more.

Norma: I think it's used quite a lot; it just isn't being lived in.

Riess: Yes, I think there's a lot of official social activity that goes on there. President Gardner's study is nice: it has a painting of his wife and various family pictures, and it has an at-home study feeling. I think he meets people there rather than on campus occasionally. Upstairs I think Mrs. Gardner has a study, and then of course there's all the running of the house that goes on from upstairs. Pat Johnson is the person who has taken Maggie Johnston's place.

Myra: What room was Maggie in?

Norma: One of the bedrooms down at the end of the hall, right at the top of the kitchen stairs.

Riess: Every time I've been there it's been very cold. It must be very expensive to warm that house. I end up just huddling, and searching for sun, as a matter of fact. The sun doesn't exactly stream into that house.

Tony: No.

Riess: Even though it may be lighter.

Ron: Well, the solarium is on the northeast side. [laughter]

Myra: I don't remember that the heating was a problem at the time.

Riess: They may not keep it heated.

Ron: That's what they do. Once you get a building up to heat it's not hard to keep it heated, but if you turn it off, turn it on, turn it off, it's very inefficient.

Norma: It was also pretty warm when I went out to see Nancy. She used to call me quite often to come out and talk over changes and repairs and things of that nature.

Myra: There was a fire there once, wasn't there?

Ron: No. When they first moved in, the first time they lit the fireplace, they didn't open the damper, and it smoked up the living room. They had to call the fire department.

Norma: There was a fire when the physical plant people were preparing the windows for painting. They had a torch that they were taking the old paint off with, and they ran into a rotten spot. There was no flame, and obviously to the person who was operating the torch things were okay, and he went to the men's room. When he came back the entire living room was aflame. So there was a lot of damage that was done to the walls, ceiling and to the curtains and we had to replace those. [to Tony] We got the same fabric, I think I called you about it.

Tony: Yes.

Ron: They had a burglary too, of the rugs, wasn't it?

Norma: Yes. During the time that they were doing the foundation, the house wasn't really secured, and we had those rugs all stacked up for the cleaners to come and get the following day. When I came to meet the cleaners to tell them what to do, there were only half the rugs left. They took the best ones. I had pictures of all those rugs.

Ron: And within the last year, didn't somebody go out there and steal rugs?

Norma: I don't know about that.

Ron: I think I talked to Maggie. They cut a hole in the garage door, and got in that way, and stole a bunch of rugs.

Norma: I do remember that I had taken pictures of all the rugs that were in the collection, and I was going to turn those over to the police. I had them in the pocket in my jacket, and I went to the ladies room, [laughter] and somehow my jacket pocket got tipped up and they went

Norma: in the john. [laughter] So I had to fish them out, of course, and wash them off and dry them. They never were the same. [laughter] Never found the rugs, however.

The Working Drawings

Tony: [looking at drawings] And there was new furniture for the dining room, I remember now.

Norma: (I think that's my drawing.)

Tony: (I think it is too.)

Myra: (Yes. Is that your signature?)

Norma: (Yes.)

Riess: So this is a color-coded furniture layout. What color is the Hitch furniture? This seems like--

Tony: I don't know if that's the case, I just know what is Hitch furniture.

Norma: I think we actually color coded it in the colors of the upholstery that was used to cover them in.

Tony: We got all new upholstery, but we used all the existing chairs and furniture that we could--and got new upholstery which brought it all to life. [looking at plans] I haven't seen these in twenty years.

This is the porch, lanai isn't it? And that's all McGuire, I think. They had visions of having lunch up there and never did. This was quite attractive.

Myra: Yes. We had the flag from when he was--

Norma: I think there was the University of California flag, and the secretary of defense's flag.

Tony: And we were given some very nice paintings.

Riess: There's the famous "Duke of Shrewsbury."

Tony: Yes, and here's Queen Anne--but I don't think it was.

Norma: Yes, I'd forgotten about that whole episode about getting the paintings restored.

Tony: We had quite a few to place around, and wonderful tapestries.

Riess: Those were the Blake tapestries?

Tony: Yes. And we had them cleaned, or backed, or something. We did all the things we'd do to a normal house.

Riess: Was this considered an art gallery, along the back?

Tony: I don't think we thought about that particularly. We just thought that this was a way to get there.

Myra: Exactly right.

Tony: Because it was a bottleneck. You had to go out that door again. This way you could come in and have a reception line, and go out, and go down here, see the whole house, and go out.

Norma: Nancy used to use that as a picture gallery. She got paintings from the faculty of the various schools of art on various campuses. I know she had people from Davis and Los Angeles and others. It was a rotating exhibit.

Tony: Yes, I remember that too. I also think that this turned out to be very comfortable and like a family's house. That's why it was successful, don't you think?

Myra: Right, yes, I do.

Tony: It didn't look just like a president's house.

Myra: Because it's huge.

Tony: Enormous, like a big tennis court.

Myra: But it never felt like that.

Tony: There was a lot of furniture, and a lot of different seating groups. I remember I was big on three seating groups at the time.

Riess: Wasn't the carpet one continuous piece?

Norma: No, this was especially woven to size, wasn't it, Tony?

Tony: Yes. And then we put an oriental on top of it.

Norma: Yes. They were both laid on the hardwood floor.

Tony: This was a new rug that we bought.

Norma: And that was on hardwood. Then we carpeted the stair with a new ribbed carpet, and everybody said, "Well, when are you going to put the carpet down? I see the padding doesn't look too bad, but when are you going to put the carpet down?" [laughter]

Tony & Myra: I remember that!

Norma: [looking at pictures] That's Caroline's bed.

Tony: That's my drawing. I didn't know people kept all these things.

Riess: Everything is in the files at Blake House, and that's where I gathered that Nancy Hitch was as involved as she was because there are just so many of her personal notes, as if she woke up every morning and made notes on everything.

Norma: I think she did.

Tony: I think that's exactly what she did do.

Riess: And various inventories of the things that went from the house, back and forth, the odds and ends that went from University House to Blake House, and from Blake House to Santa Cruz. That's another thing you were involved in, wasn't it Norma, recovering a lot of the furniture that had been dispersed?

Norma: Yes. We did lend some—Myra, you were involved in that, weren't you, with the rugs that went down to Santa Cruz for a provost's house?

Ron: For Merrill College.

Myra: They used some of the rugs from up here? I didn't remember that.

Norma: I recall that they were some of the tan runners. They were particularly interested in those and I was not. [laughter]

Myra: Worked out well.

Norma: Yes, it did.

The Public Response

Myra: "Where Charley Crashes." Gosh. [looking at publicity files]*

Tony: Is that the scandal thing? [looking at newspaper article]

Norma: That's the scandal thing. "Million-dollar Pad."

* See Appendices. Appendix Y.

Tony: Well, it wasn't so bad, was it?

Norma: If you look at it from today's perspective!

Myra: "Kitchen repairs and equipment for \$5,400." I can't believe it.

Riess: You've certainly put up with a lot of this, Norma, because the same thing happened with the McCorkle house, the Julia Morgan house. There will always be a community that will say that it's too much money.

Norma: Oh, sure.

Myra: Or not enough. You can't win.

Tony: (There's everything in this file.)

Norma: It's like choosing a paint color for a public area. When you choose a paint color, and fifty percent of the people like it, you're a success. Don't you think so?

Tony: Oh, yes.

Norma: Another funny thing that happened—I don't know if it's in this article or some other article--there was a discussion about the project manager for the Blake House keeping a secret set of files. She kept it in the trunk of her car. I did, as a matter of fact, keep files in the trunk of my car because I was constantly on the move from my office on campus to meetings. Wasn't like our University project files. But I did keep those I used constantly in the car.

Tony: You lived in that car.

Norma: I did, yes, I was back and forth all the time. Somebody in our office was very much against the project going ahead, and so they took it to the newspapers that I had these files in the car.

Myra: Do you know who it was?

Norma: No. It wasn't who I thought it was. [laughter]

One of the women in the office, who was a bookkeeper at the time, told my boss that she wasn't going to work on this job because she disapproved of spending state money on it. He told me then that she wasn't going to keep the books, I was going to have to keep the books myself from now on. I had a number of assignments in addition to Blake House. I was project manager for the University Art Museum and a married student project in Albany, etc. So I went back and I wrote him a letter, and I said, "I'm sorry, but I can't work on this job for these reasons, and I can't work on that job for those

Norma: reasons, and I can't work on this for those reasons. It's all a matter of conscience, and I simply can't do it." [laughter] So he called me into his office, and he said, "I get the point. The bookkeeping will be done by the bookkeepers as usual." (You have to realize that that took place in the late sixties.)

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Charles Hitch

THE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE, 1968-1975

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

President and
Mrs. Hitch and
daughter Caroline
at Blake House

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1995

OBITUARIES

CHRONICLE FILE PHOTO

CHARLES J. HITCH

He led UC in tumultuous times

Charles J. Hitch, Former President Of UC System

Former University of California President Charles Johnson Hitch, an economist who played a major role at the university during seven tumultuous years from 1968 to 1975, died yesterday of pneumonia in a San Leandro rest home.

Mr. Hitch, 85, had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for several years.

He was a prominent administrator during years of upheaval on the Berkeley campus, centered on protest against the Vietnam War, the People's Park project and other issues. He also figured in controversies over the university employment of Angela Davis and Herbert Marcuse, who were outspoken in their Marxist views.

Mr. Hitch was born in Boonville, Mo. His father, Arthur, was a teacher and administrator at the Kemper Military School and College in Boonville. Mr. Hitch graduated from the junior college in 1929.

Mr. Hitch went on to graduate from the University of Arizona in 1931. He then went to Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar and earned his master's degree in economics. He was the first American Rhodes scholar to become an Oxford don, and taught at Oxford until 1948.

He served in World War II as a member of the first Lend-Lease mission to Britain, under Averell

Harriman, and then joined the Office of Strategic Services.

Mr. Hitch came to California in 1948 as head of the economics division of the Rand Corp. in Santa Monica. He rose to the chairmanship of its research council, and remained with Rand for 13 years.

In 1961, he was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to be assistant secretary of defense and comptroller of the Pentagon. The appointment came after Defense Secretary Robert McNamara read Mr. Hitch's "The Economics of Defense in the Nuclear Age," one of his three books.

Mr. Hitch left the Defense Department in 1965 and was hired by UC as vice president of business and finance.

The student rebellion that made Berkeley world-famous as a symbol of the 1960s was in full cry. In 1967, UC President Clark Kerr was fired by then-Governor Ronald Reagan, and Mr. Hitch replaced Kerr at the beginning of the next year, with Reagan's support.

"Charles Hitch was president of the University of California during a very challenging period, with escalating student violence and declining financial support," Kerr said yesterday. "His leadership was marked by total integrity, steadfast good judgment, great intelligence, and seemingly inexhaustible patience."

Mr. Hitch's term was punctuated by some of the most bitter conflicts to strike the university system. One of his first challenges came in 1969 with violent demonstrations over the use of a patch of land that had been declared a "People's Park" by community activists. UC administrators sought to build a student residence hall on the site.

Mr. Hitch was notable in his attempts to moderate the situation, criticizing police for their use of shotguns and the National Guard for helicopter spraying of tear gas during street disturbances.

The same year, Mr. Hitch resisted demands by Reagan that Angela Davis and Herbert Marcuse be fired from the faculty, with varying success. Davis was fired, but Marcuse was retained.

Mr. Hitch also fought against cuts in the UC budget.

He retired in 1975, becoming president of a Washington, D.C. think tank, Resources for the Future. In 1979, he joined a research group studying national energy policy at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory.

He is survived by his daughter, Caroline Hitch Rublo of Hayward,

and two grandchildren. His wife, Nancy, died in 1983.

Plans for a memorial service are pending.

Stephen Schwartz

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

This interview with President Emeritus Charles Hitch was to have been a joint interview: Nancy and Charles Hitch talking about Blake House, about the planning and renovating preceding their residency, about normal family life in Blake House, about how the house functioned as an official residence, the events that were held there, and about the "Blakeness" of the house, if there was such a thing. However, Nancy Hitch died on January 15, 1987.

I had been pleased when several months earlier Nancy Hitch agreed by phone to be interviewed for the Blake House Oral History Project. Norma Willer, who suggested I ask Nancy, had been the University's liaison between the Hitches, Nancy in particular--the initials NSH are visible on many of the memos and documentation regarding the remodelling and decorating--and the architects, Ron and Myra Brocchini, and the decorator, Anthony Hail. Mrs. Willer knew firsthand how completely involved Mrs. Hitch was throughout that remodelling and decorating period. I also hoped to be able to understand more of the real presence of the house by talking to this woman who had been the second "lady of the house." I thought Mrs. Hitch must have had reason often to think of Mrs. Blake for whom another architect had forty years earlier designed this unusual house.

Unusual indeed! President Hitch described it in 1968 to a reporter as the biggest three-bedroom residence in the world! Remodelling was necessary to make it larger, to accomodate official gatherings, and to make it smaller, to make it livable. Reports of the cost of the remodelling, sensationally headlined in the late sixties when the University of California was embattled by the Free Speech Movement, were the single thing that brought the house from relative obscurity on Rincon Road in Kensington to a certain notoriety.

While the controversy was soon forgotten, the house was not granted such peace. Because of the Blake Garden, and the furnishing of the interior by a pre-eminent society decorator, it was considered a showplace, a favorite for tour groups. I suspect that Nancy Hitch, had I interviewed her, would have said what her husband and others have said, that she never completely got used to being at the mercy of the curious viewing public.

President Hitch and I met in the Hitches' apartment on Oxford Street in Berkeley, comfortably and beautifully furnished with the Hitches' period furniture that had for a time been part of the Blake House furnishings. It was a little over a month since his wife's death. I would have chosen a later date, but this timing was what he preferred. If the interview has something of the nature of a memorial to Nancy Hitch, it is certainly understandable. And probably that is not entirely a matter of timing. Clearly both Charles and Nancy Hitch enjoyed life in Blake House, and the work they undertook there endures.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

November 11, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name CHARLES JOHNSTON HITCH

Date of birth JAN 9, 1910 Place of birth BOONVILLE MO

Father's full name ARTHUR MARTIN HITCH

Birthplace CUBA MO

Occupation School administrator

Mother's full name BERTHA JOHNSTON

Birthplace BOONVILLE MO

Occupation Housewife

Where did you grow up? Boonville MO

Present community Berkeley, CA

Education WEBSTER MILITARY SCHOOL, UNIV of ARIZONA

Harvard Graduate School, OXFORD UNIV (England)

Occupation(s) Economist, ADMINISTRATOR

Special interests or activities Travel, golf,

dendrochronology, energy and natural resources, recreations research.

CHARLES J. HITCH

Born, January 9, 1910, in Boonville, Missouri, Mr. Hitch received his B.A. with highest distinction from the University of Arizona in 1931. At Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship, he was elected in 1935 a Fellow of Queen's College, a position he held until 1948. He was general editor of the Oxford Economic Papers.

Mr. Hitch was with the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California, from 1948 to 1961, first as Head of its Economic Division and later as Chairman of its Research Council. He was appointed Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) by President Kennedy in January 1961, a position he held until September 1965. He then became Professor of Economics and Vice President Business and Finance of the University of California in September 1965, Vice President of the University for Administration in July 1966, and was President of the University of California from January 1, 1968 to June 30, 1975. He joined Resources for the Future as its president on July 1, 1975, a position from which he retired in June 1979. Mr. Hitch has written and edited several books and has been active in professional organizations, serving as President of the Operations Research Society of America, 1959-60, and Vice President of the American Economic Association, 1965. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Econometric Society. He served as a trustee of the Asia Foundation, the Aerospace Corporation, and the Center for Biotechnology Research, and as a member of the Advisory Councils of the Gas Research Institute and the Electric Power Research Institute. He was chairman of the General Advisory Committee of the Energy Research and Development Administration during 1975-77, and a member of the Energy Research Advisory Board of the U.S. Department of Energy 1978-85. He was a member of the Assembly of Engineering of the National Research Council 1975-78, and a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar 1977-78.

Mr. Hitch is now living in Berkeley, California, and has an office in the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory of the University of California.

Blake House Designated as the President's House

[Date of Interview: February 20, 1987]

Riess: I think it was when you were a vice-president of the University that Regent Catherine Hearst said that it would be like throwing away \$33,000 to "pave over the termites" to make Blake House habitable.

Hitch: I don't remember that, but Catherine Hearst was very much against it. I'm not sure why. Perhaps it was because [Dorothy] Chandler was for it, and they were great rivals on the board.

Riess: That was in July, 1966. And then very soon after that, in the same month, Clifford Dochterman put together a draft of the various ways that the house might be used and what the costs would be. Were you involved in considering all of this from the vice-president for administration point of view?

Hitch: [pause] I don't remember being involved, but that isn't very significant. At that time I had no personal interest in Blake House and no thought of becoming president.

Riess: You had no thought of becoming president?

Hitch: No.

Riess: It seemed so inevitable.

Hitch: Not to me, and certainly not at that time. In 1966 I wasn't thinking of the Blake House as a place for me to live. I was very much in favor of the idea, of doing it, if it was done right, which it was.

Riess: Why were you in favor of it in general?

Hitch: I thought it was very important at that time to separate the Office of the President from the Office of the Chancellor at the Berkeley campus, and saw this as a part of meeting that need. I thought it

Hitch: was a plus, for example, that the postal address was Kensington rather than Berkeley--that the official president's house would have a Kensington address.

At that time we were thinking quite a lot about that problem, and we were seriously considering a move of the President's Office to San Francisco, just because of the confusion between the responsibilities of the president and the chancellor. We thought that if it were in San Francisco we could draw a cleaner line; then people wouldn't go to the president with problems that were really the responsibility of the chancellor. Reinforcing that consideration were strong feelings at UCLA that the proximity of the President's Office to Berkeley led to favored treatment of the Berkeley campus over UCLA.

I don't think any of this is very important now, with what has happened since.

Riess: The strength of UCLA?

Hitch: Yes, I think that UCLA is reasonably happy with the present arrangement. I'm puzzled that they keep talking about relocating the Office of the President when the principal reason for it has disappeared. But anyway, that's somebody else's problem.

But in 1966 we thought it was also important that the president have an appropriate place to entertain and perform other official functions, like putting up visiting dignitaries.

Riess: Would Clark Kerr have agreed?

Hitch: I don't know. Not for himself. Clark of course had built his present house, which is large and suitable for many official social functions, and insisted upon living in it as a condition of his accepting the presidency. At that time it was thought that Kay Kerr, who suffered from severe arthritis, was probably going to have to be put into a wheelchair before long. (She fooled them; her arthritis didn't get worse, and she's never had to go into a wheelchair.) But that house, if you've been in it, is all on one level, made for a wheelchair. So he was not interested at all, in fact would have refused to live there. Of course he had an El Cerrito home address anyway, though it wasn't quite official since it didn't belong to the University.

Riess: When you were offered the presidency in 1967 was Blake House already going to be the house or could it have been another?

Hitch: It was an open question. The search committee of Regents had spent a lot of time talking about it, and when they approached me they said that if I wanted to move into Blake House, and wanted to have it fixed up as an official residence, that they would support this before the Regents.

Riess: It was the presidential search committee?

Hitch: Yes.

Riess: And that was Elinor Heller and—was Mrs. Chandler on that?

Hitch: Mrs. Chandler and Ed Carter were on it, and Ted Meyer and Phil Boyd.

Riess: Had they already addressed the question of the cost and the means of financing it?

Hitch: No. That all had to be done, and that was one reason it took so long. We had to do so much planning before we could start the actual work of reconstruction.

Riess: So the matter of beginning to jack it up and level it had all to wait.

Hitch: It all had to wait, yes.

Riess: There is a letter in the file from Mrs. Chandler, on October 16, 1967, saying to N.S.H. [Nancy Hitch] that she will bring Blake House matters to the Regents for a policy decision as to usage and degree of repair.

Hitch: Yes.

Riess: Once it was brought to them, were they able to decide quickly? This was October, 1967.

Hitch: I can't remember precisely, but not long.

Riess: What about your long-range vision of the house?

Hitch: Well, I hoped and expected that it would be occupied as the official residence of the president. Is that what you mean?

Riess: Yes. So all of the decorating decisions were made with two thoughts in mind then? One, yourself, and one a kind of second-guessing--

Hitch: Of the future, yes. Of course my successor David Saxon did live in the house. I don't think he and his wife were enthusiastic about it, but they lived there. The present President, David Gardner, has decided, for personal reasons which I understand and fully respect, to live in his own house, but he and Mrs. Gardner make extensive use of the Blake House for social functions and business meetings.

Riess: So the Saxons weren't too fond of it. Did you enjoy it?

Hitch: Oh, I enjoyed it very much. Almost made it worthwhile to be the president. It was a lovely place, once we fixed it up and moved our furniture in. We employed a Chinese couple, cook and housemaid. We were very comfortable and happy in it.

Riess: It was your house: you came home from your office, and drove in your driveway, and it was home.

Hitch: That's right. Now, Nancy was very sensitive about her privacy, and on occasion she resented the large numbers of people who came to visit the garden and then would come up to the house. Let me show you a picture that she painted. [Hitch and Riess walk over to look at painting of ghostly faces pressed against a window.]

Nancy Hitch and Art in Blake House

Riess: I know that Mrs. Hitch had the studio and the arrangements for potting and painting. She was able to settle in and do that? She did find time?

Hitch: She did. It was a pretty productive period for her. That was when she painted that [round painting over fireplace]. Do you know the story?

Riess: No.

Hitch: These were from my remarks at the service for Nancy.* They were about two events in her life, the second of which relates to Blake House.

When Nancy and I moved into the refurbished Blake House one thing that struck her as not quite perfect was one's first view of the magnificent living room as one entered it from the entrance hall. One faced a large fireplace and over it a great mirror reflecting nothing but a featureless white arch. We thought and talked about what to do, but took no action until Christmas approached when we received, as a present from Regent John Canaday, a very handsome Christmas wreath which inspired Nancy to suggest: why not hang it in the center of that empty arch to greet visitors as they enter the room? We tried it and

*From President Hitch's remarks, spoken at the February 8, 1987 memorial service for Nancy Hitch, who died January 15, 1987.

Hitch:

liked it. The shape and dimensions seemed just right. But, of course, we couldn't sport a Christmas wreath the year 'round; we needed something appropriate throughout the year. So I said to Nancy: 'Why don't you paint the picture we want there--a striking picture the same shape and size as John Canaday's wreath?

Well, Nancy was thrilled. "You know," she would say, exaggerating somewhat, "my paintings have always been relegated to bathrooms and kitchens, and this one is to hang in the most prominent place in the President's House." But she was confronted with many problems. Round paintings to serve as models are rare in the history of art and most are Madonnas by Raphael--not quite Nancy's style. She had somehow to obtain a round piece of wood on which to paint, and a round frame of the right size and character. Then there was the painting itself: she knew she wanted it non-objective and started with some general ideas about its design and color, but the main job had to be accomplished with brush and palette. She was working hard to complete it in time to hang before the official opening of the University Art Museum, when we were entertaining at brunch at Blake House a large number of visiting art dignitaries here to celebrate the occasion. But the day before the party the painting was simply not finished--almost but not quite--and Nancy had a block--she couldn't see how she wanted it finished. So sadly to bed.

She woke up early the morning of the party and all had changed. She saw in a flash precisely what she had to do to finish the picture and dashed down to the studio to do it. Almost breathless, she produced the picture and had it hung in its niche minutes before the first guests arrived.

Among the early guests was Erle Loran, Professor of Art at Berkeley and great expert on Cezanne, Nancy's favorite painter. He was a friend of ours but did not know about Nancy's new painting. Also among the early arrivals was Harold Rosenberg, the famous art critic of the New Yorker. By coincidence they were talking together when Rosenberg spotted the painting in the arch and remarked to Loran, "That is an interesting picture. You don't suppose it could be a Paul Klee." Maggie Johnston was nearby and overheard the conversation, and dashed across the room to where Nancy was standing to tell her about it. Soon Loran joined them to confirm.

Nancy was walking on air for weeks after that--to some extent, I think, this success buoyed her spirits to the end. It was an inspired painting. It was not a Paul Klee but a genuine Nancy Hitch. Interestingly, while Nancy had some knowledge of Paul Klee, she had not seen any of the few Klees which bear a close family relation to her Blake House creation. Hers was an independent invention. I have brought two of the Klees for those who may be interested in making the comparison. The Klees are not round, but in other respects--composition, style, color and 'feel'--they seem to me, as they did to Harold Rosenberg, very close to Nancy's. Except, as I am sure you will agree, that Nancy's is clearly the best of the lot.

Riess: When you were in the house did you occasionally stumble over things that would give you a sense of Anson or Anita Blake, or a sympathy for what their life there was?

Hitch: I can't recall anything of that sort.

Riess: Did people stop by who had known the Blakes, or--?

Hitch: None that I saw.

Riess: I think it was Ella Hagar who said, "Be sure to ask about the lunch that Nancy gave in which the price of admission was a story about the Blakes."

Hitch: I can't remember it.

Riess: Their history didn't impinge on your life, I take it.

Hitch: No, I can't recall any way in which it did. Of course there were all the things that were in the house, the furnishings, and some of those were from the Blakes, but not many. I'd say well over half of the furniture and the furnishings had been taken away to furnish the new chancellors' houses that were going up on the new campuses. That didn't leave much. It's a big house, though it doesn't have many rooms.

Riess: Yes, you said to a newspaper it was the largest three-bedroom residence in the world!

Hitch: [laughs] Yes.

Riess: There was a certain amount of retrieval of furniture from the other campuses, wasn't there?

Hitch: Not much, no. It was in use elsewhere.

Riess: One of the things that I heard was that the Blake furniture went very well with your furniture.

Hitch: Yes, the furniture went very well together.

Nancy's parents, in the 1920s, spent a great deal of time in France. Her father was a professor of music, and every opportunity that he had he would go to Paris where he studied with some of the leading musicians of the time. But he had little money, and financing these trips was quite difficult for him. So he conceived the idea of buying and selling French antique furniture, and he left a lot of very fine things, of which we ended up owning quite a number by gift from Nancy's parents or by inheritance.

He also bought paintings, and this was almost laughable because he had no eye for paintings, as he did for furniture, and what he bought were all forgeries. Let me show you some. [shows Riess paintings by "Boudin" and "Whistler"]

Riess: Where was he a professor of music?

Hitch: All sorts of places. He was a very difficult person. I gather he was an excellent teacher, and a very fine musician, but he just couldn't get along with other members of his department, especially the chairman and the dean, so he moved around quite frequently. Finally he decided that he would give up university teaching. He taught at the University of Washington, Seattle, where Nancy was born, and he taught at Smith College for quite a while, but he finally decided that to escape academic administrators he would set himself up as a private teacher of piano and organ in New York. So he divided his time pretty much between New York and Paris.

Riess: Nancy must have watched her mother adapt and adjust to many new houses.

Hitch: Yes, that's right. A lot of different houses on two continents.

Riess: Where did Nancy do her art study?

Hitch: Never in any university. She had private lessons in Washington at the Corcoran Gallery. And here she studied with Yip, in watercolors, and various other people, some of them connected with the University Extension. She and Patsy Taylor took a number of trips with other painters to go to places like northern California and San Miguel de Allende in northern Mexico.

She also took lessons in pottery. First at Oxford in a class conducted by the city when we lived there, 1946-1948, and continuing through the Blake House period. That led to another story--"No Room at the Inn":

Hitch:

"In the early 1950's Shoji Hamada, the great Japanese potter and honored national Treasure of Japan; Dr. Yanagi, the Director of the Folk Art Museum of Tokyo; and Bernard Leach, the famous English potter who was the major conduit through whom Japanese and Korean pottery had such great influence on western pottery, were traveling throughout the United States giving lectures and demonstrations of potting in the Japanese folk art style. The site for the Los Angeles demonstrations was the Chouinard Art Institute, but there was a problem: it is hard now to remember or believe the intensity of anti-Japanese feelings in the immediate post-war years. No hotel near Chouinard would take the Japanese in. One of the organizers at Chouinard asked Nancy if by any chance the Hitches could offer them the hospitality of our home and she accepted with alacrity, although at the time we were living in a modest faculty house in Pacific Palisades.

The week of the pottery classes, immediately preceding Christmas, was an incredibly busy one for Nancy--participating in the classes, providing transportation, marketing and preparing meals for our guests, and generally running the household. As our relations with our guests became warmer and closer there was much good-natured bantering about Nancy being the perfect Japanese wife.

It was the beginning of lifelong friendships. The group had no engagements the following week (Christmas through New Year), so we invited them to stay on with us and they did. Hamada had thrown pots especially for us at Chouinard, which we treasure. The three of them discovered a market in L.A. where one could buy Japanese ingredients for cooking, and one evening they prepared an elegant multi-course Japanese dinner for us on our hearth. We took them on drives and walks where Bernard Leach made lovely sketches for us of the beaches and the Santa Monica Mountains. Subsequently, when we went to England we would visit the Leaches at the St. Ives pottery or meet them in London. And on the several occasions we went to Japan in the sixties and seventies, we always visited Hamada at his pottery in Mashiko. And always Hamada would insist over our protests that we choose and take one (any one) of the special pots he had made during the proceeding year.

Hamada, you know, in the true Japanese folk art tradition, never signed his pots. Leach was also in the folk art tradition, but he didn't go that far: he imprinted on each of his pots the logo of his St. Ives pottery. Once he protested to Hamada that with all Hamada's imitators it would be hard for future generations

Hitch: to know which pots were really his. "Oh," Hamada responded, "that doesn't worry me at all. A generation from now the best of theirs will be attributed to me, and the worst of mine will be attributed to them." Nancy loved to tell that story, but she, like Bernard Leach, did sign her pots. [Hitch, Ibid.]

Riess: What was Nancy's father's name?

Hitch: Walter Squire. And everyone, including his children, called him Walter. [laughs] Nancy always referred to him as Walter. He never found time to teach his children music.

Riess: But he obviously inspired a love of the arts in his daughter.

Did Nancy have a couple of days of the week when she simply put herself in that studio and was not available? Did she close the door to the world that way?

Hitch: Yes. At least, those were her intentions, and sometimes they got carried out.

Riess: I noticed that one of the things that she and Tony Hail did was make a date with Peter Selz--and they ended up working with Larry Dinnean--to get different paintings into Blake House.*

Hitch: We had a succession of paintings from art departments on the various campuses. I can't remember just who organized it, but the idea was that the Davis art department would provide pictures by faculty to hang along the gallery, and then after I forget how long, several months, they would be changed, and we'd go to another campus to get pictures.

Riess: Your apartment here has wonderful art on the walls. Did you have all of it hanging there?

Hitch: Yes, all of our things were there, and some are still there, some of the pieces we left. When we moved to Bethesda, where we lived in a townhouse, much much smaller than the Blake House, there wasn't room for some large pieces, which we left in the Blake House for the University.

*This meeting was held in January 1969 to discuss Blake House paintings, possible substitutes, and possible additional paintings to borrow for the Blake House. Materials in storage in the University Art Museum from the Andrew Lawson collection of English portraits as well as some modern works, were loaned to the Blake House.

Riess: Furniture or paintings?

Hitch: Furniture.

Riess: [tape interruption] Speaking of the renovations of the house in 1968, what would Nancy say about how it had all gone? Did she feel it went as smoothly as everyone else felt it went?

Hitch: Yes, I think she did.

Riess: She worked very hard, I can tell.

Hitch: She worked very hard on it, and she liked all people involved. And [laughs] she still liked them at the end of it.

The Neighboring Carmelites

Riess: Did you have any communication at all with the Carmelites up the street?

Hitch: They don't communicate. We exchanged and still exchange Christmas cards. And Caroline would go up and talk through the closed door.

Riess: She did that on her own initiative?

Hitch: Yes. She was something of a fixture, but even she couldn't get in to see the nuns.

Riess: What did they talk about?

Hitch: I don't know. Caroline, unlike her parents, always seemed to have a great interest in and need for religion. Actually she first, after sampling several religions, became a Jew. She was told it was impossible, she couldn't do it. They wouldn't take her at her age.

Riess: How old was she when she did it?

Hitch: I suppose sixteen, seventeen. She just went from rabbi to rabbi until she found one that would support her cause. She was confirmed at the Wall in Jerusalem.

Riess: That's very interesting, very unusual.

Hitch: Very unusual. That did not last forever. Later, when she married Edgar Luis Reto, a Peruvian Catholic, she decided that she wanted to be of the same religion as her husband. So she has recently been confirmed as a Roman Catholic.

Riess: So the conversations with the Carmelites apparently didn't take completely on the first round.

Hitch: No.

Riess: Did she go out and explore the neighborhood generally? Find companions in adjacent houses? Were there children to play with?

Hitch: No, not much. She did have friends from her Hilldale years, one in particular, Lise Gottwald, who was her best friend. They've kept up since. But there wasn't much interaction with other people in the houses around.

Riess: Was she in private school?

Hitch: For a couple years she was in Anna Head, but for the most part she went to public schools.

Riess: Earlier you were talking about the problem for Nancy of feeling invaded by people peering in the windows. Was there anything that you could actually do about it, or did it just wax and wane periodically?

Hitch: The latter. She was perhaps overly sensitive. But she loved Blake House, and so did Caroline.

Entertaining at the Blake House

Riess: How about opening the house itself to the public? Was it ever opened in your time there to the public, for a house tour?

Hitch: My recollection is quite vague, but there were some such occasions. There were more when Nancy was using it for Town and Gown and Section Club meetings, and that sort of thing.

Riess: When there was a Section Club meeting, did she have to be there as hostess, or did the club just take it over?

Hitch: I don't remember. It probably varied depending on the program.

Riess: Did you do Regents' dinners there?

Hitch: Yes, many.

Riess: So that happened regularly, several times a year, because the meetings rotate?

Hitch: Their rules for rotation kept changing during the events in the sixties, but yes, we had Regents' dinners, and of course chancellors' meetings and chancellors' dinners and lunches.

Let me show you something. [pause] Do you know of Narsai David?

Riess: Yes. [reads letter:]

January 20, 1987

Dear Mr. Hitch:

We were so sad to hear the news. I was honored to be selected by Mrs. Hitch as her caterer for Blake House, and have so many fond memories of her dinners. She set the most classic table of anyone I ever knew, and her expectations of the staff kept every one of them always alert. Her style and her choices set the tone for her followers at Blake House. We wish you peace,

Sincerely,
Narsai David

This must have been quite early and important in his career.

Hitch: Nancy gave him his start as a caterer. My recollection is that he'd been involved in a restaurant, and then he decided to go into catering, and Nancy was at least one of the people who gave him this opportunity. We had him frequently as a caterer at Blake House. When the refurbishing was done we had two kitchens: the small one for family, the big one for caterers.

Riess: So he was your caterer, and then other than that you would use the Chinese couple?

Hitch: We'd use the Chinese couple for small parties and the caterers for big ones. Tsui Tsang Mo, who was the cook, had spent some time in Hong Kong, working for British families, so he knew something besides Chinese cooking, and one thing in particular was steak and kidney pie--the best steak and kidney pie I've ever had, made by Tsang Mo in his kitchen at Blake House.

Riess: It's interesting. You said "Chinese couple," and I would have assumed the she cooked and he did something else, but it was the other way around?

Hitch: No, no, he was the chef. She walked three steps behind him, wherever they went. She was the housemaid, she took care of the beds upstairs, cleaning.

Riess: How long were they with you?

Hitch: They were with us, as best I can remember, right from the start. When we moved in I think they were there.

Riess: They weren't part of your household on Hilldale?

Hitch: No.

Riess: Was there any language problem with them?

Hitch: Yes. Wu Chui Kok, his wife, did not speak any English at all, and Tsang Mo's English was halting. But the two boys--they had two boys, who were about twelve and ten--knew English almost as well as a native. They would interpret. They were very bright boys.

Riess: Have you kept track of them?

Hitch: We did for a while. Both of them, as soon as they started school here, made straight A's, right from the beginning. Doug, the elder, went to Berkeley, and took his degree in electrical engineering, has done very well at Hewlett Packard, and has married the daughter of a wealthy Taiwanese businessman. We attended his wedding. Jim, the other boy, won an all-expenses-paid scholarship through Princeton. We've lost track of him. Tsang Mo died. They bought a fine, big house on The Arlington in 1973.

Riess: They made so much money working at Blake House that they could do that?

Hitch: No, but I don't know how they did it.

Riess: Did they invest in the stockmarket?

Hitch: Almost certainly, and had help from their fellow countrymen. But I don't know how they did it.

Riess: Were Jim and Doug companions for Caroline?

Hitch: Yes, to some extent they were.

Riess: Was there any awkwardness about that on anybody's part?

Hitch: There was some awkwardness, I was trying to remember just what it was. Nothing serious. They played together.

Riess: Seems like it might have been more on that family's end rather than on your end, perhaps.

Hitch: Yes, I think that's so.

Riess: What were the Yak Yak girls? I know who they were, but where did that name come from?

Hitch: I don't know. Who were some?

Riess: Well, they were guests at several lunches. One of the Yak Yak lunches—you'll be able to picture it instantly—was Esther Heyns, Ida Sproul, Amy Braden, Mrs. Monroe Deutsch, Mrs. Francis Hutchins, Mrs. Chester Nimitz, Mrs. Esther Pike, Nancy Hitch, Mrs. Knowles Ryerson. Were these friends, or was this an official relationship?

Hitch: I think they were just friends.

Riess: It wasn't that Nancy had to cultivate this particular bunch of people?

Hitch: No, that sounds like people who were good friends already, who liked to get together and yak-yak. I don't know anything more than that. I'm very familiar with the term, but I know less about it than you do.

Riess: Another year it added Marjorie Woolman and Mrs. McCorkle, and then another year Mrs. John Sproul, Mrs. Parmer Fuller, Mrs. Theodore Meyer, Mrs. Earl Warren and Mrs. Angus Taylor—is that Patsy Taylor?

Hitch: Yes.

Riess: She was an artist too?

Hitch: Oh, yes. She was very talented.

Riess: Who was Angus Taylor?

Hitch: Angus Taylor was my vice-president for academic affairs. He had the same job when Clark was president.

Public Relations, and Publicity

Riess: Funny, I should know that name. It reminds me that when people ask me and I say that one of the oral histories that I'm working on is the history of the Blake estate, honestly, people don't know that it exists. More people than you would think, in the Berkeley area. Was it even the case when you were there, that it was generally unknown to the town—perhaps very little to the "gown"?

Hitch: I suppose the only town people who would have occasion to know about it would be the people that we would entertain there.

Riess: So whatever sense I have of it being like a kind of Filoli or a generally known stately and historic home, it never took on that aspect?

Hitch: No.

Riess: The publicity from the Berkeley Barb, was that hard to take at the time? Did you or the University actively try to counteract that? Or did you just pretend that it wasn't happening.

Hitch: There was little we could do. We ignored the Barb. More serious because of his location in the state capitol was a very hostile columnist in the Sacramento Union who was on my back all the time. Not mainly about Blake House, although that came into it sometimes, but mainly about my "sweetheart contract" with the Regents. Do you remember that?

Riess: No, I'm trying to think—I have something from a Sacramento paper, actually.

Hitch: I've—in a Freudian way—forgotten his name. He would resume the attack every month or two with the same themes. His principal complaint about Blake House was its cost.

Riess: Norma Willer said that there was a time when you were alerted that some students seemed to be marching up Euclid Avenue, but they never got as far as Kensington. Do you remember anything of that? Or students actually picketing, or coming out and presenting themselves in force?

Hitch: That happened in my office in University Hall, but never at Blake House.

Riess: They confined themselves to People's Park, probably.

Hitch: Yes, most of those activities were south of the campus.

Riess: Did you have student receptions, or state-wide student groups?

Hitch: Not receptions, but occasionally the student body presidents from all the campuses. That was in keeping with the role that I envisaged for the president.

Maggie Johnston, and Official Houses and Functions

Riess: It's too bad that we didn't have a chance to talk to Maggie Johnston. Could you tell a little bit about her role?

Hitch: She was Nancy's social secretary, and she helped her with all the parties and things we did at Blake House. She was a fulltime assistant. She had played a very similar role with Kay Kerr. Somewhere I have a story of how she happened to be working for Kay. Maybe Nancy told me. You haven't talked to Kay Kerr yet?

Riess: No, I haven't yet.

Hitch: You ought to talk to Kay, because I'm sure she can tell you how Maggie got involved with her, as her social secretary. Nancy inherited her from Kay, and they were very fond of each other, got along famously.

Riess: Did Nancy talk to Maggie every day? Did Maggie come up, or did Maggie have an office in the house?

Hitch: Maggie had an office in the house. She also had an office in University Hall, and she divided her time between them.

Riess: Did she make the arrangements for the Regents' dinners and that kind of thing so that Nancy wouldn't have to?

Hitch: I can't tell you just how they divided their responsibilities, but Maggie would get out invitations, keep track of who was coming, and set out place cards.

Riess: Was she kind of the protocol officer also, if there is such a thing?

Hitch: I hadn't thought of her in that role. But yes, she had a lot to do with seating arrangements, subject to Nancy's and my review. She was doing this right up to the time of her final illness. She was always very good to me when I'd attend Regents' dinners after I'd ceased to be president. She knew just who I'd like to be seated next to and would always put me there.

Riess: That's a wonderful talent.

You had Beatrice, the Airedale, in a run. And then you had to walk her, too?

Hitch: I think that was mainly Caroline's function, walking the dog. We had complaints about our Airedale, who apparently wandered around the neighborhood. We finally had to put her in a kennel.

Riess: Were there any other complaints from the neighborhood about the house?

Hitch: Yes, the trees, those tall trees growing up and blocking their view. They didn't come to us directly, but there were complaints that had to be dealt with by my office.

Riess: Did you capitulate periodically?

Hitch: We'd compromise, we worked it out. The Blakes put in some very fast-growing trees, Canary Island Pines, and redwoods, for example, and they continued to grow, still do. I don't know what's happened on that front recently.

Riess: Did the amount of coming and going change the tenor of the neighborhood, do you think?

Hitch: No, I don't think so. Large functions were not that frequent.

Riess: I guess the initial question was one of security, and the general isolation was a minus factor rather than a plus factor?

Hitch: Yes.

Riess: But it didn't feel that way once you had renovated the house to your satisfaction?

Hitch: There was some concern about security, and for a period we had a guard who stayed there overnight in an office in the house.

Riess: Was that a period where there had been incidents or noises?

Hitch: No, just concern.

Riess: Was it a period that was politically troubled? Was it because of concern about your own selves, or was it about the valuable things in the house?

Hitch: Both, I think. And there was, not too long ago, a massive theft of University carpets from the Blake House when no one was living in it. There is a couple living there now.

Riess: Yes. You received a letter from Bob Evans, and he asked you to make a decision about whether you wanted the place referred to as the Blake Estate, Blake House, President's Residence, President's House, University of California President's Residence, or 70 Rincon Road. Do you remember thinking much about that?

Hitch: Sounds like a weighty decision. [laughs] I vaguely remember discussions.

Riess: It's interesting. Why call it the Blake House rather than the President's House?

Hitch: I can't reconstruct it.

Riess: You had a lot to do with acquiring the Julia Morgan house, the house at 2821 Claremont Ave? That was bought for the senior vice-president, but it's not called the Vice-President's House.

Hitch: No, it's called the Morgan House, just as the other one is called Blake House. Morgan didn't live there, she designed it.

Riess: Yes, but the other one might have been called Bliss House for the architect.

Hitch: It could have been, I suppose, yes.

We thought it would be quite helpful to have an appropriate residence for the senior vice-president, who also has a considerable responsibility for official functions. We looked for a house, and inspected quite a number in the area. And then we found that this Morgan house was available, at what seemed to be an extraordinarily fair price of \$100,000, so I scurried among some of our alumni and campus foundations and collected the \$100,000, and we bought the house and moved Vice-President McCorkle in. It did not need major renovation.

Riess: How did things work out between the Department of Landscape Architecture and whatever you needed in Blake House?

Hitch: Oh yes, let's make it clear: we had no responsibility for the garden; that was left by the Blakes to the Department of Landscape Architecture.

Riess: I realize that, but could you have what you wanted from it, when you wanted it, or was that not that easy? If you wanted to plant tomatoes, and you wanted to be able to pick roses?

Hitch: We never went through the department. We dealt with Walter Vodden, the head gardener appointed by the department. Our relations with him were always most cordial. He assigned one man named Bob Lutz to care for the garden immediately adjacent to the house, and he was very friendly and very faithful--incidentally a Protestant minister in his spare time. Both Vodden and Lutz have recently retired, Lutz remaining a minister of the gospel.

There was no question of picking roses. The deer always picked them first! So they were no longer grown in Blake Gardens.

Riess: And someone kept vases of flowers around the house?

Hitch: Yes, Flo Holmes, that was her job. She would come in from time to time and change and arrange the flowers. She is a true artist in flower arrangements.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Toichi Domoto

MRS. BLAKE AND MISS SYMMES, HORTICULTURISTS

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

TOICHI DOMOTO, NURSERYMAN

Over sixty years experience with flowers

Photograph by Owen Pearce

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Toichi Domoto's nursery in Hayward is an oasis in that sprawling southern Alameda County city. Located between the railroad tracks and Whitman Boulevard, it exists in a tranquility of birds, bonsai, and bamboo. Towering trees and stout-trunked stock form jungle-like allees. There is sufficient flora that the place may well create a weather system of its own.

Daily Mr. Domoto tends his acre or so of bonsai of all the standard descriptions and then all the variations thereon. His house is tucked behind fruit trees in the center of the oasis. His office in a small structure off the parking area is dated by its cash register and its files, but Mr. Domoto's memory more than makes up for his lack of computer-era "access."

In 1981 I had interviewed Toichi Domoto for the Lurline Matson Roth oral history. At that time he discussed the plant material at Filoli, Mrs. Roth's estate in Woodside, California. He also talked about his father Tom Domoto's nursery business in East Oakland and the stock, such as persimmon, he introduced to California. Toichi Domoto studied at Stanford University, transferred and graduated in horticulture from the University of Illinois, in 1926, and spent the World War II relocation years in Crystal Lake, Illinois.

For the Blake House History Project I wanted to talk to Mr. Domoto about the California Horticultural Society, "Cal Hort" as he calls it, of which he had been a member since the late thirties, and president in 1957—in particular about the Blake Garden specimens that Anita Blake brought or sent to meetings of the Society. But the bonus in this interview was Mr. Domoto's childhood memory of Mrs. Blake and Miss Mabel Symmes coming to his father's nursery and buying stock, between 1925 and 1930. The insider view of the horticultural trade is fascinating.

Mr. Domoto's choice made long ago not to visit gardens he serves was a disappointment: I expected he would be able to offer informed recollections of the Blake Garden at various times in the forties and fifties. But that choice came from some wisdom of Mr. Domoto's that I think must have to do with the amount of ego that gets tied up in gardens. While it frustrated many a proud garden lover, perhaps that pride was what dissuaded him. Serenity is what I found at Domoto's Nursery, and an absence of ego, desirable qualities in gardens, good reasons to make gardens.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 29, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Toichi Domoto
Date of birth Dec. 11, 1902 Birthplace Oakland Cal
Father's full name Thomas Kanetaro Domoto
Occupation Nurseryman Birthplace Japan
Mother's full name Teru Morita Domoto
Occupation Housewife Birthplace Japan
Your spouse Alice Ayako Domoto
Your children Douglass, & Marilyn.

Where did you grow up? Oakland, Calif.
Present community Hayward "
Education Oakland Public Schools, 2yr
Stanford, Graduate in Horticulture Un. of S.
Occupation(s) Nurseryman.

Areas of expertise _____

Other interests or activities _____

Organizations in which you are active Retired.

Mabel Symmes and Anita Blake at the California Horticultural Society Meetings

[Date of Interview: June 8, 1987]

Riess: When did you join Cal Hort?

Domoto: I don't remember exactly. I didn't join in the beginning because I wasn't too much interested in going all the way to San Francisco for it. I was more interested in the nursery side of the business, rather than the non-commercial side, which the Cal Hort was in the beginning, until my arm was finally twisted by different people that were members of society.

Riess: It began in 1935, and then--I've forgotten where you were during the war.

Domoto: I was allowed to leave the relocation center for Crystal Lake, Illinois.

Riess: You were active before the war?

Domoto: Yes, I was active in Cal Hort before that. I used to go to meetings and bring material in. But it wasn't until after the war some time that I really got active in it.

Riess: Do you remember seeing Anita Blake and Mabel Symmes before the war?

Domoto: Oh, yes. They used to come to my father's nursery in Oakland. That I remember as a youngster, that they used to come in--probably that would be between 1925-1930 they used to come in.

I never waited on them, because I was a youngster then. But my father used to wait on them. I remember them talking, and sometimes they'd talk about a certain plant. Then Mrs. Blake would say, "Tom,"--that was my father's name, Thomas, but they all called him Tom--"I think that this should be named so-and-so," or, "Do you

Domoto: know that?" My father would say, "No, I know this is the way I bought it, so-and-so." I'd heard them talking about it. That was mostly with Mrs. Blake.

Miss Symmes was very quiet, and I knew her later when she used to come by. Those times when she was buying something for the garden, Mrs. Blake would pick out or look at the plant, and then she'd ask her sister, "What do you think about this?" Her sister would say, "I think it would be all right." She was buying plants for her client, and there seemed to be a sort of a very quiet sort of a dividing line there. One would make the comment, and the other wouldn't, you see.

I remember at the Cal Hort meetings it was the same way. I don't think Mrs. Blake ever went up to the podium to discuss the plant material. The plants were exhibited up on the stage, and whoever was chairman then would say, "Now this material was brought over from the Blake Gardens," and then the person would go up there and talk about the material. They'd go on and describe it, and how it grew. That was the way the program was conducted.

Riess: You mean, Mrs. Blake wouldn't get up and describe it herself?

Domoto: I don't remember her getting up. Miss Symmes, I think, did a couple of times. I remember the Blake Garden material more later, after [Walter] Vodden came. He used to bring the materials over, and he used to describe them.

Riess: Why do you think Mrs. Blake didn't get up?

Domoto: Well, she was very unassuming. As I remember, some of the East Coast society type customers who'd come out--some of them were very demanding, and some were very quiet and unassuming. I think the difference was there. She never tried to show off her knowledge.

Riess: But your father thought that she was very knowledgeable.

Domoto: Oh, yes, she was, because when they started to discuss certain plants they could converse on the botanical names and more on the culture of the garden material.

Riess: Would you think that she was, in fact, head and shoulders above other society people about plants?

Domoto: I think so. Well, she never tried to show it off.

Riess: For instance, some of the other "society customers"—are you thinking of someone like Mrs. [Lurline Matson] Roth?

Domoto: Well, Mrs. Roth really didn't get into her garden itself until after she gave up her racing. You see, she used to exhibit those horses. I think not so much riding, I think she was--

Riess: Harness racing.

Domoto: Harness racing. She was active in that. After she gave that up, then her efforts became more active into the garden. The early part of it, I think, she was more interested just in having somebody come over, order the plants for her, and put them in the garden. At that point, when she retired to the garden and gave up the society side of life, that's when she became interested.

Riess: It's interesting to me who might have been comparable to Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes. What other fine, old gardening ladies do you think of?

Domoto: Well, going back, of course, the person that was quite active in the introduction of plant materials was Professor [H.M.] Butterfield.

Riess: Butterfield. I saw his name in early Cal Hort journals.

Domoto: I called him professor, but I don't think he was full professor. But he was of the Extension Division, and very active in the Alameda County Horticultural Society.

Riess: But any amateurs that you think of?

Domoto: Oh, in the amateur line, in the early part of the Cal Hort Society, was Mrs. Scannavino--she was very active in the Alameda County Horticultural Society way back. I think her husband was a dentist, and they had a home down near Saratoga. They had quite a collection of irises and lilacs and different plants. She was very knowledgeable plantwise.

Riess: How would you characterize the garden at Blake Garden?

Domoto: Well, you know, I have often been invited by these people to come: "Will you come to look at my garden?" I thought that if you go, you get to the point where you felt there was a certain amount of rivalry between these people, these customers. If you went to one, you had to go to the other if you want to keep them as customers, you know.

So I said, "Well, I know how to grow the plants, and I can tell you if you give me a location whether they grow there, or not. But as far as design," I said, "I don't know anything about it." I maintained that so that I never went. My father also would not visit customers' gardens.

Domoto: The only visit I had to Blake Gardens--she had some Clematis armandi variety growing in the garden. Evidently she grew some from seed, and had one that was an improvement over it. She exhibited it at the Hort Society, since the clematis was in vogue. I wanted to get some cuttings to propagate it, but the exhibited material was not the type that would be suitable for propagating. She said, "Well, if you'd come up to the garden you can take what you want." That was the only time I went. And even then I didn't take the whole tour of the garden. I just ignored it. The vine was climbing on a tree trunk.

As I remember it, the garden was kept up, but--this was just my impression, I may be wrong--but my impression was that it was a garden you liked to be in, but not to show off in. That was the feeling I had, and that would be her personality, that she was knowledgeable and would do her duty in whatever she does. She wasn't bragging to the community that she was doing this or doing that. She had different things planted in different areas wherever they would do well. I think that's the impression I have of the garden.

The Search for Uncommon Plant Material

- Riess: When she was asking you, and when she was asking your father to come and visit, wasn't she asking because she thought you would love to see her plants, not the design, but just the plants?
- Domoto: Yes. I don't know if she was importing, or friends would send her things from someplace like England or other areas and she'd have it in the garden. My father always was importing a lot of different things. So she would say, "I just got such-and-such from Japan," or wherever, and, "How is yours doing? Did you get this and that?" If my father had something that she hadn't gotten and got ready to sell, if it was interesting she'd always buy a plant. But how or where she planted, I never knew. I wasn't interested that much then.
- Riess: If your father got something in that was new and exotic, would he automatically tell her?
- Domoto: He never used to phone or anything. They'd come out, and they'd start talking. See, generally new plants from abroad used to come in in late winter or early spring, because that was about the only time you could bring them in safely.
- Riess: Bare root, is this?
- Domoto: Bare rooting wasn't done until much later, after plant quarantine #37 went into effect. Then they had to bare root. Before that, why, you would bring the plants in with soil on the roots.
- Riess: So people like Mrs. Blake would know that in winter they should check out Domoto's to see what's new.
- Domoto: Even now most of the new material that the nurseries import would come in in the fall. They try to stock them in the fall and have it ready for the spring sale. It was a very seasonal business. Now, of course, the merchandising nurseries try to make it as even as possible, without a lot of big ups and downs.

Riess: She had people she corresponded with, and she would get seeds in the letters--

Domoto: I don't know that part of it, but I know that she used to get different plant material that other people hadn't gotten yet. Whether she traveled, or corresponded—a lot of the plant amateurs in those days were in correspondence with other people and other botanical gardens, or someone, not necessarily the gardeners, but the person that's in charge. They would exchange notes: "Do you have this?" or, "When I get back, I'll send you a seed or a cutting." That's about the way, I think, a lot of that was done.

Of course, some of the English nurseries used to send catalogues out to those people, just like Wayside Gardens does to the society type, where their prices are way above the normal garden prices.

Riess: The prices are way above what a normal nursery charges?

Domoto: If you look at the Wayside Garden catalogues, they are beautiful catalogues, but their prices are way above. They prided themselves in sort of being the best. They have good material, but I don't think it warrants the high prices they get for them.

Riess: Did you see, when you were in Cal Hort, a lot of competitiveness among the gardeners?

Domoto: No, I don't think they--there may have been, between some of the people trying to outdo the other on some things. But on the whole I don't think there was. I would say that most of the members that came to the Hort came to see and be educated.

Riess: And to share.

Domoto: Yes. And there was always a problem to keep enough of the active members bringing in material. Some of the membership, unless they were into a certain hobby which they were very familiar with, they hesitated bringing something in, unless they were encouraged to bring it in.

And on that score I think Mr. [Ernest] Wertheim was very good in trying to encourage people. He was active and he was forceful. I think he came from Germany, and being trained that way, he was very thorough. He was active in it, never a person that would make you feel you were being pushed at all, but he would see that things were organized. I call it the German thoroughness in getting detail worked out. He and Victor Reiter, who has passed away, they were very active.

Riess: So the horticultural society also would be more interested in plant material than they would be in looking at gardens?

Domoto: Yes, plant material. And, of course, if they went on a field trip they would go to someone's gardens, or something like that. But most of the interest was in plant materials. The meetings would be--if new material was being brought in we would discuss it, and have a speaker. Most of the time you'd have a speaker first. You would have, say, one hour or forty-five minutes to talk on certain things, like on--oh, anything exotic, or even commonplace, irises, or whatever. They would have a talk on it.

Mostly, they did more uncommon material, rather than common, because you had special societies. Like they had the Rose Society, African Violet Society, and Orchid Society. So those things were kind of held on the short side, because if they were interested in that, it would be possible for them to go to those special societies. So it was more the new and unusual plants that were being tried or brought in.

The speaker would know some botanist, horticulturist, or visitor from another area. They would arrange to have him on the program of the meetings. The last half would be discussing the plant material that was displayed up there on the stage.

The material that came in was put in the foyer rack, and the people would put their name displayed there on a little card. Then the committee would go through that, and while they were speaking, they would try to go through and pick out the material that would be of interest or different.

That material would be picked out by a committee of maybe I think about three or four people--and there was a chairman--and as they were picked out they would be brought up to the stage and exhibited so that the whole thing would not be discussed. Then the chairman would say, "In the plant material back there there's such and such a display of iris, or something, brought in by so and so, that you should look at."

The special material would be brought up to the stage, and each one would be discussed as it's brought up by whoever brought that in or someone speaking for them. Meeting places changed as the membership increased, but the format of the Hort Society and meetings remained stable.

Riess: When Walter Vodden came, it was because Mrs. Blake was so old that she didn't want to come, or what?

Domoto: I don't exactly know just when that thing changed, but Mr. Wertheim would know. He was very active, and still is active.

Riess: When Miss Symmes was there, did she talk?

Domoto: Sometimes. I know they used to come there, and bring the material in, but I don't remember either one of them going up too often.

The Nurseryman's Point of View

Riess: It's very nice that you knew them, or at least you saw them when they were young. You were very young.

Domoto: Yes. Most of the people that would come out to buy from my father, a good many would drive their own car. I remember in those days they would come with chauffeurs.

Riess: Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes came with a chauffeur?

Domoto: I think they had chauffeurs mostly. Not until later did people of society decide to drive their own cars. There used to be the feeling that in order to get around in the car, you had to have someone that knew how to drive it. It wasn't until much later that everybody would drive a car.

Riess: Did Mr. Blake come out with them?

Domoto: Hardly. A couple of times later to my nursery in Hayward. I remember him coming out with her to look at the tree peonies. I don't think that his interest was quite that much into the garden. He knew of the plants, but I don't think too much of it.

Riess: Did he come to Cal Hort meetings?

Domoto: No. I don't remember him coming to the Cal Hort.

Tom Domoto and the Piedmont Customers

Riess: Where was your father's business first?

Domoto: The nursery was first in Oakland. He started the nursery down at Third and Grove. That was just in the beginning. Then he moved out to East Oakland, that's on Fifty-Fifth Avenue. In those days it was known as Central Avenue. That's where he really got the nursery started.

Riess: Do you remember any of his comments about the Blakes?

Domoto: No. He hardly ever made any comments that way. The only thing I know that I remember is in the discussion of plant material, that they were talking on equal level. Some of the other people, they were asking about whether this plant grows better than that plant.

Riess: I wonder if your father supplied them with any of the plants that they had before they moved to Blake Estate. First they lived on Piedmont Avenue where the Memorial Stadium of the University later was built.

Domoto: He must have because, as I remember--I don't know when they moved up to Blake Gardens.

Riess: Nineteen twenty-three or twenty-four, I think.

Domoto: It would be before that when they were buying it. I always used to think of them as Piedmont customers. Like the Blakes and--

Riess: Well, the [Duncan] McDuffies maybe?

Domoto: Yes. The old McDuffie place, and the Crockers, and [Herman] Nicholises.

Riess: These were the Piedmont customers?

Domoto: Yes. And some of them even later, to my Hayward location. I remember the Nicholises, both the parents and the daughter used to come out. I don't remember the granddaughter, but the daughter, until several years ago.

Riess: Did your father, or do you, ever keep records by the customers so you could go back and pinpoint everything that they had bought over the years?

Domoto: I did at one time. Not my father's records because those belonged to the corporation in Oakland. But in Hayward I did until I needed storage space. My auditor said, "Well, you don't have to keep too many records." He gave me a list of material which I would have to keep. I looked up some of my old invoices for this meeting, and they only go back to about '69-'70.

Riess: It would be interesting.

Domoto: Certain ones from Piedmont would come in at azalea season to buy azaleas or camellias. General plant material went to those gardens when they were in the formative period; not so much the owners themselves but whoever was doing the landscaping would come out and buy the plants for them.

Floyd Mick, George Budgen, Thomas Church

- Domoto: Very few of those people, I remember, did their own gardening, so somebody, the gardener or someone, came with them. If they liked the plant they would buy it and put it in. Most of the gardens were all designed. Floyd Mick in Berkeley, he did a lot of those gardens here.
- Riess: In fact, Miss Symmes was a professional landscape architect. Was she doing other peoples' gardens?
- Domoto: Oh, yes. She was doing that mostly. I don't think the home garden much, because there I think her sister more or less decided what she'd like, and then she had it planted. I think that was the way it was then, judging from the conversation that they used to get into when they were out looking around. Mrs. Blake would like a certain variety, and Miss Symmes would say, "Yes, I think we could use them." If Mrs. Blake liked it, all right, she'd find a place for it.
- Riess: I see. Did you ever, though, see Miss Symmes come in with any of her other customers?
- Domoto: I may have, but generally I don't remember so much.
- Riess: Did the sisters look alike?
- Domoto: I would say, as far as stature, they were built pretty much the same way. I guess their demeanor about the same too. Miss Symmes always kind of deferred to Mrs. Blake as though--I'm not sure, I think she was the older sister. Anita was the older sister. Miss Symmes was like a younger sister, you know. I always had that feeling.
- Riess: The Blakes had had Walter Vodden in 1957. He came because of the University. But before that was there a gardener you associated with the gardens?
- Domoto: I don't know who the gardener was then. They must have had a gardener there before.
- Riess: Apparently there was an Indian fellow they had who used to work for them.
- Domoto: Mr. Mick is available. He lives in, I guess, Oakland. It's Floyd Mick.
- Riess: Yes. I think I talked to him once a long time ago. You think he would remember?

Domoto: He might. You see, he and George Budgen of the Berkeley Hort--they are about the same period. George started a nursery out there in Berkeley. I think Mr. Mick was getting started in the landscape design business. Tommy Church along about that period too. I know that as far as the gardens over in Piedmont and other areas in the Oakland hills, that Mr. Mick was instrumental in doing a lot of the gardens there.

Riess: Was he a designer on the scale of Tommy Church?

Domoto: I don't think he was--actually I've never gone to all the gardens that he had done.

As I have them classified, there are those that do the gardens to be doing a good garden, and others would like to do a garden to show off. The one garden is a garden that's designed to make it feel like it's not the designer's garden, but the person they're designing it for. In other words, you have a show garden, the personality is not displayed, but the architect's personality is displayed. The other is a home garden. I think Mr. Mick was the type that more or less designed a garden that would make the person feel like it was his own garden, whereas Tommy Church was designing the kind to show Tommy Church off.

Riess: That's what his customers wanted, probably. They wanted to say, "That's a Tommy Church garden."

Domoto: Well, it starts out that way, but later on, why, you're still not satisfied with it. It's just like you go and buy a Gump's piece of furniture, and you don't like it. But just because it's from Gump's-- [laughter]

Competitiveness in the Garden

Domoto: It's the same as when people used to come out and buy certain plants from my father. They'd say, "Did Mrs. So-and-So buy that? What [did] she buy?" My father would say, "Well, I don't know." He never used to say exactly what. Then they'd say, they would go on, "What about this plant? Is this good?" "Do you think it would look good in my garden?" "Well, it should grow there." And they would buy it.

Sometimes two or three people would come out together. One person would buy the plant. The next one would say, "Oh, I must have one too." [laughs] But in most cases before delivery they would say, "I've changed my mind about that plant. I don't think I want it." We'd laugh because the one that was already there had the funds. The other one was climbing and trying to be up there but she didn't have the funds to spend.

Riess: That's a very interesting observation.

Domoto: Anyone buying, most of the time if they were serious buyers they'd never bring anybody else, they'd come on their own. If they were coming as a group you'd always make a sale to someone, but it would never be on the basis of actually wanting. Sometimes they'd want to show off, and they'd buy. If they had the funds they would buy. Different personalities.

Mrs. Roth was never that way. She'd always come out and say, "I want something for my garden," and this and that. A lot of things were left up to me to pick out for her. Colorwise, why, she knew which colors and what shades she liked. Otherwise, plantwise--. Most of the time she used to come by herself, not even with a gardener.

Riess: Interesting.

When Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes came to you, were they looking for plants that were associated with the Orient?

Domoto: I don't think so. In my place I was more in camellias and azaleas than I was in some of the other plant material. Almost always in camellia season or azalea season they would come out and see if they could find a new variety to introduce to the garden. Incidentally, since I liked oddball plants, I'd find something. She'd say, "Well, what else do you have that's new?" or something like that. I'd say, "Well, this, and this." She'd say, "Oh, yes, I have that from a seed that I got from Australia," or something. "Mine is only about so high, and it never has flowered." We'd get into a discussion that way.

Riess: You had mentioned peonies. Did they have an interest in a cutting garden?

Domoto: I don't think so.

Riess: It was mostly perennial, shrubby--?

Domoto: As I remember, I think mostly shrubs, maybe perennials too. But since I wasn't into the perennials at all, why, I don't know. But I have the feeling that certain parts of the garden were perennials and flowers. The Piedmont [Avenue] garden, the way it was laid out I don't know.

Riess: So your specialty was flowering shrubs.

Domoto: Shrubs, yes.

Anita Blake and the Relocated Japanese Families

Riess: I came across correspondence in Mrs. Blake's letters that are in The Bancroft Library, with Japanese families who were relocated. I wondered if you knew about that.

Domoto: I heard that she was very good that way. But she was never one to say, "Well, I did this or that."

Riess: How did you hear it then?

Domoto: I think it was either one of my father's customers or something saying that, "I had a pretty tough time, and she helped me then." There were several people of that pre-relocation period that got talking to my dad. They wouldn't say who they were doing it for, but, "I have a family I'd like to get this for," or something like that.

Riess: Was it unusual then?

Domoto: I think so. And as far as I remember, some of the customers who came out would be dressed high fashion. As I remember her, she was always well-dressed, but never the flamboyant type. You know, some like to show off their clothes. She probably had--it was good material, but it wasn't one that said, "Here I have the--" you know. That type. I never got that feeling at all.

Riess: And so it was very natural for her to help the Japanese family?

Domoto: Or any other one that was in the group that would be in need.

Riess: By "in the group" you mean that she met these people through Cal Hort?

Domoto: I don't think so. I don't think Cal Hort.

Riess: How many Japanese gardeners were in Cal Hort?

- Domoto: Very few. I remember only about one or two used to come in once in a while to the meeting. Most of them not, either because of the language difficulty or else they weren't--. I remember Pete Sugawara, he used to come in.
- Riess: I don't know whether these families that she helped were working at the Blake Garden.
- Domoto: I think most of the Japanese who came in as gardeners came usually as a couple. The wife would work in the house, and the husband would either work in the garden, or sometimes, if he was good, he'd be hired as a chauffeur. And then they would have a room there in the house to live in.
- Riess: Yes. I haven't heard of that up there, though. I don't think the Blakes had that.
- Domoto: I don't think by the time they went up to Berkeley. Maybe when they were in Piedmont [Avenue], they may have. As far as helping that way, they may have some other--. The people that were actually helping the Japanese during the evacuation, those that did very seldom talk about it because it wasn't the proper thing to do. It would be very much on the quiet side, and you were surprised where you got help from--the people that you least suspected that you would get any help from. The ones that you thought were friends, they shunned you, and not even a word from some of them. That was my experience, and I understand that's the way it was with a lot of the others too. I would think Mrs. Blake would have done it because of a personal relationship with the family, and she wouldn't speak much about it.
- Riess: She bought a lot of Chinese scrolls and she had Asian art in her house. Maybe she really had an unusual sympathy with the Orient.
- Domoto: Well, with that type of material, whoever she bought the material from, she probably got to know the dealer pretty well personally. Because of that connection, why, she may have bought more things that way.

Pricing and Bargaining

Riess: I've been reading about the beginning of Gump's, because I'm going to do an oral history with Richard Gump. A lot of the early history of Gump's talks about how A.L. Gump learned how to deal with the merchants in China, and how he convinced them to show him their best things. Was it the same when Mrs. Blake came out here? Would your father only show her something if she really looked like she knew her business? And do you feel the same way?

Domoto: No. See, my father's actual business experience was learned the hard way here in the United States. I think his interest in the person was more from the standpoint of whether they were interested in the plant itself. But the rest of the time, if they came in and were interested to buy, his idea was to sell on that basis.

Riess: He didn't hold back special things for special customers?

Domoto: No. I don't remember him doing that.

I'm not sure of the name now, but I think it was a Mr. [James K.] Moffitt, he always used to come out with a chauffeur. "When you go out to Domotos," he used to say, "if you go out with a chauffeur and a Pierce-Arrow, he's going to charge you one price, and if you go out with a Ford, it's another price." I think my dad used to do it that way. [laughs]

Funny thing, one day Mr. Moffitt came out in the chauffeur's car, driving it himself. My father, when he got through laughing, he said, "You don't fool me." [laughter] My father was laughing with Mr. Moffitt, and he says, "Okay." But as far as most of the prices, there'd be one price he'd quote and it would be the same price he'd quote to anybody else.

My father was a good psychologist, I think, in thinking back. The old Hellman Estate, which is now the Dunsmuir House, next to that was the place where the zoo is now, that used to be the Chabot place, I think--.

Riess: I don't know the family--Chabot is an Oakland name. Maybe you'll get it and can fill it in. Why don't you tell the story.

Domoto: There were a number of people that owned the place next to the Hellman's. Anyway, he married a chorus girl, and I remember them coming out to father's place to buy. She was very outspoken. I remember one day, everything my father'd quote, she'd always say, "That's too high. Make it cheaper." I remember going around sometimes behind them to tag some of the things they'd pick out, for my father.

When they got through my father told her, "You want to pay your price or my price?" She said, "My price." "You sure?" "Yes." "All right," he says, "here's your price; here's my price." His price was a lot lower because he had jacked the price up. [laughter] She didn't know the material. In other words, she was strictly on the basis of bargaining. In most of the old countries you go to, it's a bargaining basis. If you buy it at the first price, why, you're losing face.

After that when she used to come up and buy, she'd always tell him, "I want that. I want this, and I want that," and never a question about the price. She was a good psychologist too; having grown up the hard way, she knew that if you trust them you get the right plant.

Riess: Yes. Well, that's something that's difficult to figure out in some situations.

Domoto: If you don't know the material, and if you don't trust the person, don't buy from them. If you trust the person you go by what he says. If you don't like it, why, you just leave it.

Riess: For the Blakes, money was not an issue?

Domoto: I don't know that part of it. But I know as far as--we used to have what they called clean buyers and some buyers who always used to try to bargain. Of course, those that used to buy from my father wanted it to come out the same way. I said, "No, I don't do it that way. I quote one price, the wholesaler price, and the retailer price. It's the same whether you come today or tomorrow. If the plant gets bigger, it'll be more. If the plant gets poorer or out of date, you get lower." Whether they come in a Pierce-Arrow or anything else, it makes no difference."

Riess: Actually, because Miss Symmes was a professional, she might have a different price.

Domoto: Well, yes. See, there'd be a retail price. Landscape people would get, depending on the volume, mostly a 20 percent discount off of the retail. Or in some cases, if they were big volume they would

Domoto: get the regular wholesale price. But I think in most cases, until about the NRA days, along after the Depression when the government was trying to regulate prices and everything, until then most nurseries had what they called a volume deal, or else they'd each have an individual price. There were no definite price structures. You could go to one nursery and buy a gallon at one price, and you'd go to another nursery and it's another price.

Riess: What other local nurseries were there?

Domoto: The Sunset Nursery. It used to be in Piedmont. They supplied a lot of the smaller shrub type of material to the Piedmont area. Then Berkeley Hort got into shrubbery too. He was at first quite a bit of the perennial type of material. The Sunset was--their nursery was operated quite a bit--I think that was really, I'm not sure, but I have a feeling that they were operated by people who were maybe gardeners at first. Then Sandkeule and Carlson, the two partners, they became Sunset Nursery. They had a lot of the gardener trade there in Piedmont. I know the bedding plant people liked to supply them because they were always good pay. Then shrubwise, right in this area, my father's place. Then California Nursery, in Niles.

Riess: Over the years did they come out every year, Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes? Now we're talking postwar and the '50s.

Domoto: Yes. At least once a year in the season, when things were in blossom, I used to see either one or the other.

Riess: Would they make an appointment ahead of time to say that they were coming?

Domoto: No. About the only one that ever made any appointments like that to come in was Mrs. Roth, and Andrew Welch in San Mateo. They were part of the Welch pineapple people. You know, the Hawaiian people. The Nichols family in Piedmont, they were part of the Hawaiian group too.

Riess: Well, are you tempted to go out and look at the Blake Garden now, after all these years?

Domoto: No, my interests are limited now. I have gone to some afterward. Like all the Japanese gardens, they always want me to look at them. Well, I look at them as plant material, not the design. I appreciate it. But my interest is not that way. My brother went into the design part, and he's doing landscaping back east now. But as far as the flower shows, there were days when I used to put in the displays and help.

Riess: So you're really interested in the individual plant.

Domoto: More on the plant side than the design. But since I like to draw and things like that, I guess I had a feeling for certain arrangements. I never tried to follow any design pattern or any set rule. If it pleased my eye, I was satisfied.

Regional Oral History Office
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Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Walter Vodden

BLAKE GARDEN, 1957-1986

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1986

Walter Vodden, photographed at Blake House, 1986.

Photograph by Suzanne Riess

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Walter Vodden entered Blake House history in 1958. That year he was hired by Professor H. L. Vaughan of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of California. The department had the responsibility of maintaining the gardens of the Blake Estate which had been given to the University in 1957. Walter Vodden was put in place as the head gardener. No doubt it was a relief to the Blakes to have a competent, young, energetic, full-time employee at a time when they, and Miss Mabel Symmes, Mrs. Blake's sister who lived in the house with them, were in their late eighties. The sisters worked Walter Vodden hard and he learned a lot from them.

It is somewhat ironic that it is to Mr. Vodden that we turn for an "inside look" at Anson and Anita and Mabel. Mrs. Blake was always so careful to maintain the distance between "inside" and "outside," the upstairs/downstairs dichotomy peculiar to the Blake House. And in fact it was really Miss Symmes, with her more academically-informed approach to horticulture and landscape design, who gave Walter Vodden a supplementary education in plant families, and an appreciation for what he had been put in charge of. His recollections of her make clear that she was a good teacher and that the legacy and future of the garden were uppermost in her mind as she gave her pupil as much information as he could absorb.

While having a tutorial relationship with Miss Symmes, Walter Vodden had great admiration and respect for Mrs. Blake, and there was obviously some mutuality, as she turned over to him the job of representing the Blake Gardens at the meetings of the California Horticultural Society. She had faithfully presented plant materials for years; when she could no longer do so, Walter went in her stead.

Walter Vodden's story overlaps Geraldine Knight Scott's which follows. Mrs. Scott was the Department of Landscape Architecture's representative to the Blake Garden. Mr. Vodden, as Senior Superintendent of Cultivations, worked under Mrs. Scott's direction in the years from 1962 to 1968 when the garden was revitalized by carving out the excessive growth of forty years. By 1973 when Linda Haymaker joined the staff at the garden, Walter Vodden's stories of the sisters Anita and Mabel were the stuff of history, and in Ms. Haymaker's interview some more of those stories are recalled.

Walter Vodden and I met to record in the sunroom at Blake House. Once an open loggia, it is now glass-enclosed, but it still has a view of the pool and the grotto. The photograph which accompanies this interview

is of an animated interviewee—at the time it was taken Mr. Vodden was speaking with Mrs. David Gardner. Coincidental to our interview she was at Blake House and she joined us to talk for a few minutes about the garden for which Mr. Vodden still has evident love and concern.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

September 23, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Walter G. Vodden Jr

Date of birth May 6, 1921 Place of birth San Francisco, Calif.

Father's full name Walter G. Vodden

Birthplace San Francisco, Calif.

Occupation Contractor, Bd. Inspector (City of S.F.)

Mother's full name Easter W. Vodden (Beede)

Birthplace San Francisco, Calif.

Occupation Home Maker

Where did you grow up? San Francisco, Calif.

Present community Malibu Creek, Calif.

Education San Francisco City College (A.A.)

Occupation(s) Landscaping - (10 years) Self employed,
(5 years Navy) 27 years University (internie
at Dept Landscape Arch Blake Gardens

Special interests or activities _____

Walter Vodden's Education, and Background

[Date of Interview: November 13, 1986]

Vodden: I graduated from the City College in San Francisco with only an associate of arts degree in ornamental horticulture. This was in the 1940's, and the community colleges didn't have many programs in ornamental horticulture back in those days. I got involved in it because my parents insisted that I go somewhere to college when I graduated from high school and I was never that great in math or chemistry or foreign languages or what have you. My father was a contractor and my grandfather before him was a contractor, and I was always handy with tools.

But they insisted I go somewhere, so I went down to San Francisco State and got their booklet of courses that they offered, but decided to go to what at that time was the San Francisco Junior College. At that time they didn't even have their own building, they were on Powell Street at University of California Extension, now out on Phelan. I looked it all over; I ran into this thing that said "Ornamental Horticulture" and I thought, "Aha! That looks easy for me." So I ended up taking a two-year associate of arts degree in ornamental horticulture, back before World War II.

I had never done too much of this because I was born and raised in San Francisco. I was a city boy, lived out on the avenues, the Richmond district, and we didn't have a large garden or anything. But once I got into it it apparently appealed to me, because I eventually made the Alpha Gamma Sigma National Honor Society. I had a fine time, and really enjoyed it.

After graduating from there—it was only about a year or two before World War II—I worked for a landscape contractor and went in the navy for World War II. The navy immediately sent me to diesel school—I don't know how far away you could get from horticulture, to diesel school, but that's where I ended up. I put five years in the navy, during World War II, and shortly afterwards I got out at the convenience of the government. I knew that I never wanted to earn my living working on greasy diesel engines, so

Vodden: I got back into horticulture. Then I worked for a couple of nurseries and landscape contractors to get the feel of the business again after being away from it for five years.

Eventually I went into business for myself. I was self-employed for about ten years when my old professor from the city, Harry Nelson, called and said, "Walter, why don't you call Professor Vaughan over in the UC landscape architecture department? He has something that may interest you." I had reached the stage in my business where I had to start hiring more people and buying more vehicles and all of this kind of thing. By that time I was tired of working on Saturdays and Sundays, taking my vacations in the wintertime when my son was still in school, but on vacation--Christmas--and not being paid for my vacation. So I called Professor Vaughan and he told me about this place and asked me to come over and talk to him.

Riess: I want to ask a couple of questions about some things you brought up that interest me historically: When you were taking that ornamental horticulture course in San Francisco did they take you out to beautiful gardens and introduce you to elegant places like this [Blake Estate]?

Vodden: No, actually they didn't. As I said, we had no buildings of our own, so the professor that was actually teaching the design part of landscape architecture was a Professor Herman who came from the University of Ohio, and I guess he was a landscape architect, but I don't know. We spent most of our time in Golden Gate Park, or in Funston Field, or walking around neighborhoods--this kind of thing. As a native I would say that most of the nicer gardens that came into San Francisco came later. I don't think there were that many pre-World War II. Places like the Japanese Tea Gardens in Golden Gate Park were there, but they were not the things that they are now.

Riess: Did you meet John McLaren? Is it possible that you would have known him?

Vodden: I never met McLaren himself, no. I belong to the California Horticultural Society, and he by that time had retired I think. I know a lot of people who came later in Golden Gate Park: Roy Hudson, Jack Spring--all of these people who were superintendents. I used to play football with the gang where the arboretum in Golden Gate Park is right now.

Riess: Was there any work training that was part of your class?

Vodden: Only insofar as the professors--and I'll call them professors with tongue-in-cheek--but if those who were teaching could convince people to come to their houses on weekends and do a little work for them. [laughs] As I recall--and it's been a long time, because

Vodden: we're talking about over forty years--there was very little taught in the way of construction at all. We had mostly plant material and design, and art--I was going to get an associate of arts degree besides--they didn't give a certificate in those days like they do now. We also had the math classes and the science classes and the English classes that were required for that, too.

Riess: What were the jobs that one would typically get with a degree like that?

Vodden: I did mostly maintenance, but also some construction. I don't know if you've ever heard of Charles Harney: he built Candlestick Park. He has a reputation in San Francisco of doing a lot of shady kinds of things, [laughs] but when they widened Portola Drive, which runs alongside St. Francis Woods, they moved six or seven houses up that side of Mt. Davidson. They moved them all up on the hill, and I did all the landscaping on those. But primarily it was reconstruction of whole gardens and maintenance, and that kind of thing.

You must remember also that in those days there were very, very few trained horticulturists, or gardeners--whichever word you prefer to use. For some reason the connotations of the word "gardener" are not as great in this country as if you say you're a horticulturist. In England if you're a gardener it's a pat on the back, you're really doing something, but in this country people tend not to call them gardeners any more. Most of the people that were gardening in those days were not trained at all, they were mailmen or painters or firemen that on their days off were going out and chopping down bushes, and that's why there were little round shrubs all over the place.

Riess: Who were the people then who knew plant materials?

Vodden: Well, hopefully the nursery people, and there were a few of us. You also must remember that when I was going to school there were a lot of Japanese in the classes. The Japanese were operating the nurseries mostly, and when World War II came along they all ended up in the internment camps. The Japanese, as far as I can determine, never really gained a foothold back in horticulture afterwards.

Riess: What about women in the business?

Vodden: When I went out of business, and, as I say, that was close to thirty years ago, I turned what business I had over to a woman gardener. I knew six months ahead of time that I was going to go out of business because that was part of the deal, when I was interviewed and hired, that I didn't have to come to work until July. This was around Christmas time so I had a lot of time, and little by little I divested myself of those jobs that I wasn't

- Vodden: happy with anyway, but those few jobs that I had left that were good and had good customers, I turned over and gave to a woman gardener. So there were some around.
- Riess: You were already making a distinction then between gardeners.
- Vodden: There's no question about it; the gardeners that were operating knew who had knowledge, and they would come across the street where I was working and say, "Hey, what's wrong with this shrub over here?"
- Riess: But as far as a knowledge of drainage and the kind of structural aspects of gardening?
- Vodden: I don't think any of us had the training to really know what we were doing in those days. You know, a lot of that kind of thing only comes with the best kind of experience. I don't know if you understand that the Department of Landscape Architecture here at Berkeley--which requires four years or longer to graduate, with enough experience to go to work with some landscape architect to get the experience to take the state examination--only offers two classes in plant material, and only one class is required.
- Riess: I do realize that. That's part of what I was trying to get at.
- Vodden: It's incredible. That's why the landscape architects are in great need of all these young people that are graduating from Merritt, Diablo Valley College, and San Francisco with certificates in ornamental horticulture. That may or may not have anything to do with our survey of the history of the Blake House, but it's a background in what's happening with ornamental horticulture anyway.

When I left here there was John Norcross, who took over my job, who had graduated from McGill University and the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in architecture--he decided somewhere along the line he didn't want to sit in somebody's office drafting; Linda Haymaker, who had just come back from a leave of absence from a landscape design school back in Massachusetts--she had taken a year's leave of absence to get her master's degree in landscape architecture; Jeff Evans, who's working out here in the back at the house graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in natural resources; Allison Cardinet, who was growing the cut flowers, who has teaching credentials and was teaching in the Berkeley school system when she decided that she couldn't control the students and got out of it.

All the people who were here were well educated and in some cases with some experience too. Whenever we had a job opening here, which wasn't very often, I'd get thirty or more applicants, and I'd have people with master's degrees in ornamental horticulture from Davis or Cal Poly amongst the applicants, and

Vodden: almost all of them had some degrees. So the field is changing very rapidly. Some of the few that did apply for the job that weren't well educated, you couldn't even read their applications. I wasn't looking for formal education at all. I was looking for a strong back or people that really wanted to work.

Riess: One of the things you're saying is that you never could have gotten this job today.

Vodden: No, that's exactly right.

Riess: That's a good introduction.

Transition Year, 1957-58

Riess: It was Punk [H.L.] Vaughan who hired you?

Vodden: [laughs] Punk Vaughan, right.

Riess: This was in 1958. In 1957 the house and the garden were deeded to the University.

Vodden: Right. When I was hired, for the first six months I actually was paid by the Blakes and they were reimbursed by the University in some way--I don't know exactly how it came about. But all three of the family were still living here. Mai Arbegast was babysitting, shall we say, with the Blakes, because this officially had all just been turned over and there was a what's-going-to-happen-next kind of situation. Mai Arbegast was an assistant professor at that time in the landscape department. She was assigned by Punk Vaughan because I guess she brought her classes out here. They had always brought their classes out here.

Riess: What had they done when they'd brought their classes out in the past? Had they had a real hands-on experience?

Vodden: I don't know because I wasn't here then. This was prior to when I got here. When I got here the place was in shambles. During all World War II it had been neglected.

Riess: Why?

Vodden: They couldn't get any help. Any able-bodied people were serving in the armed forces somewhere. You couldn't find a path, or even the entrance road.

Riess: So they never had used students to work on it?

Vodden: Not to my knowledge. Afterwards, yes, we did use some students. When Garrett Eckbo was chairman of the department, he saw that we got some general assistance money, so I was able to hire three or four or five landscape students to work during the summer. That's when we got a lot of the clearing-up done. In later years almost always I had work-study people, which we paid part out of our budget. Almost invariably we could not get landscape students because they couldn't qualify; most landscape students were older. A great many landscape students don't decide until they've already taken something else and decided that that's not for them, and so they switch to landscape architecture because it sounds glamorous. A lot of them had money and couldn't qualify for work-study.

One time I had as many as nine out here during the summer, but we had law students, history students, practically every discipline.

Riess: Probably made them a more malleable group, actually.

Vodden: Actually we got along fine, and they were good workers. They were being paid though, and the work-study jobs out here paid substantially more than if you were stacking books in the library or something else.

Riess: Did you really just look for strong backs, or did you take women?

Vodden: Women are just as strong as many men! The two women who are working here now were both hired by me. I've had a great deal of women help out here; I've absolutely nothing against them. I do look at the fact of whether I think they can do the work or not, too, but no, I like to feel that I have no problems with that at all. When I interviewed for jobs, at least half of them would be women that were applying, and I just looked for the best person. The last person I hired was Allison out there. I've had a great many females working out here long before her.

The Job and the Title

Riess: When Punk Vaughan hired you did you have to be interviewed by the Blakes also?

Vodden: No, and I don't know how many people he interviewed at all.

After they finally called and said I had the job, I did have to go over to the personnel department and interview with them because the personnel department had to decide how much they were going to pay me, where I was going to fit into the scale of job order, and this kind of thing.

Riess: What was your first title?

Vodden: I was hired as a senior nursery technician, senior nurseryman at that time. But you don't call them nurserymen anymore; it's senior nursery technician. It wasn't too long before I became "senior superintendent of cultivation," which was an entirely different thing and never really matched the job. Many years later personnel finally caught up with it and changed my classification from what was by that time "principal superintendent of cultivation" to "senior superintendent of agriculture." To this day I can't see how they ever arrived at that title. Most senior superintendents of agriculture are directors of agricultural experiment stations; they're really in agriculture and not in ornamental horticulture.

Riess: They were probably just trying to get more money for you.

Vodden: Are you kidding! When they finally hired John Norcross they changed the classification, and John is "botanical gardens manager," which makes more sense.

I think there were only two senior or principal superintendents of cultivation in the whole University complex. Actually I lost money when they switched my title. Since a senior superintendent of agriculture pays about five percent less than a principal superintendent of cultivation, they were real magnanimous and they said, "We're not going to lower your salary; we'll still pay you the same amount." But the very next six months, when the state legislature passed a pay raise, they only gave me part of it because they couldn't pay me above what the pay scale was for the classification.

Riess: I thought you were going to say you were told you could have all the tomatoes you could eat.

Vodden: [laughs] I used to pick blackberries in my lunch kettle and take them home.

Anita Blake

In Command

Riess: You didn't take over from anyone. There wasn't an old Italian gardener or anything like that?

Vodden: No. I worked very closely with Mrs. Blake. Mrs. Blake was a lovable old tyrant—and I mean tyrant!

Riess: She had no one who was out there with his wheelbarrow day in, day out?

Vodden: No, she had a fellow, Jim Anderson, who worked here, and he worked full-time with her. He was a handyman: he buried the garbage and burned the papers and cleared the weeds and this kind of thing.

Jim was here already, and there was another fellow by the name of Churchill Womble, and he was a horticulturist. Jim was a handy man. Churchill was an alcoholic, a young fellow—too young to be an alcoholic. He eventually died because of this alcoholism. He was kind of her compatriot. They worked together and this whole area was full of gallon cans full of rare plants and things like that that he had bought for her. So he was here on the rare occasions when he wasn't home sobering up.

Riess: It sounds like the relationship that she had with her gardeners was working hand-in-hand.

Vodden: You have to remember that it was her garden, she planted it, she'd tended it for thirty years. You don't come into a place, particularly after they've given it to you, and tell people what to do with their garden. So we didn't do much of anything.

Riess: She had physically tended it herself?

Vodden: Well, by this time she was in her eighties, so she wasn't doing much physical labor. But she was there sitting on a stool when you dug a hole, or when you pruned, and if she wasn't there her sister

Vodden: Miss Symmes was there. When we pruned roses her sister would come out to where we used to have species roses in the middle of winter--it would be cold!--and supervise every cut that I made on her roses, even though I probably knew more about pruning roses than she did.

Riess: It must have driven you crazy.

Vodden: She [Mrs. Blake] had twenty-six cats that followed her all around. She had a hoe, so you could hear her coming, scraping with this hoe, and twenty-six cats would be following her. She'd have an apron like a house cook's, with big pockets on it filled with stale bread for feeding these cats as she came along.

Riess: Were the cats in the house ever?

Vodden: No, she fed them by the back door--that was part of Jim's job. He'd put these big trays of catfood out for them every night. The idea originally was that the cats were going to keep the gopher population down, but they fed them so well they weren't hunters at all. They were all so interbred by this time that each spring when they had a litter half of them would be born blind or what have you and we'd have to put them in sacks and destroy them. It was really kind of sad.

Riess: Why did she have the hoe?

Vodden: Just for support. Like I say, she was in her eighties by this time. She was eighty-eight or eighty-nine when she died. She died right in that room alongside. [President Gardner's office, west of the solarium.] That was her bedroom, because she couldn't get up and down the stairs. She had a canopy bed in there with a canopy on it, and pans sitting on top because the roof leaked so much that the water would drip through the ceiling, and she'd catch it in a pan over her bed. Under the bed was this big wooden square box that was full of oriental scrolls. Every six months or so she'd have us pull this box out and spray it for silverfish. They're all in the Asiatic department or somewhere [East Asiatic Library].

Riess: She really didn't care about the house so much?

Vodden: As far as the house was concerned, it was like a big mausoleum, dark and dreary. She kept a twenty-two rifle by the front door, and whenever she answered the front door she'd have the twenty-two rifle right handy. I don't know what she was going to do with it. But you have to remember that it was so overgrown here, and there was no outdoor lighting at all.

There were three old people in the house at the beginning. He was ninety when he slipped and fell and broke his hip and died. Miss Symmes, the sister who lived upstairs, fell one night, and she was unable to get up, and she knew there was nobody else in the

Vodden: house to help her get up into bed, so she lay on the floor all night and pulled the throw-rug up over herself. We got here in the morning and the cook, who was deaf, came running out, and we all came running in and picked her up and put her back in bed. And Mrs. Blake was in her mid-eighties. So here are three old people, and they were very vulnerable down here. I guess that Kensington must have had a police department by that time that they were still there.

Riess: But they could have afforded to have help, couldn't they?

Vodden: Well, they had a cook, and I think they deliberately went out of their way to hire cooks who were not the best--I don't know how they were at cooking, but the one that was here was deaf, and the second one, Mary, didn't last very long.

As I say, Mrs. Blake was very difficult to work with. When we finally had funding enough to hire another person here, he used to work with her, and she'd tell him, "Now Charles [Modecki], meet me up here at three o'clock"--she might take a little nap in the afternoon or something--"and we'll plant this." So Chuck, who also had a lot of other responsibilities working down in back, would come up at three o'clock and she wouldn't be there--she'd have fallen asleep or something. So he'd keep checking, and keep checking, until finally he had to go back and do what he had to do. She'd come out maybe an hour later and Chuck wouldn't be there, and she rode him so much that Chuck eventually quit--she was this kind of person.

Mabel Symmes, In Deference

Riess: She was really the dominant member of the family.

Vodden: There was no question about it. She and her sister used to have big drag-out battles about where to trim certain shrubs. I used to hear them out there.

When I first came here, that first winter, we had no buildings over there at all, and so I had to sit in my car in the pouring rain in the front here under a big tree. Miss Symmes came out and would say, "Walter, come in the house and I'll set up a card table in the dining room." You also have to remember that Miss Symmes was the trained landscape architect, Mrs. Blake was not. She'd set up a table and she'd say, "Walter, sit down here and write me a list of all the vines that are on the property." I'd only been here a short while, and I maybe knew five vines that were here. She said, "Well, all right, write those down." And she said, "Here's the

Vodden: encyclopedia, you look them up in the encyclopedia and find out all you can." She was really great, she was going to teach me about what was here.

Mrs. Blake heard about it and that finished that--just like that. There was a great deal of jealousy involved, I guess. No longer was I invited to come in and sit down and do my lessons. When it rained and I couldn't work outside we ended up painting in the kitchen or polishing brass work, or something like that--something that was more menial, I'll put it that way. I'm telling you just because of the difference between the two ladies.

We bought the greenhouse when they tore them down on campus to build some new buildings--we paid \$1,800 I think--and had it in storage out here until we could move up on the priority list to get it put up. Somewhere along the line we decided that it was almost time to do it, and Miss Symmes said, "If you can't find the money to build a building over there, I'll pay for it."

Riessa: Do you think that Mrs. Blake could have been dealt with differently?

Vodden: This is not a good thing, because I'm part of the Department of Landscape Architecture, but I don't really think it was handled that well. I think that there could possibly have been some endowment funds, and also there's the fact that they didn't have a great deal of money anyway. When he died, I think the paper said that he left an estate in excess of \$900,000, or close to a million dollars. That's a lot of money, but by today's standards the taxes on this place must have been fierce. I've always felt that's one reason why they deeded it to the University because they had living privileges here and their concerns for the garden would be taken care of, the maintenance on the house, the leaks--this kind of thing would be taken care of.

Riessa: Yet Mai considers it to be quite a coup to have gotten it for the the University.

Vodden: As I say, I wasn't here then, so I don't know, but from what I could gather afterwards if anybody takes credit, I think it would be Professor Vaughan. Mai was here, and she was babysitting.

What used to happen was that Mrs. Blake wouldn't come to me, she'd call Mai. This used to happen fairly often. Mai would call me at night and say, "Mrs. Blake is real unhappy because you Vodden: pulled out her rare vine that was up along the pine needle path up there." I said, "Mai, I didn't pull anything out up there." "Well, she said you pulled it out, so you must have done it. She's very upset with you." So I went up the next day when I came to work and I looked, and it was still there, the thing she

Vodden: was concerned about. So when Mrs. Blake came out I said, "Here it is, I didn't pull it out." But never once did I get an apology. She had just looked in the wrong place; she forgot where it was.

Another time she didn't want anybody to plant anything in this garden if she didn't get to say where it should be planted. My mother had a dear friend that went to Germany and brought back a package of lamprantha seeds. I grew the little seedlings. They're an incidental little herbacious, annual/perennial kind of thing, multicolored with lots of flowers on it; it lasts one year, and then you pull it out and throw it away. So I grew them in a flat, and I had a whole mess of plants. I had just moved to Walnut Creek, and I used what I had at home and then I thought, I'll plant the rest of them here. I planted them up in the rose garden. Mrs. Blake had a habit of going out after we'd left and walking around to see what kind of trouble we'd gotten into, so she went over and she found these plants growing there, and she immediately got on the phone and called Mai: "Walter had no business planting those things there."

The very next day I came and I pulled them up, when they were just beginning to bloom, pulled them up by the roots, and I took them over and threw them on the dump area, which at that time was fairly convenient, up above. I deliberately didn't throw them down, I put them at the top. So the next day Mrs. Blake came along and it just broke her heart to see that somebody had thrown some living plants out. She never came to me and made any excuses or anything, but she never said another thing. Just as I said, she's lovable at heart.

Riess: You haven't told me anything lovable yet.

Vodden: [laughs] No, she was. She was fine. I'll tell you another experience: the first time I brought my wife here—I tell this all the time—I hadn't officially come to work yet, but I wanted to show my wife where I was working, so we came on a Sunday. I think I called and told Mrs. Blake I was coming—one didn't just drop in on her—and she said, "Fine." We were down by the rock wall in back and she was down there watering when we arrived; we came down the steps and she was busy watering over here. As we got closer I called to her, I said, "Mrs. Blake," and she turned around and turned the hose right on my wife—not on purpose of course. But she was fine.

In her later life she had a great deal of difficulty, and having gone through the experience with both my mother and father I knew the problems that she was having. You get a little senile—at my age I forget, and I'm certainly not eighty yet. Little things would happen. The cook came running out of the house once saying, "Help, help, Mrs. Blake is on the floor!" She always had her lunch in the dining room there, she sat at the end of the table. We came

Vodden: rushing in and she was lying on the floor. I didn't know if she was having a heart attack or what was going on, so we picked her up and put her on the couch in the living room. I had her doctor's telephone number by this time, so I called the doctor and the doctor came out. Everything was fine, she'd just fallen asleep at the table, just dozed off and landed on the floor. She was so confused by waking up on the floor that she didn't know what to do.

Encyclopedic Plant Knowledge

Vodden: Another thing about the two sisters that always interested me--. As I say, I was new on the job here, and I knew a lot of plant material, but this garden is rather unique in the fact that there was a great deal of very unusual plant material. So I got into the habit of asking, "What's this? What's that?" If I asked Mrs. Blake something, she'd be able to tell me just like that. But if I asked Miss Symmes, she'd say, "Walter, I'll tell you at lunchtime," or "when I go up to get the mail," because she used to walk up to the mailbox. Lo and behold at lunchtime, or whenever she came out, she'd have it all written down, the name and a little bit about it; she had gone upstairs and checked her files and her notes to jog her memory about what it was. But Mrs. Blake was sharp right up to the end. You could ask her the name of any plant in this garden, almost to the end, and she could tell you just like that the correct botanical name for it. And yet she was not the trained horticulturist.

Riess: There were 2,500 different plant species in the garden?

Vodden: That was originally; it's changed.

Riess: She'd be able to give you the proper name?

Vodden: Yes.

Riess: Do you think Miss Symmes had that bit of teacher in her, and she wanted you really to know it so that you could use it?

Vodden: I think that was part of it, yes, and I think she wanted to be positive about it. I think Mrs. Blake was positive in her own mind. I'm sure she made mistakes just like we all make mistakes. When I used to run guided tours through here somebody would ask me the name of something and I would say, "It's there, but it's gone." Ten minutes later when you're walking down somewhere else it comes to you.

Riess: Did labeling plants begin before you were hired?

Vodden: I did most of that. There were no labels on anything here, and there were virtually no records of anything here. The only records that we were able to salvage that I had over in the office we got after Miss Symmes died. Mrs. Blake had us clean her room, the front bedroom up above our heads up there. You hear these stories about these recluses that live in this one room, with papers and books, well that's what her room looked like. She had trestle tables up there with dried specimens and plants folded in newspapers--the newspapers dated back to the mid-1900's. This stuff was all dried and shredded. She had, on shelves underneath, the stock market brochures from companies, financial reports, balls of string and all this kind of thing. So when we had an opportunity to clean, I was able to salvage a couple of plant file lists of what was done when they had an herbarium collection out here and a few odds and ends like that. But those are the only records or anything like that that we have.

Riess: It was just in their heads.

Vodden: Right.

Riess: Did the labeling of plants happen while Mrs. Blake was alive?

Vodden: No, not at all.

Riess: She would not have approved of that?

Vodden: No, I think she would have approved of it; I think she would approve of what's been done out here since she's gone. She was very protective, she used to station me at the gate to keep the school kids from cutting through, and if I caught any I was to bring them down to her and she'd call the police. Apparently she'd had some bad experiences with juveniles running through when there was nobody here. I could understand that. I understand what you're saying, that she was jealously guarding her knowledge of the plants so that nobody else would know. I don't think that was happening at all.

Riess: Or perhaps partly that she never conceived of it as a public place.

Vodden: Well, it still is not really a public place since we're closed on weekends--I keep saying "we" but I'm not involved in it anymore. I don't think she ever envisioned that it would be a public place per se, she envisioned it as a place where the department would bring their classes.

At that time there were no ornamental horticultural courses in the community college system at all, so it was Berkeley that she was interested in. And of course Anson was the grand old man of Stiles Hall, and all this. So they were very much involved with the University, and I think that's what she meant it to be. I

Vodden: think she probably envisioned that the house would be used not necessarily by the president of the University, but something in between, or that the department would use it. I have a feeling that she wouldn't have been disappointed that it had been used--when it was used--as a residential dormitory of the Prytanean Society; I think she would be very pleased that it was used by presidents of the University. The day that Anson got his honorary law degree Dr. Sproul came and picked him up in their limousine to take him over, and there was the inauguration of Kerr when Kerr became president.

The Blakes, and Other People

Riess: She came from a fine family; was she a bit of a snob about all of this?

Vodden: She came from Rincon Hill in San Francisco, and her father was in the electrical contracting business. She was not a snob. Miss Symmes delved into genealogy, and I don't know if the University has the information or not, but she showed me once that they went back to Geoffrey Chaucer.

Riess: Was this part of why they couldn't speak directly to you?

Vodden: I think they were in the social registry; they were in Who's Who; I would assume they went to the opera and this kind of thing. I think I would have really enjoyed knowing them when she was about fifty years old, or maybe fifty-five, because I think they were right in the thick of things, of Berkeley and the University.

Her father was in the electrical fixture business, and it's my understanding that as a house-warming or anniversary present he gave them the big stone pillars and the big light fixtures that used to be in the top of them in the gable. We still have one of them stashed away behind the tool house over there.

Riess: I was asking those questions because I was trying to gather what her attitude was toward people, that she felt that she couldn't speak directly to you, that she had to talk to Mai, because Mai was more professional.

Vodden: No, I always thought I was never anything more than a peon, a handyman, the man who was here to do her bidding.

Well, the job was such at that time that it needed somebody that was going to dig in, take a chainsaw, or what have you. That's one of the first things that we did, we bought a chainsaw.

Vodden: We had to be very careful when we were using it. If we needed a shovel or something like that I'd go to Anson, Mr. Blake, and say, "Hey, we need another shovel." He'd go down to the quarry and bring us back a shovel. There weren't even any wheelbarrows here. There were two of us here, and ten-and-a-half acres. Mrs. Blake wanted somebody here all the time Saturday and Sunday, so Jim Anderson worked on Saturdays and Sundays. So there were only three days a week when there were two of us here--and ten-and-a-half acres. We really couldn't do much at all.

Riess: Sure. And if you're being called inside periodically to take care of household things--.

Vodden: Jim took her shopping all the time, particularly after Anson died, because she had to go to the grocery store. She and Mrs. Thomas, who lived over on the other corner over here, and—I don't know whether you've run into the name of Gladys Wickson? She was the sister of Mrs. Thomas. I think there's a Wickson Wood over on the Berkeley campus. Thomas was an architect, and Gladys Wickson was a horticulturist botanist kind of person. They lived over there. Jim would take Mrs. Blake and Mrs. Thomas to do their grocery shopping, so he was gone part of the time.

You know, ten-and-a-half acres--if you can walk around it you're doing pretty good. You also have to remember that there was no irrigation system here; it was all three-quarter inch pipes that they put in as they developed the garden. Half of it was leaking, so if we turned two sprinklers on down there we got no water up here. It was a real chore, and actually very little was accomplished while any of the Blakes were alive as far as improving the status of either the house or the garden.

Riess: It was sort of the last ditch.

Vodden: Right.

Riess: Did she enjoy walking people through the gardens?

Vodden: Oh, nobody came, and she wouldn't take anybody through unless they were old friends or something like that. Now, you do have on your list Igor Blake and Mrs. Thacher. Particularly Mrs. Thacher used to come out once in a while when she was still alive. After Mrs. Blake died Mrs. Thacher said, "Walter, you should have something from the house." So she gave me two Royal Doulton pieces: a chocolate pot that came from Shreves and has Mrs. Blake's initials on the sterling silver top; and an ewer that came from the house. Mrs. Thacher was left all the European china as I remember.

Riess: That's nice. So her social life while you were around—

Vodden: Was nil. Nil. I wasn't here in the evenings of course--at that time I was commuting from South San Francisco--but there was no entertaining, no dinner parties. I think when you talk to Igor he will tell you that dinner parties here at the Blake House were a tradition, and I think on Sunday night all the clan gathered here for their final--well, not final, but their Sunday dinner.

Riess: [laughs]

Vodden: The reason I said "final" was because after Mrs. Blake had died they had the last supper here, kind of a wake dinner, when they finished up all the old wine that had been around. It was right after that dinner that the first editions of the books that I knew were in the library here disappeared, too. But I don't blame them for that at all. They must have had their feelings hurt a little bit. I think it was Igor that got the dining furniture, and he also ended up with the stained glass window that used to be in the entrance hall, and the grandfather clock, and a few things like that.

Riess: They felt they had been by-passed in favor of the University?

Vodden: I have a feeling that there might have been some animosity, that here the University's getting all of this, and even in those days the property must have been worth a substantial amount. I only saw Igor during the funeral period, but to the best of my knowledge Igor never really came out again after she was gone. Mrs. Thacher used to come out once in a while. Have you talked to her?

Riess: I'm going to talk to her in a week or so.

Vodden: She can tell you a lot of stories about the family get-togethers and all of that, which I have no knowledge of.

Riess: We haven't talked much about Anson Blake.

Vodden: Anson was a great old guy. He was I think ninety when he died, and he was in good shape. He was driving his car up until a year or two before he died, and never did I ever see Anson standing in the front here talking when there was a lady present that he didn't have his Panama hat off in his hand--a perfect gentleman. He had a little goatee, a dark blue or black suit--looked like the same suit all the time. Always very polite, very nice, very congenial. Not a great conversationalist as far as I was concerned. I don't think he had the same attitude that she had though. He wanted to be helpful. He fell on the front steps and broke his hip, and they called an ambulance, and they hauled him away. He came back, and he was here for another week or two. He had trouble getting around so they had a private nurse with him here all the time. Somewhere along the line he fell again, and they hauled him off to the hospital again, and then that was the last we saw of him.

Riess: You described Mrs. Blake as sitting at the table, having lunch. It sounds like she was by herself, she wasn't really with her husband or with Miss Symmes.

Vodden: I'm primarily talking about the time after he was gone. He died in '59, and she died in '62, so there was a fair time in between that she lived here alone. Her sister was with her for a while but then her sister died and she was here all alone except for the cook that was in the house.

Riess: I see. That's why.

Vodden: So who was she going to be sitting with? Are you asking, did she have lady friends in for lunch or tea? I never saw it happen, and if Mrs. Thacher came out or something like that maybe they had a cup of tea together or something. But she was by herself, and so really the cook, or we in the garden, were her only company outside of the twenty-six cats. She was alone. I have no way of knowing, but I suspect that she went to bed very early. I can't really remember that far back to remember when she came out to start supervising us in the morning. If my recollections are anywhere in the ballpark at all, we probably had until ten o'clock or so when we could go about and set sprinklers and do what we thought we had to before we knew that she was going to be out to start giving instructions. She probably had things to do in the house.

Personal Supervision of the Gardens

Riess: Did you ever have any actual showdowns with her about anything?

Vodden: No, I don't think so. I don't remember having an argument, or either one of us saying a harsh word to each other. Probably when I turned my back and walked away I had a few things to say, but I think one of the few good traits I have is that things don't upset me. I'm usually very calm and collected and if something all of a sudden I know is going to happen in the garden, and people are running around like chickens with their heads cut off because they want things to look nice or something, I like to feel that I'm always very calm and collected and don't have problems that way. I don't have that much of a temper. If I do anything, I sulk. I'm not vocal, I don't come out and say, "The heck with you."

Riess: You said something earlier in another context, but it's probably valuable, that you didn't get hung up on the details, it was the larger picture.

Vodden: Oh, yes. No, we couldn't, there was no way. She was in love with the details. She would have us dig a hole, sitting on her stool there, and we'd fill it full of leaves, and then, when it was planting time--which might be six months later--she would know where the holes were. The leaves would be all rotted, and we'd go back to the hole and plant something in it. I guess by that time certain things become important to you and other things do not, but by this time the place, as I say, was a shambles. One of the first jobs I had was to trim the boxwood hedge out here in the formal garden area. The boxwood hedge at that time hadn't been trimmed in years, so it was all over the paths, up and around and all over the place. She was very deliberate, she knew exactly where she wanted it trimmed. She'd come out, and we'd put the string across, and that's where I was to trim it.

One of the biggest arguments that I heard she and her sister have was when we were trimming those shrubs around where the pagoda pool is, that has that tall oriental pagoda in it over there. The pittosporums that were in there had grown for years and years and hadn't been touched, so Miss Symmes and I took a piece of string and put it around there, and this was where I was to cut them. Mrs. Blake came out and saw where we had the string, and said "Oh, no, you can't prune it there!" and she immediately lit into her sister--not me. So her sister walked away in a huff.

You have to remember that her sister was living here kind of as a guest. It was her sister's and her husband's home, and she had living space upstairs. I have no way of knowing, but I doubt that she was paying any room or board or anything like that. So she was living there as their guest, and there was no way she could get so perturbed that she would say, "Well, I'm going to move," because I don't think she could have lived by herself. So I think they were a great deal of support in their old age to each other, particularly after Anson died.

Riess: Did Anson care about the garden?

Vodden: Oh, yes. Earlier I used to hear all kinds of stories about this being his favorite tree over here--the white oak which we eventually took out--and how he'd planted the hemlocks that were down below the redwood canyon. She used to tell me how when they had the dry years they'd all get out themselves and water, all three of them. He was very much involved with the garden, although I don't think he was knowledgeable as far as botanical names of plants and that kind of thing. Also you have to remember that he was involved with business, the quarry and the street-paving business, so he had other things on his mind.

One of the stories that I started to mention before, that I'd heard rumors about, was that when he'd go down to the YMCA and get involved with the dancing he was a regular old cutup. He was

Vodden: having a ball while Aunt Anita was home, probably tending plants. I don't know how true that is, but maybe if you hear it again you'll begin to put some credence to it.

Riess: This is in his earlier days, in his salad days.

Vodden: My knowledge of him wasn't that close; we saw him coming and going in the morning, or if we needed something he'd bring us a shovel back, or he'd stop and say, "How are things going?" but that's about what it amounted to.

Riess: Did she tell you stories of the earlier days?

Vodden: No. She never told any stories about any parties or socializing they had here, and they must have had some.

Riess: But when you'd be working together, working on a particular plant or corner of the garden, did she talk about how it had evolved, or where she had gotten this or that?

Vodden: No. The thing that surprises people about the Blakes the most I think is that they were great collectors, and they collected these plants from all over the world, but they never travelled themselves. It was always someone else that went somewhere, or some nurseryman that had collected it from somewhere, or it was through the Berkeley botanical gardens that they were able to get certain things.

We had growing down in that far corner some dawn redwoods that came from seeds that Dr. [Ralph] Chaney brought back from the original seeds. She did tell me once along that same line--I'm pretty sure it was she and not Miss Symmes--that all the Cyclamen Neapolitanum that we had growing over there was smuggled in to her in the toe of a shoe of a friend returning from Europe.

I have some photographs, in fact I have some slides of the house over there in our file, that show the house with nothing planted around it. The pool is all bare out here, there's absolutely nothing there. There was a little fallen-down greenhouse over there that I guess they used when it wasn't falling down, where they started things.

Riess: She must have been really good.

Vodden: She was very involved. Horticulture was her life in her later days. Earlier I think she used to like riding horses, and I think at one time they had a horse here on the property, until the neighbors complained and made them take it off. Where they kept the horses I don't know; there was a lot of open space in those days.

Vodden: But you asked when we were talking and planting or pruning together, whether she ever spoke about herself; I don't ever recall her mentioning her life. If we were talking at all, other than about the thing we were pruning or planting, it was probably something that I brought up--telling her about my son or my wife, or that I got stuck in the commute traffic--something like that. As you have discovered, I like to talk. It's hard to be with somebody without saying something.

California Horticultural Society Meetings

Riess: You must have represented the world coming into her life, towards the end.

Vodden: Well, prior to that she used to go to the California Horticultural Society meetings in San Francisco. I don't know exactly when she stopped going, but as soon as I came here, it became my job to go over there. She had a lot of unusual material here, and when it was meeting time over in the Academy of Sciences, once a month, she'd select one or two things for me to take over. Elizabeth McClintock was there and all these people. When you take something over, during the second half of the program you have to get up and explain to them what it is and where it came from. To this day I don't know whether it was that she thought it was a good opportunity for me to get involved over there--which would be nice if I thought she really felt that way--or whether it was because she wanted them to know that the place was still over here and things were still going on.

Riess: Sounds like you understood her psychology pretty well, though.

Vodden: Part of my wisdom came in later years, with older age.

The University and the Blake Estate

Department of Landscape Architecture Faculty

Riess: I'd like to review the people from the University who had an official association with the gardens. Harry Shepherd--how did he fit into all this?

Vodden: I had no contact with Shepherd except that I do have some of his papers and lists over in the files in the office. He had a very extensive plant material list, of what to grow in saline soil or in a windy location, what to grow to attract hummingbirds, and that kind of thing. I have a lot of that in my files over there. So I never had any contact with him; it was Punk Vaughan by this time.

Riess: Did you have a schedule of reporting to Punk Vaughan, or to the department?

Vodden: There was never any of that. I kept logs over there for years, and nobody ever looked at them. Mostly time logs--how much time it was taking to do this, how much time I'd have to water--in case somebody said, "Well, what are you doing out there all the time?" In fact, there's been very very little contact between the department and myself, particularly in the latter years. Mai Arbogast, as time went on, failed to publish, so eventually she no longer was assistant pro-fessor, she was turned down for tenure. Pretty soon she was a lecturer, pretty soon half-time lecturer, and pretty soon third-time lecturer. But finally she just got fed up with the whole thing and quit.

Riess: Then it was Robert Raabe, wasn't it?

Vodden: Dr. Raabe is still over there, and he's a plant pathologist. What happened is that the department had to have some kind of liaison between myself and the department, because we were three miles away. You also have to remember that not too long after all of

Vodden: this took place they moved into the new building, and so they were very much involved in Wurster Hall and getting things set up there. We were just here.

At that time they had what they called an acting director, and they really weren't directors because the job is not of a large enough scale to have a director at the University's standards. I don't know what the financial arrangement was, but I don't think they got paid very much. Their job was to be there if I had a problem so I had somebody to call in the department and say, "What do we do next?" Bob Raabe is still over there in plant pathology, and he's a great friend of ours. He was very much involved. But none of these people ever came out here and told us what to do.

It was always up to me, and I just went ahead and did what I thought should be done. I knew that if I went over there and said, "Should we take this tree out over here?" that they would have to form a committee, get all the landscape architects over there and discuss this for weeks on end, and finally maybe we'd take it out. So I just went ahead and did things--good, bad, or indifferent. I feel very strongly about the people I hired in the garden. I went out of my way to hire intelligent people that know what they're doing. They may know a whole lot better than I about what to do. I told them to go ahead and do it, unless it's something major.

Riess: I think after Bob Raabe it was Gerry Scott.

Vodden: She retired from being a professional landscape architect, and I guess she didn't want to be strictly retired so she was hired as a lecturer in the Department of Landscape Architecture. She also taught Extension classes out here. Gerry Scott was one of the best things that ever happened to this garden. She was known as the "ruthless Mrs. Scott." She would come out here with different colored tape and say, "Walter, I want you to put blue tape around this, and that means, 'prune'; we'll put red tape around this one, and that means, 'take it out'." She's the one that's responsible for cleaning things up, getting things open, taking trees out. She was just wonderful.

When the University decided that they were going to use it for the President's House she was hired to do the design work for the entrance way, and changed the circle a little bit. She designed the stucco walls in the inner gate. They also had a chain-link fence all the way around here to kind of separate this from the rest of the garden--this was to be the president's little thing. There were gates all over. She was responsible for having the outdoor lighting put in. The architects that did the remodeling were responsible for the gallery and the servants' quarters that were added on the back. She consulted with them on the steps down in back, the lawn down in back, so she was really very much involved, insofar as the department was concerned.

Vodden: Gerry Scott by this time is having a lot of physical problems, and I haven't seen her in ages. But she was the only director that we had that really came out here and said, "All right, let's do this"—and we did it.

Riess: She put together a long-range plan.*

Vodden: Yes, and she spent a lot of time on cost estimates to make it an environmental design research center. This was one of the times when they were looking for something to do with the house. She got absolutely no response from anybody. Felt a little mad about that. Of all the people, she's the only one that was really interested in what happened out here. When we had all the freeze damage, she helped get some funds for replacing a lot of the things that we lost in the freeze. Finally she retired. At about that time Russ Beatty was working with her. Because she couldn't spend that time, Russ Beatty was working with her. But he didn't want to get involved out there because he was turned down for tenure. He got turned down for tenure, and then he had a review a while back and he got turned down for that, so the last I heard he was half-time lecturer.

For the last several years we had no liaison person. We had a chairman, Russ Beatty, of the Blake Garden Committee, which never met. If I had a problem I would call the Blake Garden Committee or go directly to the chairman of the department, whoever it happened to be at that time.

The only other chairman we had that was really interested in this place was Garrett Eckbo, and he and his wife almost moved into the house. Just before Hitch was appointed president, during the Free Speech Movement, Garrett Eckbo had retired from his practice down south and moved up here, and he and his wife were looking for a place to stay, and he said, "Maybe we'll move into the house." I don't know why anybody would have wanted to live there at that time because it was a shambles, but Garrett of course is a very artistic person, so they decided yes, they'd like to live in it. But the University would give no guarantee that they could stay any length of time.

It was shortly after that when Charles Hitch was appointed. Hitch lived in a little house on Hilldale off Marin and it wasn't big enough to entertain or anything, so that's when they came in and spent the million dollars or whatever it was for "Hitch's pad."*

*See Appendices, Y, NN.

Riess: So essentially then the gardens are still Gerry's design, you would say?

Vodden: They are Miss Symmes' design--I would assume--with vast alterations by Mrs. Blake. Gerry Scott was only responsible for the entrance road design, the parking lots, the big turf over in the front. There's quite a bit of Gerry Scott when you get right down to it.

Riess: I shouldn't have said her design, but she did change it radically?

Vodden: She never changed it really radically, I don't think. The front area, there's some trees and shrubs, but the design concept is still there. Right now you might know these have to go out because they're much too large. They're way out of scale, and we've cut them back so many times one of them's dead already. They all have to come out and be replanted. [Referring to trees alongside pool.]

But design-wise it's still pretty much the same. For instance in the front here we put in all this brick patio with student help and rebuilt the fence, but before there was lawn up here, so the design really hasn't changed that much. In the redwood canyon we've taken some things out, and we've lost some things in the storm, but it's pretty much the same. What we call the cut flower garden, over on the far side where the big turf is, that has changed. That's where the old tool house, chicken coops and old lathe house used to be. Now it's turf. But basically it hasn't changed that much.

Riess: Gerry said that she started pruning and clearing much against many peoples' wishes.

Vodden: That's why I was saying she was called the "ruthless Mrs. Scott." But Gerry Scott had a great deal of vision. She had been in the business a long time, and had done a lot of rejuvenation work. She did a lot of work at the world's fair on Treasure Island, so she knew what she was doing. She could look at a tree and she'd say, "Walter, let's take these out." I'd think, "She's out of her mind, what does she want to take this out for?" But almost invariably, when it was out we were much better off. I can't think of anything she did that I would say was a mistake.

New Financial and Moral Support and Interest

Riess: There must have been some money then because taking out trees is expensive.

Vodden: Taking out trees is expensive, but you also have to remember that we always did have an excellent relationship with the Berkeley

Vodden: campus facilities management. Ari Inouye was the campus landscape architect at that time and was in charge of campus work, and at that time they had their own tree people. We'd call Ari up and Ari would come out and look at the job and give us a very modest figure, send his tree man and helper out, and do the work for us. He took out several pinus canariensis right in here. We had practically no budget at all.

The biggest thing that ever happened to us was fairly recently, when David Gardner became president. Even though they're not living in the house he came over to make an appointment and had me take him all around the garden and explain to him what we were doing. We got over in our office in the far corner and he said, "Well, what do you need?" Just like that. I said, "Well, the first thing I need is to get the man-and-a-half back that I lost fifteen years ago when the University came on hard times," because originally there were five of us here, and then we ended up with three-and-a-half. He said, "Well, you've got it." I said, "Our tractor's twelve years old and it's falling apart." "We might as well do everything at once," he said. So we got together a list of things, and I included in it things like \$3,000 for tree work, X number of dollars for path repair, X number of dollars for new equipment, X number of dollars for this and that, and the man-and-a-half back again. And we got it all. Almost doubled our budget just like that.

We were on the list in 1958 to get our new irrigation system here. We asked for \$10,000 because that was the estimate we got from the landscape irrigation consultant for an upgraded automatic system. It came through ten years later when Hitch was appointed president of the University, so it was always in my mind that that's why it came through then. And then \$10,000 by this time would only do half of it, if that. So we worked with virtually no money. You have to remember that the Blake garden is part of the Department of Landscape Architecture. The Department of Landscape Architecture is part of the College of Environmental Design. A budget goes in to the College of Environmental Design and it starts filtering down into the landscape department, and maybe we're going to get some of what we've asked for. Particularly when there was really no correlation between the department and us out here. To this day Merritt College and Diablo Valley College use this garden more than our department.

Once in a while they have a hypothetical design problem out here. One time I asked them about a real design problem: I'd always wanted to put in a lake over in the Australian hollow, so I asked Michael Laurie, one of the professors over there, to give the problem to his design class to find out--not what it's going to look like when it's all finished--but how much water do we have to have coming in and going out, what do we have to do to the soil to hold the water, how deep should it be, this kind of thing. He gave

Vodden: it to his class, and what we got is a whole drawer full of beautiful sketches of lakeside plantings with tea houses and all this kind of thing. There's never been any money until recently, and John is still complaining about not having any money. [John Norcross, Senior Botanical Garden/Arboretum Manager, Blake Garden]

Our department--back to teaching plant material--if you know they're only teaching two classes you know they're not coming out here very often, they're using the campus or visiting other gardens. On rare occasions they're coming out here, but the Merritt College classes are out here quite often, and an Albany adult education class comes out at least once during the term. When Andy Gotzenburg is teaching down there he brings his class up here for a field trip.

On rare occasions recently I had some independent study students from the landscape department. They would go to their adviser and make a proposal to come out here and do some kind of a project, or give a reason for being here. The adviser would then okay it, and they would come out here. I would put them to work for eight hours a week on this particular project or something general, and then at the end of the semester I would write a letter of recommendation for pass or no pass. Then their professor would have them write a paper on their experience out here. So we would get something, we would get eight hours of work from them. They would also get three units of credit and much experience. But it happens very rarely.

Riess: It sounds like it's hard to rationalize this place as a teaching facility.

Vodden: That's been our problem all along. It is an excellent teaching facility, but only because we have the kind of people working here that will take the time to teach the individuals that did come out.

Riess: It seems to me that President Gardner might as easily have said, "It looks like it's time to cut back."

Vodden: Oh, absolutely, but he's never been that way. I have a very strong feeling that someday this place will no longer be under the Department of Landscape Architecture; it'll be under University-wide domain or it will revert to Facilities Management, which will do the maintenance on it. That's mostly what it is.

Either they have to spend a lot of money and make it a showplace that people will come from all over to see--. We do get a lot of visitors from all over. We're listed in the horticultural publications as one of the gardens to visit, and every once in a while somebody from back east or Texas drops in. In two weeks the American Society of Landscape Architecture is having their national convention in San Francisco, and there will be about three hundred of them out here visiting the garden.

Riess: When you described President Gardner saying, "Well, what do you need?" that reminded me of President Sproul's manner. I wanted to ask you whether Sproul dropped in here.

Vodden: I never had much contact with Sproul because he was just going out; Kerr was president then, and they weren't living here. So the first president I had contact with was Hitch.

Riess: Would Mr. and Mrs. Hitch come out to talk about the garden?

Vodden: When he had been president for a very short time they set up a luncheon. He, Hitch, came home from work, and Mrs. Hitch was here, and they had Tsang Mo Tsui (the live-in servant at the house at that time). They invited me for lunch so that I could come in and explain to them what was happening out here. We had excellent relations with the Hitches. The Hitches invited my wife and me to a reception they had here for one of their long-time horticultural friends and to a couple other social things. We got along fine.

Riess: I wasn't saying that your relations were poor, but just that there was no one who was really interested.

Vodden: You could talk with Mrs. Hitch, I had more contact with her, but half the time you knew she was thinking about something else. We didn't get any financial help from them. When the Saxons were here, Mrs. Saxon, who is a living doll, because she was lonely here, she'd come out and work with us or talk with us, or invite us in to have ice cream and brownies on anybody's birthday. Every Christmas she'd have us in for luncheon.

The one thing that I asked her husband, David Saxon, to do for us--because I was having problems with our chairman over there and had a big battle with them--he refused to do because he felt he couldn't interfere with department policies. I always thought, "If he couldn't do it, who can?" He is the one that cut out the power and the lights because we had no money, and we never got an extra nickel from him. That's why I was floored when I stood over there with David Gardner and he said, "Well, what do you need?" Just like that. He's going to be good for the University, he's a very positive person.

The situation up here is unusual in that we have some contact with the presidents of the University, and most departments don't. When I had the retirement party over here, Mrs. and Mr. Hitch and both the Gardners were there, and if the Saxons had been in town they would have been here too. Not many people lower down in the University complex can say this. I've had two presidents here, and Mr. Gardner gave me a beautiful Tiffany crystal paperweight engraved with the University seal on it. I'm very much appreciative of that aspect of my job. The best thing that ever happened was when the University decided to fix the house up.

Vodden: Otherwise I don't know what would have happened here. It was a shambles. They've done a nice job on it and it's a comfortable house now. While you're sitting here you feel like you could put your feet up on the coffee table if you really wanted to.

Riess: It's not too imposing.

Vodden: They've done a nice job.

Riess: In 1967, \$60,000 went into the garden. Was that just as the Hitches were coming in?

Vodden: Yes, that must have been at that time. It was in 1962 that we built the headhouse, so that money was probably the outdoor lighting, the stucco walls, the upper parking lot--that kind of thing.

The Monastery and the Neighbors

Riess: I want to ask you whether there's anyone at the monastery who would have been a friend of Mrs. Blake's or Miss Symmes'?

Vodden: I doubt it very much. Have you been up there at all?

Riess: No.

Vodden: It's a Carmelite monastery, so if you go up there there's a little reception room about half the size of this as you go in, and there's a big wall over here with a turntable, with a solid lattice-work thing on it. You push the bell and wait a while, maybe you push it again, and pretty soon you hear some feet coming. Then you'll hear a voice from behind the screen asking you what you want. If you've brought them something—we used to take flowers or mail up there once in a while—you put it on the turntable and the turntable turns around to the back.

When we put the parking lot up there, since it's their entrance route too, the University didn't want to go ahead and tear it all up. There was just a little narrow road going there. So they wrote a letter to the Mother Superior asking if she had any ideas, asking what they could do to meet their needs too as they were doing it. The Mother Superior wrote back and said that she didn't really remember what it looked like out in the front because when she came in, they came in by car, and it had been so many years that she hadn't been out. She had no idea what the outside world was like, or what was happening out there. They had a young lady up there, Lorraine, who would get their mail and things like

Vodden: that. But that was the only contact we had, and that was years ago, and I'm sure the Mother Superior has changed by this time. There's only about eight of them there.

Some years back we lost a tree alongside the fence over there, and the Mother Superior sent Lorraine over with two twenty-dollar bills in a card for me, with a little note from her saying that she was sorry that the tree had died and that they felt somewhat responsible because a man on their side had done something or other. It wasn't his fault at all, so I sent the forty dollars back with a little note saying that I couldn't accept it and that they hadn't been at fault, and that I was sure that they could find some worthy cause for their donation.

I will say that when I retired I got a very nice card from them signed by the Sisters of the Carmelite. Somebody keeps them a little bit informed. I think once in a while they'll have a visiting priest or something that's visiting them up there, who gets lost or has an accident and wanders around down here. But that's the only contact.

The Mother Superior wrote to ask about the original land grant. The Mother Superior was interested in knowing who the original land belonged to, so Mrs. Blake wrote a handwritten letter about who the land belonged to and how it was acquired.

Riess: There was no other prior history of relationship?

Vodden: No, because when Edwin Blake died that property was sold. [The house was purchased by Noel Sullivan.] The part that the house is on went to the Carmelites from the monastery, and the rest of it, which is way up in there, was sold off because that's Jepson Court and Anson Way, and part of it was all sold off. There were actually three divisions of the family--you may know all this: part of it was below Highgate Road, and then this section, and then Edwin Blake's. My understanding is that the people that were supposed to get the part down below Highgate Road were back East and weren't really interested in it, so that was sold, and part of this was sold.

Riess: Are there any neighbors I could talk to who knew the Blakes?

Vodden: Mrs. Barchfield if she'll talk to you. Her name used to be Agnes McCormick. They bought the property from the Blakes. That's the little corner where their house is, over there. She was married to Bill McCormick, who was an architect, and Agnes worked like a dog and helped him build the house, and they put the roof on it together. She taught school, and then somewhere along the line they had difficulties and separated, and eventually divorced. I guess her part of the settlement was the house.

Vodden: She lived down there for a number of years, and she was a good friend of Mrs. Blake's, so she probably could tell you things about it. Somewhere along the line she met Mr. Barchfield, and they got married late in life--I suspect rather for companionship. She's been quite ill, she's had cancer, and cobalt treatment, and all kinds of things. Mr. Barchfield is stone deaf, so it's very difficult to talk to him.

Riess: Maybe I'll write a note.*

Vodden: Yes. They're over in #1 Norwood Place. Our mailing address over there is #2. They bought the property from the Blakes, and they wanted the property over there to the middle of the stream--it's not a stream but actually a storm drain. The very night the deal was to go through Mrs. Blake said, "No, they couldn't have it," because she wanted both sides of the stream to plant on. So as a consequence their property is up on the back part. At that time I guess there was a little animosity going back and forth, but they were friends, and she used to come over here to see how things were going.

Riess: Paint a picture for me, before we end this, of Mrs. Blake and how she got herself up for gardening, what she wore. You said she wore a smock?

Vodden: Oh, yes, a smock and a big hat to keep the sun off, because she did have skin cancer. Dr. Engles from Marin County used to come over and treat her here, burn the lesions off her face and what have you. He used to bring her big proteas that he grew in his place over there which used to make her very happy.

Dr. Engles, after Mrs. Blake was gone, invited my wife and I over to luncheon over at their house. He had I don't know how many acres up above Paradise Cove in Marin County. He had gone down to the cemeteries in Colma and bought up a lot of old blocks of granite and marble and had them trucked up to his place, and it kind of looked like Stonehenge up there where he was growing these proteas. He had a manservant, lived alone. He gave us a gourmet luncheon. It was filet mignon, and he served this with silverware that he had hand-made himself in Sweden, when he was an apprentice silversmith. He had made all the silverware himself. He eventually became a doctor and lived over there. He since has died, otherwise you could talk to him.

* Mrs. Barchfield was sent a request to talk, and through her husband, Mr. John Barchfield, the answer, for both of them, was "no" to taking part in a verbal or written addition to the oral history.

Riess: Okay, Mr. Vodden, you're taking things in your hands and getting ready to leave, and so I will let you go! Thank you.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Mai Arbegast

MRS. BLAKE AND THE GARDEN IN THE 1950s

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1986

MAI K. ARBEGAST

1985

Photograph by G. Paul Bishop

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Mai Arbegast met Mrs. Anson Blake in 1952. Mrs. Arbegast was brought up to the Blake Gardens by Professor Harry Shepherd whom she was understudying to succeed in teaching plant materials in the University's Department of Landscape Architecture. Mai Arbegast was fifty years Mrs. Blake's junior, and Anita Blake was then a commanding octogenarian, but the two women had in common a consuming interest in plant materials and gardens. Mrs. Arbegast surveyed and inventoried the garden from 1958 to 1961. Her contact with Mrs. Blake in carrying out that assignment fostered a mutual respect.

Like Geraldine Knight Scott, Mai Arbegast can draw on a certain reservoir of outrage at how little constructive attention the Department of Landscape Architecture has paid to the Blake Garden. Mrs. Arbegast is really dedicated to teaching on site. She was known to the Regional Oral History Office because of her close association with Filoli, the Woodside, California showplace garden and home of Lurline Matson Roth which was documented by the oral history office. And she was helpful in making possible the two-volume oral history, Thomas Church and the History of Landscape Architecture, 1978.

Mai Arbegast has a very active landscape design practice and probably knows the gardens of Berkeley better than anyone else in the business. Her own garden is, as she describes it, "just full of plants." If it doesn't get constant tending it is because Mrs. Arbegast is a champion of other gardens, and adds garden tours of Japan and travels to Europe to her busy life.

We met at Mai Arbegast's home in Berkeley one weekday morning. It was hard for this busy woman to find a time to do the interview, and it was even harder for her to get the edited transcript back! (She misplaced it in a remodelling move.) In retrospect I particularly appreciate her prompting me on the subject of Mabel Symmes' and Anita Blake's papers. I asked her initially where they were; her response of, "Well, where are they?" constituted a challenge. We located a good deal with the help of Blake Garden's Linda Haymaker who was similarly curious, and appended are excerpts from our "finds."

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

December 18, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name MAI (MAY) KITAZAWA ARBEGAST

Date of birth MAY 16, 1922 Place of birth SAN JOSE, CALIF.

Father's full name GITIU KITAZAWA

Birthplace NIIGATA-KEN, JAPAN

Occupation VEGETABLE SEED MERCHANT

Mother's full name KIKUNO NAKASHIMA KITAZAWA

Birthplace ITOIGAWA, NIIGATA-KEN, JAPAN

Occupation HOUSEWIFE

Where did you grow up ? SAN JOSE, CALIF UNTIL 18; THEN OHIO, CHICAGO, DETROIT, ETC

Present community BORKELEY, CALIF.

Education B.A. OSBORN COLLEGE 1945; M.S. IN AG. CORNELL UNIV. 1949; (HORTICULTURE)
M.S. IN. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE - UNIV. OF CALIF. BERKELEY 1953.

Occupation(s) LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT & HORTICULTURAL CONSULTANT (1960 - PRESENT)
TEACHER AT U. C. BERKELEY (1953 - 1966)

* HAVE INCLUDED BACKGROUND SHEET.

Special interests or activities TRAVEL - LEAD TRAVEL TOURS TO
JAPAN TO VISIT GREAT GARDENS & FOLK CULTURE; ALSO TOURS
TO ENGLAND TO VISIT GREAT GARDENS.

Mai K. Arbegast

Landscape Architect

Horticultural Consultant

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berkeley, california 94709

415/841-9067

Education: M.S. in Agriculture (Landscape Architecture), University of California, Berkeley, 1953; M.S. Ornamental Horticulture, Plant Breeding, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1949; B.A. Major Botany & Ecology, Oberlin College, Ohio, 1945.

Registration: Licensed Landscape Architect, California License #126.

Past Affiliations and Services:

- Member, Design Review Board of San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), 1978-1984.
- Member, Board of Trustees, Filoli Center, Woodside, CA, 1976-1983(on Founding Board).
- Member, Board of Directors, American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, U.S and Canada (representing public horticulture 1976-78).
- Member, Board of Directors, Strybing Arboretum Society, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA 1968-73; 1975-78.
- Member, Board of Trustees, Saratoga Horticultural Foundation, Saratoga, CA 1965-1980. Past president.
- Member, Berkeley Planning Commission, City of Berkeley, CA, 1972-75; member Board of Adjustments; Waterfront Advisory Committee; Heritage Tree Program and Street Trees 1965-67.

Experience:

Mai K. Arbegast has practised full-time for 21 years (since 1966). Previous to that, part-time professional practice combined with part-time and full-time teaching at the University of California, Department of Landscape Architecture, Berkeley, CA for 13 years (from 1953-1966).

Her work includes residential gardens, commercial projects, schools, wineries, parks, housing, street tree master planting plans, management and maintenance guidelines for future botanic gardens and arboreta, zoos, and cemeteries. Her work has been in the San Francisco Bay Area and all of California and Washington, midwestern and northeastern United States; with special emphasis on planting design, horticulture, urban forestry, ecological considerations, native and naturalized planting for difficult conditions, landscape horticultural maintenance.

Much of her work is serving as specialist and consultant in matters ecological, horticultural, and selection of plant palettes to architectural, engineering, and landscape architectural firms.

Working with Anita Blake, 1952

[Date of Interview: December 4, 1986]

Introduction to Mrs. Blake and the Gardens

Riess: Let's start at the point where you first met the Blakes.

Arbegast: My first acquaintance with Mrs. Blake was really quite official. I think it was through Professor [Harry] Shepherd, who was teaching plant materials in the Department of Landscape Architecture and had been for many, many years. He was one of the first faculty members. He and Miss Symmes, Mrs. Blake's sister, were in class together, it seems to me [Class of 1914].* Professor Shepherd had had a stroke, and he took me up to introduce me to Mrs. Blake, and to let her know that I was going to help him.

I was still doing graduate work, and I had taken no plant courses at all, simply because I had no time to take plant courses. I had a very good background in horticulture and botany from both Oberlin and Cornell, so when I came to Berkeley I concentrated on architecture, engineering, landscape architecture. I took no plant courses because everyone said, "With your background, you can learn the plants so quickly that there's no sense in your taking that kind of curriculum here; you need engineering and architecture." So they threw me into those courses and I almost sank, but I made it.

I didn't get to know Mrs. Blake except kind of officially through Professor Shepherd. He introduced me to her as his assistant, someone who was going to understudy him, somebody who was going to take over his courses when he retired.

*Mabel Symmes, UC '96, returned to study landscape architecture, 1914. The Division of Landscape Gardening and Floriculture was established in 1913.

Riess: He had been taking his classes up there for years?

Arbegast: He had been going up there on and off in a very select sort of way, by appointment, to see her garden. She was very fond of Professor Shepherd. She always welcomed him. She was delighted to know that there was going to be someone who was interested in plants taking over his role.

Riess: But what was his role vis-a-vis her garden?

Arbegast: Nothing, he just used her garden. She was very generous in letting people come to the garden to visit who were interested in plants. She really was not interested in people who were not interested in plants.

Riess: You mean in general she was not interested in people who were not interested in plants?

Arbegast: I got that impression. She didn't have much to do with anybody. I thought she was kind of one-track-minded, but maybe that was just myself. I didn't know her personally that well, but I do know that when I was there we always had two- or three-hour sessions. She was just delighted that I came because I knew a lot of plants, and her great delight was in kind of trying to get me to identify something that she knew that I didn't know. [laughs] It was an interesting experience, and I liked Mrs. Blake very much.

Harry Shepherd, Mabel Symmes, Katherine Jones, and Due Credit

Riess: What did Harry Shepherd say about the garden over the years? Did he make any comments about changes?

Arbegast: No, he didn't say anything. We used to walk through the garden together and he would kind of describe it, but she did a much better job of description than he did. It was Miss Symmes who designed the garden in the first place.

Riess: Are you talking in real landscape architecture terms? She "designed" it, but it was planted by Anita?

Arbegast: It was planted by Miss Symmes and Mrs. Blake.

Riess: I've gotten to think of her as "Anita."

Arbegast: It's hard for me to think of her that way--"Mabel" and "Anita"--no, I can't do it, sorry. [laughs] Anyway, the two ladies were very much involved with it, and so was Miss Katherine Jones.

Arbegast: Miss Jones was a lady who taught plants in the department before Professor Shepherd. She wrote a number of monographs on vines, and acacias, and things like that. I remember when Professor Shepherd gave me his materials, there were all of these notes and notes and notes of Miss Jones's—I don't know how many carbon copies of everything she made.

Riess: I've heard she was a wonderful teacher from other interviews; isn't she the one who would reward with raisins?*

Arbegast: Yes, raisins and prunes. And she was very influential in that garden. I think you will probably get more from Gerry Scott who had a chance to see the garden as a student, and who maybe had a chance to see it over the years. Perhaps she did not. I don't know what her relationship was to Miss Jones. I know Miss Jones was her teacher, and then Harry Shepherd came after Miss Jones.

I didn't know Katherine Jones; I just have a picture of this lady who wore black, broad-brimmed hats, and kind of a cape. I can't honestly say that I've ever seen a picture of Katherine Jones, but I think I have: somebody who wore kind of a longish robe or skirt with button-top shoes and always carried a bag of raisins and prunes. [laughs] That's my image--a person who was extremely precise.

These people in those days did an enormous amount of corresponding. Katherine Jones corresponded a great deal with Ben Morrison at the National Arboretum--back and forth, back and forth--letters about acacias, about vines. The monographs that she did were extremely thorough, and I'm sure that Miss Symmes had much to do with helping Katherine Jones. I have a feeling that Miss Symmes was kind of helping Katherine Jones in the background, financially, and with support. [Mabel Symmes and Katherine Jones, 1860-1943, were both UC '96.] She had all of Katherine Jones's stuff, and it was in duplicate, triplicate, quadruplicate and quintuplicate. I've seen this before, and I knew they didn't have Xerox in those days. It was all on thin tissue, typed.

Riess: What year was it that you appeared on the scene then?

Arbegast: I got my degree in 1953, so it must have been around 1952.

Riess: And was it very formal, this relationship which you had with her? You went up at appointed times?

*Thomas Church, Landscape Architect, an oral history interview conducted 1978, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1978.

Arbegast: I always called for an appointment. I mean, people don't do that these days, but I did. I called her to let her know I was coming. She was always waiting for me in the driveway, and we always walked through the garden.

Riess: Did Miss Symmes accompany you?

Arbegast: No. I guess it's kind of part of that past era--and I find some clients who are older today treat me in a similar way--when their designer or their student or whomever comes to them, that's a special time for them to be with that person alone. So the gardener didn't go around with us, and Miss Symmes didn't go around with us. Later on she would go in and tell her sister all about what we'd talked about, and she would tell the gardener all the things that we had discussed.

I was just starting out as a student/professional so I would casually say, "Why don't you prune that?" or "Why don't you take that away and plant something else here?" not realizing that I shouldn't have been doing that, but I did. She appreciated that, and oftentimes she implemented it, but--

Riess: But in the role you shouldn't have been doing that.

Arbegast: No, probably not. Because I was not her landscape architect, I was just there to learn plants.

Riess: And Miss Symmes was still her landscape architect?

Arbegast: Well, she was her landscape architect. I think after Miss Symmes designed the architectural features--reflecting pond and the two formal gardens on the side, and the grotto, and the zigzag thing down below--I think that was essentially Miss Symmes's role--and any walls that had to be put in at that particular time--like the rock walls on the west side of the house--after that, I think Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes worked out the planting, with Miss Jones in the background probably kibbutzing. That would be my guess, and that those first major decisions about which trees to bring over, etc., were made by Miss Jones, Miss Symmes, and Mrs. Blake working together. That would be my own kind of general feeling about it.

Riess: It would be nice to see that, observe that scene, see who did what in that.

Arbegast: I'm always concerned when I read these articles and research reports about people, with so-and-so getting all the credit for doing something. You know very well that long before that person ever came, there was one person who did this, and another person who did that, and eventually the thing worked out so that it was

Arbegast: really beautiful and an award could be given. But it's always given to the last person, and not necessarily to all the other people who were so important in making it come about.

Recently the national organization of landscape architects, the ASLA, awarded their award of merit to two relatively young men, fifty years old, who designed a portion of a garden that had been started many, many years ago. I remember sitting with the owner about thirty years ago and he was telling me how Tommy Church had done this, and how so-and-so had done that, and how he wanted such-and-such here. When the award was given none of that was expressed at all; it was all on this one person. The person isn't old enough to have done so many of the things because it was a carving out of a forest, a landscape that was quite aged, and it was a matter of selecting, making a decision as to what was to be selected, what was to be kept, what was to be taken away. The end result, which at this particular moment is beautiful, might be even more beautiful as it goes down the road of time, but it may be worse. You never can tell. But one person captures all of the glory for all of the other people who have been working so hard at it. That bothers me.

Finding the Rare and Unusual Plants

Arbegast: I look at the Blake Garden now and I realize how much more beautiful it is today than it was when I was there. It was a jungle when I was there, you couldn't see very far because everything was kind of crowded in. And Mrs. Blake didn't really like to have a lot of tree work done, so it had kind of "messy hair"--that's the way I'd put it.

Riess: There's a lot of supposition that Mrs. Blake would have loved what has happened to the gardens since 1962.

Arbegast: Of course. I would say she would have loved what has happened if it was full of unusual materials. She was of the school—I have met many people with this fascination for rare plants, particularly in my time in the east, in older gardens—very old gardens that are two and three hundred years old, that have been redone and redone and redone. I found that there was a period of time—and I think this was about forty, fifty, or sixty years ago—where there was a great to-do over the unusual and rare plants.

Mrs. Blake belonged to many international societies. I first heard about the South African Society for Plants from Mrs. Blake because she was a charter member. She received seeds from them because she was a member; she was a member of just about

Arbegast: every horticultural and botanical group in the world so that she could get their seeds. As a member you received seeds once a year. She propagated all of these seeds, and whatever came up and was unusual and nobody knew--this was her greatest delight.

Riess: That's how those groups function? As a member you receive seeds? As a member do you also send things in?

Arbegast: Oh, sure. They have a seed-collecting time. For example, the California Horticultural Society and the U.C. Botanical Garden, and all of these groups, have a time when members bring in seeds, and it's oftentimes in the autumn, in October and November. Then there's a seed-packaging committee, and they make long, long lists, and if you go to the herbarium in the botany department at Berkeley you'll find these lists, lists and lists. The scientists are there combing through the lists to find out who is growing what, and what seeds are available, and then they send for those seeds.

Riess: And they have to do it that year, don't they?

Arbegast: The seeds have to be fresh.

Riess: So it's exciting, it's fun.

Arbegast: It's very exciting because most people like to know that their seeds are being distributed; whether they are pure seeds or whatever hybrids makes no difference, it's just the idea that they are making a contribution by disseminating certain seeds, and they in turn are receiving unusual seeds from other people.

Riess: It sounds like a way to be connected to the rest of the world.

Arbegast: It is. I don't think Mrs. Blake traveled much.

Riess: She didn't travel in proportion to the exoticness of her garden.

Arbegast: It's because she belonged to these plant societies. I don't know what happened to her books. Did they come to the landscape architecture library?

Riess: I don't know. Are there books in the headhouse at the gardens?

Arbegast: Oh, there are some things that she gave Walter Vodden, reference books, but it's not that good a reference library.

Riess: How about lists of seeds, and the kind of material that you're referring to?

Arbegast: That's the sort of thing that Mrs. Blake had under her bed.*

Riess: Oh, dear.

Arbegast: Yes, because those things were kind of precious to her, and she would always send out for those things. When the seed packets came that was a happy time. They always came around January or Christmas, I remember, and she'd open up her packages and say, "Oh, look at this!" She had so many seeds that she never planted; it was just the idea of having the seeds. She planted many of them, but it depended. During the war--I know she had a lot of seeds from before the war, but I don't know how much help she had during the war. And I don't know whether you have any records of things like that at all about the Blake Garden.

Riess: No, not immediately accessible. I was wondering whether that kind of thing was in the headhouse.

Arbegast: Those are the kinds of things that I remember saying to Walter, "Oh, it would be wonderful if we could get this information." I know when Miss Symmes died, most of her library went to the California Horticultural Society.

Riess: Was she still propagating seeds when you came up to Blake House?

Arbegast: Oh, yes.

Riess: What were the facilities there?

Arbegast: Very mediocre and very meagre. There was a little glass house next to the peacock run which is where the lawn is now, directly to the left of the driveway as you drive in. That used to be all of the propagating structures. There was a run-down greenhouse, and a run-down lath house--all run-down because they were wood, that's all. It was in those little buildings that she propagated all of her seeds.

Riess: And she would have ordered or made her own fine soils?

Arbegast: Oh, she did her own, of course. She composted all of her things.

Riess: She was out there digging at this advanced age?

Arbegast: Oh, yes, she loved it! She was out in the garden every day, and she had something like twelve cats that followed her around. The place was just reeking with the smell of cats, but the cats kept

*See p. 296.

Arbegast: down the field mice--and there were a lot of field mice--and they kept down the gophers. She would proudly say to me, "Oh, this cat"--whatever the cat's name was--"brought me a beautiful gopher today." They all would bring them and lay them at her doorstep. That's what cats do, after all; they get praised for all of their good works.

The greenhouse that is there is something that was added by me when I was working for the department as kind of the interim person who took care of the garden.

The University's Interest in the Blake Property

Riess: After 1952 when you were introduced to Mrs. Blake, then there was a five-year period before the gardens become University property, and you continued to have an apprentice-like relationship with her?

Arbegast: Yes. That's a good word, apprentice. The one thing that I do remember, and it was one of my first lessons, is that since I was new at the University and didn't know too much about how to do what, Professor Shepherd, who was a very strong-minded man and kind of head of the American Legion on campus and that kind of thing, said to me: "Mai, I want you to understand one thing, and that is that Mr. and Mrs. Blake do not have any direct heirs. I know that they would be very comfortable giving their property to the University, and you have to remember that."

He was the one who kind of drummed it into my head that I should be very nice to Mrs. Blake because there could be many rewards in it for the department. I was so young and innocent, I didn't know anything, but it taught me one thing, and that is that if you know that this could be the case, you should pursue it. Another thing that Professor Shepherd said to me was that Miss Symmes was independently wealthy, and that she probably would like to be a part of any gift that her sister was involved in. I didn't know what that meant at the time, but I realized later on, from the way Miss Symmes was hinting around to me, that she would like to leave an endowment to the department for the garden. I remember there was a good long period when I felt that, gosh, I should say something to somebody, but I don't know who to say it to.

Riess: The gift to the University was of the house and garden, but with no endowment from the Blakes, is that correct?

Arbegast: Yes. You see, Miss Symmes could have endowed it, but she died before Mrs. Blake. Mr. Blake died first, in 1959, and then Miss Symmes died in 1962--she tripped and fell in her room upstairs in the middle of the night, broke her hip and died of pneumonia in just a few days. She was younger than Mrs. Blake. Mrs. Blake died later in 1962.

The Horticultural Fraternity

Riess: Do you think Miss Symmes made money as a landscape architect?

Arbegast: No. I think she may have designed some gardens for friends. There was a garden--it doesn't exist any longer--that I knew she had designed, which was very nice, very small, about the size of our backyard. It was quite formal. There's an apartment building there now. It's close to the campus.

Riess: So you don't think she was out and around as an independent practitioner?

Arbegast: Not at all. If she was, it was on a very limited basis, and it was probably for friends of the family. I have only been able to dig up one garden of hers over the years.

But there were quite a number of other women practicing in the area at the time which I didn't realize. Women don't practice in a way that they're noticed, you know, they're working quietly behind the scenes. There was an Adeline Frederick up here on La Loma who practiced until she was in her nineties, and there was a Cicely Christie who came from England and who practiced as a landscape gardener and did a number of nice gardens. I met her when she was something like eighty-five, and then she was moving from her little house to one of these condominium tower things in Oakland. I'm sure they had associations with other women landscape gardeners.

Riess: Yes, that's a whole line of questioning that I want to pursue.

Arbegast: I don't know a thing about it.

Riess: [laughs] Don't say that so quickly.

Arbegast: Well, I don't.

Riess: Isabella Worn?

Arbegast: Oh, yes. Her nephew is still alive, and he is over in San Rafael or San Anselmo, at Perry's Sunnyside Nursery [Donald Perry].

Riess: Actually my question had to do with whether Mrs. Blake had a relationship with other horticulturists.

Arbegast: Yes, absolutely.

Riess: Do you know of any specific people?

Arbegast: I don't know of any specific instances because I'm too young for that era, unfortunately.

Mrs. Blake supplied plants on a regular basis to the California Horticultural Society meetings. It was her greatest pleasure on the third Monday of every month to take over a car full of greens of different kinds. They would be displayed under her name, and in the historical record of the California Horticultural Society she was one of the founding members. She was responsible for bringing in many, many new and unusual plants.*

Riess: She would take cuttings, or did she take live plants?

Arbegast: Oh, big branches, and she'd talk about them.

Riess: And then if someone were interested, they could talk to her afterwards and get seeds?

Arbegast: It's kind of interesting; she was of the era where you did not share your seeds or cuttings with people.

Riess: Except through this seed—

Arbegast: Exchange business, yes. I'm not sure whether she did ever contribute any seeds.

I met a lot of unusual and outstanding nurserymen just because they would come to visit her garden. I think she must have been a prolific letter-writer. She must have written to people a great deal asking about this plant or that plant or whatever. They all knew her garden as something that they would want to see because she would mention to them, "I have a Eugenia jambos," and everyone would say, "Nobody has a Eugenia jambos in the area." And so they would all make a point to come see her garden.

I was there a number of times when her garden was being viewed by a couple of nurserymen, and one was a man who used to come and covet certain plants in her garden. She actually made

*See Appendices, LL.

Arbegast: some of those nurserymen turn their coat pockets inside-out. You know, they might sneak a little seed here, or something—that's a terrible thing to say, don't put that down! It's that world of plantsmanship that occurred about forty years ago when everyone would say, "I have a plant that nobody else has. By golly, nobody else has this plant, I've got it."

There had been a display at the annual dinner of the California Horticultural Society, and there were these lilly pilly [*Acmena smithi*] seeds, a beautiful kind of purplish-mauve seeds that were in bunches as part of the table decor. I remember we looked at a plant that was growing in her garden and she said with a twinkle in her eye, "My plants came from seeds that were on the dinner table." [laughs] So she loved to do that kind of thing herself, which is kind of telling tales and I shouldn't say that. But she didn't like to share plants with other people unless they were special people, and the special people were always plant people.

It was a regular presentation when she gave you a special plant. That was something very special because nobody else had it. So she was a very good friend of people like Victor Reiter, who was an eminent nurseryman at the time. Victor was terribly generous with everything; he was not of that school. [He would say,] "Take a little piece of this, try it."

Riess: Isn't it true that in every garden a plant grows a little differently anyway? Like grapes, which are responsive to the soil?

Arbegast: Well, it is somewhat. But it's like people; you know, if you're at the Palace Hotel you look different there than on the Claremont Hotel tennis courts. Plants respond differently. But basically it's having that special plant that nobody else has. Today everybody's very generous and everybody exchanges freely, but thirty years ago this was not the case.

Fortunately or unfortunately my background is such that I've known a lot about plants, and I happened to go to school at the right time and the right place when I went to Cornell, and I met a lot of very important people. I had immediate entre to their gardens, and people would be very generous and give me things, but I had no place to plant them. But the reason they were giving them to me was because they wanted me to have something special that nobody else had. In those days that was something very special. Today it's not like that at all; it's "anything I have you can have a piece of," from any garden, just about.

Riess: Did the California Native Plant Society exist in the Anita Blake days?

Arbegast: No. That was afterwards.

Riess: The kind of garden that she created—I know somewhat about the DuPont and Longwood gardens. Was she the same kind of person, accumulating the exotic?

Arbegast: I honestly don't know. I didn't know enough gardens at that point, I wasn't that interested in garden design at the time and I hadn't read enough about it to know the character of the people who had those gardens to start with.

Miss Symmes's Layout of the Gardens

Riess: You said Blake Garden had "messy hair." It really doesn't sound like her interest was in the design of the garden.

Arbegast: It wasn't. The backbones were all right, but everything there was to kind of cover up the backbone. If that garden had not been laid out in the certain formal way that it has, and had just been planted, you wouldn't see anything today. Because a lot of the trees are going to have to be replaced, they've gotten too old, and like all gardens, unless there's some sort of a basic structure to the garden—. When I say "structure" I mean walls and paths and certain kinds of effects that don't deteriorate with time. Plants grow up and then they go down, whereas hard materials just kind of get older-looking but they remain in place.

You can see the structure of the garden as laid out by Miss Symmes. It's been changed, but you can see the various axes that Miss Symmes laid out that are all linked: from the front of the house looking east toward the grotto, or the reflecting pool; looking straight north there's a kind of a circle; and then there's a reservoir and a series of circles with dancing figures, etc. On a plan it has a very Italianate look. A lot of that look wouldn't still be there if Mrs. Blake had done it. If Miss Symmes hadn't laid it out it would have just kind of wandered around with all kinds of plants and would look like my garden, which is just full of plants.

Riess: Was that ever acknowledged by Mrs. Blake?

Arbegast: Not at all. Why should she acknowledge it?

Riess: Oh, you might say to her, "This is such a wonderful garden," and she might say, modestly and graciously, "Well, it does have a lot of great stuff, but if it hadn't been for my sister Mabel—"

Arbegast: No, never.

Riess: Did she ever reminisce about earlier stages of the garden with you?

Arbegast: Only the very, very early stages, when it was such a struggle to establish the garden. It was so windy. It was a wind-swept hill with lots of wild animals and lots of field mice, but a lot of wind. Whenever she talked about it I got the feeling that the house was built in that manner to cut off the wind so they could have the garden on the leeward side. All the rest was very windy, and the wind swept up the redwood canyon.

All those redwoods were cuttings taken from the redwood trees which were where the University Stadium now is.

Riess: From their old address.

Arbegast: Yes. The University, because they wanted that property, trucked, I think, three large loads of plants to the Blake garden.

Riess: Miss Symmes was a frustrated teacher?

Arbegast: Absolutely. Whenever I had a chance to be with Miss Symmes I learned a lot, but it was not easy to be alone with Miss Symmes if Mrs. Blake was there, just not possible. She was the top person.

Anita Blake's Preference for Garden People

Riess: How close was your relationship with Mrs. Blake?

Arbegast: She was absolutely intrigued by my horticultural knowledge.

Riess: She didn't ask anything about you as a person?

Arbegast: Never. It was not personal; it was always academic. She knew I had worked for Liberty Hyde Bailey—I let that slip one day. I didn't mean to, but that's something I'm very proud of.

Riess: What is the significance of that?

Arbegast: Liberty Hyde Bailey was the dean of American horticulture. He was ninety-two when I was a graduate student at Cornell. I had worked in the hortorium there and he'd done this whole encyclopedia of horticulture from which so many other things have come. At that particular time Cornell was the school of horticulture in the United States. I'm not sure that it still

Arbegast: is, but it's high up there. At the time that I went it was right after the war, and I was just very lucky to have gotten into the school. I did have the opportunity as part of my graduate studies--and I was working my way through college--to work in the hortorium under Liberty Hyde Bailey.

I think that really impressed her, but we never talked about my personal background at all. We never talked about my roots, nothing. No, it was always about my scientific knowledge, which she respected highly. It was always very professional, not personal at all. I preferred to keep it that way. For example, I was never invited to lunch or dinner, or to have a cup of coffee with her--never. Interesting, isn't it?

Riess: Yes, you said she always met you on the driveway.

Arbegast: Always, always on the driveway. It was toward the end when I met her in the house a couple of times.

Riess: That was just because she was so feeble?

Arbegast: Yes. We always sat and looked out at the garden from the windows, but it was always to talk about plants and things.

Riess: I have a question here about how you think she felt about her garden--a very "seventies" question--was she like a mother with her children?

Arbegast: Oh, yes, it was her substitute for children, absolutely. That I can absolutely attest to. That's why she was so precious about it. She was very precious about her garden.

Riess: What do you mean by "precious?"

Arbegast: She really didn't seek advice from people about changing it, she wanted to be the one to change it. Anybody who worked for her had to do what she wanted them to do, and there was very little opportunity to be independently creative in her garden. She knew what she wanted, and she knew where she wanted to put it, and the only thing you could say was that it might not grow there, it might be too shady or something like that. That's why I found later on that my saying to her, "Why don't you cut this," or "Put it there," probably was really an affront to her. I was applying those things that I knew, and I just had a feeling that she was not putting everything where it should go, but I'm not sure I should have said it, either.

Riess: How about Mr. Blake? Did he ever appear on the scene when you were there?

- Arbegast: He was there, and he was always very pleasant, but the garden was hers.
- Riess: Did he walk through the garden with the two of you? You said Miss Symmes wouldn't.
- Arbegast: No, he wouldn't either. He might walk through with her later, but never with us, no. Anytime anybody came to the garden it was Mrs. Blake's thing to host that person around, and whenever a visitor came it was rare that Miss Symmes ever walked with her and a visitor.
- Riess: Was it kept cleared so that it was possible to walk through, or did it become more and more difficult to make your way through the undergrowth?
- Arbegast: Oh, no, she had gardeners who really tried to help keep the garden open and uncluttered.
- Riess: Can you say something about those gardeners?
- Arbegast: There was one gardener by the name of Churchill Womble--such an unusual name. Churchill was a very good gardener but he had some drinking problems. He was very enthusiastic and helpful to Mrs. Blake and he tried to do his creative thing with her. He worked very hard.
- Riess: Did he live on the property?
- Arbegast: No. You know, I shouldn't say this, and you have to take it for what it's worth: she always treated a gardener like a gardener. He was never anything more than a gardener. You have to understand that there was a very definite caste system that applied.
- Riess: In a way you've been saying that something of that was applying to you also.
- Arbegast: It applied to everybody. It applied when she went to Cal Hort meetings. She was Mrs. Blake; the others were all over here--or there might have been a few at her level.
- Riess: Once you know more than she knows then aren't you above her? Or is this a social caste system?
- Arbegast: I don't know. I think that's why she was intrigued by me. [laughs] But we were good friends, and she respected what I knew. I probably shouldn't have told her to do certain things, but I think a lot of the things that Mrs. Scott did could never have happened when Mrs. Blake had been alive, absolutely never would have happened. She would not have allowed it.

- Riess: Well, perhaps you were so under her spell that you would have been even--
- Arbegast: I was not under her spell at all, not at all. I knew what her role was and I knew what my role was, and she knew that I knew.
- Riess: So your role essentially was to learn all you could and, at the same time, keep alive this very nice idea of having it come to the University.
- Arbegast: That was my role. I still consider it my role. I get very discouraged--at least I was very discouraged until Dr. Gardner came into the picture--that no one really cared about that garden except the people who worked in it. But certainly no one in the department cared; they couldn't have cared less! Never really supported it, never used it, and that bothers me.

Since that time I was the one who told Professor Vaughan about the Beatrix Farrand gift that came. No one in that department knew Beatrix Farrand, they didn't have the slightest idea who she was. Because I was a member of the Friends of the Arnold Arboretum at the time that she was going through this controversy with them about the herbarium, I managed to effectuate that thing. But you see I learned from the Blake garden what you have to do to get a property, and what you have to do to try to keep the spirit of it up. I also learned from the Farrand thing that unless there is a group that backs that gift and doesn't turn it completely over to the University--just between you and me--the gift kind of peters out.

- Riess: It just becomes money.
- Arbegast: When I was involved with Filoli I cultivated Mrs. [William Matson] Roth for eighteen years to get that gift going. Then I knew that the only way to get that thing was to do what Mrs. Roth had in mind, and what I had kind of painted a picture of for her--because I kept telling her it was the "Wisley of the West," and she knew that. She knew I had this dream, and she had the dream too. And she had the means. It was a matter of finding the right people to start that thing so that it would do what it's doing today. It took Wally Sterling, John May of the San Francisco Foundation, and Bill Roth--those three critical people--and three critical ladies in the Woodside area who were good friends of Mrs. Roth, to put that package together.
- Riess: Who are the three ladies that you're thinking of?
- Arbegast: Sally [Mrs. Robert] McBride is one of them, she's a really essential person. Timmy [Mrs. Peter] Gallagher is another. Then myself, and our using our influence on other people--but actually it's those two ladies and myself.

Riess: And involving the garden clubs of the area, was that important?

Arbegast: Not at that time. The idea was to keep them out of it, otherwise they would take over. It had to be an independent group that would further the goals that we had more or less set, and that was to make it a horticultural showcase and a place to educate future gardeners, horticulturists, and designers.

Riess: The Blake Gardens could be that, but they aren't, are they?

Arbegast: It was never set up that way. It was set up so that the gardens went to the Department of Landscape Architecture, and it depends on the faculty there what the gardens could be. The gardens could be wonderful--and they are, but they don't serve as much of a public purpose as they could.

Riess: That's the current nature of landscape architecture and, you're saying, of the faculty.

Arbegast: It depends on what faculty person in the department has an interest in that aspect of the field, and you know the people who are interested in plants in landscape architecture, at least in that department, are very few and far between.

The Public Blake Estate

The Garden as a Teaching Tool

- Riess: There must have been a time of excitement and vision of what it all might be, and I think it's worth getting on the record still what it might be. I've read the long-range plan that Mrs. Scott put together. I'm sure that was a source of frustration to her, that it was never really completed.
- Arbegast: I'm sure, but long-range plans are always made so that they can be put on shelves. We hope that people refer back to them so that they'll get a sense of the history of the place, but to me the Blake Garden could give a sense of history of the development of Berkeley even, and certainly of the development of landscape design as it started in the Berkeley area. When you think about how far the graduates have gone now, doing projects all over the world, it's really wonderful.
- Riess: How could the garden itself give that?
- Arbegast: I think that it's an example of a situation where students can get a chance to look forward and back, and where they can do some experimental things. They can use the physical setting and all of that as part of their studies because whatever they do, no matter where they go, they're going to have to study a physical setting of whatever the project is. This is only an academic exercise, but you need places where you can do academic exercises. I'm not sure the campus is necessarily the place.

There's a sense of history still about that building and the garden. It hasn't become so modernized that they are putting in parking places everywhere. Just the sense of how long it takes for a redwood grove to come to be--she planted every one of those trees. It's hard for someone to say, "Look, the oldest tree in this garden is sixty years old." (There's one tree that's older.)

Riess: It seems older.

Arbegast: Well, I know that it's the same age as I am.

Riess: That's amazing about the trees, and also about you, Mail

Arbegast: I'm sixty-four. But the thing is, I always think of it as, gosh, if you could take somebody out to a place and say, "Sixty years from now this is what you can do if you think your problem through completely from beginning to end and you know kind of what you want to do. This is what you could do if you had the right situation." Or, "You could do this, or you could do that, and here's something that's twenty years old."

Riess: That's a very interesting way to use a garden.

Arbegast: That's the only way to use a garden. [laughs]

Riess: Well, I thought of using a garden for going and looking at beautiful planted areas, but to see the unit as something that shows what one might have--

Arbegast: Or, if you're looking at a grove that's sixty years old, what will it look like in sixty more years? Then you take them to places that have older trees. But to me that's the use of a garden. Maybe it's because I look at gardens differently, but I keep projecting in time what it's going to be for the next generation, which is twenty-five years from now--what they will be thinking. If you have places where you can say we know how old these things are--it's really wonderful to be able to say, "Look at what could happen. You're how old now, and if you do a project in which you plant an oak grove, it might look like this."

Riess: So it's not the number and exotic nature of the plants anymore up there, it's really--

Arbegast: It's really the kind of setting that it has, and also the fact that it gives you a sense of the history of Berkeley and the sense of the place--which was made from nothing. It could be the El Sobrante hills, or it could be all the hills that go from here to Sacramento, which look very much like that and have similar soil conditions and have slide areas. I think that's what landscape architecture is all about; you're projecting to the future. I'm not sure it's taught that way much. I think you have to have a sense of the background and then what will happen.

Riess: Are there people teaching that at any of the other colleges?

Arbegast: No place, no place. I think a lot depends on how you're educated to start with.

Riess: So the current teaching--

Arbegast: I think it's going toward the computer, and it'll swing way over that way. It'll feed all this information in and it'll come out that way--and then people will just get fed up with it and say, "Okay, let's stand back a little bit."

Riess: In the meantime, who is doing gardens?

Arbegast: A lot of people are doing gardens. A lot of people coming from literature and history are doing gardens now. They're taking extension courses or things like that. Unfortunately they may not have all the other kinds of skills; they have the kind of visual immediate image, "I want to do a Villa D'Este," or "I want to do a this or a that," and they'll look at pictures without realizing that it's also projecting that picture five, ten, twenty-five years down the line.

Riess: Is there any way that something could be generated from the garden itself, six-week summer sessions, that kind of thing?

Arbegast: Oh, it could be wonderful. You could do a tremendous amount of teaching in that garden. It would take a special kind of teacher.

Riess: So that's what's missing.

Arbegast: Yes, that's what's missing.

Riess: Oh, dear. Well, maybe the gardeners will feel inspired enough to take it that far. I don't know if they could.

When I talked to Walter Vodden he remarked that "Mrs. Blake did her complaining to Mai." I can't remember what that had to do with.

Arbegast: I think it was mostly about how the garden wasn't being tended, or how people were taking things, or how the deer were eating things. It was not anything major.

Riess: Tell me about the Howell Mountain property in St. Helena that was given to the University by the Blakes.

Arbegast: The interesting thing about Howell Mountain is that it's one of the unique places in California where three different plant and climactic zones come together. It's a place where botanical scholars go to study because in a very small area you can study these three different kinds of flora. Jepson was fascinated by this, and I think that this is one of the reasons why Jepson and the Blakes were such good company with each other.

Connection with other Bay Area Gardens and Nurserymen

Riess: What was the Blake connection with the botanical gardens at UC?

Arbegast: They helped Professor Jepson a lot. He was a bachelor, very picky, difficult to get along with. But he liked the Blakes and there are a number of plants in the garden that he collected. They used to see Dr. Jepson socially, I would say at least once a month.

Riess: The native plant garden in Tilden [Tilden Botanic Garden]: do you think they had anything to do with that?

Arbegast: Very little. Jim Roof was involved with the native plant garden in Tilden. I remember when that was under construction I was understudying Professor Shepherd, and Professor Shepherd thought that the design was a travesty. He'd go up there and he'd rant and rave and say, "This bridge is unsafe for people to walk across," or "These paths are unsafe." He was constantly ranting and raving, so I don't think the Blakes had much to do with Jim Roof, unless they met him at the Cal Hort Society meetings and he had unusual plants and he shared them with them. Otherwise there was not much. I think it was always through the plant communication thing, but I don't think they supported the native plant garden at all. I don't think Professor Shepherd would let anybody support the native plant garden.

Riess: How about Mildred Mathias: would she have known the Blakes?

Arbegast: No. Mildred's going to be my houseguest on Saturday night; she's a good friend of mine. I can ask Mildred if she knew the Blakes, but I doubt that she did. When Mildred was here living in Berkeley I think she was so busy being a mother and a researcher that she did not have time probably to do anything else--but I can ask her.

Riess: What local nurserymen did Mrs. Blake deal with?

Arbegast: She got a lot of plants from [Toichi] Domoto's, and Hallawell's.

Riess: Where is Hallawell's?

Arbegast: In San Francisco. They don't exist anymore. There was a man by the name of Mr. Abraham, or something like that, that she dealt with. Victor Reiter; Camelliana--I took her several times to Camelliana. They don't exist anymore, they were in Concord. She did a lot of letter-writing and got a lot of things through the mail. She ordered things from all over the country.

Riess: How about Mr. Budgen at Berkeley Horticultural Nursery?

Arbegast: Oh, yes, of course, I'm sure she went to Berkeley Hort Nursery and purchased things. It was a wonderful nursery at that time.

Riess: Did she cut flowers from her garden? Did she love flowers?

Arbegast: Oh, she loved to cut these long boughs. There was an exhibit at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939 that she supplied with fresh-cut greens through the whole fair. I can't tell you which exhibit it was, but somebody who was here at that time could, I'm sure. They used to take truck-loads of things from her garden, of unusual nature, to display in this exhibit for what I think was a year or a year-and-a-half period. That's why she was always looking for the unusual. It was very important to her to be the only one that had a particular plant.

She was always interested in educating her peers, or the people interested in plants. As I said, she really did not have anything to do with anybody who was not interested in plants. There were a number of times that people came who were kind of socially inclined who wanted to meet her, and who came with people who were interested in plants. And I know that whenever they went away she would say, "Oh, so-and-so, why did she even come?" because it was the other person who was interested in plants and she wondered why they even bothered to come.

Riess: In 1941 she got a letter from Goodspeed requesting that she do a paper on vines for some presentation. I wondered whether she did much of the scholarly thing.

Arbegast: I think it was Miss Symmes who did most of that, because Miss Symmes was the one who was working with Katherine Jones. Mrs. Blake was busy growing plants more than anything else.

Transfer of the Property to the University, and Anita's Special Letters

Riess: When the Blakes decided that the house and the garden were going to come to the University, sometime in 1957, were you in close contact with her at that point? Was she saying to you, "Mai, I'm thinking about doing this"?

Arbegast: It was very systematically done; Professor Vaughan was the one who handled it all.

Riess: So that even though you had been preparing the scene, how did it actually happen?

- Arbegast: I can't actually tell you. She had a number of conversations with Professor Vaughan. He came out to the garden. I told him it was time to go and see them and he made an appointment. She had mentioned to me that she wanted to do this and she wanted to find out how to do it.
- Riess: So she did say to you that she wanted to do it.
- Arbegast: Oh, yes. And then people like Mr. [Joseph] Mixer and other people got into the act. The president's office got into the act, or the chancellor's office, I can't remember which. Suddenly there were people from higher up beyond the department who were coming to see her. They had a hard time it seems to me, and maybe that's just normal. It just seems to me that it took a long time for them to resolve it and assure the Blakes that the property wouldn't be sold. They wanted life tenancy, and this was something that the University wasn't sure about. I can't remember how old Mr. Blake was, ninety or less than that, when the property came to the University.
- Riess: Probably somewhat less than that, but not much. He was born in 1870.
- Arbegast: I just remember the age of ninety because she died right after her ninetieth birthday. She was bound and determined to live until ninety, and then it seems to me soon after her birthday she went. I can't remember exactly the details—I don't know what I was doing, I was so involved with so many things. What can I say?
- Riess: Do you know whether any of the nieces and nephews stood in the way of it at all?
- Arbegast: No, I don't think so. You see, the property was distinctly Mrs. Blake's, it was not Mr. Blake's. It was her property that was given, it was not Mr. Blake's. I say that with absolute assurance because I know that this was made crystal clear, especially with the Carmelites when they wanted to buy that other side of the canyon. It was her property and Mr. Blake said, "I have nothing to say about it, this is Anita's property."
- Riess: It had come through his side of the family.
- Arbegast: But it was hers. It was in her name only even while he was alive. I think it would be interesting for you to check that out, but he was the one who made it distinctly clear that he would have nothing to do with the Carmelites--and of course Mrs. Blake would have nothing to do with the Carmelites. You heard that wonderful story about that wooden fence there?

Riess: I saw a bit of correspondence, very delicate on the part of the Carmelites, but apparently they were meeting with no success.

Arbegast: I don't know exactly what the words were, but Mrs. Blake said to me with a twinkle in her eye that the Carmelites were going to have to deal with God and the University. [laughs] She said, "As far as I'm concerned the University's going to win on this one," because she was at that particular point contemplating giving the property to the University. The Carmelites put in the wooden fence because they just had a feeling they could buy that corner of the canyon. [See Appendix T.]

I can't remember just how the dialogue went between the Mother Superior and Mrs. Blake but I know that the wood fence went in instead of the concrete block. It's concrete block up to a certain point, and then it turns and it's wood. The Carmelites were hoping they could build the concrete block across the canyon there. They turned it and made it into wood, but Mrs. Blake said, "I can see the day when we're going to have to make that concrete block, the wood is just going to deteriorate." She was very pleased with herself. [laughter]

Riess: In The Bancroft Library we have a mass of correspondence from Anita to Anson; what do you think happened to any letters from him to her?

Arbegast: I do know that her most precious items were underneath her bed. She had beautiful scrolls, Chinese and Japanese, ancient scrolls that she had purchased, and she loved oriental works of art.

Her most special letters from James West were under her bed. James West was an extraordinary plantsman. He was at one particular point in his life associated with the University of California at Berkeley, and he wrote these letters. Most men don't write such letters. She used to read the letters to me--magnificent descriptions of things. He also wrote to people like Gerry Scott and Elizabeth McClintock. All the women who got these letters from him--he wrote especially to women--I think they must feel that they were love letters almost. They tell you about these letters, but you never see the letters.* They read descriptions out of them. You know they've kept the letters.

I think if you could find any letters from James West to Anita Blake you would find a wealth of information that would give you a clue about what she was interested in in terms of

*Letter to Mabel Symmes in Appendices. Appendix II.

Arbegast: people. James West died mysteriously somewhere in South America. There was an article about him in the California Horticultural Journal.*

Riess: I wonder who would have those letters from James West to Anita.

Arbegast: I can tell you what happened to those letters, though you need to hear it directly from Walter, not from me: when she died apparently there was a kind of a housecleaning and all the stuff that was under her bed was burned—her most precious items. Now you have to talk to Walter Vodden about this because he was caretaker or head superintendent or whatever. He was there at the time and he mentioned it to me about a week after this had happened when I asked what happened to all those wonderful things Mrs. Blake had under her bed. Because I had the privilege of going into her bedroom and occasionally she'd dig down underneath the bed—which was rather high up off the floor, with a bedspread that kind of hung over—she would dig out something and read it to me, which was very nice. I just felt that was a very special moment.

I have such a bad memory that I can't really tell you the various things that she read to me, but they were always very special and precious things that she'd dug out from under her bed.

Riess: Who did the burning?

Arbegast: Oh, you really have to ask Walter this. Walter said, "It's such a shame, it's such a shame," and I said, "Why didn't you call me? Why didn't you tell me what was happening? I would have done something to stop it."

* See Appendices, HH.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Geraldine Knight Scott

LONG-RANGE PLANS FOR BLAKE GARDEN, 1962-1987

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

Geraldine Knight Scott
at Blake Garden, 1963

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

The Blake Gardens were a part of Geraldine Knight Scott's Department of Landscape Architecture duties from 1962 to 1968. When Anita Blake died in 1962 the control that she had exercised over every detail of planting and maintenance was in Mrs. Scott's hands.

Granted very few people from the University of California at Berkeley or members of the community even knew of the existence of the Blake Estate, to the neighbors on Rincon Road in Kensington the transition to the University's stewardship was all too visible and abrupt. They knew Mrs. Scott had arrived because she pruned the trees!

Without Geraldine Knight Scott, however, what is now a garden with distinct formal features would be rampant and obscure. Mrs. Scott, an active practitioner of, as well as lecturer in, landscape architecture, was free of the awe for the relic that might have possessed less clear-eyed designers. As well as being fearless, Mrs. Scott was, as Linda Haymaker puts it in her interview, "the most sensitive person who has dealt with this garden since the Blakes."

Geraldine Knight Scott had another challenge. Besides dealing with day-to-day garden decisions, she was asked in 1963 to create a Long-Range Development Plan for Blake Estate. [Excerpts from that plan are appended.] It was presented in 1964 to the Department of Landscape Architecture but never given any attention. Mrs. Scott looks back on it as at best a teaching and learning experience for those who participated in the studies required to formulate the plan. It had little more impact than that, for want of interest and commitment on the part of the University.

The ambivalent attitude to the Blake Estate continued through the middle sixties, but in 1967 Blake House emerged as the President's House. Mrs. Scott as Supervising Landscape Architect worked with the architects in remodelling the house and grounds to make the Blake Estate function as a residence for incoming President and Mrs. Charles Hitch. Today Geraldine Knight Scott continues to be concerned for the future of the garden. She is also interested in the future of the study of landscape architecture. As the department reevaluates itself, the Blake Garden will perhaps move from the periphery of attention and use to a place closer to the center and closer to the wishes of the Blakes in entrusting it to the University.

Geraldine Knight Scott is well known to the Regional Oral History Office. She was interviewed in 1977 for the Thomas Church Oral History Project [1978]. A few years later she taped an autobiographical memoir with landscape architect Jack Buktenica as her interviewer. It has not been released. More recently Mrs. Scott has been editing fifteen tapes done with her on her garden design class. And she is vitally involved in compiling the history of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University.

It was a pleasure to spend time with someone so committed to historical documentation of the oral history variety. Mrs. Scott's husband, Mel Scott, author of The Future of San Francisco Bay, had earlier in the year contributed a thoughtful Afterword to the Save San Francisco Bay Association oral history. He was in his studio, painting--fascinating, highly detailed colorful works which he exhibits--while Mrs. Scott and I talked, and looked over the number of helpful reprints and illustrations which she had assembled to illuminate our interview.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

November 11, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Geraldine Knight SCOTT

Date of birth July 16-04 Place of birth Wallace, Idaho

Father's full name Henry Patten Knight - deceased 1911

Birthplace Oregon

Occupation Lawyer

Mother's full name Orene Lansdale Knight - deceased

Birthplace Colfax, Washington 1911

Occupation _____

Where did you grow up ? Coeur d'Alene, Idaho - Colfax Washington
Oakland, California + San Francisco

Present community Berkeley, Calif.

Education Girl's High, SF. - UC, Berkeley BS 1926
Grad School, Cornell Univ. 26-28

Occupation(s) Landscape Architect, private practice
+ Lecturer, Dept. of L.A., UCB

Special interests or activities Arts of Arch. Sculpture, Painting
Weaving - Travel

Early Horticultural History/Blake Gardens

[Date of Interview: February 24, 1987]

Harry Shepherd and Katherine D. Jones

Riess: Were you at Blake Gardens as a student?

Scott: Yes, I probably went with Professor Shepherd and met Mrs. Blake, maybe once or twice, when I was a student.

Riess: Did she come out to greet students?

Scott: Well, I think I went alone with Shepherd, not with a group. We were only a class of eight, so even if we'd gone as a group--but I don't recall that we did.

Riess: Well, tell me all about that meeting. [laughs]

Scott: Oh, she didn't make a great impression. She was obviously English, with a nice English accent, and pleasant. The garden was very overgrown.

Riess: Why did she have an English accent? She was not English.

Scott: Well, she did have a cultivated voice, maybe you'd call it that. She used the broad "a."

Riess: "Ahh."

Scott: Yes. I assumed that was an English accent, I suppose.

Riess: Was Miss Symmes there at the same meeting?

Scott: I don't recall ever meeting Miss Symmes. I should have, because she was a member of the California Horticultural Society, and she and Miss Katherine D. Jones were obviously connected with each other, but I never met her. I've looked at pictures of her and I know I never met her.

Riess: In a way your answers are eliminating a whole series of questions I had about connections between Miss Jones, and the garden, and you, and women.

Scott: I've learned quite a bit about Miss Jones recently. I have been recalling my first teachers for a history that the Department of Landscape Architecture is getting out. Miss Jones, I learned from some material that Tom Brown brought me, was here when John Gregg came to start a landscape design department. In some biographical material about Miss Jones she refers to Miss Symmes, and Miss Symmes was a student in the department for a short time. She did not get a degree and what her years in the department were I don't know. [Symmes was a student in 1914.] But she got to know Miss Jones better than I did, obviously, as a student.

Riess: In The Bancroft Library in Anita Blake's papers are some papers in Welsh, and I think that they are some of Katherine Jones' material.

Scott: I hadn't known she was Welsh. I knew her only as a curious character--

Riess: In this paper it says her parents were Welsh.*

Scott: Yes, right, and she apparently had a good singing voice, like so many Welsh people, and sang in a choir all the time. I never would have guessed because she was such a shy Victorian lady. She knew her plant materials and taught them very well. John Gregg relied on her; I mean, she was the mainstay of the department. Naturally she would have been acquainted with the Blakes, and the Blakes with her, because they were collectors of plants, and she was probably the most knowledgeable person in this area.

Riess: And yet she wasn't using the gardens for her own teaching purposes?

Scott: [pause] She probably did. She took us there maybe once or twice, but also to gardens all around the Bay Area.

Riess: What other gardens would she have taken you to visit in the Bay Area that would have been considered comparable then?

Scott: Other gardens such as the McDuffie weren't comparable, but we went to Golden Gate Park to learn plants, or Belvedere to see many smaller gardens because each micro-climate was different.

Riess: So you were looking at plants, you weren't looking at design?

*"Katherine Davies Jones, 1860-1943," by Mabel Symmes, in Madrono, April 1946, Vol. VIII, No. 6, pages 184-187. See Appendices.

Scott: Not with Miss Jones. She taught only plants, and she had little sense of design. She taught plants from a functional viewpoint, their tolerances and growth habits.

Riess: And when Harry Shepherd was using the gardens, what was he teaching?

Scott: He had a little more sense of design, probably, but he really taught construction and plants. He had learned his plant materials from her, as the first graduate of the department, and continued teaching in her method. Design was principally taught by Professor Gregg. Neither one of these people had any real sense of design as we use the term today.

Riess: I remember when I talked to John Gregg about design on campus it was clear that John Galen Howard's hand was strong in the campus landscaping as well as the architecture.*

Scott: Right. But Gregg did, of course, arrange for us--even though we were in the College of Agriculture--to take all of the preliminary courses in architecture. There was that much liaison, which he doesn't even refer to in the oral history, but Gregg did establish a curriculum that was half in architecture and half in agriculture. But he didn't make the connection, really; we didn't have any of the architectural professors giving us design criticisms.

Riess: When you went to visit Mrs. Blake with Harry Shepherd--you weren't the only woman in your class, were you?

Scott: There was one other, Beatrice Williams.

Riess: I wondered if it was because you were a woman that Harry Shepherd had taken you to meet Mrs. Blake.

Scott: No, I worked for Harry on the outside, I knew Harry very well. I worked for both Gregg and Shepherd as a draftsman while I was in college and after Cornell. Shepherd was an exceedingly good estimator, I learned a great deal from him, we were simpatico people, an easier person to know than Gregg. He took me to see lots of places.

Riess: Was he doing some construction for Mrs. Blake?

Scott: No, I doubt that. We went to see the great variety of plants grown from seed.

*John W. Gregg, A Half-Century of Landscape Architecture, an oral history interview conducted 1965, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1965.

Riess: So that was your only actual face-to-face contact with Anita Blake?

Scott: The only one I recall.

James West

Riess: When I talked with Mai Arbegast, we got into the question of where were Anita's letters from Anson; all of the letters that she had written to him are in The Bancroft Library, but where were all the letters that he was writing in return? Mai speculated that they were probably under the bed along with the James West letters, and the seed lists, and everything else. Can you shed any more light on what has happened?

Scott: None, no. Later when I was teaching, and the Blake House was empty, there were still piles of dishes that they had imported from China and Japan still in original crates. Sometimes the crates had been opened and the straw was all over the floor. There was a caretaker who lived there and took care of the many cats. The odor was terrific. When I first was asked by Professor Vaughan to take over the direction of the work in the garden, that's the state that the house was in.

Someone lived in the house because there were still pieces of furniture in some rooms, the leftovers, and these piles of dishes. I know that Duke Wellington--as we called him--Professor [Winfield Scott] Wellington from the household art department, had selected the best pieces, but where they had gone, I don't know. There were still stacks of marvelous bowls and plates from which one sample had been removed. I yearned to take one or two--of course never did--and have no idea what happened to all those beautiful, porcelain bowls and plates.

Riess: Chinese?

Scott: Yes, mostly.

Riess: Blue?

Scott: Many kinds.

Riess: So I guess you have heard about the James West letters that are gone.

Scott: I knew James West very well indeed, in Marin County, and I have a great many of James West's letters from South America. He talked often of Mrs. Blake, but I never went to the Blake Estate with James West. [pause] I don't know that correspondence. A lot of James

Scott: West's correspondence was turned over to the Horticultural Society and they published some articles about him.* I've not turned over my letters from his trip to South America, but I still have them. James West was a very remarkable botanist, in touch with every other horticulturist in the bay region.

Riess: Yes, the corresponding among horticulturists is fascinating to me.

Scott: Right. Well, James West had traveled very widely, and so had the Blakes. He knew the flora of--I don't think he'd ever been to China, but he knew the flora of all of Europe and the Americas.

Riess: So the correspondence, would it include a few seeds in the envelope?

Scott: Doubtless.

Riess: And just a kind of excited discussion of something that had turned up?

Scott: That's what I would expect, but I don't know.

Riess: Is that the kind of correspondence that you had with him?

Scott: My correspondence was much later, from his trip to South America--after [Thomas Harper] Goodspeed sent him there on a plant-hunting expedition. Marvelous descriptive passages of the whole terrain and the life of the people, as well as lists of plants fill the letters I have.

Riess: Interesting.

Scott: I went with James West on a good many plant-hunting trips in the Sierras. He was myopic, wore very thick glasses, and his distance vision then was probably as poor as mine is right now. I had perfect vision, when I used to go with him. He would tell me what he was looking for, in a particular terrain, and the right association so I could find it for him. His descriptions were that clear.

Riess: What an interesting way to learn.

Scott: He was working with Jepson and others, knew every botanist and horticulturist and everyone knew him.

*"Incredible, Unforgettable James West, Plantsman, (1886-1939)," by Jack Napton, California Horticultural Society Journal, Vol. 28, No. 3, July 1967, 180-187, 196. Appendix HH.

California Horticultural Society

Scott: When the horticultural society was founded in 1935—I was a founding member, but it was really Eric Walther, superintendent of Golden Gate Park and an authority on succulents, and James West who were the founders of that organization.

Riess: Why 1935?

Scott: That was the year of a big frost, which brought plant people together. Nobody in the San Francisco Bay Region knew what to do with plants after they'd been frozen. There were many good nurserymen, and good amateur growers, and professional growers at that time, and they were all in trouble--none knew exactly what to do. So those people who had lived in the east, or lived other places, felt the need to get together to discuss what to do with plants that had been frozen.

Riess: So it was a kind of camaraderie that did not really exist before?

Scott: That's right.

Riess: Would you say in fact that it had been more competitive before?

Scott: Yes, definitely. There were good nurserymen in the area, you know, competing with each other, and amateurs and professionals had their own kind of organizations, but trouble often brings people together.

Riess: I saw in the Anita Blake correspondence that Dr. Goodspeed asked her to write an article for him on vines in 1941.

Scott: I bet she got her knowledge from Katherine D. Jones, who wrote all these articles on vines.

Riess: "A Study of Climbers," in 1938.

Scott: As someone said, it has everything but social climbers in it. [laughs] Katherine Jones never got her due in this university. She was never made more than an instructor, and yet she was the mainstay of the landscape design department, with the most knowledge about plants and climate. She was there for seventeen years. Women.

Riess: "Women." It's as simple as that?

Scott: Yes. She had published quite a few things; this is just one. She was a real authority on acacias, wrote this section on acacias for Bailey's Encyclopedia of Horticulture. She had every reason to have been advanced to full professorship, but was not. Professor

Scott: Shepherd tried without success to increase her pension when she retired. An assistant professor's salary did not entitle her to an adequate pension.

Riess: Mabel was the garden designer and Anita the horticulturist and collector?

Scott: They had traveled in Italy together. They were both women of taste and culture. Miss Symmes came back to Berkeley and took some courses in the Department of Landscape Design. Garden design at that time was mainly the study of gardens of the Mediterranean region, of Spain and Italy, because the climates were similar, and most design at that time in California--architecture and landscape architecture--tended to be based on Mediterranean precedent. Miss Symmes was able to lay out a formal Italianate garden.

Riess: Would Mabel would have been like Isabella Worn? Did Mabel actually practice, from anything you know?

Scott: Not as far as I know. I'm sure they would have met and discussed gardens and plants. Isabella Worn set up a nursery in Marin County, and I'm sure Mabel would have acquired plants from her, or exchanged seeds. It was a common practice. Miss Worn also decorated for banquets and weddings.

Riess: I wish there were evidence--I suppose just scratching through all the letters would come up with it--of correspondence and fellow feeling among the Bournes, for instance, down at Filoli [Woodside], and the Blakes, and the McDuffies, with their Berkeley garden. I would wish to know whether they were interested in each others gardens.

Scott: Early copies of California Horticulture magazine have some references to all those places, I believe. Pacific Horticulture is a later development from California Horticulture Quarterly which started after the founding of the society. The editor now is George Waters, who is English and a very good horticulturist, and editor. He has familiarized himself with most of the early records of the society and has, of course, a complete file.

It's unfortunate that Victor Reiter, who was one of the founding members and a fine nurseryman in San Francisco, died just last year, because I'm sure he knew the Blakes very well.*

Riess: And how they connected with everyone else.

*"Victor Reiter, Jr. 1903-1986," Pacific Horticulture, Vol.48, No. 1, Spring 1987, p. 47.

Scott: Right, he would have known more than anyone.

Riess: Elizabeth McClintock was trying to arrange a meeting with Peggy Brown, who might have remembered Anita Blake at horticulture society meetings.

Scott: Very probably she would have, and Victor Reiter. Who else? These early garden enthusiasts are passing. There are one or two other original members still alive. There is a former president, editor emeritus, F. Owen Pearce, who also has clear recall.

The House and Garden Come to the University

Geraldine Knight Scott In Charge

Walter Vodden, and the Neighbors

Riess: When we talked on the phone you said you were in charge at the gardens from 1958-1969. Walter Vodden came on the scene in 1957, hired by Punk [H. Leland] Vaughan, to help the Blakes in every way that he could.

Scott: Yes, Walter was there, and he became very valuable because he knew where the sprinkling system valves were, and things like this. The watering lines had all been put in piecemeal, not a designed system. Walter was also very helpful in making peace with the neighborhood because the neighbors resented having the University take over that property.

Riess: I didn't know that. What form did this resentment take?

Scott: Well, they knew that there would be more traffic, more people coming to the garden. They liked the remoteness and privacy of the area that they lived in, and were not happy to see it developed in any way, or become an institution. The people who lived above had often visited the garden, had been free to just walk through--any time. Also the monastery people next door weren't happy about having it become a University property; they preferred it to be as private as possible. Having classes, or groups of students coming to the garden, didn't appeal to the neighbors.

Riess: There had been a tradition of that, though.

Scott: Oh, but very few at a time. Classes were getting bigger by this time, you know. Earlier there had been only one carful of students, but by the time there were busses coming out--with classes of thirty students, or a whole chain of cars, or you have a University bus,

Scott: the neighbors didn't like that. (The property is in Kensington, an unincorporated town in Contra Costa County, not Berkeley, although it has a Berkeley zip code.)

There were water problems out there always: two natural streams run through and in flood years they overflowed, flooding the property below or the property that adjoins at the service entrance. Those neighbors fought over the property line all the time. They really had built too close to the property line, so they kept trying to move the line. A very peculiar woman, whose name I don't even remember, would keep appealing to the University to do something to try to control the deer problem. The University built a fence along that boundary, and then she objected to the line of the fence-- although it was put on the survey line. There were objections all the time from the neighbors.

When we really began to develop the garden for a presidential residence and had to put in lighting systems, naturally they didn't like that. Some wanted trees cut, the trees that were getting up into their views. There were always objections, but Walter was very good about keeping peace with the neighbors.

Riess: How did he do that?

Scott: Well, just by being friendly, I suppose, telling them they could still visit the garden, that nothing was changed. He was good at quieting their fears.

Riess: And did they not complain directly to the University?

Scott: Yes, some did. Also to the planning office in Contra Costa County.

Riess: Had it all been dormant when the Blakes were there?

Scott: Yes. No problem, that I know of but when they gave the garden to the University, and we began to prune or cut trees down, then they objected. People didn't want the garden touched; they wanted it left exactly the way it was. However, it was a jungle with the trees too close together. The garden had to be opened up if it was going to serve as a semi-public garden.

Riess: But the neighbors were offended by that?

Scott: Oh, yes.

Riess: At the same time they wanted the trees topped, though, or carved, for their views.

Scott: Yes, different trees topped from the ones we were taking out. We were taking out trees for a different reason, taking out pines and conifers that were crowding each other, or because they were diseased. They wanted eucalyptus topped because they were getting up into their view. Competing interests.

Riess: I wondered if any of them were contemporaries of the Blakes.

Scott: Not that I know, but Walter would know.

Riess: I know that Mrs. Blake's friend was someone named Agnes McCormick Barchfield.

Scott: It was Mrs. Barchfield—now you give me the name—that complained most about the University. They had been good friends and I guess that explains it. She contended that she owned to the center of the creek. [laughs] Well, the creek moved its center frequently, and when the University tried to put up a fence, you see, they didn't put it in the center of the creek, it was put on the survey line. Mrs. Barchfield was connected to somebody; she had a straight pipeline to the vice-president's office and complained bitterly so that they always referred to her as "that can of worms" every time I called. [laughs]

Riess: Actually the installation of lighting—again, I'm surprised that the neighbors would complain. That is a dark corner of the world. Wouldn't they welcome lighting for security?

Scott: I would have thought so, but they didn't like the glare from the paved surfaces which interfered with their views of the bay.

Riess: Oh, I see. So Walter was conciliatory, but the University was unbending, would you say?

Scott: Yes, totally, I mean policy. Walter just had to make peace; he didn't have any authority.

Funding for Maintenance

Riess: Who else was about the place? Churchill Womble was one of the gardeners. When you arrived there was Walter and who else?

Scott: That's all. There was no endowment left and I had to beg for money to do everything that was necessary: the watering system was breaking down, the trees needed pruning, and all kinds of things were in need of repair. These were called "capital improvements," so the

Scott: Blake Estate would be No. 153 on the capital improvements list, and then it would move up to No. 107 maybe, by the next year, and so on. To do each was a battle, to get an allocation of funds for any purpose.

Riess: Were they beginning to have second thoughts about what they had taken on, then, do you think?

Scott: Management was funnelled through the department, and the department just didn't have that much clout, I guess. The battle for funds in the University is always there. It's a state university, and there's a budget, and you can't get anything unless you get it on the budget and then take your turn. Emergency funds didn't exist until we had a real flood one year, and then they found some emergency funds to take care of that.

Riess: It came completely unendowed?

Scott: So far as I know.

Riess: Robert Gordon Sproul was president when it came into the system, and then Clark Kerr--did Kerr take any interest in it?

Scott: Not so far as I know. Mrs. Kerr, but not Mr. Mrs. Kerr had her own ideas, of course, of making the house into a home for Prytanean graduate women students, yet any of us could have told her it wouldn't work. Anyway, she was a very strong person, and they found the money to do the work, about \$35,000 in all. What they did was put in double wash basins, and divide up the big bedrooms with partial partitions, so each girl had a little privacy, but not much.

Riess: I know you said to me that it was bound to fail, and I wanted to ask you today what was inevitable about it.

Scott: It was remote, and the girls wouldn't like that; they didn't want to be that far from campus activity--it was dark, it was remote. The first year a certain number of girls signed up, but they didn't sign up to come the next year, and they couldn't recruit. After two-and-a-half years, nobody wanted to be there.

Riess: I could see it as a very desirable place for a little scholarly activity. Maybe that was the notion that Mrs. Kerr had, that graduate students would wish to be cloistered and secluded.

Scott: But apparently they didn't wish to be.

Riess: Was it always something that the presidents had to deal with rather than the chancellors? In other words, Mrs. Strong wouldn't have been involved because it was University-wide rather than campus?

Scott: I don't know, that's a good question. I never dealt with anybody except Mr. Canning in the President's Office. It had been handed to him as a vice-president, in charge of property.

Riess: This was Lawrence Canning? [Assistant Business Manager, Business and Finance Office, Sproul Hall]

Scott: I always had to deal with him; everything was referred to him. When Professor Vaughan handed me the job and I asked, "How can I get anything done?" Punk would just say, "Call Mr. Canning." I'd call Mr. Canning; Mr. Canning would groan. [laughs]

Riess: So that even though it's your job, you become a thorn in his flesh.

Scott: Yes, right. He would laugh too, you know. There was no money.

Riess: I would really be interested in knowing whether, in fact, it was considered to be an extension of the Berkeley campus.

Scott: There was very little discussion. The department was not really interested in the property. Professor Vaughan had received it, and I had already had many jobs of remodeling old estates in Marin and San Mateo Counties. I was a natural. To hand it over to me--I was a lecturer, teaching one course, could I take this on--it was a cheap way of getting work done. All they'd have to do is put me on for two-thirds time to handle the Blake Estate, which they did.

But it was something I'd done a great deal of, I liked redeveloping old estates. I was teaching planting design, which includes the creation of outdoor spaces. This was a jungle to be cleared out to make some spaces that would be for visitors to a semi-public garden. I enjoyed working on the garden. But I had not enough money, or staff--you know. I had always done private estates before, never had to deal with a bureaucratic set-up.

Making Decisions

Riess: But as far as what you cleared out, you didn't have to check that with the University? Once they gave you the job, it was your baby?

Scott: My decisions. As a landscape architect that was my job. But there were objections from the neighbors, hating to hear the sound of the saw, and to taking down trees--people love trees. Also a few department people went out there and asked, "Why are you doing this?" They hadn't given the place two minutes' thought.

Scott: At the same time you should understand that the Department of Landscape Architecture philosophy was going through a very great change. It had started as gardening with great emphasis on horticulture. Then it moved into a strong design and construction phase, but a design emphasis, and at the same time as they added more design courses they dropped horticulture. (This was before the ecology movement.) They took out all the ag sciences-- all that I had had was taken out--and reduced the teaching of plants: whereas Miss Jones had taught about five hundred plants, plant materials were reduced to one hundred plants.

The staff and their main emphasis had shifted to what was called "analysis paralysis", i.e. to analyzing problems forever and ever, looking at social factors, and economic factors, etc. All very important, but cutting out almost all the ag sciences. When I was invited in to teach whatever I wanted to teach, I found that the weakest link in the profession was planting design. Private professionals were designing but didn't follow through with good planting designs. They were making excellent ground plans. So I chose to set up a course in planting design, the first one that had been offered at Cal. I was the only woman in the department, you know, so they just kept me there doing that plus working on the Blake Garden.

The Garden as a Teaching Tool

Riess: Was your course required?

Scott: Yes, it was required, but before students took it they had learned only one hundred plants. I couldn't teach much planting design, because they didn't know enough plants. Blake Garden was my laboratory. The department as such took almost no interest in the Blake Estate. I took my classes there, and we talked about design-- not just the plants. So it was a very good laboratory for me, for what I was teaching, real examples of real problems.

Riess: Did botanists study out there?

Scott: No, botany had changed its emphasis to micro-botany already, and was not at all interested. There were entomologists out there using the garden, and plant pathologists. Old estates are full of diseases, so Bob Raabe found it a wonderful laboratory. Trying to get more uses of it, I encouraged the entomology department to set up studies, which they did; they used it a good deal for studies in biological control of pests. And occasionally taxonomists used it. But the botany department made no particular use of it. Soil technology students took soil samples out of there and came out for study sessions. Various College of Agriculture people, made some use of Blake Garden.

Scott: But the people at College of Environmental Design, no. I offered many times. Because we had a fairly complete survey it was ideal to use for design problems, really. The students could go to inspect the actual terrain and study the basic data. Once in a great while some professor would set up a problem out there, but very seldom.

Riess: Did they have to clear what they were doing with you, any of these departments?

Scott: No, no.

Riess: So plant pathologists could just go out there, they didn't have to schedule themselves, or do something about it?

Scott: [shakes her head]

Riess: So that wasn't a problem.

Scott: No, no problem.

Riess: When students from Merritt and places like that came, how did they--?

Scott: None of those came in my time.

Riess: Oh, okay.

Scott: We encouraged horticultural society people to visit the garden. We set up visiting hours. The whole point was to make it available and useful as a community resource.

Riess: Because the more you did that the higher profile you'd get, and the University might begin to support it a little more, too?

Scott: I don't know. It just didn't happen. It was Professor [Fran] Violich who asked me to make the study, he was acting chairman at the time.

[Note from Mrs. Scott]

In the American Society of Landscape Architect's Committee on Education School Evaluation Report on the Department of Landscape Architecture, University of California, 1966-1967, the following was included, under "Facilities and equipment available and used by the School": Blake Garden: 10 1/2 acres of gardens and undeveloped land, Blake Residence, greenhouse and head house. A gift to the University and the Department. A rich potential, but development possible only upon adequate staffing and adequate budget--realistic only in terms of private or foundation funding. 1957 Deed of Gift requires the Regents to keep the property for instruction and research for twenty years. After 1977 it could be sold. Perhaps that is why the Department was not interested in developing the use of the garden. [See page 501.]

Long-Range Development Plan for the Blake Estate

Riess: Why don't we go to the long-range plan? Vaughan was head of the department, but it was Violich who requested it of you, in 1963?

Scott: I think he was acting chairman at the time that I completed it.

Riess: Did you welcome that undertaking?

Scott: Yes and no, because I knew it would be a lot of work, and [laughs] that I was being very much underpaid for doing it. Making a long-range plan was simply an extension of what I was already doing, just getting it down on paper.

Riess: Had you already been developing these ideas? Certainly for the garden plan?

Scott: Sure, yes. Under this title of asking me to do a long-range plan, Professor Vaughan must have wangled enough money to pay me for my extra time. But this was certainly the most for the least for the University. [laughs]

Riess: So in the long-range plan, then, you set up an administrative structure, for one thing?

Scott: Well, that's in the long-range, yes. I had already increased the staff of gardeners, but if it was going to be really developed, then it would take more maintenance, and I certainly had to develop a plan far enough to get some kind of a cost estimate of what would be required.

Riess: Was this plan to be presented to the Regents?

Scott: I don't know; it never was; it was only presented to the department, and I don't think the department ever even presented it to the college. A committee of the faculty was set up to review it, but they didn't review it until I forced them to.

Riess: Because they were not interested in the first place.

Scott: That's right. About half-way through they reviewed my proposals, and then finally they reviewed the whole thing. I asked Michael Laurie to make sketches for the report and involved as many department people as I could, my TA and some former graduate students to make the survey, and so on.

Riess: So it was a real exercise in landscape planning.

Scott: Getting it done within the University set-up as much as possible was certainly doing it the hard way, but everybody who did work on it learned a lot. I've talked to those people--like Michael Wheelwright

Scott: and Carlisle Becker who did the survey, and Harry Tsugawa (they're all mentioned in the introduction to it)—they all felt they learned a great deal from what they did. It was both a teaching and a learning experience.

Riess: When did the ideas for use of the house and the conference center concept come up?

Scott: The conference center came out of my mind, as a projection of what the property was suitable for. Nobody else had proposed that. I still think this is a legitimate use for it. That's what a long-range development plan is all about, the possible uses for an old piece of property and an old house.

Riess: Conference center, or something a little bit like the Center [for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences] at Stanford.

Scott: I went down to see that, and felt that the Blake property was suitable in every way for a similar use. But there was no interest at that time. Many people thought the University should just get rid of the property, as it's too remote from the campus to be really useful. But I felt perfectly sure the University's not going to sell property; there'll always be a use for it. It's tax-free. And they never could acquire anything comparable, so why would they get rid of it?

Riess: The long-range study basically just disappeared into the archives?

Scott: As far as I know.

A Committee of The Regents Visit

Riess: In December, 1965 Regent William Coblentz and Regent Catherine Hearst took a little tour of the house. In July, 1966 Catherine Hearst is quoted in the papers as feeling that \$33,000 just to pave over termites is not a justifiable expenditure by the Regents. Thirty-three thousand dollars was an estimated cost for some very basic structural work on the house so that it could be used. In other words, there was no love lost for the house.

Scott: This was before the Prytaneans were tenants even.

Riess: No, but this was before they knew they had to house President Hitch.

Scott: Oh, yes, I did take them on a garden tour, yes. We met out there—I'd forgotten all about this—also another woman from Los Angeles who was a Regent.

Riess: Chandler.

Scott: Mrs. Chandler, yes, and a couple of men. That was a funny episode. We met out there and discussed various problems, one being the need to fence the property completely, and why? Because of the deer. They couldn't believe there were deer there. After they went through the house and we were walking toward the rose garden, somebody turned around and there were four deer following us! A wonderful moment, just like a New Yorker cartoon. [laughs]

But I received no report on that meeting, nothing, no response--to me. [laughs]

Riess: Do you remember them responding to the garden positively?

Scott: Oh, yes, people all thought it was a lovely, lush place.

Riess: And it was looking pretty wonderful by 1965-66?

Scott: Oh, yes, I'd gotten a great deal of the overgrowth removed and a new lawn where the big lawn now is. It was in pretty good shape by that time. The old greenhouse had been removed, and a proper work yard, corporation yard, and tool house installed.

Riess: And was there a handsome sign at the entrance that identified it?

Scott: No. There was only a small sign. The garden was only open in the afternoons. I don't remember the schedule, but whenever Walter was willing to have it open, four days a week or something like that. There were quite a few visitors to the garden.

Wider Use

Riess: You said that you had been putting on some courses in horticulture.

Scott: Yes, for some neighborhood women, and people from various garden clubs. We advertised and held classes in the headhouse of the greenhouse.

Riess: Extension classes, or how were they administered?

Scott: Under Extension, I guess. I can't remember how it was set up. I taught several short courses and later somebody else taught them. Linda Haymaker also taught some later. There were classes of twelve to fifteen women one morning a week. They learned plants and a little bit about design, or how to put plants together in garden compositions in relation to form, color, texture etc.

Riess: Sounds like it would be good for goodwill, in any event.

Scott: Yes, it got the place known and used, and I guess justified some of the work, as a University resource.

Riess: In fact, the place is still not known.

Scott: Oh, no, not widely.

I tried to interest the College of Environmental Design as a whole in using it for entertainment purposes, or anything—having class reunions out there. And then it came up one time—I think I told you—about a wedding.

Riess: No.

Scott: I had two foreign students working in the greenhouses, for very minimum pay, two foreign students who met there and loved the place. They were from different countries, I don't remember which. Anyway, they wanted to get married out there. So, "Would it be all right to have it there?" And I said, "I don't know why not," I thought it was great. Then I thought, uh oh, University—I'd better ask. So I called Mr. Canning, and Mr. Canning said sort of "Ho, hum, hmmm. Is this a religious ceremony?" And I said, "I don't know; I never thought to ask." "Well, find out." And so I found out, and no, it wasn't.

So then he asked if wine would be served? (This was before they had an open campus.) I said, "I doubt it, they're so poor; I don't think that these kids have anything." Finally Mr. Canning said, "Well, let's just pretend you didn't ask." So okay, they went ahead and were married in the garden, and all went well.

It was at least four years after that before the garden was ever used for a wedding again. It has become a very popular place to have weddings since then. But--[laughs]

Riess: I guess the University was sensitive.

Scott: It was very uptight.

Riess: Did faculty wives use it for garden parties, or whatever?

Scott: I proposed setting up a Friends of the Blake Estate, a separate organization like Friends of the Library, but I got little response. I did invite some faculty wives from the whole College of Environmental Design to discuss that idea--no takers.

Riess: Why?

- Scott: I don't know, just no takers. Nobody wanted to put any effort into it, so nothing happened.
- Riess: Is that because everybody was--you know, were we all concerned with Vietnam? It sounds almost like it was something that had to do with the times as much as the place.
- Scott: I think it was; people just weren't interested in doing any more about the University.
- Riess: Or gardens weren't relevant, maybe. I mean, if you read the Berkeley Barb publicity when Hitch moved in, there was general disapproval.
- Scott: Oh, well, they tried to picket the place, sure, during the construction. There was great protest because the remodelling was costing so much money, and even the governor didn't have a residence at that time. The old governor's residence had been condemned. Reagan was governor; he didn't have any proper place to live; they were going to build another place for him. We had to assure everybody that this was private money--not state money--being paid for the work. There were threats of picketing all the time the house was under reconstruction.
- Riess: You mean by students?
- Scott: Students, and labor. A lot of union labor didn't want to work there because the gardeners weren't union. They were employed by the University, but that didn't make any difference to the union. The union was really up in arms over this. The University was not popular at that time at all, and this expenditure--I don't know how much money it was.
- Riess: It was \$438,000 ultimately, I think.
- Scott: Today we think that is peanuts, but there was a great deal of feeling against spending such a sum.
- Riess: Your effort to organize a Friends of the Blake Estate was prior to your having any idea that it might be a presidential residence?
- Scott: Yes, and then I was simply informed that that was going to happen.

Blake House Becomes the President's House

Riess: When did you hear about it first?

Scott: I guess the chairman of the department must have--it was Professor Vaughan again, he was still there--told me what had been decided, and I was recommended as the landscape architect, to work with Ron Brocchini, the architect.

I met with Ron Brocchini first, and Norma Willer. We all met out there together to look at what the problems were, and how we'd have to "hitch" the garden to the house, [laughs] what provisions we'd have to make for the construction, and at the same time keep the garden available to students and visitors. We had to recognize that these two activities would go on at the same time.

Riess: So that means access to the gardens.

Scott: We had to talk about how we were going to handle parking, and entrances, and delivery, and placement of materials during construction, and all of the typical problems of reconstruction.

Riess: I've looked at the files a lot, and there are many memos. In one of the first memos in the first paragraph it lists the things that the Hitches required, or wished to have, and it included a swimming pool, and it also included something Nancy Hitch had seen somewhere in Europe and liked very much, an outdoor eating area and fireplace; And places for Caroline to play, and arrangements for dogs and so on and so on. Were you in on the very early discussions of all this stuff?

Scott: I don't remember such a list. I met with Mr. Hitch up in the President's Office, with Ron Brocchini and Norma Willer--Mrs. Hitch not present at that first meeting. But I guess this list of what was wanted was discussed and how each item could be accommodated.

Riess: Were budget considerations uppermost, or was it just going to go ahead?

Scott: Not discussed in my presence at all. Never discussed. As far as I was concerned I was simply to plan to join garden to house, and accomodate each feature. There was no budget set up for the landscape work.

Riess: Was it a time then that you could do a lot of things that you'd always wanted to do in the garden, because now here at last is a lot of money?

Scott: Yes it did mean some further development, in line with my wanting to do something in the area on the west side, below the house. That area was a natural for a lake. It was remote for a swimming pool, but we did consider it. I did a preliminary plan, with a swimming pool there, and it was considered too costly and too remote from the house. That area ended by becoming a golf putting green. We considered the swimming pool in other locations closer to the house, but they were worried about control responsibilities when it would be more accessible to visitors. We considered a steel tank pool raised well above the grade, instead of at ground level, as really the best way to build a pool on the site. Such a pool would be earthquake proof—it's so close to the Hayward fault. That was the best way to construct a pool in any case on that property. But that was ruled out as being too expensive. I didn't get into estimating the cost, as it was simply ruled out.

Riess: What were the major changes in the garden?

Scott: Well, the parking areas, of course. There had been very little parking area, and the problem of how to get deliveries to the kitchen entrance—so close to the main entrance at the same time—and screenings, and garage—they wanted the garage in the house, so it had to go clear around and under.

Then Mrs. Hitch couldn't back out easily. Later we had to build an extension on a platform, backing over what was called the Australian Hollow, on the other side of the ridge. That platform allowed three extra parking places for servants or people assisting in the house. I had to plan all of that plus fencing, because they wanted the formal garden fenced, and the two gates, with electronic controls. I also redesigned the house terraces and stairways to the lawn area below the house on the west.

Riess: These are desirable things for the house, and the garden lighting—I guess maybe that's something that you had perhaps always wanted to do.

Scott: Oh, definitely desirable to do, and if they were going to entertain it certainly was almost a necessity to add lighting to the garden in addition to the entrance road. The parking and entrance way had to be well lighted. Indirect lighting of the garden was something I proposed and accomplished. It's in complete disrepair now, I believe.

Riess: I wanted to ask about it. There was an estimate from Scott Beamer for garden lighting that was going to cost about \$25,000, and yet your budget ultimately, for all of your work, which includes something called landscape lighting, was only \$29,000.

Scott: Some landscape details went in one budget, and some in another. I don't recall exactly.

Riess: But the grand plan for the garden lighting did go in?

Scott: Not all, some of it went in. Scott Beamer came out, great person that he was, bringing thousands of feet of electrical cord, and various kinds of fixtures, and set them up--which is the proper way to plan garden lighting but very few people will do it, entirely on spec. By trying it out we decided we could do without all that he proposed. The essential lighting on the upper, formal garden, and spotlighting one or two oaks to the north was about all that we did install.

Riess: So the \$25,000 sounds like it was reduced greatly. Who came to see the light show?

Scott: Mai Arbegast and I scheduled a department party out there. So the whole department came. We had a party to see the lighting--as an educational project with Scott Beamer as the star performer and teacher.

Riess: Was the department beginning to realize that they had a good thing in hand, now that it was the president's residence.

Scott: [shakes head]

Riess: Still no particular interest?

Scott: I don't think the landscape architecture department took any particular interest in the project at all. It seemed to me, and I talked to Michael Laurie about this, that this would be an ideal time to educate the president of the University on the importance of landscape architecture, and to get more prestige for the department, which had been always on the low end of the scale in environmental design, and that politically this was a natural opportunity. But no one followed through. I was retired very soon after, so I didn't do anything about it either. Working through the planning and building educated Mr. Hitch somewhat, I think, but not to the point of enlisting his support. The department really could have used this opportunity in a great way. If Professor Vaughan had been the chairman, I think he would have. I don't know who was chairman at that particular point.

Riess: Well, the dean of the College of Environmental Design might well have used it.

Scott: He might have, but he didn't.

Riess: Was that Martin Meyerson?

Scott: No, that must have been William L. Wheaton. Wheaton was too busy working on bigger things between Washington and the state. He was working on national and state political issues in housing and planning.

Riess: But you did educate President Hitch about it. In what way, and what were the results of this education?

Scott: I don't think I did succeed very much in this. He liked what we had planned and built, but I don't think I was able to make him see the larger picture in any way.

Riess: According to Mr. Hitch, it was very hard for his wife to have the garden a public place.

Scott: I got almost nowhere with Mrs. Hitch. I think she was very confused about her own role as the president's wife. She was interested in art and ceramics; they built in a special studio for her, into the house, which she seldom used. She seemed to feel that she had to do so many presidential duties that she couldn't take time for herself. And yet she was not comfortable in that role as the president's wife either, and always very worried about her daughter Caroline, worried about kidnapping. She was a worrier. Her concerns were not, I think, the larger issues.

Riess: So she didn't embrace the garden as a project?

Scott: She embraced the garden as a place to provide her with cut flowers every day. The next job for Russ Beatty was to build a big cut flower garden, and for Walter to deliver cut flowers to the house every day. The Blake House was her residence, to be managed in a kind of grand manner. She was interested in the history of the house, and garden. Mai had made a fine album of early and late pictures of the garden, which she lent to Mrs. Hitch.

Riess: There is a nice picture album that is now on the table in the house.

Scott: Mai took the pictures and made the album. Mai is a recorder. Mai has always taken pictures at various times from the same spot. She really records plant growth, and how it looks at various periods. She has taken wonderful slides and pictures. All those plant and garden slides in the department are Mai Arbegast's work.

Riess: And she did have that intense relationship with the house and garden for a couple of years. But then she was no longer part of the program?

Scott: Well, she wasn't teaching in the University anymore, she didn't get tenure, so she couldn't afford to just be giving more time to it, although she often goes to visit. Mai keeps up her interest in everyplace and everybody. She's an amazing person.

Riess: But there wasn't a way that you could hire someone like Mai? You didn't have positions at the beginning other than just your gardeners?

Scott: I got two gardeners to assist Walter, and some student help, part time, and that's as much help as we ever got out there. Tree cutting and heavy pruning was done by outside contractors.

Riess: Just a little detail: in memos where you refer to "filling and developing bowl to west of house," is that the swimming pool area that became the putting green? Is that what you mean by that?

Scott: Yes. That was a very difficult problem because that whole area is a sink formed after an earthquake. There are two sloping ridges with two sinks between the ridges. Water collects in those sinks naturally, and to get water out of there we had to dig through a ridge and put in a very special kind of drainage in order to grow a lawn. Otherwise it would have become a marsh. It was a really very complex problem, and I'm sure in wet years it's still a problem. That sort of drainage is very imperfect and often requires pumping. A swimming pool in that area presented the same kind of problem. The soil becomes puddled. Only marsh plants and grasses grow well in such a hollow.

Riess: That's interesting. Such a big project, it makes me think again of what a good experience it would have been for students to have worked there.

Scott: Well, those students who were there during the time that this was going on all learned, through me, quite a good deal. But the department never set up projects in which various professors took part. They each taught their own separate course, they did not collaborate on problems--as they did at Cornell, which I think was a very much better system. But at the time I was in the department, either as a student or as a lecturer later, they never did that. So that whereas a person teaching construction might set up a construction problem using Blake Garden, it would be a little minor kind of thing. A professor teaching detailed design might make his students design a pergola for a particular place or something like that, but never utilizing the site as an overall problem, which it could have been--a very good problem.

Riess: And a little satisfaction if it's a real problem, too.

Scott: Professors were beginning to get more interested in public work, park systems, and housing developments, at the time. They could have used it, but they didn't.

Now, I think I ought to mention this, that when Robert Tetlow became chairman, some years after I had retired, he got a notion that he could get a little money to do something about the Blake Estate. (Although he had ignored it totally before that and always voted against doing anything about the Blake Estate.) He got the notion that there ought to be a Friends of the Blake Estate. So he appealed to me to head such an organization and he would support it.

I said, "Thanks, but no thanks." I'm not about to take on that problem at this stage in my life. I'd had no support before and I was not about to try again. Even though the times had changed and it might have worked. It didn't work; he didn't find anybody, and nothing happened. You might talk to Tetlow, because he's still there, about how much of an effort he made--I have no idea.

Riess: If you retired, then you can't tell me, for instance, how the Saxons interacted with the gardeners.

Scott: No. I stopped going out there because I felt Walter was not a good enough maintenance person. I'd done a great deal to get his status raised to a higher and higher level, and he, I feel, didn't set a high enough standard for his own workmen. He never got ahead of just common things like the weeds each year. It was so frustrating. This place should have been a model of maintenance and I never was able to raise it to that degree.

Riess: Even though you were his boss in this case.

Scott: [laughs] Walter's words are telling: I'd say, "I'd like to see you do this, get this done by such and such a date." "No problem." But he seldom accomplished what I had asked for.

Riess: He called you "ruthless, and wonderful."

Scott: [laughs]

Riess: So there.

Scott: Ruthless because I cut trees that he didn't think should be cut because they were healthy trees. I've been called ruthless by many people, as are most artists and designers. [laughs]

Riess: But "wonderful." He obviously knew that you must love the place as much as he did.

Scott: Well, I gave it more attention than anybody else had and he got some satisfaction out of that. Most gardeners feel very lonesome. Not many people went out there; the garden wasn't used; they didn't get praise. A head gardener's job in a place like this is difficult. Mrs. Hitch was demanding in a way. Apparently the Saxons really liked the gardening and took a considerable interest, and both, I think, enjoyed the time that they were there very much because they really were interested in the garden, Mrs. Saxon particularly, according to Linda Haymaker.

Talking About the Garden

The Paths, Labelling the Plants

Scott: The stone on the Blake Estate, the walls, the grotto, and all that, came from the estate. The Blakes were interested in that property because stone was part of his business. Other people might have been daunted by that rock--there's rocky subsoil and rock outcrop--but it interested the Blakes. When they came to build the paths, for instance, having a rock quarry, crusher in Richmond they prepared paths with bases sometimes eighteen inches thick. Moving a path was an enormous job. Where the lawn area is now, that lawn to the south of the driveway was criss-crossed with paths around a little old greenhouse, and service area. To remove those paths and get that area into a uniform planting area of soil was a major job. Nobody could understand why it took so long or cost so much in labor time.

Riess: Eighteen inches! The bases were really--

Scott: --crushed rock. You know, built up properly with coarse stone, and finer and finer; built up better than the bases of our streets.

Riess: You couldn't have turned them into drainage systems?

Scott: They didn't go in the right direction; they were paths. [laughs]

Riess: That's a wonderful bit of archaeology.

Did you find signs of the Blakes' idiosyncracies? [pause]
We talked about the cats--.

Scott: They loved cats, and species roses. [laughs] With having so many pine needles available, we used them to surface paths, producing a marvelous springy walking surface.

Many of the areas that seem poorly planted are impossible because of the rocky subsoil, and/or poor drainage; drainage channels through all that area are curious because of earthquake

Scott: faulting action. Natural drainage has been changed by earthquake action, resulting in something like a moraine, mixtures of different kinds of soils deposited and drainage blocking, interesting geologically. I had a geologist come out and talk to me about it. There is a section about the geology in the long-range plan.

Riess: Was it under you tenure that plants were labelled there, to the extent that they are?

Scott: Mai had made the plant inventory, and labelling was one of the things that Bob Raabe and I did, and I'm sure that this continued with Russ Beatty. Walter tried to encourage people like horticultural society people and garden club people to come there, and he knew that labelling was needed. I remember we studied various kinds of labels, but the best waterproof kind are quite expensive. We had to settle for something less than good. How many got labelled I don't know. I think Linda Haymaker probably would have added a good many. She's been there ten, eleven years. She should have been made the director, after Walter.

Riess: You think it's another case of a woman being passed over?

Scott: Definitely.

Riess: Garrett Eckbo almost lived in the house? Do you remember anything about that? I think Walter told me that when the house was empty, I guess after Prytanean, Garrett Eckbo and his wife came up here and more or less said that they wouldn't mind living in the house.

Scott: I never heard that, but I know he had a hard time finding a place to live. When the landscape architecture department brought Garrett up to be chairman, he left a very nice home in southern California, and in Berkeley finding a house was difficult. So it's perfectly possible.

The Brochure, and Articles about the Gardens

Riess: I have a couple of final questions: the files are thick on getting that Blake Estate brochure together. It was just an impossible task to even write it? Everyone was in on it.

Scott: Except me, which is the curious part, because Mrs. Hitch asked me for quantities of material, which I gave her, and the next thing I knew there was the brochure--I'd been by-passed again.*

*Letter from Scott to Appleyard. See Appendices, OO, PP.

- Scott: The article that Linda Haymaker wrote in Pacific Horticulture is the best thing that has come out in print.* Infinitely better than the one that Garden Magazine did [1986].
- Riess: The Garden Magazine one was full of inaccuracies?
- Scott: Oh, yes, it's very poor.
- Riess: Wonderfully photographed. It is by Lawrence Lee. Who is Lawrence Lee?
- Scott: Lawrence Lee is now the director of horticulture at Staten Island Botanical Gardens [looking at magazine].
- Riess: He was a graduate of U.C. Berkeley?
- Scott: Yes, I guess that's why he came out here. He's a nice young man and knowledgeable about horticulture. Linda's article is very good, and well written.

The Garden, Twenty Years Ago

- Riess: How different is the garden now from 1964, would you say? It was a fully-grown garden then.
- Scott: Oh, yes, much of it was overgrown already, because there were plants from many lands, and many had been planted from seed, with no knowledge of how fast they would grow in this climate. They'd been planted too close together, which forces upright growth. Also the Blakes liked vines, had planted quantities of vines climbing on many trees--species roses, particularly, which have wild thorns. All species roses are very thorny, really wicked kinds of thorns. Many of those trees in what is now the lawn area and the entrance area had climbing roses clear to the top, festooning over them. It was handsome in a way, but truly a jungle.

I had made a study of species roses for Dr. Emmet Rixford, a great rosarian, who had asked me to make the study. I found many of them at the Blake Estate later. That study was published in California Horticulture. I knew about these roses. They were wonderful in a way, but you can't just cut them back, you have to take them out, because if you cut them back they grow even more vigorously, having such tremendous root systems. We had to actually

*"Blake Garden," Pacific Horticulture, Spring 1987, No. 1, pp. 8-13. See Appendices.

Scott: do away with what had been a good collection of species roses. But what was the place for? It wasn't a real botanical garden; it didn't have any great collections. It did have plants from many lands, adapting to this climate, and we tried to keep all of those that were really significant, or to keep one specimen of each in a place that didn't need to be cleared in order to make some space for people. To enjoy plants you have to have some kind of viewing space.

Many trees, for instance the magnolias planted around this main pool, were already too large. They were a poor selection. But at the time there were probably no horticultural varieties. They didn't grow those from seed; they bought those from the nursery as little magnolia trees. (Since then cultivars that are dwarfed, better proportioned, better shaped, have been developed.) Those magnolias had just been allowed to grow naturally, and when trees aren't pruned regularly, and later you start pruning them, you deform them.

Riess: So these were replanted?

Scott: No, they're still the original trees, but they're very deformed, and one or two have died, and their roots are cracking the pool. It's one of the major things that must be tended to, by next summer I understand. A lawn can't grow in that much shade. It's a design decision: either the trees should be taken out completely, and new ones planted, or given over to the lawn, letting the trees from the side do the enclosing. These are all design decisions which Walter was not capable of making, or wouldn't make, and even pruning heavily hurt him.

Riess: But you were there to make that decision.

Scott: I made the design decisions all the time I was in charge, but in order to control those trees then, they had to be thinned at least every other year.

Riess: And since you've left there hasn't been a design person there?

Scott: Russ Beatty has been in charge.

Russ Beatty, who is a landscape architect and a designer, but without the kind of experience that I have in back of me, simply couldn't get the money and didn't force the pruning. He doesn't have as strong a conviction about design as I have, let's say, so that less pruning got done. Now, the new man John Norcross is trained as an architect, not as a landscape architect. He worked up at the Botanical Garden and learned his plants by working there.

Riess: But that doesn't give you garden design.

Scott: No, it doesn't.

And Twenty Years Later

Scott: Linda Haymaker has much more of a design sense. She came out of the landscape architecture department, and has since gone back to the University and gotten herself a master's degree. She loves the place, and would have been an ideal person, but she's not exceedingly forceful. She couldn't be forceful under Walter Vodden; she's never been given the opportunity to make major decisions. I think she would have been the ideal person. However, she was not advanced to that position. Russ Beatty insists that Norcross has a strong design sense and will keep the hedges properly pruned and all that. I don't know.

Riess: What do you think the future is up there? You've hinted before at another big change.

Scott: Well, it's still an appropriate place that the University could use for some kind of a "think tank." There's plenty of space, both above and below the house, with easy access from the roads below and above to add extra housing, if needed, or extra laboratory space.

Riess: So you think it's not adequately used by having it the president's official residence/office.

Scott: Well, it's an expensive thing to maintain for that purpose, but it has been on the University's budget all this time. Only about four acres of the ten-acre site are developed and maintained.

Riess: Do you see a new push for the garden?

Scott: I don't see it; however, they have a new chairman of the department who's an entirely different kind of person. His name is Randy Hester, and Randy believes in what he calls "responsible design." He's done a lot of public work in which he involves all the people concerned in the decision-making process. This the department also believes in. I'm sure that he will concern himself with the Blake Estate because he's that kind of person.

I've put ten years of my life into working on the Blake Estate, and I'm still very hopeful that some good use will be made of that property.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Florence Holmes

THE FLOWERS OF THE GARDEN

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

Flo Holmes in the Blake Garden's greenhouse, 1987.

Photograph by Suzanne Riess

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Since the late 1950s Florence Louise Chilton Holmes has been arranging flowers for the official houses of the University of California. Whenever the University sets a fine table for an official function someone has to decorate that table. In 1958, after the Robert Gordon Sproul years, as both the campuses and the roles of the presidents' wives and the chancellors' wives expanded, some of the traditionally wifely duties were delegated. Mrs. Jack "Flo" Holmes was a graduate of Chouinard School of Fine Arts, trained as an interior decorator, and already involved with flower arranging through a Faculty Wives Section Club group. She had done some flower arranging for Chancellor and Mrs. Clark Kerr, and in 1958 when Kerr became President she accepted a staff position where she was on call to do floral arrangements for Berkeley's University House. In 1968 President and Mrs. Charles Hitch requested Flo Holmes's services at Blake House, and she is still, thirty years later, taking delight in finding the right arrangements for the tables at Blake House.

To any query about how flower arranging might be a valid way of viewing history, I would refer the social historian to the Regional Oral History Office's memoir completed with Ida Amelia Sproul in 1981, The President's Wife, in which Mrs. Sproul, in recalling the floral aspect of her duties as president's wife also described working with Isabella Worn on flower arrangements at University House for daughter Marion Sproul's wedding. This is the same Miss Worn who worked in the gardens of Lurline Matson Roth at Filoli in Woodside, and was a colleague of Mabel Symmes. Thus a bit of connective tissue between those three institutions is woven and saved.

This brief interview with Mrs. Holmes was held in the sunroom at Blake House. We were provided with tea and cookies by Marina Harrison. Marina and her husband Dan are the resident staff at Blake House and have many opportunities to recognize and appreciate from behind the scenes what Mrs. Holmes takes on so willingly, often above the call of duty.

An open and cheerful person, Mrs. Holmes was very frank in the interview. But while allowing herself to be amused by the vagaries of her job and the idiosyncracies of the official families she has served, she nevertheless clearly loves what she does and knows the Blake Gardens as well as anyone on the gardening staff. She added her own conclusion to the interview, saying, "Each day is a new and different challenge, never a repeat, always something different. I guess they like my work. I'm still around in my old age—still have plenty to do!"

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

November 11, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Louise Chilton Holmes

Date of birth Dec 25, 1911 Place of birth Pasadena Cal

Father's full name William Chilton

Birthplace New Castle on Tyne England

Occupation Interior Decorator Baker & Chilton, Pasadena
decorated many famous movie stars homes.

Mother's full name Ada Morton

Birthplace New Castle on Tyne England

Occupation good mother of four -

Where did you grow up? Pasadena Cal

Present community Alhambra Cal

Education Chunard School Fine Arts L.A. (4 yrs)

Occupation(s) Interior designer, draftsman for decorators S.F.

during war, Mare Island - drafting -

Raised 3 boys - then started back to painting and into

flower arranging - Teach Japanese brush painting, have
for some 20 yrs.

Special interests or activities Flowers - landscapes, out door scape

mountains, ocean waves etc - Bird watching & feeding

Special things with Section Club - at University

thru the years - hiking adventures, birds, home & garden

- museum great interest. etc -

The Flowers of the Garden

[Date of Interview: March 20, 1987]

Riess: How did your involvement with flowers at Blake House begin?

Holmes: Things just grew. I did things for the Kerrs when he was chancellor, then as president.

Riess: You were a faculty wife.

Holmes: Yes, my husband Jack was a professor of educational psychology. There was a need and interest in doing something with flowers, and so we started a flower arrangement group in University Wives Section Club.

Riess: When was that?

Holmes: In the late fifties sometime. I suppose the Section Club president has a record of when it actually started.

Friends of mine, Nellie Rollifson, Margaret Horning, Rebecca Cason, and I were made early chairman and co-chairman, and we decided we'd better get a little training during the summer. I asked Mrs. Obata if she could start a class, so we started a class at the YWCA down in Oakland where she'd been doing classes all along. She was glad to do it. We started at the top, really.

The Section Club group went on until a few years ago, and then—. Well, the problem was that Strawberry Canyon [Haas Clubhouse], which was built actually for faculty and student use, outpriced us, and we couldn't afford to pay the rent to meet there. It takes a lot of space and makes a mess. One has to have a place to work, and so we just discontinued it. A home can handle no more than a demonstration. (We do this through home and garden section at times.)

Riess: When you were at the Y, it was just a small class?

Holmes: That was just six of us there. To learn flower arranging you have to participate, and we took turns. With the Section Club group sometimes we had guest speakers. And maybe someone would come and do corsages. This training we have used at different University events. There are a number of flower arranging shows and demonstrations in the Bay Area through garden clubs and the Japanese Ikebana group.

Then when Dr. Kerr was president, they had many social events at the house [University House] and Mrs. Kerr needed somebody to help with flowers, so she asked me if I'd do it. Then after a while I think they got embarrassed about it because I did it for nothing. First they tried to get Mr. [Ari] Inouye to do it, and he didn't know anything about it, even though he is Japanese. [laughter] Not his job really--the campus grounds kept him very busy.

They really ran me ragged! After the Kerrs then we had the Strongs, then the Wellmans and others filled in, and they all had their different ideas, and they were all using the place, presidents and vice-presidents, chancellors. They were disturbing days in the '60s.

Riess: Did you have any say in what they grew in the gardens of University House?

Holmes: Yes, suggestions were welcomed. I had a lot of cooperation from Ari Inouye. He's a wonderful person, very helpful and dependable; he directed things.

Riess: Who planted the perennial and annual flower beds?

Holmes: Fred Chervatine, and he was really quite a guy. He kept us well supplied with flowers. They've got quite a yard over there actually. They don't have deer problems like they have here at Blake. Now they have Bob West.

Riess: Did you know Ida Sproul?

Holmes: Yes, indeed. Grandma Sproul, too. Mrs. Obata used to do special arrangements for Ida Sproul. I'd go in with her sometimes and help. Just special events. She didn't drive.

Riess: Does that cutting garden on campus really date from Ida Sproul's time in University House?

Holmes: Oh, yes, but Mrs. Sproul moved in armloads of greens. They've got a big rose garden. There's a lot of sunny, south space. They've got a lot more flowers there than they have here. We have to hike around here for ours. Ten acres is quite a bit to cover to try and find what's blooming! The flowers there were really very ample.

- Riess: Did you keep the house in flowers all the time, or were you only called in for state occasions?
- Holmes: When the Heynses were there we kept the house pretty well filled up with flowers because they lived there. They had come out from Michigan, with three young sons. So things were lively, lived in.
- Riess: Did you have a collection of beautiful vases at your disposal there?
- Holmes: Well, usually I went out and scouted, like I have here, for vases. A few things came with the house. They have three Chinese bowls that we used on the long dining room table. They had some real heavy metal containers--you needed a derrick to pick them up. After a while you can't carry all that stuff, especially upstairs, so we kept these heavy ones down below and got things that were more of the same shape, and of lighter material.
- Riess: Did the gardeners cut the flowers?
- Holmes: Yes, usually, but I did too. We went over things I wanted. If I ran short, I'd go out and get more. They didn't object to that. We cut together more often than not.
- Riess: If the chancellors and presidents hadn't had you, where else might they have turned? Who were the professionals?
- Holmes: They used the florists. The professionals, state judges, you might say, like competition and display things. They'll spend all day doing one thing, which wouldn't fit in with what we needed, where you had to put twenty or thirty arrangements in the house and get it done before the caterers arrived or the party started. The professionals spend a lot of time just on one thing, an amazing amount of time.
- Riess: You sound like you were essential to the social operation.
- Holmes: I guess so. Then I've included some of the girls who had had training in flower arrangements. We did the Charter Day luncheons too, for three or four hundred people, and special things at Kerr's house, too. That was always something. But with Maggie Johnston leading us around--she was wonderful, she really was a wonderful person. She'd tell us what the president wanted. Maybe the number would change, but she'd always allow for more than was needed, so we didn't run short, things worked out well.
- Riess: Were these things what the president wanted? Wasn't it really the president's wife?
- Holmes: Things fit together through Maggie. Every time it was something different. Just like the food, the menu. But I got the orders from Maggie. And I could suggest things too, whatever was in

Holmes: season. Sometimes you can't get things; it's not the season. Of course the Kerrs liked to make it nice and showy. Each president had his own idea, what kind of flowers, or vases.

Riess: Then how did you work with the Hitches at Blake House when they moved up here?

Holmes: Oh, the Hitches liked flowers all over. When she was away--. I remember one time she phoned me on a Sunday and she said, "We're home, Flo, and there isn't anything in the house." [laughter] The house was big, though, and it does look kind of unlive in when you don't have something alive in it. I hadn't gotten the message when they were due home--no orders!

Riess: She wouldn't have done it for the house herself on that Sunday?

Holmes: No, she didn't do it at all. She was an artist and potter, but certainly liked the place happy. (Not time for things as president's wife, believe me.)

Riess: She thought of you as a professional and she didn't want to interfere?

Holmes: I just don't think she did anything with plants, really. But she liked flowers everywhere.

Riess: Didn't she ask the staff to grow particular things here?

Holmes: Well, I think all the wives make a stab at that because of the things that they are used to around their own place wherever they've lived before.

Riess: Is there a cutting garden here? Or do you have to wander the acres?

Holmes: It's up where you park your car, behind that big hedge of blackberries. Just last time I was here the deer had broken into the cutting area, chopped off all the new rose growth. But they left the tulips, so I picked those. We figure if I don't get them the deer will! The cutting area is rather poor, but then I don't think we've ever had to go out and buy anything unless it was something special, except in winter. December, January, and February--nothing much but greens then.

Riess: The Japanese style of arrangement often is just a few blooms.

Holmes: Yes, the Hitches were contented with line arrangements. Of course she was an artist too, so she understood. Mrs. Gardner likes a bunch of flowers, a great bunch of them. Not just a line. You have to fill it in! [laughs] Which is all right, but it takes a lot more flowers to do that. Not Japanese style, more old English.

Holmes: Mrs. Gardner likes lilies and tulips and roses and freesias and iris—though they are very expensive out of season. It hurts when you have to go out and pay \$1.25 for one lily! Greenhouse plants don't keep that well. Perhaps in California we use seasonal flowers to better advantage.

Riess: The garden isn't able to support the "bunch of flowers" concept?

Holmes: Not in the wintertime. I've had to go out and buy supplies. We usually try to buy it according to what the calendar is, too. If they need it to last longer, then chrysanthemum or something that will last.

But really we have an amazing amount of plant material around here. I just really am spoiled. There are so many greens, and I think greens are wonderful for contrasts. A great variety of flowers, too. We've got some bamboo out here that's nice, a sort of a variegated variety, it's kind of simple and good if I need extra height.

They're trying to plant more variety out here for use. Linda Haymaker has put in a lot of azaleas and rhododendron. If I live long enough I'll be able to use them.

We've got a lot of varieties of pale grey leaves which is nice to use. I like greens in different shades--grey, yellow-greens, reds, wonderful combinations with flowers. Sizes, large, small make a difference.

Riess: Who put together this organizational chart on how to handle flowers for Blake House?*

Holmes: [laughs] I think maybe Maggie and Mrs. Hitch and I did that. Walter Vodden was kind of dragging his feet. You know, the garden is run by the Department of Landscape Architecture, and I don't know—. That list gets funnier every time I read it.

Riess: You had to have it spelled out that there was one man who would regularly cut flowers for you, and so on?

Holmes: That wore out in a hurry. If something came up that they wanted Bill Jones to do, he'd take the truck and leave. They didn't do much picking—a dream. I finally hired students to help me. If I needed extra help in arranging I'd get a friend, usually students, in to help. I did have several students over the years. Barbara Balamuth [Andrews] graduated from Santa Cruz. She wasn't located,

FLOWERS FOR BLAKE HOUSE:

The long run plan for handling flowers for Blake house should be as follows:

1. Flo Holmes is told about a social event as far ahead as possible - right after it goes on the calendar.
2. Flo Holmes should call the man who regularly picks flowers for her and tell him
 - 1) how many arrangements (approx) there will be
 - 2) what kinds of flowers she has in mind
 - 3) when she wants them ready for arranging
3. There should be 1 man who regularly cuts flowers for Flo. When she calls him, he can decide how many of the kinds she has specified and from whence he should buy them, etc. If what she asks for are not available, he should discuss this with her on the phone and work out substitutes at that time.

He delivers the flowers to the back door in buckets at the time specified.
to be expected

4. Flo Holmes is NOT to cut the flowers herself, ~~except that~~ unless there is something special that she wants to find herself.
 5. The gardener who is in charge of the cut garden is to plant the flowers as specified in the listing made up by Mrs Hitch so that they will be ready for use in the house at the specified times.
- Any other bedding plants that the Department wishes to plant may be planted in ADDITION to those specified on the list.
6. It is Flo Holmes' responsibility to visit the cut garden with the gardener handling it (as convenient to them) so that she will know what is available and what is going to be available in the future.
 7. It is extremely important that there be one regular employee who is responsible for the cutting of the flowers for the house. He should be trained by Mrs. Holmes as to the lengths she needs, type of foliage, etc. and any other information that will make both the cutting and arranging more efficient and less time consuming. The training will take both of their time, however, in the long run a thoroughly trained full time, regular employee will save both time and money for all of us.
 8. If flowers on the list are already planted in the garden, it should be ascertained that there are sufficient of each item to handle the needs of the house. If these are scattered throughout Blake Garden and not concentrated in the cut garden, it is the responsibility of the man who cuts the flowers to gather these from wherever they are growing and to bring them to the back porch as requested.

Holmes: so I said, "Come on over and you can help me." Then they hired her to help Maggie, and so she worked here quite a while. A wonderful earnest worker, and always pleasant. Maggie really enjoyed having her—real friends.

Riess: When did you start as a paid person?

Holmes: When Mrs. Kerr was chancellor's wife. There were only a few months that I worked free. Checks then came through campus maintenance. Slowly!

Riess: Paid on an hourly basis?

Holmes: Yes, I'm sort of like a free-lancer. But up here the house pays me—still free lancing. I don't do it at the chancellor's house any more. I worked there about thirty years. Too much of a hassle.

Riess: Have you trained the person who does it there?

Holmes: No, they just picked somebody out of the hat that's learning—awful stuff so they report.

Riess: From where? There isn't any Section Club group.

Holmes: No, but they are hoping to start up again in the fall [1987]. If they can find a place to do it. It's a messy job, leaves dropping around all over the place. The Heymans' [Chancellor Ira Michael and Therese Heyman] basement there at the University House is a good place, but I don't think she'd approve. I used to have my art class there for quite a few years. She was nice about that.

Riess: Was that also University Wives Section Club?

Holmes: No. Mostly we were Section Club women, not Section Club-sponsored though.

Riess: Back to the old Blake House list of Dos and Don'ts. "Flo Holmes is not to cut the flowers herself, unless there is something special that she wants to find herself."

Holmes: [laughs] Is that right? Once in a while they object if I cut off a branch that they're trying to straighten a bush out with. We cut four to five bucket loads each event and greens, a lot of stuff. Now I have Vera Gough, English gal. She is great.

Riess: Does this list reflect difficulties in communication between the house and—.

Holmes: And Walter. He is really a nice guy, wonderful knowledge of plants. He was sort of from a generation of not wanting women bossing him around! No way! But helpful in telling about flowers

Holmes: in bloom. We could use the hothouse to plant things. Really I liked him.

Riess: Of course Mrs. Blake must have bossed him around.

Holmes: But not for too many years. She needed help, was lonely and living alone. He came in to do things for her in the garden--caretaker more.

Riess: You met her?

Holmes: Yes, she used to let us come in the gardens. We met her at the door out here. She was pretty old, and nearly blind, too. She must have been quite a gal, her sister, too. But the gardens weren't really open when she was here. It wasn't until afterwards that the University acquired the property and straightened up the house and improved the place--adding things. Got a garden crew and Mai Arbegast.

Riess: "It is extremely important that there be one regular employee who is responsible for the cutting of the flowers for the house. He should be trained by Mrs. Holmes as to the lengths she needs, type of foliage, etc., and any other information that will make both the cutting and arranging more efficient and less time consuming. The training will take both of their time; however, in the long run a thoroughly-trained full-time employee will save both time and money for all."

Holmes: Yes. We had a guy called Bill Jones. You can't tell gardener people things like that, but that just sort of pointed out that we'd like a few things, I think. You know, you don't go around complaining to people because you haven't got the flowers you want this week, when last week they all bloomed. It's very hard to arrange growth of flowering plants around the calendar. The calendars and weather are unpredictable.

Riess: Other places maybe use hothouses.

Holmes: We have a hothouse here, a big one, but it's rare that we have anything in there we can use. They had a lot of freesias, geraniums, and they bloomed beautifully, but nobody was here to use them. You can't put geraniums outside because the deer just chomp them all off.

Riess: The deer have always been a problem?

Holmes: Yes. Now we have them fenced in. They should be thinned out, they should do this. They were just walking in the front gate! It's been about two weeks now since they have changed it so that people can't just drive in. You now can use a walk-in gate.

Riess: How much notice do you get of when you will be needed?

Holmes: Usually for the big things, about a week. It's President Gardner and Mrs. Gardner who really decide things, or his office, though sometimes the vice-presidents have dinners here too. At times things come up on short notice.

Riess: When you need more flowers for this house, can you use the garden on the campus, the University House garden?

Holmes: They have plenty there, just gobs, and they have a better area, it's on a slope, and it gets the southern sun, the western afternoon sun. There have been three fellows over there, and they were good growers of flowers.

Here they are really more interested in landscaping. For instance, in the south circle it is all planted with primulas, and they are pretty with the magnolias, but they all bloom at once, and they are just for looks for the landscaping. Alison Cardinet here--I feel like she's the first one who's really been interested in growing flowering things for us. She was hired just to grow flowers in fact. They're still struggling with the cutting area, that has a fence like a chicken coop--a terrible fence around it. They keep saying they're going to move it out in the sun a bit more too, which would help. (Times are developing.) When you have a lot of blackberries, you're going to have a lot of bugs. Roses are a struggle here. We will have more light now because they have removed a tree.

Riess: But anyway, could you use the flowers at University House?

Holmes: No, Mrs. Heyman doesn't want us to. Why, I don't know. It used to be all right. Now the gate is locked. I don't do the work there anymore. She has a different attitude about it, about faculty things, Section Club things.

The Gardners, my hat's really off to them. They gave up some party to come to a Section Club event (60th year), believe it or not. And Mrs. Gardner showed up the other day when the northern campuses Section Clubs met in Davis for the annual meeting. The Heymans openly admit that the Section Club is a nuisance. Yet there are a few things that we have to do there. Section Club is really in a pickle, having no place really to meet and do our thing.

Riess: Where do you purchase flowers to supplement things here?

Holmes: Ashby Flower Shop or any place. Sometimes I get plants out my way in Orinda where I know the quality is good.

Riess: Do you go to the flower market?

Holmes: I used to. But the traffic has gotten so terrible. I feel like I have to bring my son or somebody because if you get an armload of flowers and all those people, and everything's wet and heavy, I need help! But we used to do it. Still go for pin frogs and vases and supplies.

We used to get the flowers for Charter Day from campus and the flower market, and I'd arrange them up there at University House. I'd get paid by Maggie. Now that's all changed. There is no more University-wide Charter Day. This year they dedicated the Clark Kerr Campus.

Charter Day was always interesting, because Maggie or the president would move it around. If they were honoring a professor from the Law School we would have it out on their patio. Usually lunch in Pauley Ballroom. Charter celebration, Greek Theatre. But we've had lunch outside, when they dedicated the new bells for the Campanile. Had to anchor things! Makes a difference when the wind is blowing. [laughs] Some days we'd just about die from the heat, other days the wind took over. When they had the protestors they had to move to Zellerbach, and that kind of cut the joy out of it. The flags make it such a celebration, but the low, balcony ceiling in there--it just wasn't right.

Riess: Did you have to deal with the flower and pollen allergies of visiting dignitaries?

Holmes: Yes. One of the chancellor's wives over in the city couldn't stand anything! But there are plants and greens that don't have pollen to bother most people.

Riess: Do you have any stories of strange things, funny things, that happened about the arranging?

Holmes: There was one time we had a fawn in here. The kitchen door was open on a hot day. Of course the floor is kind of slick for a deer. It hopped around. We had a Negro maid at that time, and she was really frightened. Maggie tripped and almost fell down the stairs trying to see what was happening. She just picked this little fawn up and went out the door!

Back to Maggie. Maggie was wonderful, really. Very complimentary. If everything went right she'd phone me up and say, "Everything was just perfect!" It made you feel good. She was very understanding, good directions as to what was wanted. Great leader in the many interesting parts of her life.

Holmes: From this work I have met many wonderful people. One thing leads to another in friendships. I have done a number of weddings, special events, and memorials for dear friends. I feel

Holmes: complimented that people do like my relaxed way of flower arranging, not stiff like florist things. Each day is a new and different challenge, never a repeat, always something different. I guess they like my work. I'm still around in my old age--still have plenty to do!

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Blake Estate Oral History Project

Linda Haymaker

THE HISTORICAL VALIDITY OF BLAKE GARDEN

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

LINDA HAYMAKER
at Blake Garden

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Linda Haymaker has worked at Blake Gardens since 1973 when as a student she was hired by Walter Vodden. Ms. Haymaker is in the tradition of strong and gifted women landscape architects that includes Miss Mabel Symmes, the garden's original designer, and Geraldine Knight Scott. And the admiration and sympathy for her predecessors are obvious in Ms. Haymaker's careful explication of the reasons for the garden's excellences.

I had met Linda Haymaker several times in the course of my first visits to the Blake Gardens, but an interview with her was not part of the original design of the Blake House Oral History Project. Oral history tends to overlook people under forty. By definition she could not have known Mr. and Mrs. Blake, and unless carried as an infant in arms could not have seen them. Linda Haymaker arrived at Blake Gardens in an historical vacuum. How could she add to the story?

But in the thirteen years of working by the side of Walter Vodden, until 1986 when he retired, Linda had been an audience for Mr. Vodden's recollections of Miss Mabel Symmes and Mrs. Anita Blake. That lore whetted her appetite for more. She delved into the available historical records and wrote an article on the gardens published in Pacific Horticulture in Spring 1987. I felt the author had an exceptional understanding of the original garden and its designers. I wondered what she might say in the conversational setting of oral history that she had not said in the published article.

Linda Haymaker agreed to an interview. Her very thoughtful, informed responses to my questions showed how well acquainted she is with the garden and its history and how ably she verbalizes her feelings--and feelings are for her much of what makes the garden interesting. In a way, this oral history project's ideal audience is Linda Haymaker's generation. That she was already asking many of the same questions in her own research was not surprising.

We met in the glasshouse at Blake Gardens for an hour of taping and then took a walk to see Linda's favorite garden spots. In the months after the interview we continued to pursue the whereabouts of Mabel Symmes's papers, and through a certain doggedness located caches in the University's Department of Landscape Architecture, in the Strybing Arboretum Library, San Francisco. and in the University Herbarium in the Life Sciences Building, Berkeley. Several of those "discoveries" are appended.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 29, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name LINLA M HAYMAKER

Date of birth 3-8-51 Place of birth SAN DIEGO, CA

Father's full name FRANK H HAYMAKER

Birthplace SAN FERNANDO VALLEY, CA

Occupation WRITER EDITOR

Mother's full name NORMA E. HAYMAKER

Birthplace SALK COUNTY DISCALSI

Occupation WIFE, MOTHER, REGISTERED R.N.

Where did you grow up ? MOJAVE DESERT (CHINA LAKE, CA)

Present community ALBANY, CA

Education BA UC BERKELEY 1978

MA CONWAY SCHOOL OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN 1985 (MAG)

Occupation(s) LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, GARDENING, DESIGN
AND HORTICULTURE

Special interests or activities ALBANY WATERFRONT COMMITTEE
(DESIGN ADVISORY BD TO PLANNING + ZONING, CITY COUNCIL).
PUBLIC ACCESS TO DESIGN DECISIONMAKING, WRITING, LECTURING.
PRIVATE COX L. AND DESIGN.

I LIKE SPORTS, TRAVELING, QUIET EVENINGS AT HOME, MUSIC

The Garden's Designers

[Date of Interview: May 27, 1987]

Sensitivity to Site

Riess: We're here to ferret out anything we can about the Blakes and Mabel Symmes. You've worked here and you've written about the garden.* I'm interested in how you've pieced it all together.

Haymaker: It's an amazing collection of facts that comes together in so many different ways depending on who you talk to. I think that was part of the mystery for me when I first started working here, I guess it was in '70 or '71, as a student. I heard a lot of lore about the garden. Some of the stories didn't mesh too well; there were lots of very interesting stories.

It became a real desire for me, enjoying and actually loving this property as much as I did, to try to uncover through the garden itself--rather than from people and hearsay and stories--what I really felt the evolution of the garden was. That is something in a restoration process that a lot of times you have to do from indicators, relics that you find within the garden. Uncovering little bridges someplace, or finding areas for seating, or paths that haven't been seen for thirty years that you discover have gone to an interesting little spot. How does it all add up together?

A lot of what I really felt a strong need to find out was what these women were doing both in terms of design and in terms of the horticulture right here in the garden. What that collection probably was, what the planting evolution was quite

*"Blake Garden," Pacific Horticulture, Vol. 48, No. 1, Spring 1987, pp. 8-13, by Linda Haymaker.

Haymaker: likely to have been, and how they probably progressed along with the site in a certain type of design direction. Because you don't know that kind of stuff. You know stories about how Mrs. Blake would always go to the Cal Hort meetings and show certain very esoteric special plants that only she owned and that she wouldn't give to anybody else because she wanted to have her collection. And you hear stories about small—I assume they're small—sisterly rivalries about territory in the garden and how they handled that.

But what I wanted to work with was the fact that there was an amazing sensitivity to the site on this piece of property, and to ask how they put the design into the land, and how they evolved this particular garden and garden system here at that time. Because the standard fare that you got in the twenties was a kind of a--what would you call it? the California exotic garden, that you saw so much of particularly in the Santa Barbara area and the southern California area. The grand estate, the exclamation of exotic materials like palm trees and tropical things, the showmanship of the garden.

I think a lot that was special--and I mean incredibly special--about this garden was that they were able to somehow make a unique California garden. They were trying new things, not new plants but—I guess "new" is the wrong word. Maybe more developing a technique that was going to be more of a California style of planting, in a sense a rougher style—I certainly wouldn't call it less sophisticated at all. I would call it more sophisticated than eastern gardens in the sense that it identifies a special aesthetic from the existing landscape and its vegetation; we have here such a diverse and naturally wide-ranging kind of native flora that the people like the Spaniards and the earlier settlers in California had not really explored. They'd come into the grassland or chaparral, they'd say, "Well, we need our lilac trees, we'll put in some palm trees, we'll put in a few orchard trees for our food, and this is what our garden will be." Those were more of the mission-style gardens, frontier gardens.

In the twenties I believe there was a strong new phase in garden development—I think it was probably allied with this arts and crafts style that was happening in California then, during the twenties—a returning to the native material and locally crafted arts, exploring the natural beauty that hopefully would be existing in the area. Some artists were exploring that and exploiting that, rather than trying to bring in this fully exotic collection. I think the Blakes did both—kept up some of the more traditional standards of horticultural collection, and developed new ideas and directions of their own, based on their unique site constraints and assets.

Riess: There are no models around here for what they did? Would you have assumed that on the basis of your research?

Haymaker: I think the models that I know about probably were developing concurrently, probably in the twenties, thirties and forties, with, say, the Tilden Botanical Garden, which was a real pioneer garden in terms of promoting and growing native material exclusively. But you see the California Horticultural Society formed in the very early thirties, and that was a real effervescent kind of bubbling of people's ideas together that was I think extremely fortunate to be happening at that time even though it came from a negative impetus. [The California Horticultural Society was formed in 1935 to pool knowledge, after a devastating freeze.]

Riess: But you'd say that these sisters already had a lot of those ideas, independently?

Haymaker: They had a lot of ideas; they had a lot of contact, largely through their particular background in design and in horticulture, but also because they had money to be spending in avocational ways, towards the plants. But it's my feeling, especially with Mrs. Blake, that it was kind of an isolated sort of event, that the Blake garden was a separate and distinct interest, based on Symmes' and Blake's predilections. They would go through their particular contacts--social or scholastic or whatever--and would get through seed exchanges or gifts, very unusual seed. They would grow them up, they would put them out in the garden, they would test their beauty and growability.

You sort of need to ask the question, "Are they doing this for the love of the plants? Are they doing this for the love of trying to create a garden on this relatively dry hillside with not a whole lot of water? What are they trying to do?" Of course they had a very rare and valuable collection, and a great number of species. So you have to say there's a certain kind of quantity involved in what they were doing that was designed to be impressive.

Riess: That's a way the garden's talked about, "twenty-five hundred plant species"; at least at a certain time that was how it was referred to, the quantitative aspect.

Haymaker: There was also a lot of real sensitivity for the effect of what they were creating. It's impossible to tell exactly what it looked like from early photos and large scale drawings, but I imagine in certain respects there was this desire to avoid a hodge-podge feeling that you get in botanical presentation, where you're trying to grow a lot of different things, often one or two of each one, just to see how they look, how they respond, what their presentation is for the garden.

Historical Records

Riess: Are there planting plans then from year to year that you can refer to? Are they in the archives here?

Haymaker: That would be incredible if they were. We do have some good photos from the '20s and '30s, that help to portray the garden's progression. I have asked a lot of people where Miss Symmes' drawings were, and I heard that they were over in Strybing. I called Strybing, I tried to find where they were over there--nobody knew. I suppose they could be in some library over there, I wouldn't be surprised if they were found sometime. But again, it's this detective thing, they would have to be uncovered there.*

There was a real unfortunate lack of understanding about what to do with all this stuff when Miss Symmes died and their papers were disposed of. I don't know if you talked to Walter Vodden about this, but he said that essentially all of a sudden there were people over there--I don't know who died last, it was one of the women, I think it was Mrs. Blake--

Riess: Yes, it was.

Haymaker: People were throwing stuff out right and left, just by huge room-fuls of material. Walter said that he went over there and tried to salvage whatever he could that he thought was important, but there was just piles and piles and boxes and boxes full of stuff.

Riess: Mabel died earlier. Do you know whether her room was emptied out earlier?

Haymaker: I don't. Presumably they had the whole trust thing worked out with the University, and wherever books were given, a lot of the books went to Strybing. There was apparently a lot of duplication in their library, and several other libraries--probably Beatrix Farrand's and a few others that went to Cal--so that was why they wanted to send some over to Strybing or elsewhere, so that they would disperse a lot of the material. But somewhere along the way--and it could be just the fact that there isn't a complete cataloguing of all these things--there may have been overflow places where this material went, to some other building or some other library, and they're just still boxed up someplace. I know it's not unusual.

*Some letters to Mabel Symmes have been located in the Strybing Arboretum Archives, including notes from James West. [7/14/87]
See Appendices, II.

Riess: But you know that there is material there?

Haymaker: I know that there was material there.

Riess: And we know that from Walter?

Haymaker: Well, for instance in here* Gerry Scott has a drawing that Mabel Symmes made of the two gardens. The original of this is on yellow flimsy trace paper and is located in the Landscape Architecture Department drawings room. This is a site plan of Quinta de las Lilas [Villa of the Lilacs], which was Edwin's property, and La Casa Adelante, which was Blake Garden. This was, as it says here, drawn by Mabel Symmes, landscape architect, although it doesn't have a date. I imagine it was right about 1930, maybe a little bit earlier. This gives you the obvious deduction that there was professional drawing and thinking going on here. This was the entire site plan, and I believe there would have been some section plans and particular small-scale drawings of the various borders and beds and what-have-you. The other thing that we got, which I thought I would bring up today-- I don't know if you've seen these--this is Miss Symmes' three-by-five card files of all the plants.

Riess: That's wonderful. Does it say where the plant is located in the garden?

Haymaker: Sometimes it does. It sometimes has the source. It was basically I believe her trying to do some form of cataloguing with the correct names, the flower colors. This was done I believe in conjunction with the Royal Horticultural Society. They did an encyclopedic survey with all the color ranges of the botanic material that was drawn here. So a lot of what this was doing was saying what the plant was, the species, hopefully the origin, and the color of the flower. I don't know why this flower color code was so important, but apparently it was, and they had that catalogued through some sort of a standardized international color source where you would match this up and say what it was. That was part of how these herbarium specimens for collection were indexed and compared to other species colors.

Riess: When was this project done?

Haymaker: This was done in the later thirties and early forties. Probably it was discontinued by the Second World War, but that's what the reason for this was. It's a very interesting file. This is the

*Long-range Development Plan for Blake Estate, Appendix NN.

Haymaker: only real evidence that I've ever found of what plants were grown here. Walter remembers certain planting combinations; he remembered a lot more even when I first started working here than he did in '86 when he retired. Many of the plants, you can come back here and look up and see yes, indeed, there was this plant. What this won't tell you is the planting combination, and that is really the most interesting thing, is how they were combined. I understand that although they had a very broad range of what they would collect and grow, from trees down to bulbs, that their specialty area of interest was herbaceous and South African bulbs and smaller things. They're much easier to play with, they flower a lot, and they're faster. It's a more--[pauses] feminine way of looking at the garden, generally at a smaller scale, more detailed, rather than as the large structure plants.

Riess: Then these things adapt themselves to the rocky outcroppings in the back of the house?

Haymaker: Yes. There's really a limit to how many trees or even shrubs you can have.

The Two Sisters, Anita Blake and Mabel Symmes

Haymaker: Basically it was very fortunate that Mabel Symmes was trained as a landscape architect, because she was able to certainly form a very thorough and efficient structure system for the whole garden. Primarily this extensive windbreak system that she had all down the north section and across the west end, that really sheltered the top part of the garden from the winds. But also just aesthetically to get these axes in the garden working properly, and to have shrubs and trees that really began to define areas.

Riess: It is interesting that this garden really began when the house began. It appears to have all been of a piece. The thinking apparently was going on even before they moved over, because they brought plants from Piedmont Ave., where they lived. Can you see any signs--do you know which ones might have come from Piedmont Avenue?

Haymaker: Walter knows a few stories about plants, basically Mrs. Blake being extremely concerned about how plants were moved and having these old-fashioned wagon loads--I guess they were drawn by horses at that time--of plants that were dug up and very carefully burlapped over the roots and carried four or five miles all the way out here and put into the garden. I don't know the exact plants that they were, but I know that it happened.

Haymaker: I know that Mrs. Blake was the detail particular person who would oversee all the minutiae of the garden detailing. She would drive Walter crazy a lot of the time, and she would go out into the rose garden at pruning time and point to the gardeners and tell them where to make each and every cut on the roses. That didn't go over too well. I think Walter really respected her a great deal, but of course by that time she was very old, she was in her eighties, and I'm sure that she was cantankerous some of the time about how she wanted things to be done.

Riess: But Miss Symmes was a different character.

Haymaker: Miss Symmes was a lot more laid back. They were both, as I understand it, fairly formal people, but Miss Symmes was certainly the gentler of the two, she was much more approachable. If, for instance, Walter would want to know the name of the plant, if Mrs. Blake was around, Mrs. Blake would probably recall it pretty quick and give him the name of the plant. Miss Symmes would maybe remember it, maybe not, but if she didn't remember it right off she'd say, "I'll think of it in a little while. Come by the house and I'll let you know." She would write it down on a little piece of paper and give it to Walter.

Miss Symmes was the one that was really concerned in trying to get an education process about the plants from the Blakes into the University mostly via Walter. She really took great pains to try to teach him as many plants as possible. I think that was maybe why she was sometimes not so quick about the plant, because if Walter would come over there then they could look it up in the sources and they could talk about it, and she could explain things about it, and it was more of a conversational process rather than straight facts. Straight facts are great, but they have their limits as to how much functional information can be given.

Riess: That's interesting. Walter is very important in all of this. It sounds like he's it, there were no other sort of apprenticed people.

The Department of Landscape Architecture and the Garden

- Haymaker: The only other person that was really around then was Mai Arbegast; she was doing the tree and shrub survey of the garden, and she acted as a kind of a diplomatic liaison between the department and the house and tried to keep some kind of connection open. But I don't think--.
- Riess: She was doing the survey based on her own plant knowledge then?
- Haymaker: Some, and there was help from a number of students. I think a lot of the plants were known or in the trade. There were many, many plants that were real esoteric that she would have to probably look up in an encyclopedic way in the records and then verify them with the Blakes. I think it was Mai that did a lot of that cross-cataloguing stuff.
- Riess: But an independant operator, in any event, rather than the kind of relationship that Walter had.
- Haymaker: Yes, she was teaching on campus and Walter was here at the garden. Remember that at that time the whole garden structure of design was much more formal. When they moved out here the Blakes were either in their late forties or fifties, very well established in a certain regime of garden protocol and operation, which was quite Victorian and certainly more old world than anything we would even begin to consider now. Mr. Blake always walked around the garden in full dress attire, with a suit, a hat, a white shirt and a tie. I think even both of the women really dressed for the garden, that they didn't really get out there and grub, as many women of means will do today. It's more accepted, even in English circles I think, to be kind of dotty about one's garden and to want to go out there and do things, than it was in a lot of American society.
- Riess: So what are the implications of this, that you don't talk to the gardeners?

Haymaker: I think it would have been that. Certainly in this political intervening between the Blakes and the University, where there was the period of time when the Blakes were considering giving the property to the University, they were having various negotiations with the Department of Landscape Architecture, probably a lot with Professor Vaughan, who was the department chairman, and who was as far as I can tell the great chairman of the Department of Landscape Architecture. He was really a very unusual and highly-thought-of individual who had a great breadth of knowledge and was able to do a wide range of diplomatic efforts. I think that he embraced this effort and made it as successful as it was. But I think that Mai Arbogast was also one of the principal people. She was either a graduate student or a lecturer at that time.

I think her real strength was her ability to do this encyclopedic survey, and also in her attention to detail I think she really made a lot of strong effort to try to keep some active connection between the department and the Blakes. She knew the Blakes, and she has told me that she would call them up frequently and just keep a dialogue going. That's something that would seem obvious but that just doesn't happen very often. Keep them remembering the University, and make it that much easier for them to actually give the property over.

That was the big thing for the department, was getting the property over. I think particularly at that time of garden design they probably thought, "Oh, we've got to really clean this place up." The fifties was kind of the ultimate in garden geometry and technology, force and chemicals over nature, this whole thing. I imagine that there was a lot about this that was frightening to the Blakes, and frightening to the department, about how those two forces were going to interconnect. It would be the standard difference that you always get of the older people wanting to preserve their tradition and the younger energy coming through. I think especially at that time there must have been a real conflict--especially on an emotional level, not even so much on a political or physical level, but those realms would have to have been a reactive part of the process, too.

Riess: You are just assuming that--and I think correctly so--but there's no correspondence back and forth, or promises--?

Haymaker: It's true that it is an assumption, but it's based on a lot of conversations that I've had with people in the garden. The people that have come out to the garden, people that have known the Blakes, and explained to me about what their process was, stories I've heard about the Blakes, a lot of what Walter has told me, and the kind of conflicts that he had in that intervening time.

Haymaker: Walter was in something of an unenviable position, right in the middle of all that muddle, and he really was the one guy that kind of had to carry everything through and got the shooting on all sides. I think you really have to give him a lot of credit for, one, being able to take on all that stuff, and two (Gerrie says something about this in the preface to her Long-range Plan) the fact that he really did have a lot of loyalty for the Blakes. He really made a strong attempt to try to understand what it was they had done here, try to understand whatever it was that was their love of the garden, and to be a kind of a guardian for that interest even after they left. Walter did learn a great deal of plant material, and he tried to learn as much as he could about how the plant material was taken care of traditionally by the Blakes. But he also was very dogged in his determination about not letting people just come along and tear something down for the hell of it.

There was a heck of a lot of that going on in large "older" estates. It would have been real easy for the University to come in and say, "We are going to renew this garden; we're going to modernize it and update, and make it a nice, current place." Walter was real important in helping the Blake interest--whatever you want to say the Blake interest was--say, "No, wait a minute, you've got to look at the individual plants and plantings and have some real respect, historical and otherwise, for the fact that this is here and has in its presence become a sense of history."

Riess: So the first person who came in from the department really was Gerry Scott, was it not?

Haymaker: To do a comprehensive design plan for the garden, yes. Mai and Bob Raabe preceded her as directors.

Restoration of the Garden

Understanding the Designers' Motivation

Haymaker: A modern trend of '50s landscape design was to "clear and conquer," to do this simplification—if you want to call it that—opening it up, broadening out the lines, making everything more open, incredibly, shudderingly homogenous in the plantings and in the esthetic of what you would look at. You look back at that now and it was this agricultural point of view, where you have monoculture, and the beauty of it is looking over the vast fields of crops or whatever it is. But it's impossible to maintain that, it's impossible to maintain a half an acre of *Hypericum* and have it look all perfect at the same time.

It's way too artificial and whenever it does get prone to all the things it's going to get prone to it sticks out badly. For one thing, you will look at that planting and a blight will show up immediately because it will be different from the other things. For another thing, if an insect or an imbalance gets in there, it runs in there in a big way, and that was this very delicate balance that people were always trying to do with a lot of manpower and a lot of chemicals, to keep that balance and this control over the landscape. We've given up on that, because it just hasn't worked, it's too costly.

Riess: When we opened this interview, you said you were trying to—I don't know what your word was—renovate or recreate the garden that was here at some point in time.

Haymaker: There are certain parts of the garden that we've tried to restore.

Riess: What point are you going back to in garden time for this place?

Haymaker: I think I'm going back to a state of mind more than I'm going back to a particular point of time, because you can't ever go exactly back to what it was. It was a time and a period in

Haymaker: history that because of their means, and because of this eclecticism that was so prevalent at the time and all this, that you wouldn't want to and you couldn't recreate that. There's a different resource and a different mind set.

What I want to do is understand what their motivation was to make a certain effect, and how they were able to in my opinion really understand what made the lay of this land so unique and so beautiful. And how they worked with it in what I consider to be a feminine style of design, and unusual at that time, because most of the gardens were done by men. They nurtured the on-going processes in this garden and promoted natural features and resources in a unifying and graceful manner. The residential structure was long and a bulky mass to try to coordinate with the site, but the two were reconciled by garden structures and plantings allied to the building, as well as away from it. Compare this garden to one like Filoli, which is a fairly well-known and popular garden from the same period, and that was designed by a male architect [Bruce Porter]. It's a completely different statement of process and desired effect.

Unusual Features of the Garden

Haymaker: The reason that this garden is so unusual and so lovable is that it does things like take the two natural stream systems that are going through the garden and allow them to do that in a harmonious and gracious kind of manner. It allows them to be the north and the south boundaries of the garden, the natural boundaries, but enables you to understand why they are good natural boundaries, in making them that. In another instance, the formal garden, which is the most contrived part of the garden--also in many respects one of the most interesting or memorable--has certain cliches that work really well, and the whole reason this was designed here was that drained the spring system of all the water coming down the hill. It put them in a collecting basin [pointing to map], made them go in this picturesque overflow, go across underneath the roadway out into the grotto, drip down the back of the grotto into the formal pool--this being the main garden feature, the formal pool--then going into an overflow off the formal pool into a side garden, and then back down into the stream system here. Very, very simple way of dealing with excess water, making it into the garden feature.

Mabel Symmes' Vision

Riess: I wonder whether Mabel brought Harry Shepherd, or any of the other department people out here. Who did she have holding her hand—did she need anyone holding her hand?

Haymaker: That is a really good question. I think she was a real bright woman. I think that she probably worked a lot by herself. People will say things like, "Well, what did Mabel Symmes do, anyway?" or, "Was she really a landscape architect, what were her exact qualifications?" This is coming from people in the department. I don't think she promoted herself at all, I think she had enough means through the family and through colleagues to get work to do certain things as a designer within the region, and to stay busy and do this field of work. I think a lot of it--(her low profile)--was probably because she was a woman, but I think part of it also was that she didn't really have to promote herself; she chose to kind of go about a quiet way of designing. Blake Garden would have been a major interest.

Riess: But this shows a lot of sureness and bigness, what she did here.

Haymaker: It does, not only in the fact that she could create this here, the formal garden--which has aged very, very well, and which was built with amazing precision. Mr. Blake made his money in the rock quarry business, so of course he had the resource of the rock, etc., but she was able to get the Italian stone masons to lay the schemes into the land in a way that was technically very expert. I can't know if that was she being an overseer and paying attention to those details or if that was the kind of quality old world workmanship that was still available then in the masonry line. The fact was that the structures were well designed and executed, and that the Blakes obviously had enough money and vision to realize an extremely good job on that work. It was the earliest part of the garden. If you look at the old, old pictures, you see the grotto coming up out of nothing into the hillside. They were smart enough to realize that that was where you needed to start, and that they should start with the hardest part and put the rest of the garden around it.

She also did things--this is the sort of the flip-flop of her design ability: she was able to create this formalistic effect exceedingly well, but then you watch what she did down into the canyon area, and you see how she has this whole naturalistic system down in through here. Right now there's a reflecting pond up here, and then little tiny waterfalls, and then two collecting ponds. Then it comes down and back into the stream system.

Haymaker: But she does the same thing with the water down here in the woodland situation as she does with the water here in the Italianate garden. Both work really well in very different ways, and both look great still. If you could say there's two sections of the garden that you really must preserve in their intended way, it would be the formal garden and the redwood canyons. These sections over here [pointing to map: Bog Garden, West Section, Australia Hollow, Cut Flower Garden] are more expendable. I think a lot because they weren't as thoroughly executed to begin with, whereas these two were, and I'm sure these were the favorite parts of the garden. Both were real sheltered parts of the garden. This was sheltered sunny [Formal Garden] and this was sheltered shady [Redwood Canyon].

History and Precedent

Riess: As you've studied the little paths, and perhaps unearthed statuary and benches back there, you can tell then how they walked through it and what they were heading for? Do you feel that it was a garden for the three of them? Who was it for?

Haymaker: I think it was for the three of them, but I think it was for something that was beyond them, too. You can't say that it was to impress their friends really, but I think it was for something higher that they really did believe in, and who knows what that was. I have no idea what their philosophy of life was or anything, I don't know what their world view consisted of, but a person can understand something through the richness of the lore that we have in the garden, even through the kind of things that exist, the little fertility goddess that's here behind the house kind of protecting things and being rich and simple, something that you find yourself as a garden inhabitant coming upon one day.

You come upon these things, and they're not ordinary things, they're like buried treasure. You come upon them and you say, I've got to know what that is, and you keep asking somebody about them until they tell you the story of the fertility goddess, or they'll tell you the story of Kuan Yin, or they'll tell you how the little pool system got developed down in the garden. And then you as an on-going part of history begin to uncover how it was and how it could or will be unveiled now and in the future. That's part of being a good designer, originally or in restoration, to understand what is integral, and what makes it special or magical or whatever you want to call it. Enjoying that, but enjoying that in a style that is appropriate to its original intent.

Riess: Have you had people other than Walter walking through the gardens who were Blake contemporaries or reasonably so, and who have been informants for you?

Haymaker: Longtime neighbors in this area have supplied some data. Very occasionally we have had visitors to the garden who have known the Blakes and will relate a story or two. Most of what I've learned has come from Walter or from various landscape architects and horticulturists, who either had met the Blakes, were affiliated with the department, or know the garden. For instance, recollections of a person like Marshall Olbrich, who is the owner of the Western Hills Nursery up in Occidental, and who knew about the Blakes from the Cal Hort Society, and who knows and has a vast appreciation of gardens in general. He can make comments as a man in his sixties and master in his field about observations that he has had here, or ask me questions about what's still happening here. Michael Laurie of UCB has been a very important long-term link between Blake Garden and the department, and he was involved with Gerrie's master plan. Then of course Gerrie and Mai.

Riess: You mentioned Western Hills Nursery; how about other nurserymen, suppliers, contractors and so on? In gathering history, have you had any contact with people she was ordering materials from?

Haymaker: No. You have to understand that she wasn't ordering from Western Hills. She was involved in Cal Hort, and all these people that had nurseries or were growing interesting things were involved in Cal Hort and that's what their connections are. They knew her, or of her, and they admired or respected her, and they loved the garden and its unusual plants. They remember either coming to the garden in their very early years—like in their twenties or thirties--or hearing lore in the early days of Cal Hort. The active growers now are much younger, in their twenties or thirties. They could certainly supply the kind of material needed to restore it, if that is to happen.

Even though the focus of the formal garden is Italianate, the detailing is Asian, and that comes from the fact that both Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes were great collectors of Chinese art at the time, and they got all these artifacts—they had scrolls and screens and everything else—for the inside of their house. There was a Chinese theme in the detailing that you see in the tile and in the statuary in the garden. Then what evolved either by chance or by particular intent was that the plant material in the inner formal garden is largely Chinese. There's the deutzias and the rhododendrons and the azaleas and this exotic semi-tropical feeling that also blends extremely well with the detailing of the statuary.

Riess: They could have gotten a lot of that material from people like Toichi Domoto, in Hayward?

Haymaker: I would think so, nurserymen who were doing the cutting edge work in horticulture with those cultivar forms.

Mediterranean-Style Planting

Riess: There are references to the garden looking like the Villa Tuscalana.

Haymaker: That comes from Gerry Scott's reference, and Gerry Scott lived in Italy for a number of years and visited countless villas there, and knows the Italianate garden style probably better than anybody in the region. So she was able to see that connection and refer to it as such--I don't know if Mabel Symmes had been to that particular garden or not, though I understand she traveled, but she was able to make the grotto and stairway in an Italian design. This is an Italian garden, but it is a specific style. Grottos were very popular in the twenties, and it could be she just saw a picture in a book that she liked, or combined features from memory.

Riess: Sure, so there was published material, at least about Italian gardens.

Haymaker: Yes. Italian gardens because they were also Mediterranean gardens of a similar aspect to the California garden.

Riess: Was there any thinking about the whole idea of native plants, and growing natives in drought areas at that time?

Haymaker: There was a tremendous amount of thinking about growing plants in general in the drought areas, but it wasn't so specifically or carefully on natives as it is now. As our native population of plants is dwindling and becoming more precious decade by decade, we're trying to do much more with that. The native thrust--I know that there were some insurgencies that way in California as early as the twenties, led by Californian nurseries and authors like Lester Rowntree. But I think their (Anita and Mabel's) particular interest was in what we're now calling appropriate horticulture, in Mediterranean-style plantings. Even that's sort of a poor term; you'd want to get more specific and call it California style or something like that in this day and age. What you're wanting to do is not get exactly a xerophytic kind of plant, like a desert plant, but you would want to get a plant that adapts extremely well and thrives under this particular

Haymaker: climate condition, Mediterranean or California, or San Francisco East Bay, and looks really good, will naturalize or evolve on this kind of a site.

Riess: If the house and the gardens weren't here, is this a lush wildflower area, do you think, come spring--naturally?

Haymaker: I think that there would be fertile areas certainly in spring—we have two or three naturally occurring spring areas—you would get these meadow effects, and the vernal pools of water-loving and then drought-tolerant kinds of plants. But a great deal of the garden faces towards the south and towards the west, and those kinds of areas dry off pretty easy and fast as far as wildflowers go and spring progresses. They would get burned over occasionally, whereas your draws, the very bottom of the southern canyon and certainly the greater part of the northern canyon, would be your woodland kind of plants. So that you'd get a lot of wildflowers, but they'd be shrub or tree wildflowers rather than meadow or bank or grassland types that you would get maybe up on the hill. They really did try to work with the smaller, lower-growing plants in a naturalistic way, but I think more naturalistic rather than native.

Riess: When you refer to a kind of feminine garden, it sounds like you've meant sort of lower, hugging the terrain.

Haymaker: Well, yes, that was one of the styles within which they worked, but I also mean nurturing in the sense that they really chose to work within this body that was this piece of land here, and within this very unique topography. They promoted it rather than changed it.

The Edwin Blake Garden

Riess: What are the connections between the Edwin Blake garden and the Anson Blake garden? The rose garden is the only real connection from a design point of view between the two.

Haymaker: Yes. This part of the garden is cut off now by the monastery wall. There's a little bridge here, and they used to have dinner at each other's homes on Saturday nights, one week here and the next week there. They would be full formal-dress dinners and they would go in their carriage through the garden here—I'm sure it was a grand procession--and dine here one week, and then come back here the next week.

Haymaker: I don't think that Edwin really had this strong garden interest. I think that he was perfectly happy to do the little entrance garden here. But even if you're looking at this old, old plan you can see that these here are very wide, broad areas, and would have been much more of the native kind of plantings that you were alluding to earlier, where you had what they were calling the ceanothus woods and probably oaks, and ninebark and all the rest of that kind of woodland stuff that would just be in here naturally. I assume that they pretty much preserved that.

Riess: So what she did was create paths.

Haymaker: That kind of just went through it via the topography. Whereas you can see even to begin that there's much more intricacy to all the little things going on here, in the Anson Blake garden.

Riess: How did you know that they went back and forth by carriage?

Haymaker: Walter told me that, and I'm sure the Blakes told him that. There's this little bridge here, and that's how I came to ask him, because I uncovered the bridge one time. "What's this bridge for? It's the bridge to nowhere." He said, "Oh, no, this is what we did here."

There's another really interesting thing that's on record which is this article by Mabel Symmes.* It doesn't talk about their dinners there, but she talks about the spring walk, which was this walk right here along the way.

*"Adelante," by Mabel Symmes, California Horticultural Society Journal. See Appendices, CC.

The Garden Today

Riess: Do you think that Gerrie Scott's work in 1962 obscured the original garden?

Haymaker: No, not at all, I think Gerrie was and is the most sensitive person who has dealt with this garden since the Blakes. I consider that this garden has had only two designers really: one was Miss Symmes, a landscape architect, and the other was Mrs. Scott, a landscape architect. The big question is who is going to take on this third realm of what's happening now. It's high time that something did happen, and you need a wide-ranging ability to deal with the land, the garden design, the horticulture. You need somebody who can deal with the historical perspective, you need somebody that can deal with the landscape-architectural, constructive points of view, and you need somebody that knows horticulture up and down, that can really take all the older plantings that are here and say, "This part is great; this part isn't great."

It's a critical kind of question to ask, because it's past time for this stuff to be done, and you know there's new management out here. The garden at its best traditionally has been guided by someone who can see the clear vision of the garden, someone who is trained in landscape architecture and who understands what is important and why, and can keep that--not only just preserved, but as you have to have in a garden, healthy and on-going. And keep the structural things: which structural things are important? And how do you support the structural things by the lines of the design that you put in and the horticulture that accompanies those? Also we have quite a few aging garden structures, like the formal pool and the old magnolia trees that border it, that are in very bad decline. We have the shelter belt plantings down here that are senescent and need replacing. This requires a great deal of sensitivity and phased design work, phased renovation.

Riess: What is the situation now? It's just on hold?

Haymaker: I guess you would say that we have someone to take over Walter's place but we don't have anybody to take the place of the Symmes-Scott kind of insight, and that's a really strong need now. It's the need that's going to make or break the garden's success in the future.

Something has to happen with the influx of concern that we're getting in the garden, particularly from the President's Office, and if you're going to have an increased budget, and an increased awareness of the garden, and a lot of money pumped into it, you have to have a sophisticated outlook and a professional outlook of how that is going to be spent. Otherwise you're going to get the money spent, but you're not going to get it spent effectively or artistically—artistically isn't the right word. You're going to get the money spent and that's all you're going to get.

Riess: It can be spent and the whole thing can be gradually running downhill all the time it's being spent.

Haymaker: If it's spent without the right perspective being placed on the focus of how it's going to be spent, then you can do irreparable damage very quickly. If they decided in five years to hire a landscape architect, the landscape architect could come in and be dealing with literally the ruins of a garden rather than with the potential of a garden.

Riess: I asked you earlier to what period you were trying to restore the garden, and I know what you said to that, but just for fun, do you think that there was a peak in this garden?

Haymaker: I think there were two peaks. There was a peak which was almost at the very beginning, which was this wonderful enthusiasm that they had, and imagination and resource, of putting the structure down into the garden. You might call it the Italianate crafted style. There was also the horticultural peak which was when they really had this massive collection here, which was probably in the thirties before the full effects of the Depression and the beginning effects of World War II began to really take their toll. So what you would see as an effective restoration point would be the crafted style of the twenties and following in the style of this California kind of garden, but restoring the formal garden and the redwood canyon to their potential. Then carrying on probably a more contemporary horticultural and design style in these western and southern slopes that still need an incredible lot of—not even renewal—just basic working out and planting out, and maturation.

Riess: All of this could work with the teaching function for people in the landscape department?

Haymaker: Certainly. The key thing here, of course, is that you have to have a landscape architect who knows what they're doing, is sensitive to this site, and horticulturally expert, to oversee that. Then you can take the physical resources and promote all the incredible professional resources of both the students and the staff here, and the ability to spend money for tree work or whatever you need. You can plan to coordinate them so that they all fit together into one grand flowing picture instead of conflicting.

Transcriber: Johanna Wolgast
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Igor Robert Blake

June, 1971

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Geneological Charts - The Blake Family in America.

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Anson Gale Stiles' House, San Francisco, California

AND IN AMERICA

William Blake, born in 1594 in Pitminster, Somerset, England, came to America some time between 1630 and 1636 and settled in Dorchester, Massachusetts. His move to America from England seems to have paralleled the republican leanings of his cousin, Admiral Robert Blake, noted below, who allied himself with the Commonwealth. William was the son of William Blake, grandson of John Blake and the great-grandson of Humphrey Blake. In 1555 Humphrey Blake took over the estate of Tuxwell in Spaxton Parish near Bishop Lydeard, Somerset and died in 1558.

John Blake's grandnephew was Admiral Robert Blake who was born in 1598 and entered Wadham College, Oxford in 1615. He was elected member of Parliament from Bridgewater in 1640, the Short Parliament, and again in 1646, and was appointed General at Sea in 1649. He was again elected member of Parliament from Bridgewater in 1654 in the time of Cromwell. His major contribution to the English Navy was to reorganize the admiralty, laying the foundations of modern naval science. His development of the techniques of attacking land fortifications by fast maneuvering of his ships before the inflexible land cannon could hit his ships, was a naval innovation. Admiral Robert Blake died in 1657.

Admiral Robert Blake (one of 15 children) was the son of Humphrey Blake, Lord of the Manor of Planefield in the Parish Over Stowey, and merchant in Bridgewater, and the grandson of Robert. Robert Blake had been elected mayor of Bridgewater in

1574, 1579 and 1587, and in addition, he had represented the Borough in Parliament in 1584, 1586 and 1588.

A picture of the town residence in Bridgewater where Robert Blake was born, is included in the Illustrations. It is a Tudor building of two stories, strongly built of blue lias stone. The interior has some fine oak beams, roughly hewn, and the Tudor Rose is represented in the plaster work of the ceilings. The house is now preserved by the Bridgewater Corporation as a museum.

William Blake (who came to America) was baptized in Pitminster, England, July 10, 1594, and was married there on September 23, 1617 to the widow Agnes Band (Bond) who was apparently born Agnes Thorne.

There was a reference to William Blake's house in 1652 in the town records of Dorchester, Mass. as a survey reference and the Blake house is now a museum. William Blake served as Selectman from 1645 to 1647 and again in 1671. In 1656 he was elected as town clerk and also Clerk of the Writts to Suffolk County. In his will, he gave a public bequest for the preparation of a burial ground.

His youngest son, Edward Blake, born 1625 in Pitminster, England, was a Cooper in Dorchester and served as Selectman in 1672, and settled in Millton where he, with his brother William Blake, was one of the founders of the church in 1678 with Reverend Peter Thacher. His son, Jonathan, born in 1672, married Elizabeth Candige in 1698/9 and moved to Wrentham, Mass.

The Blake family continued living in Wrentham, Mass.. Jonathan's grandson, Ebenezer Blake, served in the French and Indian Wars. Elihu Blake, son of Ebenezer, married Elizabeth Whitney, sister of Eli Whitney the inventor, and their son, Eli Whitney Blake, was born in Westboro, Mass. in 1795. Eli graduated from Yale in 1816 and entered a law school in Lichfield, Conn. conducted by Judge Gould. He left law school in his second year to assist his uncle, Eli Whitney, in the work of enlarging his arms manufactory at Whitneyville, and in the general conduct of his business. He was also a member of the National Guard and was a lieutenant in command of 20 men to protect the medical college during the medical college riot of January, 1824. On July 5, 1822, Eli Whitney Blake married Eliza Maria O'Brien. Eli Whitney died in 1825 and the Whitney Works were continued to 1835 by Eli Whitney Blake and his brother Philos.

In that year, John Blake joined his brothers and the firm of Blake Brothers Company was started in Westville, near New Haven, Conn., for the making of door locks, latches and other articles. Eli Whitney Blake invented the mortise lock.

In 1832 Eli Whitney Blake bought the house next to his mother-in-law's house (The Pierpont House) on the New Haven Green, which was then numbered 77 Elm Street, for \$4500. This house, in which he lived until 1886, is now the Graduate Club of Yale University and one of his portraits hangs in the entrance way. 77 Elm faces the New Haven Green, the town common, on which was formerly located the State Capitol building.

when New Haven served for a short period of time as the Capitol of Connecticut. The house was opposite the Capitol building and on each Fourth of July the Sargent at Arms requested that the windows of Eli Whitney Blake's house be opened least the glass be broken by the concussion of the cannons fired in celebration.

Eli Whitney Blake's writings in the Journal of Science and publications on aerodynamics were recognized when Yale awarded him the LL.D. degree in 1876 for his contributions to science. His major invention was the Blake rock crusher, the first machine of this kind. It has had a profound influence on the mining and rock crushing business. An account of Eli Whitney Blake's life is included in the Appendices.

In 1851 Eli Whitney Blake was appointed by the town of New Haven as one of a committee to construct two miles of macadam road on Whalley Avenue, one of the principal avenues of the city. No other work of this type had been done in the neighborhood and at that time there were probably less than a dozen miles of macadam road in the New England states. According to Eli Whitney Blake's patent statement, it was calculated that it took two days labor of one man to produce one cubic yard of road metal (road base). For seven years he thought and worked on the subject, and concluded that he should construct an apparatus that should act at the same time on a considerable number of stones of different sizes and shapes from which the fragments would be reduced to the desired size rapidly and automatically. He conceived the idea of a pair of

upright jaws converging downwards with the opening at the top to be large enough to receive the stone, and the space at the bottom sufficiently small to permit passage only of those fragments broken to the required size. The entire machine was worked out on paper before it was constructed. This was a parallel to Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin where he devised a new mode for the separation of cotton fibre and seed and contrived the machine to do it. In both cases, the resulting machine was so simple and perfect for the purpose and both were the only devices that have been used over a long period of time without being materially changed.

As mentioned earlier, Eli Whitney Blake married Eliza Maria O'Brien in 1822. Their six sons attended Yale, graduating with honors. Eliza Maria O'Brien Blake was once asked by Harriet Beecher Stowe to contribute to a symposium on the best way to bring up children and she wrote that her experience of ten children taught her that "there was no general rule; each child was a case by itself", and answering a request for a guiding "maxim", she replied, "It might be summed up into what not to see".

Eliza Maria O'Brien was born in 1799 in New Haven, Conn. and died in 1876. She was the daughter of Mary Pierpont O'Brien born in 1776. Mary Pierpont O'Brien was descended from the Reverend James Pierpont who was given a grant of land in 1685 when he came to be pastor of the church in New Haven. This lot was not built upon until his grandson built a house in 1767. Reverend Pierpont's third wife was Mary Hooker, daughter of

The Reverend Samuel Hooker, one of the founders of Yale University. John Pierpont married Sarah Beers, December 29, 1767 and moved into the house (which had just been completed but never occupied), on their wedding night. This house stayed in the family until 1900 and the reminiscences on life there by Miss Foster (one of her descendents), and the account of the Centennial Celebration in 1867, is included in the Appendices.

Edward J. O'Brien, father of Eliza, married Mary Pierpont in 1796. His grandfather had been a follower of James II of England and had followed him into exile in France. He first went to Maine when it was still in French hands and later moved to New Haven where he became a publisher and assisted Noah Webster with his dictionary. O'Brien also published a pocket dictionary of his own. After Edward O'Brien's death in 1799, his widow married Eleazer Foster and continued to live in the Pierpont House until her death in 1852. This is another family house which is serving the Yale University as its Faculty Club, having been preserved as an outstanding piece of colonial architecture. The desk of the Reverend James Pierpont which was for many years at Anson Blake's house, was given by Anita Day Symmes Blake to her nephew, Igor Robert Blake.

Charles Thompson Blake, eldest son of Eli Whitney Blake and Eliza O'Brien Blake, was born October 19, 1826 in New Haven, Conn.. He was named for the uncle of his great-grandmother, Charles Thompson, Secretary to the Continental Congress.

Charles graduated from Yale in 1847. He had completed one year of law school when news of the gold discoveries in California reached the Atlantic Seaboard and he and his Yale classmates, Edwin Tyler and Roger Baldwin, Jr., sailed from New York early in January, 1849 for Nicaragua. Here they were delayed for several months by revolution and by the impossibility of securing a vessel on the Pacific side to continue their journey to California. They at last succeeded in chartering the brig "Laura Ann" and arrived fifty-seven days later in San Francisco on October 5, 1849. The account of this trip, based on the letters of Charles T. Blake's classmate at Yale (Roger Sherman Baldwin, Jr.) was published in the "Century Magazine", October, 1891, and is included in the Appendices. The father of Roger Sherman Baldwin, Jr. was Governor of Connecticut and later United States Senator from Connecticut. The other Yale classmates of Charles T. Blake who remained closely associated in California, were Charles T. H. Palmer and George Gideon Webster.

Charles T. Blake and his Yale classmates went (after their arrival) to Sacramento and then to Georgetown where they spent the summer of 1850 in the mines, having only indifferent success. In the winter they moved to Nevada City where they had a difficult time because of the very heavy winter. By midsummer 1852, the party had moved to the vicinity of Michigan Bluff where Charles T. Blake was the first Wells Fargo agent. The next decade was spent in this area. As a means of working their claims, a ditch was built bringing water onto the top of the bluff. The next year all classmates were members of

the El Dorado Ditch Company which continued to operate after the placers of the district had been worked out. In 1856 Edwin Tyler took over as Wells Fargo agent from Charles T. Blake at Michigan Bluff, and Blake went to Yankee Jims as Wells Fargo agent where he ran an assay office also.

In 1863 he went to Virginia City, Nevada to relieve his friend, Roger Sherman Day who was Wells Fargo agent there. While at Virginia City he made the assay of the first bonanza ore taken from the Yellow Jacket mine. On leaving Virginia City he was sent by Wells Fargo and Company to Idaho to open service to the new mining camps near Idaho City. At the conclusion of this undertaking by Wells Fargo, in the same year he moved to Boise and started his own stage line connecting with the overland stage route from Sacramento to the Coast and running a pony express through indian territory.

The letters of Charles Thompson Blake were published in the Quarterly of The Society of California Pioneers, Vol. VII, No. 1, March, 1930 and The California Historical Society Quarterly, Vol. XVI, No. 1, March, 1937 and No. 2, June, 1937; these are included in the Appendices. In October, 1868, Charles T. Blake married Harriet Waters Stiles. The following year was spent visiting families and friends in the East and the C. T. Blakes returned to San Francisco over the newly constructed Central Pacific Railroad, and then returned by train and stage to Boise City.

Harriet Waters Stiles Blake, wife of Charles Thompson Blake, was born November 24, 1840 in Millbury, Mass., and came with her father, Anson Gale Stiles and her mother, Ann Jane Waters Stiles

to California in the 1850's. She was married to Charles Thompson Blake in 1868.

Anson Gales Stiles was born in Amsterdam, New York in 1809 and moved, when he was a young man, to Millbury, Mass.. Then in 1836 he married Ann Jane Waters of Millbury and remained there 16 years, having two children, only one of whom survived. In March, 1852, he came to California and went to the mines and then to Sacramento. Later, he built his house on Rincon Hill in San Francisco and lived there until his death in 1876. He returned to Millbury on his fortieth anniversary to have a reception at the home of his brother-in-law, Samuel Davenport Torrey, grandfather of William Howard Taft.

Ann Jane Waters was the daughter of Asa Waters, Jr. of Millbury, Mass., who had inherited his family's munitions work described in the appendix. The Waters' house still stands in Millbury and is owned by the Roman Catholic Church. Asa Waters, Jr. was the grandson of Colonel Jonathan Hollman who was born in 1732 and died in 1814. Jonathan Hollman was sworn in at Worcester, Mass., December 29, 1758, with a detachment of Captain Solomon Hollman's company from Sutton, Mass.. Some of the ironstone china that still remains in Blake House at the University of California, was owned by the Waters family; Colonel Hollman's grandfather clock which stood in the hallway to the dining room of Blake House, also belonged to the Waters family and is now in the possession of Igor Robert Blake.

In the summer of 1870, Harriet W. S. Blake returned from Boise to San Francisco to have her first child, Anson Stiles Blake, at her parent's home on Rincon Hill, August 6, 1870.

She returned to Boise City and the Blakes remained there until 1872 when the Charles T. Blakes returned to San Francisco and lived with the Anson G. Stileses on Rincon Hill. C. T. Blake went into the paving business with C. T. H. Palmer, his Yale classmate, and they formed the Oakland Paving Company which operated the quarry at 50th and Broadway in Oakland.

Charles T. Blake and his classmates were agents for his father, Eli Whitney Blake in the sale of his rockcrusher for roadwork and mining work. These efforts took him to Washington Territory and to Victoria.

The Blake's three other children who lived to maturity, were born in the Stiles house on Rincon Hill. Eliza Seely Blake, U.C. '95, married Sherman Day Thacher June 24, 1896, who founded the Thacher School in Ojai, California. An account of the early events at the Thacher School is included in the appendices. Sherman Thacher and His School, by Henry McKim Makepeace, an account of Sherman Thacher's life was published in 1941 by the Yale Press. Edwin Tyler Blake, U.C. '96, mining engineer, was associated with Anson in the family quarry business. Robert Pierpont Blake, U.C. '08 and LL.D. '34, was Professor of History at Harvard and Director of Widener Library; summaries of his life are included in the appendices: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* #8, 1954; *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 & 2, June, 1951.

In 1887, the Charles Thompson Blakes and Mrs. A. G. Stiles moved to Berkeley, renting a large house on Bancroft Way. Anson S. Blake's recollections of his boyhood were published in the *California Historical Quarterly* and are included in the

appendices. When Anson Stiles Blake entered the University of California in the fall of 1887, the enrollment was 250 students. He majored in history and graduated in 1891. Three years later he married another U.C. graduate, Anita Day Symmes, a ~~Φ~~ΒΚ in the class of '94. Shortly after their marriage they built their first home and planted their first garden in a portion of the Piedmont Avenue property which had been given to them by Anson S. Blake's mother. Mrs. Charles T. Blake built a house for herself next to the Anson S. Blakes around the turn of the century after the death of her husband and her mother, Mrs. A. G. Stiles. A third family house was built on the Piedmont Avenue property when Edwin Tyler Blake was married. The Piedmont Avenue property had been purchased by Anson Gale Stiles from the Trustees of the University of California as they felt that the University would not expand east of Piedmont Avenue. Anson Gale Stiles later gave the Piedmont Avenue property to his daughter, Harriet W. S. Blake for a home in the country, later to become Memorial Stadium site.

In 1891 Ann Jane Waters Stiles (Mrs. Anson Gale Stiles), organized the "Trustees of Stiles Hall" and gave the principal donation for the construction of Stiles Hall to house the University Y and the building was dedicated to religious and social uses of the University students. Anson Stiles Blake was elected to the Stiles Hall board in 1900 and elected chairman in 1902. He retired as Chairman of the Stiles Hall Board after 50 years of service and was honored by a concurrent resolution from the State of California legislature citing him

as the "Grand Old Man of Stiles Hall". In 1958 Anson Stiles Blake was honored by the University of California with an LL.D. degree in recognition of his service to Stiles Hall, The University, and for his work as a preserver of California history. Anson Blake's award of the LL.D. degree followed almost a quarter of a century after his youngest brother, Robert Pierpont Blake, was awarded an LL.D. degree in recognition of his scholarship. The third member of the Blake family to receive an LL.D. degree from the University of California, was William Phipps Blake in 1910 (a cousin of Charles T. Blake). He was Professor of Minerology and Geology in the College of California, 1864 and then was Professor of Geology and Mining and Director of the School of Mines at the University of Arizona, Tuscon. The Biographical Notice of William Phipps Blake by Rossiter W. Raymond, published in the Transaction of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, is included in the appendices.

The Anson Blakes had a long time interest in conservation and a desire to have a large garden. Anson S. Blake purchased forty acres in Orinda and also had a ranch in St. Helena. When in 1922, the University of California purchased the three houses on Piedmont Avenue from the Blakes for the purpose of building the Memorial Stadium, Anson and Edwin Blake decided to build on the 60 acres in Kensington, which, as a gift from their mother, had been divided equally among the four children.

Edwin Blake's house was planned with a separate wing for his mother to occupy for her remaining years. This house was

later sold to the Carmelite Order and now serves as a monastery. Anson, being the eldest son, was given the first choice of locating his house on the property and its placement was carefully considered to provide a windbreak for an extensive garden area. Construction began in 1922. The architectural plan by Walter Bliss is in the Mediterranean style for which he was noted. The basic garden plan laid out by Mabel Symmes, U.C. '96, sister of Anita D. S. Blake, who had returned to the University to study landscape architecture shortly after the department was established in 1914. Mable Symmes made her home with the Anson Blakes after the house was completed and devoted her life to working in the garden. Gladys C. Wickson's account published in the California Historical Society Quarterly, Vol. 42, #2, June, 1963, is included in the appendices.

Following the interest in conservation and their earlier gift to the State of California of the St. Helena property on Howell Mountain, Anson and Anita Blake deeded their house and gardens to the University of California in 1957, retaining a lifetime right to reside in the house. The deed stipulated that the gardens be developed for teaching and research in landscape architecture, and the house be used for appropriate University purposes. The extensive restoration, remodeling and additions to Blake House would have been a joy for Anson and Anita Blake to behold, and to know that their house is now the official residence of the President of the University of California. The thoughtful care of Nancy and Charles Hitch in

the restoration and reconstruction of Blake House has insured that it will join the long line of Blake family residences in England and the United States of America which have been preserved as historical monuments.

One third of the furniture remaining in Blake House was collected by Anson and Anita Blake, one third was purchased by the University, and one third is the Hitch family furniture. The Hitch collection of early French oak furniture blends well with the Blakes oak furniture of the same era.

Anson S. Blake took his business training in banking. He became cashier at the Central Bank and engaged in various enterprises on the side. After the death of his father, Charles Thompson Blake in 1897, Anson became active in the quarry business while still maintaining his position at the Central Bank.

During the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, the Oakland Paving Company had on hand, a railroad car of dynamite, and was asked to make this powder available to the firefighters in San Francisco. It was used to blow up the houses along Van Ness Avenue and thus contain the fire. Anson Blake, with two teamsters and two wagonloads of dynamite, crossed the San Francisco Bay by a special ferry put into action for that purpose by Southern Pacific. He conducted his two teamsters and their wagonloads of dynamite to the Assistant Fire Marshal. He then returned, bringing his parents-in-law, the Frank Jamieson Symeses, back to the safety of Berkeley. Later, after the fire, when the vaults of the San Francisco

banks could be opened, Anson S. Blake supervised the group of bank representatives who were members of the Oakland Clearing House, to take the contents of the San Francisco vaults to Oakland. The Oakland Clearing House served San Francisco until the San Francisco banks were rebuilt and reopened.

Sometime after the fire, Anson S. Balke resigned as cashier of Central Bank to devote himself to family interests. He foresaw that the gradual growth of San Francisco and Oakland would eventually close out the quarries that existed in those areas because of zoning pressures due to the dusty, noisy nature of the quarrying business.

Blake and Bilger Company was organized in 1914 as an affiliate to the Oakland Paving Company. In 1906 the San Pablo Quarry Company was incorporated and the 300 acres of land were acquired in Richmond, north of the Standard Oil Company refinery on the Portrero of San Pablo at Castro Point. It was planned to ship the output of this quarry in a self-unloading barge to San Francisco where at the end of Third Street, the Company had rock bunkers. It was at this time that Edwin Tyler Blake, Anson's younger brother, returned from the gold mines at Hornitos, Mariposa County, California, bringing with him the skilled crews of Welsh miners who built the quarry plant at Richmond. This plant, designed by Edwin Blake, was a remarkable engineering feat and it was operated from 1906 to the time the family sold it in 1963 under a corporate reorganization, to Standard Oil Company of California.

There was intrabay and river commerce at that time, and rock was shipped by barge to San Francisco and other bay and river points. The San Pablo barge was a 700 ton barge with hoppers which fed a conveyor belt. The belt in turn, fed a bucket elevator and thus the rock could be unloaded into the bunkers in San Francisco, as well as used for balast rock for ships coming to San Francisco.

In 1914 there was a corporate reorganization whereby Mrs. Charles T. Blake, Anson S. Blake, Edwin Tyler Blake, Robert Pierpont Blake and Eliza Seely Blake Thacher (Mrs. Sherman Day Thacher), bought out the interest of F. W. Bilger in the Blake and Bilger Company, and the name of the firm was changed to Blake Brothers Company, reminiscent of Eli Whitney Blake's firm in the nineteenth century in New Haven. The Blake family traded most of their holdings with Bilger in the Oakland Paving Company for the ownership of the San Pablo quarry in Richmond.

The quarry business did very well from 1906 until 1916 when there was quite a recession in California during World War I. The State output was primarily agricultural to support the war effort. Anson Blake once remarked that it would have been better to have closed down the plant and paid the real estate taxes rather than endeavoring to run it during the World War I years. There was a construction boom in the twenties and Edwin Blake, returning from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, made extensive additions to the plant, and the first asphalt concrete plant was built.

In 1911 the Castro Point Railway and Terminal Company had been established as a subsidiary of Blake and Bilger Company. The Castro Point Railway and Terminal Company joined its tracks with the San Francisco-Oakland Terminal Railway which operated a trolley service connecting with the San Rafael Ferry. From 1915 until 1923 a portion of the Castro Point Railway and Terminal Company wharf was leased to the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry and Transportation Company. The Castro Point Railway and Terminal Company wharf was a busy place in this time, with the cars and passengers for the ferry and rock shipments of the quarry. In 1925 the ferry built its own wharf at Castro Point. Rock shipments were made through the East Bay over the trolley tracks and continued to be made until 1925 when the tracks of the Castro Point Railway and Terminal Company pushed north and joined those of the Richmond Belt Railway which had direct connection with the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific lines. In the depression years of the 1930's business was slow for the quarry until the Golden Gate Bridge, the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge and Treasure Island were built.

Anson Blake's interest in history and conservation have been mentioned before. The initial design of the Golden Gate Bridge called for the destruction of Fort Point which was built after the plan of Fort Sumpter. Anson S. Blake led the citizens group who pointed out to the bridge designer, the importance of Fort Point and the possibility of moving the

footings of the bridge to a better location which would preserve Fort Point.

When Blake Brothers Company was in the construction as well as the quarry business, they had put in streets and sewers for a Rockridge Land Company development. The Rockridge Land Company went bankrupt and in order to protect their liens for the sewers and roads and improvements, Blake Brothers Company completed the job and brought it to a successful financial conclusion.

Anson Blake did engage in a few ventures of his own, one of which was to develop the area in El Cerrito near Blake Street which is named for him. (The Blake Street in Berkeley was named for a farmer by the name of Blake, who was one of the original settlers of Berkeley, but no relation to the Eli Whitney Blake families.) Anson S. Blake was also involved in a real estate venture for the redevelopment of Berkeley after the Berkeley fire in 1927. Another one of his personal ventures was to serve as receiver for Scofield Construction Company which, around 1908, under his direction, completed the Mare Island Drydocks. With the proceeds of this he bought and presented to his wife, Anita, their ranch property in St. Helena. For many years they spent vacations and weekends at St. Helena. Mrs. Blake frequently rode her horse, taking the ferry across the bay and riding on to St. Helena where Anson Blake would join her for the weekend.

After they had the garden in Kensington, the Blakes gave the St. Helena property to the State and, foreseeing the need

for conservation, they hoped that the natural planting would be preserved. The State of California at that time applied the terms conservation and recreation synonymously and the original intent, unfortunately, was partially lost by allowing camping on the property. This, in Mrs. Blake's opinion, altered its pristine nature.

Anson Blake served as NRA (National Recovery Act) chairman for the industry, and chaired the committee for prices which was established under the laws at that time. He also negotiated, as a member of the Rock, Sand and Gravel Producers Association of Northern California, the fundamental construction contract which continues on into the present time. Under this contract, the quarry industry pays construction rates when they engage in new construction, but maintenance rates while they operate their fixed plants. This concept is of vital importance and the University now finds itself working toward this plan, which was pioneered in the thirties.

Anson Blake chaired the Berkeley Committee to Welcome William Howard Taft, his cousin, upon his trip to Berkeley in 1909. It is interesting to note that transportation to Oakland was arranged by streetcar. President Taft and his party stopped to have coffee at the Anson Blakes (who were then still on Piedmont Avenue), as Mrs. Charles Thompson Blake whose house was next to theirs, was in Europe and not able to receive her cousin.

Anson Blake's interest as an historian is evidenced by the fact that he served as both President of the California

Historical Society and President of The Society of California Pioneers. In the thirties and into the war period, he worked in both Societies which, for sake of economy, shared a common building. Later he observed with great pleasure, the magnificent new quarters which were acquired and furbished by both The Society of California Pioneers and the California Historical Society, attending the dedication of both buildings. It is interesting to note that in the dark days of the depression, he managed both the Societies with one full time employee who was half time on the payroll of each group. They still managed to publish a journal as well as collect and save Californiana for the future when there would be more funds to work with it.

Anson Blake had an appealing combination of conservatism and forward thinking. He supported the open platform of Stiles Hall where he served as Chairman of the Board for 50 years. On the other hand, he opposed and lead the Berkeley opposition to the Women's Suffrage Act in 1919, collecting money from Charles Lee Tilden and others to run advertisements in an effort to defeat the 19th Amendment. Mrs. Blake thoroughly agreed with Anson Blake's position on women's suffrage but never fully agreed with his support of Stiles Hall. Mrs. Blake had strong feelings as a naturalist and conservationist.

The family is fortunate in having extensive historical records published, some of which are noted here.

1. The life of Admiral Robert Blake is described in two books:
 - a. Blake, General at Sea, by C. D. Curtis, published in Taunton, England in 1934 by Barnicot and Pearce, The Wessex Press;
 - b. Robert Blake, Admiral and General at Sea, by Hepworth Dixon, London, 1852, by Chapman and Hall, Piccadilly.
2. The Hollmans in America, by David Emerby Holdan, published by Graftin Press, New York in 1909.
3. Increase Blake, His Ancestors and Descendants, compiled by Francis E. Blake, published in Boston in 1898.
4. Blake Family, a geological history of William Blake of Dorchester, and his descendants, by Samuel Blake, published by Ebenezer Clapp, Jr., Boston, Mass., 1857.
5. The Blakes of 77 Elm Street, a sketch by Alida Blake Hazard privately published by the Quincy Press, New Haven, Conn., in the early 1920's.
6. The Stiles Family in America, by Mrs. Mary Stiles (Paul) Guild, published by Joel Munsell's Sons, Albany, New York, 1892.

June, 1971

Igor Robert Blake

A San Francisco Boyhood

1874-1884

I WAS BORN in San Francisco and propose to offer you some of my youthful recollections of scenes and events in that nascent metropolis. My home during those years was my Grandfather's home on the crest of Rincon Hill at its westerly end. The house faced north on a little street then called Vernon Place but now known as Dow Place. The outlook was over the large grounds of General Halleck's house which fronted on Folsom Street opposite the Talbot, Pope and Latham Houses. At the rear of our house was the large place of Mayor Selby and next to it the former home of Pedar Sather, which was then a boarding house, perched on the cliff above Second Street cut, which had only recently been put through Rincon Hill. This was "the banker's ruined castle" noted by Robert Louis Stevenson as the place where he visited Charles Warren Stoddard, who boarded there.

Rincon Hill in those days was an island of Victorian respectability surrounded by an area of flat land then universally known as Tar Flat. I have looked for the name in Professor Gudde's *California Place Names* to ascertain its origin, but his only reference to Tar is "see asphalt." There were no asphalt streets in those days. Such streets as were paved were surfaced with plank or cobbles except for a few heavily travelled stretches which were surfaced with basalt or granite paving blocks. Tar Flat had a number of industrial establishments scattered over it but it was essentially a residence district of wooden houses. I have a picture dated 1872 taken from the roof of my Grandfather's house showing only two structures projecting above the general level, the shot tower in Tar Flat and the Masonic Temple at Post and Montgomery streets where the Crocker Bank now stands. My first recollection of interest in this scene was when I observed the vast walls of the old Palace Hotel rising story after story above the expanse of wooden houses. This I saw, but I did not realize that beyond my line of vision, the business district on California, Pine and Montgomery streets was being metamorphosed as a result of the flood of money coming, in one form or another, from the Comstock lode.

My next contact with the outside world which has left a vivid mental picture was September 9, 1874, when I was four years old. The occasion was the twenty-fourth anniversary of the admission of the State to the Union. It was celebrated by the Society of California Pioneers by an excursion on the Bay. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company had donated the use of their big paddle wheel steamer "Great Republic" for the occasion. My Father, who was a member of the Society, took me along. The steamer was of the pattern of the Pacific Mail Fleet. The whole stern end was occupied by a deck house consisting of a double row of staterooms on each side. The outer ones opened on a rather narrow passage with a netting extending from the outer edge of the boat to a heavy guard rail about five feet above deck level; the inner row opened into a long and rather narrow room, the full length of the deck house. This was the passengers' dining room. When we went aboard we made a quick inspection of the ship and as we came to the stern we had a view of the dining saloon already set for lunch. I was astonished to observe that there were a great many more bottles than dishes on the long table. If I had ever learned to sketch, I could reproduce that scene for you with great accuracy. We were summoned to lunch shortly after we got under way. Following the habit which had already been set for the day by the Society of California Pioneers, food was abundant; wine and liquor flowed even more freely and the meal was capped by a torrent of oratory. All of this kept us within for quite a time. As the company spilled out onto the deck in the most convivial good humor, it was discovered that the Captain was heading the ship out through the Golden Gate. It took only a short time for the rough water outside to reduce the exhilaration of most of the passengers to the depths of misery, my Father among the others. I can remember his standing me against the deck house and saying "Don't you move," while he dashed for the railing. We were just abaft the paddle wheel house. From where I stood I could look down on the great oaken knee that held the support of the outboard bearing of the paddle wheel and ahead of it the green sea water as we rolled toward it and away from it and the red paddles of the wheel churned it into white foam. And that was the last recollection I have of the day's events.

For the year 1875, I have few recollections of the City and its life largely because of two long sessions with infantile diseases with a longer interval between illness when I was laid up by a broken hip. I was one of the early cases in San Francisco where a cast was used. That cast, I

remember very vividly. It was a ponderous affair. I was stretched out and the leg wrapped from the ball of the foot to my hip in two layers of old woolen blanket. The wet plaster was then applied to the blanket in successive layers for the whole distance and was then held in place by old sheeting sewed firmly over it. When it was done, it was too heavy for me to stir and I had to be lifted by someone whenever I moved position in bed. I had to wear it for six weeks and for every minute of that time, my flesh, that was in contact with the old blanket, itched to an unbelievable degree. When I finally recovered from my second illness of the year, the family was glad to get rid of me and sent me to school. It was a private school, kept by Miss Cheever, the sister of H. C. Cheever. She kept house for him and also kept boarders. One of these was Alfred Robinson who wrote "Life in California" which was published in London in 1846. The second story of the Cheever stable was refitted for a school room. Here I met Albert and May Hooper, Daisy and Don Merrill, Sadie and Louis McLane, Porter Garnett, Evelyn Norwood, and Bessie, Leslie and Charley Tilden.

These contacts immediately stirred a sense of community life and intense curiosity as to how the other fellow lived. The first thing my plunge into education brought me was a wild delight over uninhibited license to frequent the public streets, for I had to walk to school along Harrison Street over the Second Street Bridge to Essex Street where the school was located.

This brings me to the year 1876 when I really began to participate in the life of the City and my memories are many. The first vivid one is attending, on Washington's Birthday, the unveiling of the huge plaster bust of Washington which stood in Woodward's Gardens near the entrance gate and to the right of it as you entered. That day was the first that I remember of a long series of visits to the Children's Paradise of our generation. Even the journey out Mission Street in the little balloon horse car was a thrilling adventure. The car needed no turn table. At the end of the line the driver lifted a pin, drove his horses around the car, put the pin in an appropriate place and was prepared to drive home. Of Woodward's Gardens, I can note that it was a well-considered pleasure park for there were attractions for all ages. Years later I first heard Pinafore and the Pirates of Penzance there. That spring I remember a number of drives with my Grandfather in his two-horse buggy through the Panhandle of the Park. At that time, it was the only part of Golden Gate Park that was in use. The rest was only drifting sandhills

and there were no streets laid out or houses in existence beyond the western limit of the Panhandle. A couple of years later John McLaren had reclaimed the sand wastes with the Sudan Grass and bush lupine planting which stabilized the surface sufficiently to allow planting of trees and pushing roads toward the ocean. I also remember driving with my Grandfather out the old Geary Street road to the Cliff House to see the sea lions and then a rapid trot down the beach to Mussel Rock.

It was Centennial Year. In common with the rest of the United States, San Francisco had a series of celebrations centering around July 4th. One of these I remember very well. On July 3rd, there was a parade of naval vessels. My Father took me up to the open hillside that is now the Western Addition. After the ships had steamed past us toward the sea and returned, several dropped anchor below us and began shooting at a target anchored below the Marin Hills opposite. The ships were armed with the big Parrott cast iron guns and we could see the big round solid shot go ricocheting across the water. It is my recollection that no hits on the target were scored. I have a picture of the crowd on the hillside of which we were a part and an enlargement of it was shown in the exhibit of Presidio pictures last year at the Crocker-Anglo National Bank.

Shortly after this, my Grandfather, who had gone east with his wife, died there. My Mother decided to go east to bring her Mother home. She took me on the trip so I was away till about mid-September for we made several visits to relatives and spent a week at the Philadelphia Exposition. After my return, I joined my contemporaries, aligned to the party of their choice in the Presidential campaign then under way. I made my debut in politics by joining the crowd that shouted for Hayes and Wheeler. We were vociferous to the end. But I can remember no further interest in politics until the campaign for the adoption of the new state constitution. Following my elders, I was violently opposed to adoption. As far as I can remember, all my schoolmates were too. I remember our delighted celebration when San Francisco's vote against adoption was announced notwithstanding support of the Workingman's Party for the new constitution. In a few days, the country's returns reduced us to despair. My regret over the outcome has continued to this day.

But this is getting ahead of my calendar. As I have said, 1876 brought me freedom to roam the streets. It was toward the end of the era of wildest speculation on the Comstock. There was hardly an individual

who was not gambling. The market was stimulated by legitimate and illegitimate pressures. The Consolidated California and Virginia Mine was paying a million dollars a month in dividends. There were a dozen more mines that had, or had had bonanza ores. The lode was only partially explored. Why should there not be more? During Stock Board hours, hardly anyone on the street walked; the rest ran. If they checked themselves to greet a friend, hands were plunged deep in trousers pockets and the universal salutation was "How's Stocks?" Perhaps an answer was awaited, but a faster gait to make up for the lost interval was usual. My boyhood friends and I delighted to visit this area of supercharged atmosphere to participate in its thrills and we adopted the salutation as soon as we acquired trouser pockets.

Almost as thrilling as Pine Street were San Francisco wharves. In the '70s only the Pacific Mail dock had a shed and gates. All the others were open planked structures with berths for ships on each side. You could wander at will among the piles of cargo that had been unloaded and sometimes sneak aboard a vessel, if no ship's officer was around, for the sailors were almost always friendly. We learned early that the repair crews of the port treated their jobs informally. Missing deck planks were not always replaced. If you held your chin too high a step might land you in the bay. Two types of ships produced the most interesting cargoes, the sugar boats from Hawaii and the traders to the South Seas and the East Indies. All of these were windjammers.

Sugar refining had not developed to the present stage of perfection. The molasses came in little wooden barrels. In those days molasses was not the doctored residuum that you now buy in bottles. It was a syrupy fluid that embraced a concentration of all the delights that you obtained in chewing the pith of the sugar cane. When a sling load of these barrels was dropped too hard on the wharf, the barrels sometimes sprung at the seams. With the aid of a straw from a nearby bale of hay, you could fill yourself with the sweet-sour nectar to the limit of your capacity. No child of today who buys a coca-cola, ice cream soda or banana split has a treat comparable with our free ride at the public's expense.

The South Seas and East Indies trading schooners have disappeared from San Francisco Bay as completely as has the San Francisco scow schooner which was the pioneer means of transportation to all the shallow water landings about the Bay. In my youth, hundreds of these craft dotted the bay but their cargoes did not hold any interest for us. The traders, however, offered eye-opening glimpses of how the inhabi-

tants of these remote regions lived and what they had to work with. The crews were largely Hawaiians, South Sea Islanders and Lascars. They in turn were equally interested in how the uncivilized inhabitants of California, represented by ourselves, lived and behaved. This mutual interest enabled us to examine the curiosities in the cargoes and taste the edible portions and view the menageries of live pets that many sailors had. Sinbad the Sailor had nothing on us in this field of exploration and adventure.

In order to give you something of a background of our life in San Francisco during 1877, I will quote from John S. Hittell's summary of that year's events in his *History of San Francisco*:

"A great depression of business, resulting from a severe drought, and a fear that the rich deposit of ore in the Consolidated Virginia and California mines would soon be exhausted, the organization of the workingman's political party, were among the most notable events of 1877. The scantiness of the rainfall of 1876-77, the amount being less than ten inches at San Francisco, and less than that of any other season within a quarter of a century, caused a general failure of the grain crop, a large mortality in the herds of cattle, and a serious decline in the yield of the placer mines. The direct pecuniary loss to the state by the drought was estimated at twenty million dollars. The southern part of the state was especially depressed, notwithstanding the completion of the railroad connection between San Francisco and Los Angeles in September, 1876, and the extension of the road to the Colorado River in the April following. . . ."

When we remember that the eastern United States had been in a depression since 1873, the suddenness of its advent in San Francisco is more understandable. In any event, Pine Street and vicinity, even with its new Mining Exchange, lost its interest for us, when its excitement dropped. Although there were sporadic short revivals for several years we had become sophisticated and did not respond as of yore.

As a substitute for walks to Pine Street, we began to explore the outlying edges of San Francisco. A favorite excursion was an all-day trip. We took the Mission Street horsecar to what was then known as Bernal Heights. This was the first abrupt rise of ground below Twin Peaks. There were only one or two streets along this slope above Mission Street. Beyond that, there was the unfenced grassy slope that stretched to the peaks. In the spring, the grass was dotted with innumerable wild flowers. There are left only a few spots in Marin County

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where you can see a comparable display to those we thoughtlessly cramped underfoot. The climb to the summit was quite a walk but the unrestricted view was rewarding as it is today. But its composition was very different. To the west you now look down on almost solid city. In our day, the Valley was almost unoccupied. The Alms House lay almost exactly below us and the rest of the Valley held perhaps a half dozen houses. We usually went down to the Alms House tearing pell mell over the flower-strewn grass. When we went as far as this it was an all day excursion and we ate our lunch near the Alms House where we could get water. The return trip was often made by an alternate route.

This year was the beginning of the Dennis Kearney, Dr. O'Donnell, "The Chinese Must Go" era which persisted for several years. It may be said that the impact came in July 1877. The economic conditions indicated in the above quotations produced a large body of unemployed who were restless and worried and became ready listeners to any speaker who claimed to champion their cause.

In July, news came of the great labor, socialistic and railroad riots in the eastern states. There was an immediate reaction in San Francisco and the first object of attack was the Chinese. A Chinese laundry was burned and several others sacked on July 23rd. The rioters following this became defiant and threatened to drive out all Asiatics, by fire if necessary. The San Francisco police force was only about one hundred and fifty men, entirely inadequate to meet the situation. So on the following day a public meeting of citizens was called and a protective association was formed known as the Committee of Safety under the presidency of William T. Coleman who had headed the Vigilance Committee of 1856. By nightfall, he had a volunteer organization of over five thousand members armed for the most part with hickory pick handles; hence their subsequent title of "pick handle brigade."

On the night of July 25, after a day of excitement and disturbance, and several encounters, the rioters determined to make an attack on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's docks and steamers at the foot of Brannan Street where the Chinese immigrants were landed. Threats to destroy this property had been made before. Great crowds congregated in the neighborhood and fire was set to several nearby lumber yards. The disorderly elements were out in large force and attempted to interfere with the firemen who soon arrived with their engines; but, at the same time with the firemen, came many policemen reinforced by large

numbers of the pick handle brigade, who at once began to disperse the crowds. There was a general fight for a couple of hours; in the melee a number of shots were fired and many stones thrown; a few men were killed, and a number wounded. The object of the police and committee was not to kill or maim the rioters but to disperse them. In this they finally succeeded.

The show of force and organization ended most rioting but it did not alleviate the situation of the unemployed. The laboring classes were discontented and hardly knew which way to turn. They only needed a bold leader to turn them in almost any direction. There was therefore a magnificent opening for a demagogue. And a demagogue of considerable boldness and force, and for a while of extraordinary success, soon appeared. This was Dennis Kearney, an Irish drayman, born in County Cork and about thirty years of age. He threw himself into the so-called workingmen's movement, which had already been started and soon took a prominent part in it. In August he advocated the organization of a new party soon to be known as the Workingmen's Party of California, but because it held its principal meetings every Sunday afternoon on the then vacant lots south of the new city hall, it was usually known as the Sand Lots party. Here Kearney continued to make incendiary speeches for many months, denouncing the capitalists, threatening the Chinese and advocating drastic means if the party could not attain its ends by peaceable procedure.

These conditions in public affairs could not be overlooked by an alert gang of boys from seven to nine years old, accustomed to a life on the streets and with an inordinate curiosity as to the doings of their elders. We soon shed all interest in finance and exploration and converged on the City. It became immediately evident that a considerable group of us aroused much more attention and suspicion from our elders than a single small boy loitering about them. Consequently, we all became amateur sleuths with deadpan faces and wide open ears. Dennis Kearney was a neighbor of ours on Rincon Hill. He was tailed by one of the gang when he was on the street near home, as were some of the other leaders. Meetings where information could be shared became essential to us as we should have burst if we could not spill our findings. We were soon meeting with the regularity of a club. The meetings engendered so much excitement that they became objects of suspicion from our elders. We promptly sensed this and soon became a well-organized underground. A favorite meeting place was the Tildens' unused stable.

Their house was on Hawthorne Street, the barn at the back of the lot below the house level, and out of sight from Hawthorne Street. It was not new to us for it had been useful to us in avoiding police supervision. Its rear wall was supported by a brick foundation six or eight feet high which also marked the end of an alley which came up from Third Street. By lifting a loose plank in the floor of the stable, we could drop down alongside of this wall. The bricks of that day were often inadequately fired and when wet were soft enough to crumble if attacked with a sharp instrument. We opened a hole large enough for a boy to wriggle through the wall into a vacant lot that fronted on the alley. Thus it was inconspicuous from the alley, and a little persuading opened a hole in the board fence of the lot. It was easy to disperse into the traffic of Third Street which had small relation to the top of the hill. We did our best to learn where breaches of the peace would occur and attended many minor outbreaks. But parental authority enveloped us after nightfall so we missed the major riots. We did attend a number of the Sunday afternoon Sand Lot Meetings and skirted the outer edges of the crowds listening to the comments of the listeners and becoming acquainted with the appearance of the speakers.

This turbulent era held our interest well into 1878 when the new constitution election added new subjects to lists of the Sand Lot speakers. By this time we had become bold enough to shout some vigorous "noes" to questions put to voice vote. This had to be done from the outer edges as we had to duck and scatter to avoid reprisals. However, the old topics had begun to turn stale for us. The new constitution was, as I have already said, a live issue with us. The election on this issue was held on May 7, 1879 and as already indicated the vote favored adoption by about seven per cent majority. It was a live issue for California voters. Ninety per cent of the registered voters turned out and voted.

My personal grief over this outcome was soon diverted. The family spent most of the summer and early autumn in the Sierra, first at beautiful Summit Soda Springs adjoining the estate of Mrs. Mark Hopkins and later, after an interesting ride down to Truckee in the caboose of a freight train, at Tahoe City. On my return to San Francisco, I found my pals had been on the edge of further political excitement. The Workingmen's Party had nominated a Baptist preacher, Reverend Isaac S. Kalloch, for Mayor. The *San Francisco Chronicle* attacked Kalloch and published some damaging statements against him. Kalloch, from his pulpit, answered by attacking the mother of Charles DeYoung

and Michael DeYoung. Charles DeYoung responded by going down to Kalloch's study in the Metropolitan Temple on Fifth Street and shooting him, wounding him seriously. The Campaign Committee of the Workingmen's Party was skillful in using this assault and at the election Kalloch was elected by a large majority and inducted into the office of Mayor. The newspaper continued to assail him and finally having found and published a particularly damaging statement, the Mayor's son, also a Baptist minister, surprised Charles DeYoung at the Chronicle office and killed him. However, this was only a passing incident. With the defeat of our efforts to prevent the adoption of the New Constitution and the capture of the City by the enemy, we lost interest in matters political and turned to such boyish games as were available to us. New areas for exploration were opened to us by the extension to the limits of population by the California Street Cable Railroad in 1878 and the Geary Street Cable Road in 1880 at Fillmore Street. We could plod over the brush and oak covered sand hills to Lone Mountain and climb to the great cross on its summit or explore the area farther north until we met the untamed drifting sand hills, or still farther north until we came to the lake from which the Spring Valley Water Company supplied the northern section of the City.

Early in the summer of 1880 my Mother took her three children to the East to visit our many relatives and become acquainted with New England. We stayed long enough to have a sample of winter sports under the guidance of our cousins. Shortly after our return I was entered in the fourth grade of Lincoln Grammar School on Fifth Street near Market Street. It was the largest school in the City, housing about twelve hundred scholars. We were herded into two large planked yards behind the building where the classes were drawn up in single file and marched into our class rooms to the beat of a drum. The boy who acted as drummer and the principal stood on the roof of the shed dividing the two yards and the principal gave the orders. We were returned to the yards for noon recess where most of the scholars ate their lunches. There were a few trash cans about, but most of the surplus food was tossed out to go down between the planks. The scavenger work down there was done by a horde of rats. The area was small for such a large crowd and we were kept under strict supervision to prevent running or mass movements of any kind. So, we had no sports to make recess desirable.

The new school, however, greatly enlarged my circle of acquaint-

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ances and added many new friends and they brought me new ideas and new fields for exploration. One of these became a frequent excursion. We took the newly finished Union Street Cable Car out to the Presidio Gate and walked through the Presidio to Fort Point where we paused to ramble through the untenanted Fort and then we proceeded from that point on top of the wooden flume of the Spring Valley Water Company which brought its water from the lake previously mentioned to the north side of San Francisco. The flume was a box flume about three feet high and wide. It was decked over, stood on a trestle for most of its length and on mud sills where it crossed the rocky points it met. There were also cross fences at intervals with picket tops to prevent intruders from using it, but any live boy could swing himself around them. The flume followed the shore line for about two miles before turning in toward the lake. Near this point was our destination, Baker's Beach, a beautiful stretch of beach between jutting rocky points. Above it was a springy meadow with a carpet of the rare *Iris longipetala* which civilization has made almost extinct. Beyond the meadow on the landward side there was a belt of drifting sand a mile or mile and a half in width. No minion of the law or foreign enemy could toil through that to descend on us. The ocean was in front of us and all in sight. It was before the day of motorboats and no sail craft ventured near the rocky shore. We could see the whole length of the flume so we could see any approaching party by that route and the cliffs between us and the Cliff House were sheer to the water's edge. Strange to say during our many visits only two or three times did any party approach by way of the flume. We soon acquired a sense of proprietorship and revelled in our isolation. It enabled us to shed any unnecessary impedimenta such as bathing suits for there was plenty of time to dress if we spotted flume walkers.

My previous school experience had been in a small private school whose scholars were all drawn from a limited area. I was now a small cog in a large machine which turned at the pace of the mass. My fellow scholars were drawn from a large area of the City and were of several races. Having entered in the second half of a school year, I was fortunate in getting into a class whose teacher fitted the collar of discipline to my neck, gently. Not so my contemporaries. I was fair game for a searching investigation of my past life, my present views, and my luncheon resources, during recess; they also ganged up in devising practical jokes or semi-secret assaults to test my mettle. These latter, of

course, had to be staged when the attention of the supervising official was turned to other quarters. It was not long before I found interesting friends and became a member of one of the groups into which such aggregations of boys split. Among them were several life long friends.

My three years and a half at the Lincoln Grammar School gave me far more of an education than my previous experience. I had learned to read and write and had begun to read on my own initiative. I knew enough arithmetic to get into step with my grade, but it took some hustling to take the pace of the class and I had to scratch gravel to follow the intricacies of grammar. But more than the subjects themselves was the discipline of being prepared in advance in all your subjects to the extent that they had been assigned for the day. Our classes numbered about sixty; an hour was assigned to each subject and we were called up under no prearranged system. There was little shelter for anyone who attempted to bluff. You were not called on every day but if you were you had to be brief, definite and fluent or take a verbal castigation while the class snickered. And I must say that our teachers succeeded in arousing a considerable competition among their pupils.

But it was not only in school that I was getting an education. From my associates I acquired a large fund of small boy lore that was useful when venturing into unfamiliar portions of the City, or avoiding observation during infractions of rules, or diverting attention from desired objectives. Also among my friends were constant followers of the theater. I was not unacquainted with the theater but had only attended under family guidance. I remember being taken to the opening production at the Grand Opera House on Mission Street near Third. It was a spectacle called "Snowflake." I also saw there Joe Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Rivals*, before I ventured out with companions of my own age. San Francisco, from its earliest days, was known among the celebrated theatrical people of the world as a city where audiences were both discriminating and cordial. Most of the world's most distinguished actors and actresses after 1853 made the month-long journey in both directions just to play in San Francisco. This reputation still held true in the '80s and on to the end of the century.

The old California Theater on Bush Street had a spacious top gallery where for two bits at the Saturday Matinee we could see drama in all its phases. From that station I saw all of the celebrated Shakespearean actors of the day and many of the blood curdling melodramas then current. I saw there at least seventy-five years ago the original company

that put on "Around the World in 80 Days" which has recently been revived so successfully. Across the street was the smaller Bush Street Theater where the ruling attraction was Haverly's Minstrel Company interspersed with many of the tuneful light operas that were so popular in the last century. Here I heard "The Mikado" at its first appearance in San Francisco.

We only frequented the theaters on Saturday afternoons for there was homework to be done at night. On Sunday there was Sunday School and Church. The other days we walked to school and back home after a session from nine till three. Life had become much more of a routine than when I attended the private school and there was much less free time to give to the life of the City. I wonder now how we were able to get so much time to snoop into City affairs during the four years at the private school.

Now let us take a backward look at San Francisco during 1876 when our Rincon Hill crowd first began to study it. It was thirty years since the American flag was raised and twenty-eight since the treaty ceded California to the United States. At the time the flag was raised there were about thirty houses in the village of Yerba Buena.

In 1876 it was a city of 200,000 inhabitants. It had passed through its riotous youth although the echoes were still in the air and many of the early inhabitants were still active figures. It was then in the throes of its prodigal adolescence lured on by visions of the yet to be uncovered, ready made treasures of nature at the end of the rainbow. Our gang when exposed to the atmosphere of this era felt its exhilaration, but it was not auto-intoxication as it was with our elders, so when the vision faded and the rainbow dissolved we did not have the headache that they did. It was potent and protracted. In retrospect it is easy to recognize the fact that recovery from the mad speculation was not all that was involved; it was also a period of fundamental readjustment to changed conditions not fully realized nor dealt with, while the madness was on. During the whole decade from 1870 to 1880, San Francisco had more than a quarter of the sparse population of California. The City could not be maintained on the scale of living to which it was accustomed by supplying the wants and handling the products of that limited population without the equivalent of the Comstock income. Prior to the opening of the railroad it had commanded the import trade of the area west of the Rocky Mountains but now railroads were advancing both to the north and the south; its field was narrowing. San Francisco met this

condition by using its brains and its capital in developing the latent resources of the State. Naturally, the first effort was in the expansion of agriculture. From the middle fifties the State had a surplus of agricultural products for export. Grain was the principal export crop and by the decade of the '80s was a major element of the economy. The early farmers naturally turned to it because large acreages could be handled by the limited population available. The extension of the railroad through the San Joaquin Valley in the seventies had made available a vast additional area. During that decade more than two-thirds of the cultivated land was in grain. The next largest acreage was in wine grapes. Both of these crops were grown without irrigation. A few bold spirits had demonstrated that many other products could be grown if they could be assured of water at the right season. The City joined the struggling valley towns in financing and building irrigation systems. The railroad, with its large land grant holdings, cooperated by giving inducements to immigrants to populate and cultivate intensively the areas brought under irrigation. The City also plunged into the canning industry which absorbed the excess products of field and orchard. In half a century, California became the state with the largest and most diversified range of agricultural products in the Union.

Meantime, in the late eighties and early nineties a series of disassociated efforts was leading to a momentous event in the history of California's industrial development. In 1895, Livermore's electric generating plant on the American River began transmitting hydro-electric power of high voltage to Sacramento, generated by the waters carried by the old Natomas mining canal. Forthwith, the San Francisco owners of the old mining ditches, which had been finally put out of business by the Anti-Debris decision, saw a source of revenue in their properties beside water for irrigation. During this same era, San Franciscans had finally located and proved up an oil field in the southern San Joaquin Valley and began refining in a small way in Alameda.

When the late Robert Glass Cleland chose his title "From Wilderness to Empire" for his short history of California from its discovery by Europeans to the year 1900, the title was prophetic rather than descriptive. In the fifty-seven succeeding years these two industries have furnished the means for California to become an industrial as well as an agricultural empire.

ANSON S. BLAKE

Berkeley in Retrospect, by Anson Blake*

My first picture of Berkeley is a very vivid memory, although lacking in many details. On Christmas Day 1875 my grandfather drove my sister, our nurse and me over to the site of my first house, which was at the north end of the Stadium. He had bought from the College of California, some years before, a piece of land on the east side of Piedmont Avenue adjoining the Palmer holdings, which was subsequently enlarged to include the canyon behind and an extension to the north. He planned on retiring to build here a home in the country. The object of our journey was that my sister and I should each plant a tree on the family domain. We took the ferry to the foot of Broadway in Oakland, and drove out Telegraph road. I have no recollection of the scenes on the journey except the little wooden bridge across Temescal Creek with the willows overhanging it. But I do remember my impressions at the journeys end. The Monterey pines, cypresses and eucalyptus trees that my grandfather had planted were young, but thrifty, and to one of my size were impressive. The Islay hedge, part of which still stands, enclosed us, and the two great oaks which still stand at the north of the stadium. The ground had been plowed and a long handled shovel was in the carriage as well as the trees. As I was the older, I first undertook the handling of the shovel, but the job was completed by deputy.

After this ceremony my sister and I surveyed our surroundings, which had been the subject of conversation at the breakfast table between our parents and grandparents. We were on a hill, just as we were at home on Rincon Hill. But below us under the low rays of a brilliant winter sun, stretched away a vast emerald green carpet of grass dotted by few buildings and by more frequent black green oaks, with the dense growth of bays, oaks and willows on our

*partial text

right that marked Strawberry Creek. Far away was the bay we had crossed, and distant San Francisco. It was very different from the sea of wooden buildings on which we were accustomed to look from my grandfather's front windows, and far more lovely. Fearing that my memory of that scene might have been built up by subsequent impressions, I checked the rainfall of the autumn of 1875 and found that in November there had been over seven inches of rain, and in December over four. The picture of the campus in 1874 which hangs in the University Library is confirmation of the outlines. From then on Berkeley was a reality, and not a word used by grown folks, and the scope of my known world had been enlarged.

My next visit was a longer one. In 1878 the two Palmer houses were built. Shortly after the families moved in, my grandmother and I made a weeks visit. By this time I was much more a free agent than before, and a vast field of interest opened up. Besides, I had the companionship and guidance of the Henry Palmer children in the exploration of my terra incognita. Buildings had begun to spring up at intervals adjacent to the University. There were a few other children to visit, there were wonderful secret paths to follow through the tall wild oats and Strawberry Canyon with its stream and vegetation was a never ending source of joy. In San Francisco, livery stables had made me acquainted with horses and their care, so the stable was just a point of interest. But the tank house and wind mill furnished a completely new set of phenomena. True, we had a shot tower in San Francisco which had the same outline, but the pump, tank and windmill were new mechanical devices that deserved and got careful study. At home all that seemed necessary to getting a drink was to turn on a faucet. If you forgot to turn it off, what of it? Here if you forgot, everybody shouted at you

at once. One windless morning when we had a drought the consequences were borne in on me.

It was on this visit that I first began to be conscious that the University of California was a feature of Berkeley. The late Miss Millicent Shinn was then in attendance at the University and visited the Palmers while we were there. She talked at great length over its affairs and problems, and had such an interested and responsive audience that I became sure the place was of importance.

From this time on I was frequently in Berkeley. In 1883 I had my first direct contact with the University. I again visited the Palmers and attended Class Day and Commencement exercises. The only speaker who left an individual impression was the late Abraham Ruef. I remember his ease and assurance as he spoke. I also remember that in the distribution of gifts, the Dispensator handed him a revolver as the Class conception of the tool that would be most useful for his start in life. It was all intensely interesting.

In September 1887 I came to Berkeley to enter the University, and a month later the family moved over, having in mind a trial year. The Henry Palmer house was chosen as our abode, and continued to be the family residence until after my fathers death in 1897. We found Berkeley a scattered and quite primitive community. There was a little center of population at North Berkeley, the end of the railroad, a sparse fringe of buildings on the west and south sides of the University grounds, and a somewhat larger center of population in West Berkeley. North of the University was a dairy ranch. Between the University and West Berkeley lay a few scattered farm houses and the lonely Town Hall half way down University Avenue at

Sacramento Street.

When we arrived, Dwight Way was being paved from Shattuck Ave. to Piedmont Ave., the first such improvement in the town. There were rather more houses on Dwight Way than on any other street. The back fences of those on the south side marked the extreme limit of civilization. The pumpkin and barley fields came right up to them. Between this line and Temescal were farm houses, an occasional road house, and a few country homes like the Garber, Deane, Ballard and Ainsworth places and Pagoda Hill lying east of College Avenue.

The other streets of the town and all of the roads to Oakland were muddy ruts in winter and deep with dust by autumn. All of the roads to Oakland had somewhere in their course almost bottomless sink holes. San Pablo Avenue, being the main line of approach to Oakland for heavy traffic, was the safest to use for numerous layers of cobblestones and creek gravel had been dumped in the softest places, making the ride over it much like one over the old corduroy road. In the part of Berkeley between the University grounds and Dwight Way, sewers had recently been installed, which added to the perils of winter traffic as no effort had been made to consolidate the fill over the pipes. However, few of the inhabitants sported horses and carriages. Those who did not, bore the misfortunes of their neighbors bravely.

As a large part of the population journeyed afoot, provision was made for them on most of the streets by putting down wooden sidewalks. There seemed to have been two schools of thought as to the way to build them. On some streets they consisted of three twelve inch planks laid side by side and nailed down to an occasional

cross piece sunk in the ground. In other places sills were laid in the ground with cross pieces of one by six boards nailed to them chicken ladder fashion. Both had their disadvantages. The long planks, subjected to the alternate wet and dry seasons, warped and pulled up the spikes. It was very easy to stub your toe as you walked, either on the protruding spikes or the ends of the planks. In the other instance the boards were fragile enough so that wandering cows frequently broke them and individual boards were easy to pry loose for any temporary use. Both forms saved an enormous amount of toil for students who needed bonfires.

Of course, nocturnal journeys were much more hazardous than daylight trips, as there was no street lighting, and every house was provided with a number of little kerosene lanterns which could be carried in the hand or on the handle of a cane to spot the dangers of navigation when the family went out at night. It was during our first Spring in Berkeley that the first public street lighting was put into operation. It consisted of four steel masts about one hundred feet high scattered about the town on each of which were four arc lights. It was enough illumination to show where the streets were, but not for finding nails or displaced planks. There was ~~no~~ gas in ^{only a limited area} ~~the houses or public buildings~~, and kerosene lamps were ^{common.} ~~universal~~.

As there were no crosswalks across streets between the sidewalks, it was necessary to wade the mud or the dust at the most favorable place. In summer at every front door there hung a feather duster. This was both a courtesy to the guest and a reminder not to track into the house what could be removed by reasonable use of the instrument.

In each center of population there were a couple of grocery stores, a market or two, and a bakery, but almost no artisans to do repairs and meet emergencies. If you wanted anything after the morning call of your grocer or butcher, you sent for it, as the telephone was unknown in Berkeley houses then and most Berkeley stores.

In many cases this meant a trip to Oakland, a time consuming process even if you owned your own horse and buggy. If not, there was a steam dunny on Telegraph Avenue which towed a car to Temescal every half hour up to six P. M. There you made connection with a horse car which jogged into Oakland, total time consumption an hour or more. At night a horse car came out all of the way at eleven o'clock. This accommodated those who had gone to church or a lecture, or had made a decorous call. But for those of us who had gone to a dance it meant leaving in the early hours of the party, or walking home. This we did a number of times during my student days. There was also a half hourly service on the Southern Pacific to West Oakland and San Francisco. When we first came over, our train only ran to Seventh Street, Oakland, where a transfer was made to the Oakland train for San Francisco, or to East Oakland, Fruitvale, Fitchburg and Melrose, all little separate communities now absorbed in Oakland. All the East Oakland students at the University came out by this means and some that lived in West Oakland. One classmate who came from Melrose made this journey for four years spending over three hours each day. During my student days the run of the Berkeley train was extended to the ferry. The train trip was made from Shell Mound Park to Dwight Way through hay fields and pastures with very few signs of habitation. One one side of Adeline

Street there was a straggling roadway. At Shattuck Avenue there were indications of one on each side of the track to Channing Way, where the easterly side was interrupted by a pumpkin field. At Allston Way the track crossed Strawberry Creek on a wooden trestle which was shaded by a giant oak. At Berkeley there were a few store buildings, the station, and the recently finished Odd Fellows Hall. On the west side of Shattuck were the Barker house at Dwight Way and the Morse house at Bancroft and next the Shattuck house and grounds extending to Strawberry Creek. A few houses west of Shattuck on Channing and Bancroft Ways and Durant Avenue marked the westerly extension of East Berkeley.

In 1884 the Alameda Water Company was incorporated to supply Berkeley with water and a reservoir in North Berkeley at the site of the Euclid Avenue reservoir was built. This company took over the old Water Company in West Berkeley and began extending its mains. They had not reached the Palmer houses when we arrived for during the first winter there was very cold weather and our pipes up Strawberry Canyon froze and burst in more than twenty places.

Notwithstanding such handicaps to the housekeeper as I have enumerated, our years trial of Berkeley life resulted in no vote to return to San Francisco. We found here such a cordial, interesting and companionable community that we found ourselves part of it almost at once. We, of course, had many old friends here, but had we been entire strangers, it would have delayed our amalgamation very little. Tennis courts at various homes made centers of social life for the younger element. There were long walks to be taken to interesting objectives like the Fish Ranch House, Grizzly Peak, or Boswell's Ranch. We also had occasional picnics to more distant points like Point Ysabel, when the yellow violets were in bloom,

Redwood Canyon, or Orinda. There were occasional dances at the Deaf and Dumb Institution, and various public functions at the University.

Our elders had the Berkeley Choral Society and the Longfellow Memorial Association to attend as well as the activities of the various churches. Besides these community interests, there was a very genuine social intercourse that was quite inclusive.

This community into which we had come had, at that time, an estimated population of twenty-five hundred. It is difficult to gauge the early population of Berkeley. The United States Census of 1870 and the Census of 1880 took no cognizance of the Town of Berkeley. It was non-existent in the first, but was incorporated before the second. The population was lumped in each case with that of Oakland Township. We know that in 1876 there were 158 votes cast at the Presidential election in November in the whole of Berkeley. The Centennial Year Book of Alameda County says that West Berkeley had grown into quite a settlement in the past three years. East Berkeley really began to grow the following year and North Berkeley at about 1882.

I, personally, had plunged into the University life before the family arrived and was deep in class room work, class politics, rushes and investigations of the new phases of existence that surrounded me. So far as numbers went the institution was not much larger than the San Francisco High School that I had left. There were more teachers, but not many more students. I dug out the Blue and Gold of '89 which enumerated all of the Academic Senate and classes of my freshman year and found that there were forty seven members of the faculty and administrative officers, six graduate

students and two hundred and ninety three undergraduates in Berkeley that memorable year. There were more professors attached to the professional colleges in San Francisco, than there were here. It will be seen that small as the town was, the University represented a smaller proportion of the population than it now does. Naturally we soon knew all of our classmates, and in quick sequence all of the faculty and upper classmen who did not make an effort to stay aloof.

North and South Halls, the Bacon Library, the old engineering building, and the Harmon Gymnasium in its original form ^{of an ink bottle} were the college buildings then in existence. They stood at the upper edge of a dreary slope. There had been some terraces to the west of North and South Halls which had just been reduced to a continuous slope and no planting had taken place as water was not available till later. At the lower edge of this slope was the cinder track (real cinders) and just above it the composite football field and baseball diamond. During the time I was in college the wooden Agriculture Building on the bank of the creek, where Eshelman Hall now stands, was built. This subsequently burned down.

Here we worked, played and lived together, quite apart from the great world, with only occasional excursions into it. As I look back, I can realize that our class came onto the campus just at the end of a pioneer epoch. By the time we graduated the influences that created the new order were at work, although then, we were quite unconscious of the part they were playing. Physical isolation was only one aspect of a more profound, if less obvious isolation of our institution. This does not imply that the University stood alone in this community as a collegiate institution. There was the University of the Pacific, then at San Jose, which

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222 Sutter Street,

San Francisco, Dec 1st 1880

My dear Anson

When you announced to me an engagement between Anita and yourself subject to my approval, I told you at once that I could not endorse such an action or give the approval desired. I have felt since then I failed to express to you a proper sympathy for your situation, and I sincerely hope that I was in no degree unkind or severe. Coming to me in business hours and amid business surroundings the subject did not get the fine sympathetic consideration which it deserved. I could not get away at once from the business aspect of the case that such an alliance to be made at the present time and under the present circumstances was not only unwise but unreasonable and improper. I believe that down below the depths of your present passion you can, by yourself realize some portion of these conditions as true. I doubt much if you can realize how anxious I am to consent to anything which can bring true happiness to Anita - but my opinions are fully concurred in by Mr Symmes that the step is not a wise one.

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(2)

San Francisco,

to be taken at the present time and we are exceedingly anxious that you should take a similar view of it and Wais. I am fully disposed to believe that your own parents must feel the same way. Over against a passion which you certainly know is not always governed by the wisest judgment, we ask you to consider the combined and decided opinion of Mrs Symmes and myself, weighted with an affection which nothing else can equal and governed only by a desire for united greater happiness - not the present only, but all the future. You ask for a promise of marriage to be carried out at some distant date. Such a promise demands the most thoughtful consideration, a careful regard for the opinion of parents or friends when received and a conscious appeal for approval to the Higher Power above. It carries with it when made rights entirely inconsistent with secrecy and ^{it} should be as noble as true and as holy as to scorn the shadow of passion or deception. If it is good and wise to do we should be proud of it and glory in it. Mrs Symmes and myself are fully con-

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(3)

San Francisco,

mined that ours is the better judgment. We speak to an "engagement" as entirely inconsistent with proper collegiate work, we feel that she is quite too young to realize the importance of the step or the awkwardness and impropriety of such pledges extending over a whole college course. You may scorn the idea now, but older heads & stronger minds than yours have crossed and changed in less than four years time and I beg of you both to make no vows now that shall not leave you the full & free use of that mature judgment - whatever it may be - which may come with later years. If your minds are the same a few years hence, you can most readily take this step which is so unnecessary now and to me is entirely unnecessary. I therefore ask of you to withdraw your proposals, to release Anita from what we deem an answer not wisely considered and I ask you to trust your future to her continued interest in you and to the hands of Father Time who if sometimes slow is always sure.

In so doing you would certainly place her parents under the greatest obligations

Yours truly
Frank J. Symmes

Blake Papers in The Bancroft Library

Key to Arrangement

Boxes 1-2

Letters written by Anita Blake, 1881-1962 and n.d.

Originals, arranged chronologically, written mainly to her husband, relating to family activities. Letters, 1911-1920 and n.d., were written from their ranch on Howell Mountain near St. Helena (Napa County).

Boxes 2-4

Letters written to Anita Blake

Arranged alphabetically by name of person or organization preceded by a miscellany of unlisted letters. A few are written to Anson Blake and others. A partial list of correspondents follows the key to arrangement.

Congratulatory letters re marriage of Anita Symmes and Anson Blake, May 17, 1894. Unarranged

Miscellaneous family correspondence, primarily from unidentified relatives. Unarranged

Carton 1

Manuscript of article about Henry Correvon by Anita Blake

Diary kept by Anita Blake, Dec. 7-29, 1941

Personalia - Anita Blake

Membership cards; award from Berkeley Floral Society, 1898;

Poems written about her

Miscellany - Anita Blake

Certificate of cattle brand registration, results of a phrenologist examination, records of summer session courses taken, 1917, etc.

Personalia - Anson Blake

Membership card, resolution by Society of California Pioneers upon his death, etc.

Notebook kept by Edwin T. Blake, [brother] 1903-1905. Notes re engineering projects in Mariposa and Calaveras counties (Calif.); notes re paving contracts in Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda

Diary kept by Edwin T. Blake, 1917-1919. Written while serving in the engineer corps in France. A few entries are dated 1920-1927.

Diary kept by Charles H. Richardson, Feb. - Apr., 1853. Written while in Boston, Kingston and Cape Cod. Includes also: poetry and letter (copy) to C. H. Richardson, Oct. 2, 1855. Many pages torn out.

Genealogy

Symmes, Stiles and Blake families

Invoices, receipts, etc.

Many are for purchase of plants for the Blake garden

Photographs

Relatives and unidentified

Invitations, announcements, etc.

Address books

See also address book in portfolio

Miscellany

Typescript of a play written by a relative, miscellaneous data about gardens, plants, etc., several items written in Welsh.

Clippings

Relating to the Blake and Symmes families (2 folders) and California history (5 folders)

Portfolio

Manuscripts (typescripts) of articles [by Anson Blake?]

Arranged alphabetically

David Douglas, A Pioneer Botanist in Action

Edward Fitzgerald Beale, A Pioneer in the Path of Empire

The Great Frontier

The Land on Which You Live

Salt Water Barriers For San Francisco Bay

The Water Problem in California

Address book kept by Anita Blake, 1898-

See also Carton 1

Partial List of Correspondents (Letters are written to Mrs. Blake unless indicated otherwise)

Altrocchi, Julia (Cooley), 1893-1972
4 letters, 1939-1959 & n.d.

American Friends of Vietnam
Letter, Oct. 2, 1959. Written by John W. O'Daniel, Chairman

American Humane Association
Letter (copy), Nov. 10, 1961. Written to the City Council of Palo Alto, Calif.

Arboretum Foundation
5 letters, 1940-1962

Bartlett, Louis, 1872-1960
Letter, Aug. 19, 1959

Biggs, Donald C
See California Historical Society

Blake, Charles Thompson, 1826-1897
6 letters, 1875-1897 & n.d. Written mainly to Anson Blake and others. Letter, Aug. 8, 1875, contains account of journey from San Francisco to Lake County.

Blake, Edwin Tyler, 1875-1948
3 letters, 1886 & n.d. Written to Anson Blake

Blake, Harriet Waters (Stiles), 1840-
7 letters, 1887 & n.d. Written mainly to Anson Blake.

Blake, Robert Pierpont, 1886-1950
Letter, Apr. 16, 1909

Bracelin, Nina Floy
2 letters, 1959-1962

Bray, Absalom Francis, 1889-
Letter, Aug. 21, 1959

California. Legislature. Senate
See Miller, George

California. University. Agricultural Extension Service
2 letters, 1916

California. University. College of Agriculture. Division of Agricultural Education
3 letters, 1914-1918

California. University, Berkeley. Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology
Letter, May 3, 1961

California Academy of Sciences. San Francisco

5 letters, 1934-1959 & n.d. Letter, Feb. 28, 1934. Written by Alice Eastwood.
Letters, July 11, 1944 & Sept. 24, 1959. Written by R. C. Miller, Director

California Historical Society

4 letters, 1959-1962. Written mainly by Donald C. Biggs, Director

California Horticultural Society

7 letters, 1941-1959 & n.d.

California Palace of the Legion of Honor

Letter, Oct. 12, 1959

Carmelite Monastery, Berkeley, Calif.

7 letters, 1950-1962

Chaney, Ralph Works, 1890-

2 letters, 1959-1962. Included also: 3 letters, 1959-1961, from Mrs. Chaney

Colman, Jesse C

Letter, Nov. 20, 1961. Written while member of a sponsoring committee
to help finance lobbying activities of Harry and Ruth Kingman

Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco

See Meyer, Theodore Robert

Cornelius Fidelis, Brother, 1877-1962

2 letters, 1944

Correvon, Henry, 1854-1939

12 letters, 1926-1938

Day, Clive

23 letters, 1897-1901 & n.d.

Deane, Ruthven, 1851-1934

Letter, May 3, 1910

Drury, Newton Bishop, 1889-

See Save-The-Redwoods League

Eastwood, Alice, 1859-1953

See California Academy of Sciences. San Francisco

Engineers' Club. San Francisco

Letter, Aug. 19, 1959

Fischer, Martin Henry, 1879-

Letter, June 28, 1922

- Giffin, Helen (Smith), 1893-
Letter, Aug. 21, 1959
- Goodspeed, Thomas Harper, 1887-1906
2 letters, 1941
- Grant, Charles H
34 letters, 1917-1962 & n.d. Written mainly from France during World War I
- Grosvenor, Gilbert Hovey, 1875-
Letter, Oct. 23, 1914. Written to Anson Blake
- Harvard University. Arnold Arboretum
5 letters, 1927-1955 & n.d. Written mainly by Elmer D. Merrill and Richard A. Howard
- Howard, Richard Alden, 1917-
See Harvard University. Arnold Arboretum
- Huggins, Dorothy Harriet
Letter, [Nov. 24, 1959]
- Hutchinson, James Sather, 1868?-1959
Letter, Nov. 20, 1946. Written to Anson Blake
- Hyde, Charles Gilman, 1874-
See Young Men's Christian Associations. California. University. Berkeley
- Jepson, Willis Linn, 1867-1946
5 letters, 1926-1941
- Kerr, Catherine (Spaulding) [Mrs. Clark Kerr]
Letter, Aug. 23, 1959
- Kingman, Harry Lees, 1892-
3 letters, 1959-1960. See also Colman, Jesse C
- Kingman, Ruth (Winning), 1900-
See Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play
- League of Women Voters of Richmond (California)
Letter ? 22, 1961
- Lessing, Ferdinand Diedrich, 1882-1961
Letter, Dec. 29, 1945. Included also: 2 letters, 1959-1962, written by Mrs. Lessing
- Livermore, Caroline (Sealy), 1883-
Letter, Aug. 28, 1959
- Lyman, William Whittingham, 1885-
Letter, Oct. 12, 1959

McDuffie, Jean (Howard), 1880-1955
Letter, May 12, 1951

McMillan, Elsie Walford (Blumer)
Letter, Aug. 25, 1959

Merriam, John Campbell, 1869-1945
See Save-The-Redwoods League

Merrill, Elmer Drew, 1876-1956
See Harvard University. Arnold Arboretum

Meyer, Theodore Robert, 1902-1973
Letter, Aug. 20, 1959. Written while Secretary, Commonwealth Club of California

Miller, George, 1914-
Letter, Sept. 20, 1961. Written while serving in the California Senate

Miller, Robert Cunningham, 1899-
See California Academy of Sciences. San Francisco

Mills College, Oakland
See White, Lynn Townsend

Moffitt, James Kennedy, 1866?-1955
Letter, May 14, 1940

Moses, Mary Edith (Briggs) [Mrs. Bernard Moses]
Letter, Aug. 30, 1902. Transmits sketch of experiences in Manila. (19 p.)

Napa County (Calif.) Farm Bureau
Letter, May 18, 1916

Napa County (Calif.) Farm Bureau Fair
5 letters, 1916

O'Daniel, John Wilson, 1894-
See American Friends of Vietnam

Olnev, Mary McLean, 1873-1965
2 Letters, 1959-1962

Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play
Letter, n.d. Written to Anson Blake by Ruth W. Kingman, Executive Secretary

Parratt, Edna (Martin)
3 letters, 1959-1962 & n.d.

Parsons, Edward Lambe, 1868-
Letter, [Aug. 24, 1959]

Phelps, Ralph L , 1880-1957
Letter, Jan. 28, 1933 .

Richardson, Maud (Wilkinson)
Letter, [1931]. Written to Mabel Symmes

Save-The-Redwoods League
3 letters, 1942-1961. Letter, Feb. 20, 1942, written by John C. Merriam,
president. Letter, Feb. 27, 1961, written by Newton B. Drury, Secretary.

Seaborg, Glenn Theodore, 1912-
Letter, Sept. 1, 1959

Skinner, Cornelia Otis
Letter, [Feb. 8, 1950]

Society of California Pioneers
Letter, Aug. 19, 1959

Sproul, Ida (Wittchen), 1891-
2 letters, 1959-1960

Stiles, Ann Jane (Waters), 1813-1897
7 letters, 1882-1886 & n.d. Written mainly to Anson Blake.

Stratton, George Malcolm, 1865-1957
Note, n.d. Included also: 2 letters, n.d., by Mrs. Stratton

Strybing Arboretum Society of Golden Gate Park
3 letters, 1957-1962

Symmes, Frank Jameson, 1847-1916
4 letters, 1890-1910. Letter, Dec. 1, 1890, written to Anson Blake. Included
also: 2 letters, n.d., written by Mrs. Symmes

Symmes, Harold Shakspear, 1877-1910
16 letters, 1894-1909 & n.d. Postcard, Aug. 6, 1909, written to Anson Blake

Symmes, Mabel, 1875-1962
2 Letters, 1895 & n.d. Written to Anson Blake

Taft, Charles Phelps, 1897-
3 letters, 1959-1962

Taft, William Howard, 1857-1930
Letter, June 21, 1905. Written to Hattie W. Blake. Included also: letter,
June 17, 1909, from Mrs. Taft, written by her secretary.

Thacher, Anson Stiles, 1905-
2 letters, 1959-1962. Included also: letter, Apr. 10, 1960, written by Mrs.
Thacher

- Thacher, Eliza Seeley (Blake), 1872-
11 letters, 1886-1897 & n.d. Written mainly to Anson Blake.
- Thacher, Sherman Day, 1861-1931
Letter, Sept. 27, 1895
- Thomas, Harold Earl, 1900-
3 letters, 1938-1941
- Towle, Katherine Amelia, 1898-
2 letters, 1959-1962
- U. S. Bureau of Plant Industry
Letter, Apr. 9, 1938
- Wheelan, Albertine (Randall)
Letter, Nov. 13, 1905
- Wheeler, Amey (Webb) [Mrs. Benjamin Ide Wheeler]
Postcard, n.d.
- White, Lynn Townsend, 1907-
Letter, June 12, 1951. Written while President, Mills College
- Young Men's Christian Associations. Berkeley, Calif.
Letter, Aug. 24, 1959
- Young Men's Christian Associations. California. University. Berkeley
7 letters, 1959-1961. Letter, Aug. 19, 1959, written by Charles G. Hyde.

Blake Papers in the California Historical Society
Library

Blake, Anson Stiles, 1870-1959

Business records, 1897-1938. 1½ ft. 4 boxes.

Samples of quarry company records including minutes of the Board of Directors, copybooks, ledgers, cash books, stock certificates, and invoices.

Nephew

Gift of Mr. Igor R. Blake, ~~Son~~ of Anson S. Blake, March 1972.
Acc. no. 23.

Added entries: Blake, Edwin T.
Bilger, F. W.
Symmes, Whitman

Blake & Bilger Co.
The Blake Bros. Co.
Interior Land Co.
La Jota Rancho, Napa
H. Peterson & Co., Inc.
San Francisco Quarries Co.
San Pablo Quarry Co.
Venice Island Co.

Business

1897-1938

San Pablo Water Co.
Quarries and quarrying
Yount, George C., -1865 see Vol. 9

Anson S. Blake Business Papers

Box 1

- Volume 1 Stock Journal and Ledger of the San Pablo Quarry Co.
1906-1914
Castro Point, Contra Costa County
By-Laws of the company included
- Volume 2 Copybook of Blake and Bilger Co.
Sept. 1906 - Jan. 1907
Central Bank Bldg, Oakland
- Volume 3 Copybook of Edwin T. Blake
June 1904 - March 1908
Central Bank Bldg., Oakland
- Volume 4 Minutes of the Board of Directors, Venice Island Co.
May 1906 - Oct. 1913
Balboa Bldg., San Francisco
Some minutes of the stockholders' meetings and some
correspondence included

Box 2

- Volume 5 Account Ledger of Blake and Bilger Co.
Nov. 1908 - Oct. 1909
- Volume 6 Account Ledger of Blake Co.
Oct. 1897 - 1914
- Volume 7 Cash Book of H. Peterson & Co., Inc.
1912-May 1914

Box 3

- Volume 8 Cash Book of San Francisco Quarries Co.
Nov. 1908 - March 1909
- Volume 9 Title Abstract of La Jota Rancho, Napa
- Folder 1 Continuation of Abstract of La Jota Rancho from 1886
- Volume 10 Stock Certificates for Interior Land Co.
Nov. 1910 - March 1938

Anson S. Blake Business Papers

Folder 2 Appraisal Invoice of The Blake Bros. Co., 1921

Folder 3 Pictures of the quarries

Box 4 and 5

Invoices, San Pablo Quarry Co., 1907-09

Box 3 continued

Folder 4 San Pablo Water Company and others

5 Blake and Bilger Co.--Miscellaneous records, 1910-12

6 Blake Bros. Co.--Financial records, 1916-17

7 TLS, George Fletcher to Anson Blake, Feb. 20, 1913

Biography

Anson Stiles Blake was born in San Francisco on August 6, 1870. He was the son of Harriet Stiles Blake and Charles Thompson Blake. His father, C.T. Blake was an early pioneer to San Francisco, arriving in 1849 from New Haven, Connecticut after a difficult voyage through Central America. Anson Blake attended Lincoln Grammar School and Boy's High School in San Francisco before moving with his family to Berkeley where he attended the University. Upon graduation in 1891 Blake went to work for the Bay Rock Company in Oakland, moving two years later to the Oakland Paving Company a macadamizing outfit run by his father and his father's associate C.T.H. Palmer. In 1899 he became president of that company. In 1894 he married Anita Day Symmes, a recent U.C. graduate.

Blake's interest in such businesses arose from his father's and grandfather's own mining and mine-equipment backgrounds. (His grandfather patented the Blake Rock Crusher in 1858.) In 1904 he helped to form the San Pablo Quarry Company which supplied materials to the city of San Francisco for its rebuilding after the earthquake. In 1914 the company, which later became Blake Brother's in Richmond, was created and this business was in Blake's control until 1954. Rock from this company helped to keep islands in the Sacramento-San Joaquin from flooding in addition to supplying the bayside rock edges of Treasure Island for the 1939 Fair there.

Throughout his life, however, Blake's interests diversified far beyond those of the quarrying concern. He took an interest while still at Berkeley in the University YMCA - Stiles Hall - (donated by his grandmother,) and helped to support it throughout his life. He was a member of many clubs including the Berkeley City Club, the Claremont Country Club the Athenian Club and others. He wrote prolifically on a wide variety of subjects and was a frequent speech-giver. Speech topics covered such subjects as, "Racial Contrasts on the Southwestern Frontier," to the effects Prohibition on California grape growers. Usually, though, they dealt with history. He was president of both the Society of Calif. Pioneers and the Calif. Historical Society, the latter from 1945-48. He was on the Board of Trustees of CHS from 1924-1959 and was made a fellow in 1958. He did extensive research on his father, concentrating on the years Charles Blake spent mining in the Sierras during the Gold Rush. Among Anson Blake's papers are letters written by his father's traveling and business partners describing their trip to California and the Gold Rush.

In 1953 the California State Legislature bestowed upon him the title of "Grand Old Man of Stiles Hall" in honor of his 50 years of service. In 1958 he was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree by the University. He died on August 17, 1959, eleven days after his 89th birthday.

Scope and Content

The papers of Anson Blake cover a wide variety of subjects. Most are the text of speeches he gave to various organizations around.

the Bay Area and many cover both contemporary California issues and facets of California history. There are also a few folders containing personal papers relating to his participation in the Society of California Pioneers and the California Historical Society. Some of the more interesting papers include Blake's early reminiscences of Berkeley and an insightful history of the early years of the University.

Blake's papers also include some materials on three associates of C.T. Blake, Anson Blake's father; Roger Sherman Baldwin, Charles T.H. Palmer and Caspar T. Hopkins.

In cases where papers had no titles the folders have been labeled according to what the articles seem to be about.

Box 1 contains correspondence, primarily and Box 2 contains texts of speeches or papers by Blake.

See also: Blake papers, MS203

Arrangement

Box 1

Folder:

- 1 Correspondence, receipts, notes and memorabilia of ASB
- 2 Correspondence, California Historical Society
- 3 Society of California Pioneers - misc.
- 4 Centennial Celebrations Committee Report (and papers on same)
- 5 Autobiography of C.T. Hopkins (pt.1)
- 6 Autibiography of C.T. Hopkins (pt.2)
- 7 Notes from Newspapers about C.T. Blake

- 8 Berkeley - In Retrospect
- 9 (Berkeley) - The Land on Which We Live
- 10 Calif. Historical Society, (History of) The Early Years
- 11 California in the Civil War
- 12 (Calif.) Water and Reclamation
- 13 Codes and Code Making
- 14 Collective Bargaining in Practice
- 15 The Companion "Histories of California"
- 16 David Douglas - Pioneer Botanist in Action

Box 1 (continued)

Folders:

- 17 EBMUD: background and formation of
- 18 The First Emigrant Train to California

Box 2

Folder:

- 19 The First Steamship Pioneers to California
- 20 The Hudson's Bay Company in San Francisco
- 21 The Initiative Incubates Ham and Eggs
- 22 Kensington (The Carmelite Monastery and Blake property there)
- 23 The Labor Situation in the Industrial Community
- 24 Life at Sutter's Fort
- 25 Life in the Mines (1850-52)
- 26 The Problems of a Rural Population
- 27 Prohibition and the Grape Growers
- 28 Racial Contrasts on the Southwestern Frontier
- 29 Rights of (labor) Minorities in the Present Labor Situation
- 30 Sacramento-San Joaquin Valleys - early views of California.
Also - conservation of natural resources.
- 31 San Francisco, 1846-48
- 32 Two Early Paintings of San Francisco Bay
- 33 The U.S. Reclamation Service
- 34 Wartime and governmental expenditures
- 35 Working for Wells Fargo

Added Entries

(Box and folder locations follow)

Agriculture -- California (2:26)
American Federation of Labor (1:14)
Art--San Francisco Bay (2:31)
Berkeley, California, 1875-1900 (1:8)
Berkeley, California--Transportation--Railroads (1:9)
Berkeley, California University (1:8)
Bidwell, John (1:17)
Blake, Charles T. (1:7, 2:25, 2:35)
Botany (1:16)
California-- Description, Geography
California-- Exploring, Expeditions (1:17, 1:18)
California--Emigration (1:17 1:18)
California Historical Society (1:2)
California--History, 1861-65 (1:11)
California--Politics and Government, 1849-1879 (2:21)
California, University, Berkeley, 1897-1900 (1:8)
California--Water and Reclamation

Added Entries (continued)

Chapman, Charles E. (1:15)
Cleland, Robert G. (1:15)
Collective Bargaining (1:14, 2:21)
Congress of Industrial Organizations (1:14)
Conservation (2:30)
East Bay Municipal Utility District--History (1:17)
Hopkins, Casper T. (1:5)
Hudson's Bay Company-- San Francisco, 1841 (2:20)
Kensington, California (2:22)
Labor -- California (2:29)
Labor Disputes (2:21, 2:34)
Mines and Mining (2:25)
Palmer, Charles T., 1850-1852 (2:24,-2:35)
Prohibition--California (2:27)
Race Relations (2:28)
San Francisco Bay (2:31, 2:32)
San Francisco--Social Life and Customs, 1846-1848 (2:31)
San Francisco--Politics and Government, 1846-1848 (2:31)
Society of California Pioneers (1:3)
Street-cars--Berkeley, California (1:9)
Sutter, John A. (2:24)
Sutter's Fort (2:24)
Trade-Unions (2:23, 2:29)
Wine and Winemaking (2:27)

Anson S. Blake, on the occasion of receiving an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of California at Berkeley, September 26, 1958. Dr. Blake is standing between Mrs. Clara Hellman Heller and President Emeritus Sproul. *Courtesy University of California.*

The citation reads: A senior alumnus of the University of California, a graduate in the class of 1891, a beloved member of Stiles Hall for seventy-one years, Chairman of its governing board for half a century, and now Honorary Life Chairman, faithful and generous friend of the University, knowing collector of texts on California's past and a beneficent influence on her present, revered by generations of student leaders for your inspiring faith and confidence in them.

ANSON STILES BLAKE

Biographical Data (from various sources)

President, Blake Bros. Company, construction materials, Richmond

Past-president, California Historical Society (also served as director and secretary-treasurer); past-president, Society of California Pioneers; director, California Academy of Sciences; director, California Botany Society; member of California Centennials Commission

Chairman, Class Secretaries' Association of California Alumni Association; member of California Senior Alumni Association

Member of University YMCA for 64 years, serving 50 as chairman of Stiles Hall Advisory Board; instrumental in fund-raising drive for new YMCA building (Stiles Hall named after his grandfather, Anson Stiles)

A.B., University of California, 1891; manager of U.C. baseball team in 1891, associate editor of The Occident in the fall of 1890, director of U.C. Tennis Club, member of Classical Club, quarterback of Class of '91 football team, historian of Class of '91, member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity

83 years old, born in San Francisco on August 6, 1870

Excerpt from Recommendation of Committee on Honorary Degrees

Northern Section - January 28, 1953

" ... He is a successful businessman; a student of California and Pacific Coast history, a member of western scientific societies, especially in horticulture; a public-spirited citizen; a philanthropist; a friend of students; and a staunch believer in the importance of character ... (while) his achievements are largely local and ... he may not be widely known outside of the circle in which he has been active ... his life and achievements are an adequate basis (for an honorary degree)."

Legislature Honors Blake As 'Grand Old Man of Stiles'

The stature of any organization can be seen through the people associated with it over the years.

The late Anson Stiles Blake was one of those persons. In 1953 when he retired after serving as chairman of YMCA Advisory Board for 50 years, the California Legislature bestowed on him the title "Grand Old Man of Stiles Hall" in a resolution praising him for his half-century of leadership.

In the fall of 1958 at President Kerr's inauguration he was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree by the Regents of the University.

Throughout his life he maintained an active interest in California history and has served as president of the California Historical Society and a member of the Society of California Pioneers.

In 1887 Blake began his long association with the University YMCA as a student member. He became a member of the advisory board in 1900 and was its chairman in 1902.

Robert Gordon Sproul, president emeritus of the University, has said in tribute to him: "From the day when you entered the University of California, you have played a full part in the life of the campus YMCA, standing in the shadows while others received plaudits of the successes that were largely yours, and meeting difficulties and dangers, almost anonymously with courage and with cash.

"All of us who have been privileged to serve with you, young and old alike, gratefully acknowledge your leadership and honor you for what you have done to build Christian character into Stiles Hall and to give meaning to the lives of the students to which the Hall was dedicated.

Another of those of stature is the late Gaius M. Fisher, whose life was also spent in close association with Stiles Hall.

In 1894-95 he was student president of the University YMCA, and just before his death in 1955 his final draft of "Citadel of Democracy" was completed.

"Citadel of Democracy" is an account of the Stiles Hall program in the field of public affairs. It was published in 1955 with a forward by University President Clark Kerr.

Fisher's special competence for this study was aided by his service as Secretary of the Rockefeller Institute of Social and Religious Research, a post which he held from 1921-1934.

In the words of President Kerr: "... his own life was one of the finest testimonials which can be adduced in support of his devotion to the life of both the mind and the spirit. The fact that he should wish to give his waning strength to this study is, in itself, a tribute both to Stiles Hall and the ideals which it has espoused."

Daily Californian 1960

The following references to Anson Stiles Blake are excerpted from What Is This Place? An Informal History of 100 Years of Stiles Hall, by Frances Linsley, 1984.

campus did not then permit partisan discussion of either religious or political issues, one of the early radical groups (the Social Problems Club) had found its way to Stiles Hall where its members were permitted to argue their causes and proposed solutions. This stirred up one of the first of many controversies to develop over the right of free speech being sheltered within a community-supported agency. The image of Berkeley as the unofficial capital of avant-garde opinion was still thirty years in the future. Members of the 1934 Berkeley community objected to Stiles's growing reputation as a place where all sorts of opinions could be voiced, and there were a number of attempts over the years to threaten Stiles's allocations from the Community Chest.

An early example of the meeting together of opposing points of view under the aegis of Stiles Hall was a four-hour session in November, 1934 at Harry Kingman's home. A committee of the "Joint Americanism Committee" met with members of the Stiles Hall Board to demand "that Stiles Hall discontinue its policy of allowing any student group, whether it be radical or conservative, to use meeting facilities." The minutes of December 15, 1934 recorded: "Chairman Blake and other representatives of our Board and Cabinet emphasized that our present policy is one which has been carefully worked out over a period of years and that it is the policy which seems best calculated to serve the University, and to achieve the moral and spiritual objectives of the University YMCA."¹⁴ The visitors left mollified, but not convinced.

Kingman referred in his oral history to the kind of support he received from Mr. Blake and the others on the Board:

Kingman: The free speech policy which Stiles Hall tried to develop was run by a Student Cabinet which set our rules. We had an advisory committee, of course, of older men, professors, business and other professional men who were of great help. They always stuck with the students and supported the free speech policy . . . Mr. Anson Blake—the Chairman of our Board at Stiles—was a staunch free speech man and a tower of strength . . . I remember once when the heat was on us particularly. Some organizations and individuals were trying to force us to do away with open meetings. The California American Legion, in their monthly magazine, came out with a front page attack on Stiles Hall's policy. I saw it and thought I would show it to Mr. Blake.

Conference that it was felt that small, frequent retreats from campus life at some nearby rural setting would have an ongoing positive, stimulating effect on the men of Stiles Hall. In the early thirties, a search group had considered a site near the end of The Arlington, in Berkeley, but had rejected it as "too foggy." Student President Wayne Lobdell brought in a report of a cabin site overlooking the Orinda Country Club, and in a relatively short time, a rustic, but quite spacious, cabin was built on the oak-dotted hillside for less than \$5,000. For a number of years, it was heavily used by various campus groups for weekend discussion groups and parties. In 1936, Harry Kingman reported a complaint by an Orinda realtor that the cabin was being used by groups which included "Negro students." The Board calmly reaffirmed its longstanding policy of non-discrimination.*

Galen M. Fisher, in his *Citadel of Democracy*, a small book about Stiles Hall history in the area of civil rights, cites many individual cases in which the men of Stiles Hall worked for racial integration throughout the community. This little book, published in 1955, is recommended reading for those who want more details about specific actions taken by Stiles Hall men in the civil liberties and race relations areas. Using techniques of non-confrontational pressure, which came to be called "the spirit of magnanimity," Stiles students, backed by staff and Board members, took action wherever bigotry came to their attention and urged racial integration in all segments of Berkeley life. Harry Kingman, resorting to sports terminology, over and over again spoke of the spirit of "fair play." The phrase became a kind of motto for Stiles Hall.

He also spoke of the need for an American student version of London's famous Hyde Park corner—a place where the ever-growing number of campus groups espousing a wide variety of political points of view could talk and debate. Not only was the right of free speech and assembly guaranteed under the Constitution, but Stiles men saw the provision of such a site at Stiles Hall as a "safety valve" for the campus community. "So long as they confine themselves to discussion, and refrain from planning for overt action, it was felt that students should be allowed to talk to their heart's content," said the *Stiles Hall News* in February, 1934.¹⁵ As the

*The Orinda Cabin was sold in 1948, for financial reasons.

matter-of-fact descriptions of the three other future enemy countries, but it would not be long before all this would be viewed in a very different light.

In the pivotal year of 1935, the *Blue and Gold* also lamented the disappearance of some familiar campus landmarks in the wake of the expansion of the University:

Gone but . . .

Harmon Gymnasium – In all the pride and glory of an institution which has served loyally and well during a long and troubled life, old Harmon fell before the mighty onslaught of the new Gymnasium for Men. [Old Stiles Hall had fallen for the very same reason.]

Hazing – Farewell to days of peanut rolling, dink wearing and cob pipe smoking. We mourn the passing of the iron rule of jolly Sophomores over the harassed Freshmen.

Jeans and Cords – Oh where are those great class distinctions, peculiarly marked by Sophomore jeans and Senior cords? With weeping and gnashing of teeth, we realize that trousers no longer distinguish us. We are all alike!*

Extravagance and Farce – The quest for “that which has never been said before” has resulted in utter failure. The campus supply of originality has been exhausted.

Wheeler Oak – The mighty has fallen! The stalwart guardian of many campus generations has been chopped down and taken away, leaving Wheeler steps heartsick and barren, hoping to console themselves with a bronze plaque.¹⁹

At 2227 Union Street, the site of the Old Shack, Dyke Brown, who was Student President of the Stiles Cabinet in 1935, presented his platform to members of the Board. “Brown stated that his hopes for the new year were to maintain the standards set by his predecessor and that his program contemplated the following emphases: To make the Association a center of campus liberal opinion; to bring about closer cooperation between the YMCA and other religious groups, including Catholic and Jewish; and to reach a greater number of students . . .”²⁰ Interracial groups were organized and crime prevention work continued. A brochure of the time sums up Stiles’s program:

*Unpredictably, in the early eighties, many students are even more “looking alike,” with jeans the most popular form of dress for both sexes.

So I did. He read it and he laughed and didn’t make any comment, and then at the Board meeting the next day he didn’t mention it. He really played a big role in the fact that a little organization like ours could, for a quarter of a century, stand up against the pressures and the constant opposition of certain individuals and organizations.¹⁵

On another occasion, Kingman remarked about Blake: “No anti-free-speech pressure group ever succeeded in pushing him around. They bounced off Anson Blake like tennis balls off the Campanile.”¹⁶

With the rise of fascist governments in Europe and an international acceleration of rearmament and military belligerency, American students began to respond by involving themselves in peace movements. In the minutes of the Advisory Board of February, 1935, we read: “Mr. John Taylor reported on the relations with radical campus groups and referred to the strike planned as a national student protest against war.”¹⁷ Typically, the Stiles Cabinet drew up its own statement in support of “our independent action and non-participation in the strike.”

The *Blue and Gold* of 1935 is, in hindsight, a very curious student document, in light of the historical perspective from which we now view the governments of Germany, Russia, Italy and Japan. Purporting to sum up each academic year, the “annual” reviews the highlights of events on campus and reflects the attitudes and mood of students as they move up one class, or graduate. The foreword refers to “the tremendous forces at play in the national and international scene . . . As students of a great university, we are vitally interested in the great struggle to save man and his civilization.”¹⁸ The volume goes on to feature the symbols of the swastika, rising sun, and hammer and sickle, with various sections of the book introduced by nationalistic collages of these war-like insignia. Each of the collages is then explained in a kind of neutral way. We read about Germany that “The blazing, defiant swastika stands out in bold relief. Germany’s progressive commercial spirit is shown by its air carrier . . . the left hand group on the yellow background shows Germany’s rebirth since the war and its glory in the 1936 Olympic Games. The workers united under the Nazi government are shown in characteristic posture” – that is, giving the Nazi salute. There are similar

Mr. Blake rose to respond:

Long ago when I was quite young, my father said to me, "I hope that you will never let your ideas get crystallized. I hope you will always keep them in solution." The fifty years of work with the University Y has presented 50 different aspects of the vital considerations which challenge the attention of the body of students. I have seen them make solutions adapted to the necessities of the case. It has been one of the great pleasures of my life to see this stream of young life flow by at rather close quarters.⁴⁰

At the shack on Union Street, with the team of Kingman and Davis still heading the staff (Francis Smart and Ralph Scott now having been replaced by Ed Duckles and Wes Hershey), the calendar remained crowded. Almost every day of the week, a student could find gatherings of his fellows listening to and discussing with an informed speaker topics in the areas of civil liberties, race relations, the co-op movement, the labor movement, world peace and theological questions. There was the Frosh Commons, the Soph Supper, the Junior Lunch, the Cabinet Supper, the Senior Lunch, the Student-Faculty hour and the YM-YW groups. The Hall served as a kind of combination public forum and clubhouse where a "fella" could always meet a friend. Said the Y's *Bear*, "Men like to associate themselves with other men who have a common belief in certain fundamental ideals . . . We hope the time will never come when we will want to stop talking enthusiastically about these things."⁴¹

There was outreach as well: 800 textbooks were gathered and shipped to China; money was raised to bring Austrian refugee students to U.C.; and Stilesmen were represented at community meetings, wherever the stresses and strains of intolerance pulled at the fabric of Berkeley. "The strained relations on campus which have developed between the U.C. administration and students have been deeply regretted at Stiles Hall. Lots of time is being devoted by Y members and secretaries to working for renewed good will and confidence within the University family," commented a student writer rather mysteriously in a 1940 issue of the *Bear*, without giving any further facts.⁴²

"What does Stiles Hall stand for in 1941?" the Student Cabinet asked itself at its annual planning conference at the

and bluebooks—all these made up student life at Berkeley in the late thirties.

As the decade ended, there was another occasion for celebration by those of the campus community interested in Stiles Hall. "Harry Kingman gave a brief review of the history of the University of California YMCA," reported the Board minutes of May, 1939, stating that this month "marks the 50th anniversary of the recorded participation of Anson Stiles Blake in this organization . . . On receiving a signal from Kingman, Ed Duckles emerged from the pantry with a birthday cake for the Chairman. However, the General Secretary for once in his life, had talked too long and his assistant sheepishly appeared with a smoking delicacy frosted with wax."³⁸

This was the in-house observance, but to officially honor 50 years of devoted and distinguished service to Stiles Hall by Chairman Blake, a dinner was held in the Great Hall of International House.[†] The toastmaster for the evening was Ralph T. Fisher, '02, and remarks were also made by Miss Sherman of the YW, James E. Taylor, Student President of Stiles, Harry Kingman, Brutus Hamilton and, of course, President Sproul who seemed to be a necessary and welcome feature of every Stiles Hall celebration. Sproul recalled his long association with Anson Blake, the bearded and venerable Chairman who had literally spent the major part of his life involved in Stiles Hall:

I first met him in 1911 when I was a member of the Student Cabinet of the University YMCA. I remember that I thought him cold and aloof. I long ago found out that I was wrong and grew to know his warm-heartedness and his eagerness to serve. There have always been two provisos attached to any of his offers to help, namely, that there shall be no publicity, and secondly, that he shall get none of the credit . . . He found an opportunity to play a part in the life of the University he loved. He settled down to the long row. And tonight some of us who have pulled with and those who are pulling with him now, congratulate him . . .³⁹

*Ruth Kingman remembers that only the top tier was made of cake. "The other two were overturned pans covered with frosting." The heat of the candles melted the icing, "revealing the deplorable subterfuge. Mr. Blake was amused, pleased, and, as usual, had a droll comment."

†The committee planning the event was offered a six-course dinner at \$1.00 per person by the IHouse staff, but opted for five courses, featuring prime rib of beef at 87¢ per serving.

The Fortnightly Club of San Francisco was organized in 1899 by Mrs. Anson S. Blake, Miss Alberta Bancroft, Miss Laura Hamilton, Miss Margarita B. May, Miss Julia George, Miss May Hooper, and Miss Alice M. Rambo.*

CHARTER MEMBERS.

MRS. ANSON S. BLAKE,
MISS HARRIET BUTLER,
MISS MARY BOWEN,
MISS ALBERTA BANCROFT,
MISS GERTRUDE A. BURNETT,
MISS JANET BRUCE,
MISS ADELAIDE BROWN,
MISS FLORENCE DOVEN,
MISS CORNELIA FELT,
MISS JULIA GEORGE,
MISS JOSEPHINE HARKER,
MISS KATHERINE HARKER,
MISS MAY HOOPER,
MISS MARY HATHAWAY,
MISS LAURA HAMILTON,
MISS GENEVIEVE HARVEY,

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* There was also a Fortnightly Club of San Jose, organized in 1899. Its purpose [1928 constitution] was "systematic study, and a higher culture both socially and intellectually." Membership was limited to twenty-five. "Literary exercises shall not...continue longer than two hours."

The Fortnightly Club of Berkeley appears to have been a men's group, publishing in 1800 and 1881 The Berkeley Quarterly, A Journal of Social Science, giving "public expression to individual views of the members of the Club, more particularly on topics pertaining to social science..." by "thoughtful men." Contributions from Bernard Moses, Martin Kellogg, Joseph LeConte, Josiah Royce etc. [No more published after Vol. II, 1881. In The Bancroft Library, UCB.]

MISS MOODY,
 MISS MARGARITA B. MAY,
 MISS CARLOTTA MARURY,
 MISS ETHEL MOORE,
 MISS DAISY POLK,
 MISS C. META PETERSON,
 MISS RUTH E. PALMER,
 MISS EDITH PILLSBURY,
 MISS MARION RANSOME,
 MISS JULIA F. REID
 (MRS. C. W. WILLARD),
 MISS SUSAN A. RUSSELL,
 MRS. H. B. RATHBONE,
 MISS A. M. RAMBO
 (MRS. A. GRIFFEN),
 MISS ALICE SCOTT,
 MISS ANNA G. SHEPPARD,
 MISS FLORENCE V. SMITH,
 MISS ANITA WHITNEY,
 MISS FLORENCE A. WEHLE
 (MRS. B. W. STONE),
 MISS MARY E. WILSON.

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I.

NAME.

SECTION 1. The Association shall be named
 the FORTNIGHTLY CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO.

OBJECTS.

SEC. 2. Its objects shall be mutual sympathy
 and counsel in all further development.

METHODS.

SEC. 3. For the better execution of its objects,
 the Club shall work under the direction of sections
 representing its different lines of activity: Literature,
 Art and Science.

MEMBERSHIP.

May, 1899.

Adelung, Mrs. Ed. von . . . 1925 Webster St., Oakland.
Averill, Miss Julia . . . 1014 Pine St.
Bancroft, Miss Alberta . . . { Aloha Farm, Walnut Creek,
Contra Costa Co.
* Bailey, Miss Minnie . . . 1369 Jackson St., Oakland.
* Bender, Miss Ella . . . 1812 Gough St.
Blake, Mrs. Anson Stiles . 2231 Piedmont Av., Berkeley.
Bowen, Miss Mary . . . 900 Sutter St.
* Bruce, Miss Janet . . . 2546 Jackson St.
Burnett, Miss Gertrude . . 1916 Broadway.
* Coleman, Miss Florence . 1834 California St.
Coleman, Miss Sara . . . 1834 California St.
Doyen, Miss Florence . . 1032 Washington St.
Felt, Miss Cornelia . . . 899 Pine St.
George, Miss Julia . . . 749 Sutter St.
Gregory, Mrs. Warren . . 828 Green St.
Griffin, Mrs. Andrew . . . Belvedere.
Hamilton, Miss Laura . . 2609 California St.
Harvey, Miss Genevieve . . Galt, California.
Hart, Mrs. Walter M. . . { 2631 Channing Way,
Berkeley.

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Hathaway, Miss Mary P. . . . { 2427 Channing Way,
Berkeley.

Hooper, Miss May N. W. cor. Laguna & Clay Sts.
Hooper, Miss Jessie N. W. cor. Laguna & Clay Sts.
Landers, Miss Mabel 1313 Taylor St.
May, Miss Margarita B. . . . 1313 Taylor St.
Moore, Miss Ethel 6th Av. & 20th St., E. Oakland
McKee, Mrs. Albert 2223 Central Ave.
Morgan, Miss Emma 754 14th St., Oakland.
Mackenzie, Miss 2716 Scott St.
Norwood, Miss Evelyn 2026 California St.
Olney, Miss Mary 481 Prospect Av., Oakland.
Olney, Miss Ethel 481 Prospect Av., Oakland.
Pillsbury, Miss Edith Palace Hotel.
* Pringle, Miss Cornelia 326 E. 19th St., E. Oakland.
Polk, Miss Daisy 1017 Vallejo St.
Rathbone, Mrs. Henry B. . . . 2225 College Av., Berkeley.
Russell, Miss Susan A. . . . 302 Laurel St.
Safford, Miss Clara L. . . . 3120 Pacific Av.
Sheppard, Miss Anna G. . . . 1624 Taylor St.
Stone, Mrs. B. W. . . . 3820 Washington St.
Symmes, Miss Mabel 630 Harrison St.
* Smith, Miss Amy D. . . . 2610 Jackson St.
Spiers, Miss Katherine 2114 Vallejo St.
Wilson, Miss Mary E. . . . 1415 Brush St., Oakland.
Wood, Miss Eleanor 1920 Clay St.
Willard, Mrs. C. W. . . . 1263 Clay St.
Whitney, Miss Anita 576 8th St., Oakland.
Wayman, Mrs. Willard 2210 Union St.

* Absent.

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April 6, 1987

Suzanne Riess, Senior Editor
Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 - Library
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Suzanne Riess:

Your letter has sent me on a memory search which has been most enjoyable. I talked with my sister to verify what I had and to get some of her ideas, too.

I think the Fortnightly Club was formed in the 1890's by a small group of like-minded ladies - "intellectuals" eager to explore new fields. Their fortnightly meetings were held in the members' homes, probably at tea time, to hear book reviews, discussions on various topics, and lectures by the members, rather than outside speakers. I believe the club started in the 1890's with members from both sides of the Bay. Mother was an active member until the family moved to San Jose in 1910. When she returned to Berkeley in 1941 I think she rejoined what was left of the group, though of that I am not sure.

Perhaps the Town and Gown Club, founded in 1898, filled the social and intellectual needs of this group of ladies and caused the eventual demise of the Fortnightly Club. Mother, her Mother Mrs. E. V. Hathaway, my other Grandmother Mrs. Charles R. Greenleaf, and Mrs. Anson Blake were among the founding members.

Mother knew Anson Blake's family in the late 1870's and early 80's when she lived in old South Park in San Francisco, at the foot of Rincon Hill where the Blakes lived. (Dr. Alfred Shumate of San Francisco has made quite a study of that area and era.) She knew Anita and Mabel Symmes at the Boys High School, which they attended in order to study Latin and Greek, not offered by Miss Cheever's School. We knew their younger sister Mrs. Charles (?) Derby in our San Jose days.

I have happy memories of Anson and Anita Blake and Miss Mabel Symmes during the time I lived in Berkeley (from 1938 to 1960). My husband and I were dinner guests at their beautiful home on a number of occasions. My husband (who was with the Berkeley schools) and Anson Blake shared a love of trees, and Mr. Blake delighted in showing his Dawn Redwood. Miss Symmes was a landscape gardener and I believe she planned the lovely garden. Anson's brother Ned(?) lived in the home next door.

I'm sorry my memory is so faulty about the Fortnightly Club. I'm not sure which of Mother's many friends belonged to it.

Mother kept up her membership in the College Women's Club, the Town and Gown Club, and the Daughters of California Pioneers into her 90's. I'm sending you a copy of Hal Johnson's column in the Berkeley Gazette in 1955, and also Millie Robbins' column in December 1966 in the S.F. Chronicle which might be of interest to you. I think Mother was typical of the membership of the Fortnightly Club.

-2-

Since this is the anniversary month of the Great Earthquake, I am enclosing for your interest a copy of a letter ~~my~~ Father wrote to his brother about the event. His description of his trip from Berkeley to the Presidio in San Francisco is rather dramatic. As I am the "earthquake baby", the event has been of particular interest to me.

I'm grateful to you for prodding my memory about the Blakes and the Fort-nightly Club - they are happy memories.

Best wishes to you in your search.

Sincerely,

Franco G. Helmke

Mrs. Guy M. Helmke
140 Sandburg Drive
Sacramento, California 95819
(916) 456-8256

140 Sandburg Drive
Sacramento, CA 95819

April 20, 1987

Dear Suzanne Riess:

I've been racking my brains since receiving your letter of the 15th.

My recollection is that Mabel Symmes was a permanent member of the Blake household; at least, she was there on the few occasions when I visited, and my sister agrees with me. There was no other company when I was there.

It was a very gracious home, with beautiful furniture, rugs, and Oriental rugs, as I recall. Likewise, fine crystal, china, and silverware. I'm not sure how many servants they had--at least a cook, one maid, and a full-time gardener.

So far as conversation, it must have been of general interest. There was never a feeling of having to "make" small talk. They and we had a background of general information. My mother was never at a loss for words, but I don't recall that she hogged the conversation.

Anson Blake was a charming gentleman--gentle in the true sense of the word. He loved his garden and a walk in the garden with him was delightful and instructive. They had a fine vegetable garden, too. I particularly remember the artichoke plants.

You ask about Anita's interest in Oriental art. I think many San Francisco and East Bay families collected it. Commerce with the Orient was easier than with the east coast of our own country, at least before the inter-continental railroad; and army families who were in the Orient at the time of the Boxer Rebellion and the trouble in the Philippines brought back many pieces.

Please do pass along to the Bancroft Library the letter my father wrote about the earthquake. I'm glad you found it of interest. I sent a copy to the California Historical Society in San Francisco.

I wish I could be of more help. It would be interesting to see all that you come up with. Betty Evans said Elliot enjoyed so much his meeting with you.

Sincerely,

N. Y. Apr. 18-09

Dearest Queen-

It is the an-

niversary of our earth-quake & if I were at home I should think of this possibility of another it is so hot & sultry here.

It is hard to believe I was cold a week ago. I long to put on some thinner clothes but my cold is still bad and is in my bronchial tubes to such an extent that I don't dare & will just have to bear it.

Yesterday was decidedly sultry^{too} and the air absolutely dead - no freshness in it at all. Ada went with me to the dressmaker's in the morning & I had my various things tried on. Then I went to the Belmont & had a very nice luncheon with Mrs W. Mullen & after it we went to the slums on the East Side, where we investigated the copper & brass shops in the Russian Quarter. The street & the people I found even more interesting than the shops. You never saw anything like that quarter. The children in the streets were like nests of ants and

2-

I noticed that there were five policemen stationed at every crossing instead of one, as we took. Enjoyed the afternoon very much, tho' between the weather, my cold & the confusion of the family, I was very tired indeed by the time I got back. I had a few minutes rest before an early dinner and after dinner which was at the Lafayette, two blocks away — I went straight to bed & feel somewhat-revived this morning. Will tell me that the library table had already gone W. P. but

Adams pre. paid the charge and will charge them to him. You can send him the money later when I know just what it is.

This morning I am spending the morning in bed preferring rest to breakfast alone at the Brevoort. I have some crackers and luncheon is to be at 12:30 which is not far off. C. Adams expects to come again here with us. He is dramatic critic for one of the large papers & C. Adams says can give me all the latest news of my theatrical

3. This afternoon I take the elevated out to the end of the line to see Elsie Hunt. Will has asked Mrs Bryant to take luncheon with me at the Holland House on Tuesday & has also asked if I would like to see Maude Adams some night toward the end of the week. We go on to Newport on Saturday morning & I have heard from Robert that we may look forward to seeing him there on Sunday - which is very nice. Your letter after your trip to Venice came yesterday.

day - I hope you are well. I'm out - the Fern-like growth from the pond as much as you care. It increases so fast that it is safe to reduce it to a very little. Father need not take any gold pick out of the pond again. It was only a sign of their breeding season! The same thing occurred last year.

It will be very nice indeed, if father can come up from Altadena with me. I have heard nothing more from Fannie but - the latest date for starting that she set was May 3rd.

4-

That should bring me to Los Angeles on the 7th I suppose. I feel impatient to start & the last days in a place are always hard for so much has to be crammed into them. Ordinarily dinner in N. Y. is such a late & long affair that there is no evening after it & I am usually tired enough to be glad to go to bed as soon as it is decent to leave C. Ada & C. Barclay. C. Barclay always remains at the table to smoke his cigar out & me seldom

return until after nine o'clock.

Much love to all at home especially yourself - dearest. It is very good to see the time approaching when I return to you. Ever your loving wife,
Ailā D. S. Blake.

Please bring up Distenjer -
 Also find out if Alice Griffin is still at the address
 & send some flowers from Aunt Helena Cal.
 me if she is - I've just written her.

July 15 - 1913.

Dearest Anson -

Yesterday was a lovely day - just reaching 80° - I spent part of the afternoon in sleeping on the hammock under the big Maple. About 5:30 when every one was especially busy on Chous Lundell jogged down the road in his buggy with his most affable smile & a bill for \$5.30 for bringing the wagon up! I discussed the bill with him somewhat to his indignation but paid it in the end & shall be very careful to see that he has no further claim against us. His patronizing manner & his officious & impertinent advice to me are almost more of a strain than my limp can bear. I treated him very coolly - asked him

a number of embarrassing questions about our possessions here — but he is made of brass & nothing offends him. The wrenches — I learn — were lost by Mr. Alue! — He had never been near enough the wild kiifer calf to know it was not a bull calf — etc. — etc. He has been too busy "helping them out on the Chabot Ranch lately" to have much time for his own affairs. He said that Rann, the butcher, said he would be up soon for the stick & I took the opportunity to send word to him that a bargain made in April for the stick — no longer held. Mr. L. said that I would find he was the only butcher I could deal with in this country — that all others were crooks & that of course I might be able to get some one else to say he would take them who didn't know the country

2.

* Could be imposed upon ^{by me} as to the difficulty of driving stock out! I told him I felt capable of making my own arrangements regarding the stock. I finally froze him out at 7:15 - & he left remarking he was going deer-hunting for a few days & that if he got any he'd bring some around! Another remark about the stock was that it was "beginning to look awful poor now & he'd advise me to 'sell it as soon as possible'!"

Jolly became suddenly sick yesterday - from no apparent cause. She just wants to lie down all the time - first on one side - then on the other - tho' she does not seem to be in pain & does not roll or paw. I had Lonell dose her with some soda & offer her flax seed

but she does not want to eat except to nibble at a little hay. She is not desperately ill - but something is quite wrong.

Lorrell expects to go to Sacramento on Thursday - on the week end, so if Leslie & Grace can come just as well a week later, it will be better, for, I would like Lorrell to be here when Leslie comes, if possible. If the Lewises can come this Friday it will be better. Lorrell's son will probably come up on Thursday for a visit of a week or more, before going up to Truckee on some work he is to undertake there. Lorrell thinks better & better of our possibilities here for cattle as he becomes better acquainted with our conditions. He said this morning that our water supply

3 -

was such that with it properly applied to the land we have he believed the place could be developed to support 100 cows. It is good to have him think better instead of worse of things. He spoke gratefully of the prospect of a bath. tub for the cottage. Rose has heard nothing from her husband since first learning of his illness & is quite worried. I think she means to stick it out here & stand by her contract with me. She has a very sturdy good sense & fine character at bottom - She's such a child in many ways & having had a pretty poor environment on the whole. She & her husband are most oppressed by their obligations to the doctor. Her husband has already paid

what he could on the bill &
 I think the doctor is pretty
 unfeeling as to ^{Lending} his bill, ^{in giving} Rose
 said her husband was afraid
 he would "get after him" & there
 is evidently a fear of being
 more or less hurt in his "stand-
 ing" ^{"in his company"}. I have said what I could
 to reassure her & she said
 rather pathetically "I tried
 to begin to earn money, just
 as soon as I left the hospital
 — I couldn't do it while I had
 to stay in bed"! Lendell

brought in the mail yesterday.
 Please thank Mabel for her
 letter & Tom mother for hers &
 the many enclosures in which
 I was much interested & which
 I return with this as she wanted
 them back as soon as possible.
 How did Sherman ever manage
 to write such a long letter while

4 -

He was engaged in such a
 program. I should love to have
 Eliza spend ^{with me} this two weeks. Sher-
 man suggests she take away
~~from~~ her children later in
 the summer, if she cares to come
 to the very, very quiet primitive
 conditions I have to offer. I do
 not feel equals to any one for
 whom I should have to make
 any effort this year. I realize
 that I should have been much
 worse at home this past year
 if your mother had not been
 so generous in leaving me with
 the machine. A little extra
 exhaustion brings on lots of
 pains that are in abeyance
 if I do not get tired. In the
 heat, I can not do much of
 any thing, tho' it seems to do
 me good if I am absolutely
 quiet. If only you could be
 here more!! I do not feel
 reconciled to your getting so

little vacation again this sum.
 mer, as seems to be the prospect
 now. I am glad things at home
 seem to be going so well. Will
 you suggest to Mabel that
 she try planting some of the
 elder-berries in ^{the} damp sand
 in a half shady place, without
 laying out the berries. Some-
 times might be dried before
 planting, but if they are as
 all ripe - I think they will
 germinate more quickly if
 planted as they are now.

Much love to all at home
 all three houses - & a kiss
 all our to yourself, dearest.
 From your loving wife,
 Anita D. S. Blake.

The team will meet the electric at
 cl. on Friday as usual unless some-
 thing from you changes the program.

from Woodbridge Metcalf, Extension Forester, 1926-1956, an oral history conducted in 1968 by Evelyn B. Fairburn for the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, 1969.

50

Fair: I know from your annual reports that you did have some recreational areas built by WPA and CCC. I was wondering if you supervised this work, or helped lay out plans for new fire lines?

WM: We drew up the plans for the camp at Whitaker's Forest in Tulare County when State Forester, Mr. Pratt, had the state CCC camps comply with my request that they devote some time to the improvement of recreational facilities there, and also at Las Posadas in Napa County. He assigned the men, and J. B. Brown, who was extension specialist in agricultural engineering, designed the swimming pools for both of these places.

The CCC crew built the pools and also some of the cabins and a cook house, added to the facilities and did fire protection clean-up along the roads and trails at these forest properties.

The Las Posadas camp is in a state forest, which was given to the state by Mr. and Mrs. Anson Blake of Berkeley. After consultation with the Blakes, Merritt Pratt and I went up and looked at the property with them. It is on Howell Mountain, right adjacent to the Pacific Union College property.

Fair: Yes, I know where that is.

WM: At the Las Posadas camp on Moore Creek, we developed the water supply and the swimming pool, and the buildings, trails and fire clean-up. Mendocino had their own camp. Napa, Sonoma, Marin, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties all cooperated in the development of that Las Posadas camp. I know that Contra Costa and Napa Counties still go to the camp, but I don't know about the others. Now the State Division of Forestry has a fire protection headquarters at Las Posadas in the state forest.

Fair: The Blakes gave the Las Posadas land to the state parks system, but I have heard that there was some type of rub on this and that the land was not supposed to be developed. Was there some type of stipulation attached to this gift of property, and did you have difficulties establishing that camp because of this?

WM: Not as a park. They gave it as a state forest. This was an interim arrangement. Merritt Pratt and I went to the property with the Blakes, sat in their old summer cabin there, and talked about their giving the 880 acres to the state. Mrs. Blake first of all had suggested giving this property to the University. Well, the University didn't want it particularly, but Mr. Blake was very anxious that she get rid of it for she was not particularly well at the time and he felt that it was too much of a problem for her. (She owned the property.)

She finally drew up the deed and gave it to the state with a ten-year clause in it that the caretaker could remain there for

WM: ten years. During that time, there was a provision that the 4-H Club camp could be developed. So it took about ten years to get all of these details worked out. And it worked out eventually all right. Mrs. Blake didn't want to have more than 150 people at any time on the area.

Fair: How did you work around that?

WM: Well, most of the camps were not more than 150. They ran about that. But there wasn't any particular problem in connection with it except during that ten years in which the provision about the caretaker was in effect. The caretaker was not cooperative and I never knew what kind of information she got from him; her contacts were not with me but with the State Forester.

There was some question about the building of the swimming pool. The caretaker didn't want the swimming pool in the place where it was put; however, the CCC camp was there and they did the work on it for the 4-H Club camp, and it worked well. The 4-H Club camp is still there and still being used.

Fair: During the Depression, the only contact that you had with the CCC and the WPA was the men that Pratt assigned to your camp?

WM: We had very good cooperation there.

One of the other interesting things that was done under WPA was the development of the Mendocino Woodlands on Big River in Mendocino County. This was one of the recreation projects in the United States. They had a camp under WPA of somewhere between three and four hundred men from San Francisco up there. They built most of the roads and they built a lot of very beautiful buildings, but the man who drew up the plans for it was a national parks recreation man, and I couldn't see the theory of the whole thing from the beginning.

They built these beautiful little cabins with fireplaces, just a place to sleep, the fireplace and bedrooms, no cooking facilities, no toilet facilities. There was a unit cookhouse with a group of cabins here, and then a unit washroom--that sort of thing.

This was one of twenty-one such areas that were built throughout the United States. This was the only one in California. There was one in Oregon. I saw the one that they built in southeastern Ohio. The people who built them I am sure had very limited opportunity to know what people want. This one up here was supposed to be for families. Well, families don't want to go to a place like that. They never did.

Fair: What did they use it for?

Sunday Dec. 7-1941.

Today the sword which has been hanging for so over our heads has fallen ^{at last} and we are at war with Japan. We have seen it there so long that to a certain extent it had lost some of its terror and reality. Today every thing has become more than real for the imagination ^{also} is running wild with many of us.

I heard the news when H. V. Kallieson spoke on the radio at 12:15 - and gave the details which were still coming in about the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hickham Field and Hawaii. The raid was still in progress and only the facts that loss of life and damage were heavy could be accurately known. Then came contradictory reports from Manila.

We spent the rest of the day listening in on the radio - for the most part to a repetition of the same reports and in trying to orient ourselves in a world that had changed for us so suddenly and completely.

Went in the evening at Juliet Stringham's with a group of some of our oldest friends here. We tried to talk of old times and ignore the present as much as possible.

2 Monday, Dec. 8th 1941.

Listened on the radio to the President's declaration of war against Japan at 9:30 in the morning — a very short & impressive statement. He is a great orator for he never says too much and says it deliberately and with exquisite enunciation and well chosen words.

At noon I heard Churchill — not at his best. It sounded "not carefully prepared" as one feels most of his speeches are.

I tried to carry on routine garden work with Sam the gardener. It was hard to think the work was worth the effort this time.

A little after six p. m. the radio went off. An elderly friend telephoned — very jittery to ask whether we could see any lights on the two bay bridges. We could not. There were some lights on land but for the most part things were dark. The radio came on at ten o'clock & we got news of the unidentified planes hovering off the Golden Gate — said to have come within 20 miles of the Golden Gate. I hope the isolationists who were so sure we could not be attacked — were listening in.

3)

Tuesday - Dec. 9th 1941.

No radio when we got up this morning. Planes are still supposed to be off the coast somewhere. Caterina, the Italian house cleaner, came as usual but quite unnerved. She had learned of this war yesterday when she left her house in the evening to visit a neighbor - found everything outside dark and had cars filled with soldiers tear past. Her home the Bay bridge with screaming sirens. She didn't sleep.

My sister and I have been discussing how we can observe the new regulations for blackouts etc. Not very easy with one ^{high} very large (10 ft) glass windows. We are rather vulnerable here - the house is conspicuous on the hillside and below us on the shore of the bay lie the factory district and a little to the north are the ship building yards and the standard oil milk etc. refining plants and flock of tanks - and also - next to it my husband's quarry & office.

I am going to pack up some of the small objects in the house tomorrow. My sister says she hopes the Japanese will give her time enough to put her room in order. She says she'd hate to be dug out of it as it is now.

We dine tonight with an old friend in S. F. and do not relish the prospect of driving over &

4) back in the promised blackout
We shall not do it again.

My niece, Carol K., telephoned
me at dinner time last night.
She had been up to Chinatown
for something and reported all
the many Japanese bazaars &
shops padlocked and pasted
with papers saying "Closed
by order of the F. B. I. or
" " " " U. S. Customs.

The F. B. I. notice was not on
the door of one of my special art
dealer friends there. I have a
heart ache when I think of him.
He was born in Japan, left with his
grandparents when his parents
came to live in S. F. He joined
them at the age of 7 & has lived
here since. His brothers & sisters
are citizens because they were born
here. Also his own children but
he, "the oldest" son, had to register
as alien - finger-printed etc.
He said to me once in speaking
of the possibility of war - "But
I do not go back to Japan even
if they kill me for it." He is
one Japanese, I entirely trust.
and he is sensitive enough so
that I know he is suffering.
I wonder how he & others like him
are going to live now.

5

Wednesday Dec. 10 - '21 -

Last night's trip to S. F. & back to dine with Mrs. Tucker was accomplished safely tho' hardly comfortably. A terrible jam & congestion on the highway leading along the shore to the bridge - Automobiles, army trucks, buses, freight all piled up in a triple line & stalled. We had allowed double time for the trip & it took triple. A mistake of some kind in orders about the bridge. When we did reach it, lights were on & there were no discomforts. We reached dinner $\frac{1}{2}$ an hr. late & the guests of honor, the British Consul & Mrs. Fisher arrived an hour late having been ^{caught} in the same jam as they came from a ship launching in Richmond. They had to come without changing to evening clothes - as that.

Today a quiet day in the garden with Sam. It seemed hardly possible that the world had changed as we transplanted shrubs and did the usual things. Tonight dinner with our neighbors Prof & Mrs. Payson & a pleasant company of university friends.

Thursday Dec. 11 - '41.

⑤ The day in P.F. for some Christmas errands. The atmosphere had changed greatly. Many boys in uniform on the streets, looking very young. The crowds in the shops were noticeably less than the week before. Newspapers on the corner stands carried headlines that Hitler & Mussolini had declared war on the U. S. On Grant Ave the bank telephone company's building was being banked high with sandbags and in Chinatown every Japanese shop still bore its padlock & the notice that it was closed by the U. S. Government. It gave a depressing atmosphere to the street. I called up my little Japanese friend, Ichiro Shibata. He said that he "still couldn't believe it" - that he kept thinking it must be a dream. The shop is in the name of his younger brother, Shiro, who is an American citizen, having been born here. I hope it will help them out of some of their difficulties. Ichiro said that they were not allowed access to their money in the safe and were living on what money they had in their pockets.

I had luncheon with Hope Bliss at the Club, then tried to straighten out some of my knitting difficulties with the knitting teacher then home.

Saturday
Friday - Dec 13 - '47

I expected to make my entry as usual last night. The day had passed very quietly but we had just finished dinner when we heard the wail of the siren. We watched the lights below us go out until the blackout was nearly complete. The radio too was off of course and there was nothing to do except sit in darkness for the next two hours and a half. We have not yet been able to arrange a room where we can retreat and keep a light going. A carpenter is to be up to see about blocking some of the windows with wall-board on Monday.

All is quiet this far today. I am packing some of the things I value in portable containers in case the time should come when it was advisable to evacuate here.

The "military objectives" below us seem to have become suddenly nearer - the West Berkeley Industrial Area and a very few miles away to the north west - two large ship-building plants and the large refinery & storage plant of the Standard Oil. My husband's office lies between the last two.

Caterina came to clean - very cast down. After two years at night school after her days work in preparation for the examination for citizenship for which her application had been in for weeks, the announcement comes that no more applications will be considered until war is over. She added that she did not go to Edgar's (the little son's) Xmas party at his school on Friday night because she "was so ashamed of being Italian".

Sunday Dec. 14 - '41

Rain - heavy & steady all day long. Spent this time on Christmas cards & letters and various things indoors. It was the day when the Chinese (our cook & his two sons) had their holiday in S. F. I wondered whether a blackout would not interfere with their return but they are safely home again.

Monday Dec. 15 - '41

Rain all day. busy in the house & greenhouse & garden on hand.

Wilson the carpenter came to arrange closing windows for blackouts -

Went up at four to see our neighbors, Mrs. Beck & Mrs. Pardee -

Tuesday - Dec. 16 - '41

A very rainy dark morning - clearing later around noon. Weather reports are no longer published so we have to guess at our weather more than formerly. Anson drove Mabel & myself to S. F. & we & Hope Bliss were his guests at the Cal. Historical Society's monthly ^{Luncheon} ~~meeting~~ at the Palace Hotel. A very interesting meeting Mr. Kroeber & Mr. Steiner (of U. C.) reported on their "finds" of bits of Chinese porcelain & old iron hand made nails at Point Reyes. Supposed to have been left by the Cermán Expedition in the San Augustin about 1595. Afterwards some Xmas presents - a wedding gift for Jih Ing too - & met Anson for egg nog at the annual "Open House" of the J. & C. Club - Then home across the bridge

Wednesday - Dec. 17- '41
a quiet day in house (writing) & in
the garden.

Thursday - Dec 18-
ditto — bought our small Xmas
tree - a white fir.
Carpenter working on our windows
for blackouts -

Friday - Dec 19 - '41
In the garden almost all day -
turning over rubbish every where
so as to have less around that is
inflammable when dry weather
comes. We found some of these
piles were refuges for rats & mice -
tried one large rat & I saw it
take the gun & shot it.

Saturday - Dec 20 - '41

Housekeeping duties & garden supervision in
the morning - Two men still turning rubbish piles
In the afternoon called at 2 o'clock to take Lady Collins
with us to attend the wedding of Jih Lung Woo &
T. A. Soong at Grace Cathedral at 3 o'clock. — a beautiful
wedding with Bishop Block officiating — the church
decorated with white (chrysanthemums) & greens — the
bridesmaids in pink satin with pink bouquets —
the maid of honor in blue with pale pink roses & the bride
in white satin & veil on her father's arm. Some one
remarked it was the only time she had seen the
serious expression on Mrs. Woo's face. The church
was filled — many Chinese & many American friends
A reception & supper afterwards at the Fairmont —
Lady Collins & I had supper at the table with Bishop
& Mrs. Block & Miss Alma Carlisle — Angus & I
at a table with the Leas Richards & Maria & Bob.

Evening - Called afterwards on the Pomer Hutchinson in the hotel. Many other friends calling - among them Mr. & Mrs. Lyman Brown (U.C.) Mr. & Mrs. Herman Meyer. Mrs. Jas E. Tuckett -

Sunday - Dec. 21 - '41 -

Breakfast & cooler - Mrs. Bracelin came for her work on the herbarium - also Whitman. Whitman said Mildred's cousin Robert Sinfu was lost at Pearl Harbor when the Arizona went down. He was the radio man on the Arizona & sent the first word of the attack to the mainland where the message of the attack was first picked up by his brother also a radio operator. Then the Arizona was torpedoed & he went down with it.

Monday Dec. 22 - '41

Spent much of the day in the basement with the two Chinese boys - preparing our black-out room so that it will be habitable in case we have to retreat to it during Christmas dinner. The carpenter here completing his work. When we went into the "work room" to prepare, I was surprised to find it much decorated with Chinese underwear. Tom had been doing his weekly wash & it was strung every where to dry. I sent for him to remove it & said "Why didn't you hang it outside in the sun - it's a beautiful bright day - what made you put it here?" He said "On account of the enemy!"

Tuesday Dec. 23 - '41

Cold clear weather today tho' it rained hard for a time during the night. Stories in the papers of the submarines off the coast near us - and of the noise of guns further off in the ocean. Saw one sonorous shot

(#2) Tuesday Dec. 23-41

Hitler's assumption of the head of the army portends.

Churchill is in Washington

Hongkong holding out against a force 10

times its superior in numbers.

Dugon is being very heavily attacked

Bellu resistance in Malaya.

The Russians still driving the Germans back - It is explained in Berlin that the Nazi Army has proved itself superior "because the Russians were not able to prevent their retreat" !!

Wednesday - Dec. 24-41

Very busy in house & garden - set up the Xmas tree which Mabel always decorates - preparing gifts for the tradesmen & employees - put on to-bail the plum pudding made according to the old English recipe of our day ancestors - began the arrangement of the crèche. The day has been clear & cold.

Thursday Xmas Day

Cold & a little drizzly - preparing all day for our Xmas guests at dinner time.

Mabel decorated the tree beautifully & arranged a small gift with an accompanying rhyme for each person at the table. We had dinner at 6 o'clock - I thought that if we were to have an air-raid alarm - at least dinner would be cooked - but the evening proved calm & quiet. Our guests are Norrie Laft & Donald Hall - Whitman - Mildred & the Juniors - David & Monique Nicols. Mildred reports that an amended naval report gives her cousin Robert Swift as not dead but so seriously injured

he may not survive.

Friday - Dec. 26 - '41
 all day in bed - trying to "rest up" -
 cold & frosty. I heard Churchill's splendid speech
 to the Congress on the radio -
 The newspaper reports arrival of a vessel bringing
 the wounded from the Pearl Harbor Tragedy -
 Also the death of Blanche Bates Creel in S.F.
 She was my classmate in the old Lowell High
 School. How beautiful & magnetic she was
 & how adored by the High School boys!

Saturday - Dec 27 - '41.
 In bed most of the day again. I am begin-
 ning on a round-up of waste paper in answer
 to the "Defense" request for it - & such
 mappings - paste-board boxes - old cata-
 logues of seeds & plants - It will amount
 to quite a contribution when all are in.
 Everyone hangs on the news from Manila.
 — none of it good. It is too awful
 that we can not answer the appeals for
 help. A raining day.

Sunday - Dec. 28 - '41
 More rain & more news of Manila (without
 defense) being bombed again. It makes
 every one very grim here for Manila has
 now seemed as far away as it really
 is.

Monday - Dec. 29 - '41
 Sam arrived for garden work - everything
 stopping but he can still burn trash.
 Showers in the afternoon — and no
 good news from the Orient except that
 U.S. forces are still holding in the Philippines

December 15, 1942

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Dear Mrs Blake

It was so nice to hear from you again, but we were very sorry to learn that you had not been well and that you had such a bad time with your eye again. I had been thinking of writing you again to inquire whether you were ill when I did not hear from you. Please do take good care of yours and do not strain your eyes. With a shortage of doctors as it is now, all of us must be extra careful of our health. All of us here are well excepting that my daughter, Naomi had another accident again. She slipped and broke her arm again in the same place. Doctor was saying that perhaps the cast of her first broken arm was taken off too early. Usually six weeks is sufficient but perhaps her diet did not give her sufficient Calcium which might account for her arm being broken in the same place again.

Thank you for your kindness in remembering us during the holiday season. The jams are most welcome because as you know, Children constantly hunger for tidbit between meals and a little cracker with jam is enjoyed by them immensely.

Not only the children but the adults too. I delivered your package to Mrs. Wasa and they were delighted and asked me to express their thanks. No doubt you will hear from them direct.

The world has certainly changed for all of us during the past year, hasn't it? I have been keeping up with the daily news around the Bay Area by reading the Chronicle and each day it seems life on the outside is getting difficult. War demands many sacrifices, doesn't it? During the past two weeks, we have had many Japanese-American boys in the Service visiting the center here. Many of them to see their families perhaps for the last time, as it seems this is their last furlough before leaving for combat zones. Sons in the Service, Parents in Camp. Well, that is war. It demands a different sacrifice from each of us.

Life in the center has become much more bearable and in a way quite comfortable. The camp is much more, nearly complete, and so far the food is good and I think quite substantial. The children are getting their milk, butter and eggs

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now and then, on the average about twice a week so we really can't complain when we think of the circumstances. From the papers it seems those on the outside are having a difficult time trying to secure butter, eggs, meats and etc. Sometimes, I believe that this evacuation may prove a blessing in disguise to some of the Japanese people here. On Thanksgiving we had a very lovely dinner. Turkey with all the trimmings. The dinning hall workers decorated the dining hall very cleverly with orange and grapefruit wrappings, and flowers made out of tin cans so it was quite festive looking. For Christmas they are putting in a Christmas tree in each dining hall for the children to enjoy. It means so much to them. The weather here is quite warm yet considering it is December. According to the people who have been living in this neighborhood, it is one of the warmest winters. Perhaps we brought the California sunshine with us. The coldest day so far was 4 degrees and we have had three snowfalls. The children were delighted and played in the snow. It is the first snow for most of them. Contrary to 21

weather in California, even if it is cold here, the sun usually comes out, so it is quite pleasant. We do not have many days where it is gloomy.

In San Francisco, I know about this time we go for weeks sometimes without seeing the sun.

It was quite encouraging to read in your letter about President Sproule and Dean Deutsch. I remember reading several articles by Dean Deutsch prior to the evacuation and I know that he was quite understanding person. I am especially glad to see men of their calibre in the field of education because in that field especially understanding, tolerance and broadmindedness is so essential. The future of the American boys and girls are being guided and molded by them.

Delta, the town closest to this center, is very tolerant. This is a great help to the morale in the center especially to the young folks.

The Lion Club of Delta extended a good-will invitation to the Council of the center, which was reciprocated later by a dinner by the Council.

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And also the Delta high School band drove out here to entertain the school children with a concert. a few weeks later, a group of 50 talented boys and girls from this center went to Delta and entertained the high school children there. They were so enthusiastically received that they have a second performance that evening for the town people and I was told that the auditorium was packed. Things like this will gradually help to overcome the feeling of those in the center that they are isolated. It also helps the American public to understand the Japanese people. A great many of them are prejudiced because they do not know.

In closing, my family and I wish to extend to Mr Blake and your sister and yourself a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. All of us are praying that the New Year will bring the dawn of peace.

Sincerely Yours,

Ichiro Shibata

Hotel Shattuck
Room 431
Berkeley 4,
California

May 29, 1944

My dear Mrs. Blake:

I cannot tell you how extremely good it was to see you again. It was very kind of you to invite us for tea and we did enjoy every minute of our visit with you, Mr. Blake, and your sister Miss Simms. My husband and I, we sincerely appreciate your kindness and thought of us.

We still talk about your lovely garden and marvel at the collection of so many unusual and beautiful varieties of plants in your garden. It truly is a blessing to have a garden, such as yours, to wander around in and forget even for a moment the hectic hustle and bustle life today.

The pagoda looks like a sacred shrine in its setting and we can think of no other appropriate place in your garden than where you have placed it. To know that you are pleased with it makes us very happy.

I placed the flowers you gave me in a vase immediately upon arrival at the hotel and they are still in good condition. The Bird of Paradise had one unopened bud which opened three days ago, and it is certainly a beautiful sight. The Rhododendron flower from South Africa fills our room with fragrance and each time we enter our room we remark how sweet the odor is. I noticed this morning that the flower has begun to droop and wilt and I am afraid that I will not have it for long.

As yet, we have not decided when or how we are going to dispose of our merchandise now stored in the warehouse. Therefore, we have been quite busy contacting different business people.

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We have visited Chinatown several times and we can only say that it is truly a sad sight. One of our Chinese friend complained about the fact that he is now forced to handle Mexican art objects and does not like it at all. Wholesalers of Chinese merchandise have stopped selling wholesale and keeping what Chinese merchandise they have. The price is sky-high on objects not classed as novelty and the merchants do not seem at all eager to sell them. Times have certainly changed. I believe Nathan Bentz is the only store on Grant Avenue with fine merchandise.

It is certainly wonderful to be back 'home'. We have not felt out of place or strange but feel as if we have returned from a vacation. I don't believe we ever had the feeling of being settled in Salt Lake City. We were always homesick for San Francisco and knowing that we could not return for the duration made us more so. This opportunity to return to San Francisco for a short period of time is the most wonderful thing that has happened to us since evacuation.

Thank you again, Mrs. Blake. My husband sends his warmest regards and appreciation to you and to Mr. Blake and to Miss Simms. Will you kindly tell Miss Simms that I have pressed the Yerba Buena leaves. I can hardly wait to present one of the branch to Mrs. Shibata.

Mr. King has asked to be remembered to all of you and sends his good wishes.

Oh yes, please give Tiran a loving pat from me. I will let you know from time to time how we are getting along. In the meantime, please take very good care of yourself.

Gratefully,

(Mrs.) Setsu Tsuchiya

HISTORY OF BLAKE AND CARMELITE MONASTERY PROPERTY

The land on which stands the Carmelite Monastery of The King in Exile at 68 Rincon Road in the area now called Kensington in Contra Costa County California, first came into the hands of people of European ancestry in 1823. Francisco Castro a soldier of Spain whose allegiance was transferred to Mexico on its becoming independent in 1820, was among the first to apply to the new government for a grant of land. His petition was granted and he became the owner of the San Pablo Rancho. When he retired from the army in 1826, he, his wife and children moved onto the property and continued to occupy it long after the acquisition of California by the United States. Francisco Castro himself died in 1831, leaving his widow and eleven children. They continued to occupy the land and to operate it as a unit. In 1851 before her death, the widow deeded her interest to her daughter, Martina, wife of Juan B. Alvarado, former governor of California.

The petition of the executor of Francisco Castro's estate to the Land Commission of California was filed in 1852 for confirmation of title. The Commission confirmed this title in 1855. Confirmation of the District Court followed in 1855.

The first survey was approved in 1864. During this time a number of the heirs sold portions of their interests. Others borrowed. Purchasers sought specific holdings and great confusion followed as conflicting interests arose. An attempt to settle the matter by an amicable agreement failed. Then in 1867 Joseph Emeric brought a suit in partition and the celebrated case of Emeric vrs Alvarado began its thirty year life in the courts of California. It was a terrible financial drain on the owners. A large amount of land went to lawyers for their services. In this category is the land on which the monastery stands. George Leviston of San Francisco was the owner of Lot 1 of the San Pablo Rancho, a piece of land over six hundred acres in extent and representing about two thirds of Kensington. Leviston could get hardly more than the taxes in the way of rent from the cattleman who used it as pasture and he sold the property to a group of speculators who divided their holdings. The holder of the largest individual piece sold it to the late Frank J. Woodward and associates who planned its future subdivision. Woodward borrowed money from George P. Baxter on the southerly seventy-two acres, and on the northerly forty-five acres from Harriet W. Blake. When the United States entered the First World War, hopes for immediate subdivision were ended and Woodward surrendered possession of the land to George Baxter and Mrs. Blake.

Mrs. Blake held possession of her forty-five acres taken on her loan to Mr. Woodward until 1922 when the University of California suddenly asked Mrs. Charles Blake and her two sons Anson S. Blake and Edwin T. Blake who together occupied a piece of land on Piedmont Avenue adjoining University property, to surrender their land to them for the building of the present college stadium and all three of the Blake families found themselves forced to look for new homes. Wishing to find a site where they could remain together and also have space for the large gardens for which they all cared, they finally agreed upon locating upon Mrs. Charles Blake's unoccupied land in Kensington. It seemed remote then for it was open meadow land covered with wild flowers and with cattle still using it as pasturage. There were two small streams running through it, with meadow larks singing on every side and the wonderful view to the west, of the bay, the distant city and Tamalpais and the hills of Marin County.

HISTORY OF BLAKE AND CARMELITE MONASTERY PROPERTY (cont.)

Mrs. Blake combined her home with that of the Edwin Blakes and the Anson Blakes built on the land adjoining. The acreage to the west was divided by Mr. Blake between two other children, Mrs Lherman T. Thacher and Robert P. Blake, neither of whom was ever able to occupy their share of the property. The Edwin Blakes held possession of their portion until the death of Edwin T. Blake when the estate was sold and the home and three acres of the garden were purchased by the present owners, The Carmelite Monastery of Christ in Exile.

The Anson Blakes, still making their home on the adjoining land have been happy in their new neighbors, and in the thought of the preservation of the garden within the cloisters and the peace which has become their nearest neighbor.

Anita D.L. Blake

Berkeley
April 7th, 1956

Carmelite Monastery
Santa Clara, Calif.

Pax Christi!

July 10, 1950.

Dear Mrs. Blake,

For many weeks I have looked forward to writing to you personally concerning our adjoining property, but recently the desire has, through circumstances, become a need.

We have been most interested, since acquiring the place, in discussing and planning the many and various details of the little monastery-to-be, and I wholly neglected any minute investigation of the garden lines and its exact contours. I am afraid my notion of it has been vague—too vague, in a sense—saying which I admit to you, dear Mrs. Blake, what a poor business-woman I am. I should certainly have gone over all the boundary line with you before we actually made the purchase of the land, and in that way would have been wholly aware of its irregularities, which I am sure you will understand, make the erection of a wall very difficult and expensive. When I awoke to these facts some time ago, I asked Mr. Jones, our very honest and efficient Contractor, to speak to you and Mr. Blake, and to demonstrate for you on the ground just what we wished and hoped to accomplish. He was to propose to you to cede a strip of land that would allow the wall to be built solidly, and at the same time as gracefully as possible, for we wish for your sakes, as well as ours, to make the wall a thing of beauty.

As you no doubt know, we are obliged, being Cloistered Nuns, to have such a monastic wall enclosing our property. We have indeed been charmed by the loveliness of the outlay of the gardens and the glorious trees, and would not for the world wish that any one of them would be in the least injured, as might happen in digging for a wall where it is important to anchor foundations deep enough to withstand storms and time. For this reason, a considerable strip of land should be allowed; it would also be required to give the growth room for air and expansion. All this I hoped Mr. Jones would convey to you, dear Mrs. Blake, plus the technical part of the work, which might be of interest to you, and for which I depend on him. However, he has come down to tell me that you do not wish to part but with the very minimum of land, and in very irregular measure.

This message places us in a most difficult position, as I think you will understand, and is most distressing to me, for it is essentially due to my lack of foresight months ago. Had I understood at the time of the purchase that there would not be a suitable strip of land to accommodate our wall at the end of the

property line, I would not have been willing to let the deal go through, much as I was pleased with the site, for a wall is essential to us.

I can therefore only appeal personally to your kindness and understanding, and ask you to reconsider the matter. It has meant very much to us, dear Mrs. Blake, to know that you and Mr. Blake were to be our nearest neighbors, and to be aware, as we have been, through my brother's conversation with your husband, and through Professor Olivieri (our mutual friend) that you are not unsympathetic with our way of life and monastic customs. We look forward to meeting you when the building is completed and repairs finished at the little Carmel-bo-be. It may interest you to know that we are dedicating it to "Christ, the Exiled King", as Our Lord God is little wanted in His own world today. It is to be a place of prayer and reparation—a little spot of spiritual rest and peace.

Personally, I am not going to Berkeley; there will be a group of younger Sisters there. I am only trying to arrange and complete things for them, as, being long years in Religion, I cannot expect too many more days! Do not think that I do not understand your viewpoint of wishing to keep your present property intact, just as it is, dear Mrs. Blake. I not only understand, but sympathise with you, as I know from experience how dear and sacred old surroundings can become, and as we advance in life we become the more attached to them! That is natural; they seem like part of ourselves. But, notwithstanding this knowledge and conviction, I come to ask you to do what your heart already refuses! I would not venture such a thing, be assured, were it personal, or even for my Religious Sisters, for I am deeply conscious that such would be an imposition, but in this instance I think I can say that my request is in the Name of Our Exiled King—He Who is seeking a home at present, and will come before too long to dwell near you on an Altar Throne. If you find that you can cooperate with us, He Himself will reward you here and hereafter, with abundant blessings of peace, and with the secret joy that must come to one who has actually shared their own home with Him, Christ Our Lord. I will pray to Him to let you feel even now, a little of what such a blessing means.

With every good wish and greeting, believe me, dear Mrs. Blake,

Very sincerely yours,

Arthur Rogers of Jesus

P. S.

I have asked one of our Sisters to type this letter to you, as my hurried long hand is not very decipherable. God bless you!

✠
J. M. J. C.
Carmelite Monastery
Santa Clara, California

November 3, 1950.

Pax Christi!

Dear Mrs. Blake,

It is several months since your letter, in reply to mine, reached me. It seemed conclusive, so I did not write again.

I know that you must realize that I was very disappointed that the most beautiful part of the Berkeley acreage was not to be offered to our "Exiled King", as a portion of the gift of love and reparation we hope to make His in this new little Carmel. I refer to the winding creek-bed and surrounding trees and foliage. I know that proprietorship to it is yours under every title and human right, dear Mrs. Blake, and that you delight to hold it, and dream of how you may further beautify it. It is all very comprehensive to me in a human way, and I sympathetically understand from that viewpoint.

But there is also another way to regard these terrestrial things. They cannot always be ours, just as there was a time when we did not possess them. Our Holy Mother, Saint Teresa, warns us (Carmelites) "All things pass away—God alone sufficieth." Happily, we know that before they pass—while they are still ours—we may have the advantage of exchanging them for value that does not pass: that which is eternal, by offering them in sacrifice to God, Who alone "sufficieth" to each of us, His creatures, for He made us, and for Himself. Has this occurred to you, dear Mrs. Blake? Needless to say, the clarity with which such divine wisdom has stood forth to most of us "who have left all to follow Him", has been light to our steps through the shadows of this earthly life, where we are now exiles. I know that you are not a Catholic, or, I should say, a Carmelite, and therefore it may be presumption on my part to speak to you in our own language, which contains so much hidden beauty. But I feel that you have an intuitive knowledge of our Faith, and will understand the only way I am able to express myself! Truth is one!

Very slow progress has been made on our little Monastery in recent months and weeks. The wall of enclosure has called off from the work on the house, so we have to wait patiently the completion of the many details.

As you will have noted, no doubt, we are erecting only part of the wall—the most important part—as the expense is very great, and are filling in the balance with wood for the present. Of course this necessary expediency throws open a wide door in my confident hope that perhaps in time the portion of the acreage including the trees and creek might be permanently enclosed - God willing! I firmly believe that the only way to preserve them for posterity would be absorption into an enclosure such as ours, for, judging by the building which has taken place on all sides in the last year, the day will come when those who do not feel as think as you and we do, will take down the trees and fill in the gulch by the huge tractors which are laying low and filling up land on all sides, to accommodate the mushroom growth of small homes. It is too sad a picture to ponder!

One other thought came to me regarding the charmed wooded portion we have been discussing, and I submit it to you. Would you consider allowing our Nuns to take over the formal ownership of the creek-bed and tree line by deed in the near future, were we to allow it to remain as it now lies, apparently in your possession? - that is, allowing the purchased land to be simply staked and wired to prevent any trouble in future? Will you think of, and pray about, this, dear Mrs. Blake? - reflecting that He—not the Nuns—Whom you would accommodate, is only an "Exile" in this poor world, but that everlastingly He is the Eternal King of Glory. How much His smile: His "Well done", will mean to us each, forever! Life takes a new aspect when we look forward to it, I assure you!

With every good wish to you and Mr. Blake, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ Our Lord,

Agnes of Jesus
Agnes of Jesus

A Chronology of the Gift of Blake Estate to the University:

President Robert Gordon Sproul kept memos of conversations held in person and on the telephone. In the 1957 record there are five entries related to the Blake Estate, as follows:

(1) Chancellor Kerr, Berkeley, June 14, 1957

Anson Blake property

Referring to Professor Vaughan's letter of May 17, 1957, concerning Mrs. Blake's desire to give her property at 71 Rincon Road to the University for use by the Department of Landscape Architecture, I asked him as to his wishes. He said that he would like very much to have the property and especially the garden which is of fine quality. He asked me whether I wished to handle further negotiations or wished him to do it. I said that I thought it would be well to leave them to Professsor Vaughan with an assist from either of us if he feels he needs it and calls upon us. Chancellor Kerr told me also that the Campus Planning Committee has studied this possible acquisition and a report will be coming to me soon.

(2) Chancellor Kerr, Berkeley, October 7, 1957

Blake property

He told me that he joined heartily in the recommendation of Vice President Wellman and Professor Vaughan that this property be secured. I told him that I was strongly in favor of acquiring the land, but that I did not see why we wished to agree to maintain the house in perpetuity. He said he thought it could be used to advantage for little conferences and perhaps for a little research institute, but I pointed out that no doubt there would have to be a good deal of remodelling in order that this might happen, and that this would be very expensive. I suggested, therefore, and he did not demur, that we recommend to The Regents that the gift be accepted, that the house be maintained during the life of Mr. and Mrs. Blake, but that no commitment be made as to its use hereafter.

(3) Robert Underhill, Berkeley, October 15, 1957 [telephone]

I asked him if he could get a rough estimate of the value of the Blake property, which has been offered to the University as a garden for the Department of Landscape Architecture, in time for the October Regents meeting. He said that this would be difficult if not impossible, especially as Mr. Hartsook is in southern California at the present time. He told me that he would try, however, and report to me as soon as possible.

(4) Vice President Harry Wellman, Berkeley, November 7, 1957
Blake property gift

He is working on this with Vernon Smith and expects to present a form of gift to the Blakes in the near future. I told him that I hoped that this would be worked out on a basis which would enable us, after the Blakes are through with the property, or in any event after 20 years to remove or destroy the house on the land if this seems to us wise. He thought that this would not be impossible and agreed to work with the Blakes toward this end.

(5) Vice President Harry Wellman, Berkeley, December 2, 1957
 [telephone]

Talked to me about the Blake property concerning which he has been conferring with the Blakes, with Mr. Vernon Smith, and finally with General Counsel Cunningham. He said that the time had now come, it seemed to him, when the General Counsel and the Blakes should get together on the drawing of a legal document which could be presented to the Regents at their December meeting. He read me certain paragraphs from a proposed document, in which The Regents are given the privilege of renting, selling or using the house during the first twenty years as may seem to them best. He pointed out that "selling" the house would seem to give The Regents by inference authority to destroy it if they cannot otherwise dispose of it. He reported that Mr. Vernon Smith is of a similar opinion. I said that, in these circumstances, I would suggest that the meeting of the Blakes and the General Counsel be arranged and that all necessary steps be taken to get Regents' action at the December meeting. He will proceed accordingly.

The outcome of all this:

On December 4, 1957, the Blakes signed the Deed of Gift of the Blake Estate.

On December 9, 1957, Professor H. L. Vaughan of the Department of Landscape Architecture wrote a letter of thanks to the Blakes. Among other things he said, "It is my understanding that you do not want any publicity about the gift."

The gift was a matter of record in the Committee of Finances recommendations to The Board of Regents meeting in Los Angeles on December 13, 1957.

On December 12, 1957, President Sproul wrote the following letter to Mr. and Mrs. Blake:

Mr. and Mrs. Anson Blake
70 Rincon Road
Berkeley, California

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Blake:

Now that the legal documents relating to your thoughtful and generous gift of your home property, subject to lifetime use, have been gotten out of the way, I would like to depart from the official and express to both of you my deep personal appreciation of your action.

The consistent and sympathetic interest which you have shown in all things pertaining to the University of California, and particularly to its students, not to mention your broader interest in every matter of real importance to this east shore metropolitan community, scarcely needs elaborating by me, but I can't help feeling thankful for alumni of the University such as the Blakes.

We are not concerned with the monetary value of the gift, though that is considerable, but we are keenly aware of the fact that there is no other property in this area which could even distantly approach yours as an outdoor teaching laboratory in landscape architecture and related subjects. What you are giving, as I see it, is not just a piece of land, but a part of the life and the home building wisdom of Mr. and Mrs. Anson Blake. For that I find words of thanks distressingly inadequate, but for what they are worth I would like to offer them to you from my heart.

Sincerely yours,

Robert G. Sproul

DEED OF GIFT

TO THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

For many years we have made the gardens at our home property in Kensington available to the Department of Landscape Architecture on the Berkeley Campus of the University of California for instructional and research purposes. We have been informed that this permissive use has contributed substantially to the enrichment of the courses offered by the Department and to the opportunities for fruitful research. To make this arrangement permanent and to assure the continued maintenance of the property for those and allied purposes we now desire to transfer it to the Regents, subject to our right to its use and occupancy during our lifetimes. We have therefore contemporaneously herewith by deeds granted to you that certain real property located in Kensington, County of Contra Costa, State of California, described generally as 70 Rincon Road, the same being more particularly described in those deeds and herein referred to as the "trust property."

The said trust property is conveyed to the Regents of the University of California (herein referred to simply as "The Regents") in trust, and we expressly declare this trust to be irrevocable, for the following uses and purposes and subject to the following conditions:

To hold, manage, control, sell, rent, exchange, hypothecate, invest, reinvest said trust property or the proceeds thereof, and to mingle the same and the proceeds thereof with its own or other funds, but only for the purpose of investment or reinvestment, and otherwise to deal with said trust property and the proceeds thereof, in whole or in part, all as The Regents may deem fit and proper and consistent with

the provisions of this trust, provided however, that The Regents shall not sell or convey the said trust property for a period of twenty years from the date hereof but shall hold the same for the purposes hereinafter stated. In fixing a period during which the trust property shall be held by the Regents, it is not our intention to suggest that at the end of such time the property should be sold; it is in fact our belief and expectation that the trust property will continue for many years beyond that time to serve the purposes for which it is given. We recognize, however, that conditions change in the course of time and that we cannot now foresee all of the contingencies which may arise; in order to make our basic purposes more effective and responsive to such possible changes, we place only a twenty year limitation and have confidence that our intentions will be followed with fidelity and that the property will continue to be a significant part of the facilities of the University of California.

To use the said trust property for instruction and research in the Department of Landscape Architecture (and any department successor thereto) on the Berkeley Campus of the University of California and for similar purposes by other departments, preference being given to instructional and research needs in the Department of Landscape Architecture; provided however, that we, and the survivor of us, shall have the right during our lifetimes to reside at the trust property and to the use and occupancy of our house thereon free of rent and other charges therefor.

Certain of the trust property is not, and possibly may not be, developed in ways appropriate for the instructional and research purposes which are the primary reasons for the establishment of this trust. This land is a strip approximately 110 feet in width parallel to Highgate Road. During such time as this land, in the discretion of The Regents, is not needed

for those primary purposes it may be used for other University purposes such as, but not limited to, buildings, experimental plots and similar purposes, but not for a general recreational area.

Should The Regents determine that our house, after we have ceased to occupy the same, is not needed as part of or as an adjunct to the primary purposes of this trust, The Regents may use the same or any other structure which at their discretion they may erect in its place, for or in support of other University purposes, including but not limited to use as a residence or for conferences. Any income derived from said house by way of sale, rental, or lease, so far as may be practicable, shall be applied to capital improvements and maintenance of the trust property.

If, after the expiration of the twenty years hereinabove limited, The Regents shall determine that the trust property or a portion thereof is no longer necessary to the basic purposes for which we have provided, then in that event the income from the proceeds of a sale, or from the trust property, shall be used for the benefit of the Department of Landscape Architecture (and any department successor thereto) for the support of scholarships, fellowships, instruction, and other University purposes within or on behalf of such department.

The Regents, so far as practicable and consistent with budgetary limitations and changes in instructional and research needs, shall endeavor to maintain the trust property in a manner substantially equivalent to the care and maintenance it has received heretofore to the end that it shall be an effective part of the instructional and research activities of the University.

It is our purpose to serve the University and its students, and we desire this trust to be liberally construed to the end that our purposes may be fully accomplished.

(Signed) Anson S. Blake

Date: December 4, 1957

(Signed) Anita D.S. Blake

IGOR ROBERT BLAKE
4165 CANYON ROAD
LAFAYETTE, CALIFORNIA 94549

October 21, 1973

Mrs. Charles J. Hitch
70 Rincon Road
Kensington, California 94707

Dear Mrs. Hitch,

Pursuant to our conversation regarding the the Blake family ironstone tableware, I note the following. In Anita D.S. Blake's last years after the death of Anson S. Blake I was asked by her to assume increasingly more responsibilities, such as supervising the preparation of her income tax returns, access to her safe deposite box, liason with the executor of Anson S. Blake's estate, and for advise and help on a variety of matters. Dr. Helen Christensen attended Aunt Anita during her last illness, which lasted two months, starting in February 1962. A nurse was called in and Aunt Anita informed her that I was to handle matters if she were unable to do so herself. Dr. Christensen told me that Mrs. Blake kept mentioning that she wanted to change her will. I arranged to have the family lawyers see Mrs. Blake and she signed her will in the month in which she died. Mrs. Blake had intended to leave the income producing assets of her estate to her Symmes niece and newphews and grand-niece and grand-nephew and had previously informed me of this. Anson Blake had left part of his estate in Trust for Mrs. Blake with my Thacher cousins and I as remaindermen. The disposition of the contents of the house she had not thought through at that time and had hoped to give more thought to. A few items had been given to my Thacher cousins and to me prior to her final illness and many things had been to the Universities East Asiatic Library . As indicative of this process I enclose a copy of an undated list in Aunt Anita's hand. This verv likely was a "think list" in preparation for the conference with the attorneys. Mahogany probably referred to the dining room furniture which she had purchased with her own funds and had once promised to her niece and later thought of giving to the Taft Memorial, and finally left to her niece, with the exception of the lowboy which went to the Colonial Dames. This is another indication that she was still pondering her final decisions. China is undesignated on this list. In her last evening of consciousness in April 1962 she

IGOR ROBERT BLAKE
4165 CANYON ROAD
LAFAYETTE, CALIFORNIA 94549

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dictated to Dr. Christensen the enclosed list of items. Basically everyone except the Carmelites got some of the items on this list in addition to some items not wanted by the University. Of the items listed I received six Sevres cups and saucers and the chocolate pitcher and half a dozen serving pieces of the Waters blue, white and gold Blossom ironstone china. Asa Waters was my third great grandfather who lived in Milbury, Massachusetts. If there is any possibility of my acquiring the remainder of the Waters china I would be most interested to do so.

Had it not been for yours and Mr. Hitch's accomplishments towards saving Blake House, it might long since been taken down, as my aunt had feared. It is most fortunate that the University found such an appropriate use for the house and we appreciate all the personal effort which you and Mr. Hitch have put into preserving, restoring and improving it.

I am impressed with Dr. Sessler and I am interested in joining his staff.

I deeply appreciate your thoughtful attention on the matter of the china. Liz, Laura, Robert and I very much our visit with you, Mr. Hitch and Caroline.

With best wishes, I am,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Igor R. Blake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'I' and 'B'.

Igor Blake

Savre }

Nyon }

sets of china. The first is no doubt Savres, and second is probably meant for Iron(~~apple~~ stone), which is the Blake set of chinaware.

Carmelites

Small miniature painting in the chest, of St. Anthony

Madonna in hall

Picture in arch (Carmelite painting)

George and Helena Thacher

European china

Anson Thacher - nephew

Cooloy china in bureau upstairs

Jim Anderson - to have television

Taft's Memorial

Bolton china set

Mahogany chest in room above

4 old chairs,

2 Colonial in dining room passage

2 Hopplewhite

Rugs - his choice

Anne, Carol's daughter

Family set of old Buff china

Oriental pearls with round diamond clasp

Whitman Symmes

Phonograph

In Memoriam

^{Anson}
~~Anita~~ STILES BLAKE, ANITA D. SYMMES BLAKE, and MABEL SYMMES

According to the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin*, the wedding on May 17, 1894, of Anita Day Symmes and Anson Stiles Blake at the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco, the Reverend Horatio Stebbins officiating, was of more than ordinary interest, the relatives of the contracting parties being "prominently known in society, mercantile and literary circles and they are both representative pioneer families."

White marguerites and snowballs were knotted to the portals of the pewstalls along the central aisle of the church, down which the bridal procession passed, Miss Mabel Symmes being her sister's maid of honor.

At the wedding reception in the Symmes' residence on Rincon Hill, precious stones, typical of that affluent period, were much in evidence. "The groom's present," said the *Bulletin*, "was of diamonds and sapphires. Each of the bridesmaids received a pink enameled wreath set with pearls. The ushers as souvenirs had four-leaf clover pins, in the center of which a diamond dewdrop was set."

The affluence of the Frank J. Symmes family was attributable to his father-in-law's thriving electric-fixtures business, viz., Thomas Day & Company (incorporated 1886), of which Mr. Symmes was president.

In the East Bay region, the groom's family had also been financially successful, in this case through real estate operations and street paving—to such an extent that in 1891 Mrs. Ann J. Stiles, Anson Blake's maternal grandmother, organized a corporation, Trustees of Stiles Hall, under whose supervision the hall, dedicated to the religious and social uses of university students without distinction of creed, was built as a memorial to her husband, Anson Gale Stiles (former member of the board of trustees of the College of California).

In 1895, another Stiles-Blake real estate transaction involved 3.34 acres lying in the valley of Strawberry Creek (part of the present California Memorial Stadium). By a deed dated December 6 of that year, the University of California acquired the land from Mrs. Ann J. Stiles for \$3,800 as a future reservoir site. Meanwhile, on the western border of Strawberry Creek facing on Piedmont Avenue north of Bancroft Way, Anson, his mother Mrs. Charles T. Blake, and his brother Edwin built handsome residences with connecting gardens and a small stable for Anita's riding-horse Dewey. On March 20, 1922, this property was deeded to the university, the former owners moving to the Kensington area of Berkeley in Contra Costa County. Finally, by a deed dated December 4, 1957, Anson and Anita gave their part of the Kensington property, amounting to ten and one-half acres, to the university, the Edwin Blake portion having been already purchased by Noel Sullivan for a Carmelite Monastery.

The importance of Anson's and Anita's gift to the university has been described by Professor H. L. Vaughan, chairman of the department of landscape architecture: "Of the physical features essential to teaching and research in

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Landscape Architecture—laboratories, libraries, classrooms, plant collections, and well-designed garden space—the last two are the most difficult to obtain and keep. The Blake Garden provides them in incomparable fashion.”

As to Anson’s personal career: after graduation, he went into the contracting industry in which his father, Charles T. Blake, was engaged, specifically in furnishing materials connected with street work. By 1913 his brothers had joined him in forming Blake Brothers, with a quarry and office in Oakland, California. The company is now known as Blake Brothers Company, Crushed Rock and Rip Rap, Asphaltic Mixes, in Richmond, California, of which his nephew Igor, son of Robert Blake, is officer and director.

The first official connection Anson (University of California, 1891; died August 17, 1959, at the age of eighty-nine) had with the University Y.M.C.A. was on March 27, 1889, when he became a student member. By 1900 he was a member of the advisory board, and, in 1902, the board’s chairman. At the groundbreaking ceremony (February 20, 1950) for the new building at Bancroft Way and Dana Street, Mr. Robert Gordon Sproul, then president of the university, complimented him for having, during all that time, met “difficulties and dangers, almost anonymously with courage and with cash.”

Praise came from another direction in 1953, namely, in a concurrent resolution of the legislature designating him “The Grand Old Man of Stiles Hall.”

On September 29, 1958, a culminating event occurred when, at the inauguration of President Clark Kerr, his Alma Mater granted him an LL.D. degree, paying tribute to his having been “revered by generations of student leaders for your inspiring faith and confidence in them.” In addition to such expressions of admiration were those from booklovers and from fellow-members of the California Historical Society and the Society of California Pioneers, in both of which he had held high office.

Anita (University of California, A.B., 1894; died April 25, 1962, at the age of ninety), as well as her sister Mabel, were members of the Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity. Scholastically, Anita received what she called a most happy surprise when, subsequent to its establishment at the University of California in 1898, the Phi Beta Kappa honor society chose her as one of the few earlier graduates admitted to its membership.

A year after her marriage, Anita was one of the seven “organizers” of the Fortnightly Club of San Francisco. Twenty years was the minimum age limit and the membership was limited to sixty in addition to honorary members. The “objects” of the Fortnightly Club were “mutual sympathy and counsel in all further development,” and were to be carried out “under the direction of sections.” Included were such studies as French, English, history of religions, music, and art. One program, two years after the founding of the club, was to be devoted to a debate: “Resolved that study and society are compatible.” Apparently the affirmative won, because the club continued its existence for some decades, Anita and her co-organizers bearing witness to a thoroughly flourishing “compatibility.”

News of the Society

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During the early years of the Fortnightly Club's existence, a sincere interest in Oriental art arose, induced by the creation, in 1895, of a department of Oriental languages and literature at the University of California. Money to finance such a department had been supplied in the will of the Hon. Edward Tompkins (*d.* 1872) who was one of the university's first regents; but the complexity of the will's provisions had delayed settlement, and it was not until 1895 that the first professorship in Oriental languages and literature was established. Along with several wives of faculty members, Anita was attracted by the beauty of Chinese porcelains, paintings, and furniture—an attraction which was stimulated by the possibility of obtaining them in the shops of San Francisco. Thus it was that her collection attracted the attention of connoisseurs, and her wisdom in leaving it in her will to the East Asiatic Library at the university (Dr. Elizabeth Huff, librarian) was hailed with the greatest enthusiasm.

Miss Mabel Symmes (University of California, 1896; died, Berkeley, February 1, 1962, at the age of eighty-seven) joined her sister in her love of plants, but she directed her energies toward what might be called their *becomingness* to a given piece of land under given climatic and exposure conditions. In this demanding profession of landscape architecture she built a name for herself in the San Francisco Bay area. Her work in Kensington was made easier by the beauty of the Blake residence, designed by John B. Faville of the San Francisco architectural firm of Bliss & Faville.

In recent years, Mabel had been working over the papers left by Miss Katherine Davies Jones (1860-1943), university botanist and ecologist, whose printed reports on ninety different varieties of climbing plants were published in the *National Horticultural Magazine*, 1936, 1937, and 1938. Miss Symmes' own account of Miss Jones' work had appeared in *Madroño*, VIII (April, 1946); but much remained to be done on the subject, and the notes she took during the process she donated in her will to the Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

After the Blake-Symmes move to Kensington, Anita and Mabel began their almost forty years of plant-propagation and landscaping. The list of Anita's contributions to horticulture contains such far-flung species as *Ilex paraguariensis*, *Pistacia Chinensis*, *Acacia pubescens* or "Hairy Wattle" from Australia, *Osmanthus illicifolius*, and many others. For these she received "awards" from the California Horticultural Society which published her descriptive text in each case in their *Journal*. To quote a professional authority, Mrs. Mai K. Arbogast, assistant professor of landscape architecture at the university:

From her early years, Mrs. Blake's interest in plants led her not only to support horticultural societies and botanic gardens financially but also to present to them the unusual specimens she herself had grown. The result has been that rare plants from her collection are now to be found in botanic gardens and herbaria all over the world. I learned much from her and am deeply grateful for having known her as a person.

Though a close second to Anita in her pursuit of plant lore, Mabel made room in her busy days for financial matters, and, as a stockholder in a bay area bank,

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attended annual meetings regularly. She also attended reunions of her college class and joined with them in processions at various university celebrations.

It is pleasant to record a tribute that was paid to Anita and Mabel by their neighbor, the Reverend Mother of the Carmelite Monastery in Kensington. To show her appreciation of the broad Christian principles manifested in their daily lives, she sought for them a Papal Blessing. According to custom this is only bestowed in Rome, but exception was made in their cases because of their age and delicate health. The Blessing was doubly welcome, Anita said in her letter to the Reverend Mother, because it arrived on her first wedding-anniversary subsequent to her husband's death.

GLADYS C. WICKSON

From Berkeley Barb, June 13, 1969

U.C. SKELETON

HITCH'S \$1,000,000 PAD

by Steve Haines

UC Pres. Charles J. Hitch is living in a million dollar pad courtesy of the UC Regents. This figure comes from local architects, realtors and UC officials.

Hitch and his family look over their new pad April 1, a few weeks before the people look over the UC mudlot at Dwight and Bowditch, and created a People's Park.

The people spent weeks pouring their time, talents and love into creating a thing of beauty out of 2.3 acres of desolation. The Regents spent \$458,500 fixing up the Blake House, a 10-1/2 acre walled estate in the Kensington hills, for Hitch.

These are official figures (see box for details). BARB has learned that the true details of the transaction are contained in UC account number 1-902340, which has been removed from UC files and is regarded as Top Secret.

Sources in the UC administration told BARB an employee of the Campus Architect's and Engineer's Offices carries the file in her brief case for safe keeping.

Hitch's new house is located at 70 Hinton Rd. in Kensington. It contains 13,300 square feet of living area. This is about the size of 10 suburban tract homes, which are designed to house a family of five each.

The walled estate consists of a

castle-like house and a world-renowned botanical garden, it was given to the university on Oct. 18, 1927 by the Blake family. Since then, the UC Dept. of Landscape Architecture has maintained the grounds as an experimental field station.

Ironically, this is what UC Prof. Sym Van der Ryn proposed for People's Park.

The estate dominates a hilltop in the most exclusive section of Kensington. The main house, several out buildings and the 10-1/2 acre botanical garden and grounds are enclosed by a high stucco wall and steel fence. Public records show that the university owns nearly 100 acres surrounding the estate, as well.

The main house faces the bay. A Taj Mahal-like pool reflects the front portico. It is a monstrous three-story house of Spanish design, with adobe stucco walls and red tile roof.

It reminds you of Hearst's San Simeon - opulent, decadent and manicured.

No less than five roads dead end at the Blake estate. It even has a separate address for the grounds keeper's house (2 Norwood Place).

The house was once used for women students, but was so poorly maintained that it had to be abandoned. At one time, the Regents had considered using it as a VIP house for visitors to the Berkeley campus. Then Hitch came on the scene.

Hitch was appointed President of UC in September, 1967. He took office in January, 1968, under a contract that called for an annual salary of \$45,000 plus a house and furnishings.

ma and I found it acceptable," Hitch said.

BARB asked if he had picked out Blake house himself.

"It was proposed at the time I was hired," he said.

When asked about the \$458,500 to fix it up, he replied:

"I have no knowledge of the costs, although I don't believe that taxpayers funds were used."

"Besides, I don't have use of all the estate," he added.

BARB asked how he liked his new house.

"It's a very fine residence. We're very happy with it."

When asked how often he would use his million dollar pad, Hitch hung up on this reporter, saying, "I really can't give you anymore information. That's a private matter."

Hitch should know something about costs. He was chief financial officer for UC and the Dept. of Defense, and he taught economics at Oxford.

Hitch should be happy with his house. Over \$90,000 was spent for furnishings and decorating, including a \$9,000 fee to SF interior decorator Anthony Hall. BARB has heard that those furnishings include a set of 12 chairs costing \$2,700. Another item is a \$48,000 expenditure to relocate a greenhouse nearer the main house, BARB was told.

Two families of live-in servants are said to staff the estate.

Local architects estimate it would cost \$25 a square foot, or \$32,500 to replace the main house before the \$458,500 in repairs and furnishings.

would live in Blake house, he had to know something of the expenditures, whether or not he included them in his budget.

Before coming to UC as chief finance man in May, 1965, Hitch was Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller). He was appointed to that post in 1961 by former president Kennedy.

According to a Science magazine article in 1966, Hitch was "the fulcrum for McNamara's reorganization of the Defense Department."

Hitch's background also includes gigs with the RAND Corp., the war machine's think tank in Santa Monica, the WWII War Production Board and the Office of Strategic Services. He also spent nine years as an academic economist at Oxford University, where he had attended a Rhodes scholar.

Apparently Hitch's cost accounting ability only counts with weapons systems -- not million dollar pads. Anyway, it takes a heap o' money to make a Hitch's home.

WHERE CHARLEY CRASHES

regents

konklave

The U.C. Regents are going to hold a meeting in Berkeley, Friday, June 20. "There will be mass action," say members of the Peoples' Park Committee.

Negotiations seem to be at a standstill. "They don't seem to think there's anything to discuss. They haven't called us back," says Art Goldberg of the Negotiating Committee. "The only reason they want to negotiate is to get people out of the streets."

Reverend James, Berkeley Chancellor, said it would be impossible to have a Peoples Park on land owned by the university. He said "time, place, and manner" regulations could not be waived, said Goldberg.

These regulations would require non-students to obtain permission from the university 48 hours before making a speech, says Goldberg. "Students couldn't even pass out leaflets or man a table in the park," he added. Clearly non-students wouldn't be considered "people" in that kind of a park.

James, says Goldberg, has refused amnesty for students accused of violating the "time, place, and manner" rules during the recent occupation. Both the university and the city of Berkeley have "refused to help the injured" or ask that charges be dropped, he says.

Hejny wouldn't suspend the regulations to allow fund-raising benefits for the injured in either the Greek Theatre or King Auditorium.

"That shows how flexible he is in new situations," says Goldberg. "Hejny wants to pose as the liberal salvation from Reagan. At the time he out-Reagans Reagan."

The Berkeley City Council overruled Mayor Johnson and offered to lease the park. If they can obtain the lease, it's hoped that a true Peoples' Park can again flourish.

This could be done by sub-leasing the park to the committee. It could also be community-controlled with provisions for spontaneous development. But so far the university hasn't agreed to lease the land.

"We're hopeful there will be a solution. We're willing to negotiate at any time," says Goldberg. "The people don't want to spend the summer fighting the pigs, who are trained killers. We'd rather have a creative, beautiful summer in the park."

paid public officials in the state. Work on the Blake estate also began in January, 1968.

Before making it to the big time, Hitch, his wife and daughter, lived at 770 Hillsdale Ave., Berkeley, an area of higher priced tract homes.

BARB interviewed Hitch by phone Wednesday.

He was asked how it felt to occupy such a valuable house on so much land when the people in the south campus community just wanted a little land for their park. "It was done by the Regents for

OFFICIAL COSTS

Following is a list of expenditures made by UC Regents in fixing up and furnishing UC Pres. Charles J. Hitch's house in Kensington. It was obtained from UC's Public Information office. BARB has good reason to believe that many costs are understated or not included.

Restoration of Blake House	\$207,100
Repair of foundation and treatment for termites	36,250
Kitchen Repairs & Equipment	5,410
Furnishings & Equipment for House	78,250
Interior Decorator Fee	9,000
Campus Arch. & Eng. (interior)	5,000
Build Retaining Wall	10,000
Maintenance, Retaining Walls	7,000
Landscaping (near house)	21,000
Landscaping (elsewhere on estate)	31,000
Architect & Engineer Fees (house)	25,000
Architect & Engineer Fees (estate)	8,000
Campus Arch. & Eng. Fees (house)	9,900
Campus Arch. & Eng. Fees (estate)	3,100
Printing of Plans (house)	2,200
Printing of Plans (estate)	300
Total Expenditures	\$458,500

in addition, three local realtors valued the raw land at \$210,000, not counting the value of the botanical garden or other improvements. That brings the total to \$91,000.

Both architects and realtors agreed that a million dollars was only an approximation of the estate's real value since it was one of a kind and could never really be duplicated.

This means that Hitch's house is three times as big and at least three times as expensive as Gov. Reagan's executive mansion in Sacramento.

The Contra Costa County Assessor's office told BARB that the estate (Tax # 560-270-032-8001) is valued at a mere \$240.

We told a clerk in the Assessor's office that we wanted to compare the Regents' treatment of Hitch with their treatment of the people and their park.

"Boy, is that unfair to give him all that land and not give the kids their park," she responded. "I hope you hang them for this."

Carl Irving, director of public relations for UC, told BARB that "the place was unlivable before we began work."

The expenditure for Hitch's house are not in the UC annual budget because "the Regents used their own money that came from an unrestricted endowment fund set up in 1919," according to Irving.

"It is not state tax money," said

Thurs., Oct. 30, 1969 ☆ R San Francisco Chronicle

A Peek Inside Hitch's Hideaway

"THERE'S BEEN so much mystery about the house, it's healthy to clear it up."

Travis Cross, a member of UC President Charles J. Hitch's staff, is delighted that the home of the head of the nine university campuses is going to be on an East Bay house tour November 7, sponsored by the campus YWCA.

The house made headlines last June when the University admitted it spent \$458,500 refurbishing it for the Hitches, who moved in last March.

Yesterday, on a tour arranged by Mr. Cross, who is a former aide of Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon, Mrs. Hitch showed me through the house, which is set in ten acres on Rincon road in Kensington, nearly four miles north of the campus.

In gaining a handsome Italian-style home designed in 1925 by architect Walter Bliss, the Hitches lost a great deal of privacy.

The house is located in Blake Experimental Gardens, named for the late Mr. and Mrs. Anson Blake, who willed the house and property to the University in 1957.

The extensive gardens, which include a redwood grove the Blakes started from burls, are used as an outdoor laboratory by UC's Department of Landscape Architecture.

Students were swarming over the property yesterday, inspecting plants and trees. They are everyday visitors, said Mrs. Hitch, adding that garden clubs and other groups are free at any time to make arrangements to see the grounds.

Sometimes, for privacy, chains are put across pathways leading to the windows of the house. A wire fence — a dirty word in Berkeley — was started around the garden immediately surrounding the house, but the project was abandoned.

"The work was stopped because it wasn't attractive or desirable," said Mr. Cross.

The fence remains, with some stakes minus wire, because, Mrs. Hitch explained, "it costs too much to tear down."

On the delicate subject of finances, Mrs. Hitch said the house and grounds were refurbished for them entirely with private gifts.

The Hitches (he was formerly UC senior vice president) remained in a small home in Berkeley during the year and a half it took to get the mansion ready.

On the exterior, double gates, electrically operated, were added and near them, a new parking area.

There's a telephone at the gates and another at the front door. The gates are locked at night once Mrs. Hitch and her daughter Caroline, who is not quite 10, had to climb over them. For added security the house and grounds are lighted at night.

"I feel safe here," said the president's wife. "We're so far from the campus. But I did worry a lot last summer about Esther," she added, referring to Mrs. Roger Heynes, the chancellor's wife, who lives in University House on the campus.

Expensive structural repairs were necessary, as the house, which was built in the mid-20s, has sunk four inches.

"The foundations had to be jacked up," said Mrs. Hitch, "there was a lot of rewiring and a fire alarm system was installed."

It was necessary to add a gallery to connect the huge living room with the dining room and kitchen wing to provide circulation of guests and servants.

All of the drapes had to be replaced and a new wall-to-wall beige rug purchased for the living room.

"The furniture is about one-third ours, one-third Blake and one-third new."

San Francisco decorator Tony Hail was commissioned to do the interior.

"We got along quite well. Sometimes, my suggestions were vetoed," Mrs. Hitch said with a smile, "but some were accepted. It's difficult to find a decorator who knows antiques and also understands how to make a house work for large and small groups."

So far, the entertaining has consisted of working sessions — "stag parties" in her words — small dinners and receptions.

Tomorrow, there'll be a dinner for 50 celebrating the inauguration of Dr. Philip Lee as chancellor of UC Medical School.

Budding landscape architects may be all over the gardens, but, "unfortunately, we don't entertain students in the house as much as we'd like."

The tour is the first time the house (ground floor only) will be open to the public.

Being the wife of a man who heads the State's university system is, Mrs. Hitch said, "fascinating, but it keeps me very busy."

She has a secretary, a couple for the kitchen and a housekeeper. Window washing and such are done by University maintenance crews.

The Hitches find their only real privacy in a large second floor sitting room-bedroom. It is impossible not to be constantly reminded that the house belongs to the University.

And, as far as Walter Vodden, who has charge of the botanical gardens is concerned, the important thing about the whole set-up is the chance it gives students to study plants and the opportunity it affords the landscape architecture department.

"If you don't mind my saying so," said he as Mrs. Hitch smiled, "the Hitches are incidental."

WALTER VODDEN
Gardens come first

A Look at Hitch Home

By JAN SILVERMAN
Tribune Staff Writer

It has to be one of the most beautiful goldfish bowls in the world.

The home University of California President and Mrs. Charles Hitch, set on a Berkeley hillside and surrounded by 10 acres of garden, invites cliches.

"It's a beautiful place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live here," said one lady to her companion. They were part of the crowd who thronged the home Friday, when it was a featured part of

the U.C. YWCA Fall Festival of Houses.

The lady who actually does live there, Mrs. Hitch, took the afternoon off to meet a friend for lunch. She phoned home around three to see if the coast were clear.

It wasn't, she was informed by Nancy Funston, who calls herself "Mrs. Hitch's secretary's assistant," the charming young woman who showed us through the Italian styled home.

The house was the center of a considerable controversy earlier this year when the U.C. regents spent \$458,500 to remodel it for the Hitches.

Some felt that this was an extravagant expenditure, especially in these days when the University is so strapped for funds.

Defenders of the project counter that no tax monies were used, but only private

Anthony Hail decorated the Hitch home

donations given to the university to be used as the regents saw fit.

The house is strongly tied to the University since it is surrounded by the 10-acre Blake Experimental Gardens. The gardens were grown from a bare hillside when in 1922 Mr. and Mrs. Anson Blake purchased the site and had architect Walter Bliss design a house in 1925 "as a windbreak for Mrs. Blake's famous gardens."

It was a beautiful windbreak, but over the years some of the earth had slipped beneath its foundation and extensive renovation was necessary to get the house back on an even keel. This accounted for much of the expenditure.

The other major change was a gallery added to the rear of the house to provide an easy flow of large crowds between downstairs rooms. The handsome addition also serves as a place to display

The Million Dollar Tour

Mrs. Charles Hitch added own pieces

paintings from the art departments of the numerous U.C. campuses.

Furnishings in the house are a combination of pieces owned by the Blakes, the Hitches and new pieces which Mrs. Hitch selected with the help of Anthony Hail, the San Francisco decorator who helped her tie all of the furnishings together.

The first floor of the house is entered past parking lots secluded in the gardens and a lovely oblong reflecting pond. One enters a large foyer with a small cluttered office behind a closed door. The rest of the house is elegant and formal, save the huge modern kitchen, reminiscent of a small restaurant.

The living room with its carved ceiling looks to one side over a bay panorama, to the other onto the pond and garden. Comfortable upholstered pieces blend with very old carved pieces.

Upstairs, where the guests on the YWCA tour were not

permitted, are three huge bedrooms. The Hitches is bright and airy, large windows looking over the bay. Most of the furniture is their own.

Daughter Caroline, almost 10, has a typical little girl's room, her dolls and books on shelves along one wall.

Lucky is the guest who is entertained by the Hitches. Their guest room houses the commodious bed used in the White House by William Howard Taft. Its canopy and spread are of a colorful early American fabric.

The entire second floor and the graceful curved stairway leading up to it are carpeted in an unusual off-white carpet of thick cording. The neutral color makes a perfect background for the long, narrow oriental rug at the top of the stairs.

Norma Willer*

February 8, 1987

As an architect for the Berkeley campus, I was assigned to manage the remodeling of Blake House. My first impression of the house was that it was a disaster. The west side of the building had settled about six inches below the east side in some areas, the walls and ceilings were cracked, floors were warped, and there was abundant other evidence of long neglect.

Nancy and Charlie saw something different. They saw beautiful panoramas of the bay from virtually every room, rooms spacious enough to entertain large gatherings of people, an approach to the house through lovely gardens and a gorgeous lily pond at the house entrance.

At one of our first meetings to develop a program for the remodeling, Nancy invited me and Ron and Myra Brocchini, who were the executive architects for the project, to lunch at the Hitches house on Hilldale. Nancy was a person who liked to make things with her hands. She was a painter and a potter. And, as an artist, she was able to show rather than tell what she had in mind for the house. That day, she had prepared a poached salmon for lunch and presented it on a buffet table on a pewter platter surrounded by salad and rolls and other mouth-watering goodies. The display of food was a beautiful and appetizing composition in color and texture. The table was elegantly set with pewter service plates. Every combination was just right. Not overdone, not boring, certainly, but just right. We talked at length about the program for the house. but she spoke eloquently by example of how she expected to entertain.

Nancy took advantage of the expertise of others who had been in her position and who had experience with large-scale entertaining. She talked to Mrs. Clark Kerr, to whom she gave credit for suggesting the addition of the gallery along the west side of the house to improve the traffic flow. Mrs. Chandler, who

* Comments prepared for Memorial Service for Nancy Hitch.

was then a regent, toured the house and offered advice. Maggie Johnston, who had arranged dinners and parties for special university events, was brought in to consult.

Nancy knew of Tony Hail from some of her advisors and she and I went to his house in San Francisco to interview him. We were both impressed with its ambience and Tony joined the team as a decorator.

Nancy had a very deep appreciation for the University of California and its importance on all levels of society. She wanted the house to be a symbol of quiet elegance that would underscore the impression of excellence of the University to its visitors. She also wanted to impart a comfortable and welcoming feeling. She wanted the house to be a home for her family and took special delight in planning her daughter Caroline's room.

The rooms in the house are huge and seemed to swallow without a trace all the furniture left by the Blakes. The Hitches have lovely antiques which they brought into the house with them and which combined beautifully with the furniture that was the Blakes. Jean McNeill, who became Nancy's secretary after the Hitches moved into the house, told me that when she went for her interview she was surprised to learn that the house was newly occupied. It impressed her as having a warm, lived-in quality.

Working with Nancy was a special treat for me. As an architect for the University, my job often included handling disputes rather than the more graceful aspects of personal contact. After the house was finished Nancy would call me to come and discuss things that needed correcting or changing. She always welcomed me into the lanai with coffee or tea and cookies and a little chat before we got down to business.

She took special delight in maintaining a constantly changing exhibit of paintings of artists on the faculty from the campuses.

In additon to restoring the house to its original character, the program, as outlined by Nancy, included finishing of the basement, the gallery and a wing for live-in staff, and remodeling the kitchen to provide a separate area for caterers.

Nancy and I became very good friends as the years went by. The memories of those years have been supplanted by more recent ones but I will never think of Blake House without thinking of Nancy, though I think of Nancy often without thinking of Blake House.

ADELANTE

By MABEL SYMMES
Berkeley

If you are ordered to leave, not only the home in which you expected to live and die, but an old garden as well, it comes as a major catastrophe. At least such it seemed twenty-three years ago when the building of a stadium required the land on which we had lived for many years.

The question of where to go was a serious one. An available site on a hilltop was thought too restricted, and the top soil was washed down hill; but finally more space was found beyond the town, where the variety of conditions was tempting.

We viewed the property first on a glorious April day after a rain. The sun was shining, the buttercups yellow under foot and we hopped from hillback to hillcock through marshy meadows to higher ground. Rolling hills were all about us, cattle grazing, meadowlarks singing; the settlement of houses was far below us and, beyond, the blue bay, San Francisco, the Golden Gate, the Marin shore. "But," said friends, "the wind and fog!" We asked the streetcar conductor who went up and down all day and his verdict was, "Sometimes more, sometimes less," which we have found fairly accurate. When we consulted the friend of all garden lovers, Charles Abraham, and when he learned that we could have space, he advised "Go! More wind, less frost. Go, and plant your windbreak."

So we began to prepare for Adelante, so named from the Spanish for "further out and higher up." For four months with the help of an expert baller we dug and boxed and flatted, trucked the plants to Adelante and heeled them in in nursery rows on the edge of the property out of the way of future work.

The house was placed on the edge of a bluff and was made,—the architect also being a garden lover,—long and narrow to break the wind. A temporary road was brought in from the south for the purpose of building and, beside giving time for the planning of the permanent entrance, it taught us a wholesome respect for adobe, which was to be part of our future soil; gooey, sticky stuff in winter that trapped any innocent unwary workman who ran off the packed road until his companions helped to lift his Ford back on again. The b-r-r-r of a stalled machine was a familiar sound for many years. In summer the adobe checked in big plates with deep cracks that swallowed any small thing dropped down them. It looked rich, however, so we considered thoughtfully and hopefully.

The permanent road must enter from the east. We brought it down the hill and made a turn at the south end of the house to give access to the service entrance and then planted a screen of shrubbery about it. Across the front of the house we carried a twelve foot road, wider at

the front door, for those who needed to come closer. Then for garden service we carried the road on to a small circle at the north, from which it goes east and west; east up the Spring Path to connect across a stone bridge with the family garden adjoining, planned at the same time. Then it turns south again on a somewhat higher level, giving a view down into the garden opposite the house, crosses the entrance road into the first temporary road and on by a footpath to the south boundary. This constitutes the East Circuit Road.

In a short article or on one tour of the garden it is impossible to see more than a few of the plants here, so this account will be confined to some of the main features and the more prominent trees and vines of the East Circuit.

On the house over the front door is an old vine of *Stauntonia hexaphylla*. With clean evergreen foliage it makes a dense and heavy growth throwing out long graceful streamers, attractive in habit and in every detail of leaf and flower. The bloom in spring is not very conspicuous; it consists of charming clusters of small creamy bell-shaped flowers flushed with old rose. A native of Japan it is of the family of *Lardizabalaceae* and is said to be monoecious; but whatever the reason may be we never get "a berry four inches long splashed with scarlet," as described in the books.

At the north end of the terrace is a group of *Holieria populnea* trees now some thirty feet tall. Eric Walther wants now to call them *H. sexstylosa*, but we received them from Mr. Abraham under the name of *H. populnea* and another somewhat different as *H. sexstylosa*. It is said that there is often much variation in the leaves of different plants. A well-shaped tree of a cheerful light green, suggestive of an evergreen birch, it is called "Ribbonwood" in its native New Zealand because of the tough inner bark which the natives use for tying. At a glance the pure white bell-like flowers do not suggest the Mallow Family to which it belongs. They are so massed and in such profusion that in August or September the tree is white with them. The winged seeds are in correspondingly great numbers and often become a nuisance.

Climbing into the holieria even to its highest tip is the deciduous vine of *Actinidia chinensis*, growing with joyful abandon wherever you let it and sometimes where you don't want it. The new growth has a ruddy tinge from the red hairs that cover it. Handsome large orbicular leaves often protect and cover the attractive creamy white blossoms so that they are seen best from below. The flowers look like small single roses. Light brown hairy fruit the size of a small egg hang on the vine in clusters even after the leaves have fallen late in the year. For those who like a gooseberry flavor they are acceptable fresh or as jam.

At the south end of the terrace is a group of the European Laurel, *Laurus nobilis*, used as screen and as windbreak, and among them is a tree of *Persea indica*. It has a rich clean leathery leaf very suggestive of the other avocados but smaller and narrower. For many years we paid no attention to it; but recently when watching the bloom on our

avocado Fuerte, hoping for fruit, we began to inspect its cousin on the terrace. Finally we found the bloom, so high up it is best seen from an upper window, for the tree is crowded and tall. The panicle of small creamy flowers is interesting but not showy; they are followed by small round black fruits. We tasted it. Don't! There is not much pulp and it looks and tastes like a ripe olive. It is a good foliage tree, not Indian as its name would imply, but from Madeira, the Azores and Canary Islands. It stood the freezes when *Eugenia paniculata* (E. Hookeri), not far away was cut to the ground.

On the outer edge of the terrace, where we never would have dared to plant it, is a self-sown seedling *Ceanothus*, a natural hybrid probably of the native *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* and *C. cyaneus*, which was formerly in the border below and in passing on left this as its progeny. It is a fine small tree with rich blue blossoms.

Near the front door and beside the steps of the terrace are four Irish Yews, *Taxus baccata* var. *stricta*, brought by box from the old garden, the tallest some eighteen feet in height now.

The house faces east and on all the stretch of land in front there was not, when we came, a single tree. Almost the only native growth was in the little canyon on the north. The ground is fairly level with a vernal pool where the cattle used to drink and incidentally paddled and puddled the adobe soil. Our pool was put here on the axis of the front door. We pushed into the slope beyond far enough to build a wall with a Grotto and curving steps to the level of the East Circuit Road above. Surrounding the Long Pool is the lawn with a row of six *Magnolia grandiflora* trees on each side. A hedge of *Eugenia myrsifolia* bounds the area and separates it on each side from a little square garden with its grove behind.

The Long Pool is 10 x 75 feet, 3 feet in depth; looking from the front door at the narrow end it is of course foreshortened by perspective. At first it was kept as a reflecting pool, but the problem of algae was so great it was planted with water-lilies to shade the surface. The tiny top minnows, *Gambusia*, help us keep it in order. The wall, Grotto and double flight of steps are made of the honey-comb rock picked up on the place. The inspiration for their development was the grotto and ramps of Villa Tusculana at Frascati, not Villa d'Este, which is much more pretentious. Two of the fastigate yews at the foot of the steps and two at the top balance the four yews on the terrace and give an Italian suggestion that we have tried to continue in the hillside of conifers that rises beyond. The winter water for the Long Pool comes from a spring in the corner of the property, the headwaters for the canyon. At first we visualized a sparkling dancing little cascade over rocks with a waterfall into the pool, but alas for California conditions! Very ignominiously and humbly in order to make our water last as long in the season as possible we brought it by underground pipes first to a Settling Pool above the Grotto. This pool is pushed into the bank with big honey-

comb rocks that received the adoration of the Italian workmen, who had to use horse and sled to put them into place. From there the water goes under the road and emerges through the rocks in the back of the Grotto, pipe well-concealed. Here, however, we felt that nature needed a little summer help. If our rocks were to be dripping with maiden-hair and other ferns, they must be dripping with water, summer as well as winter. So, hidden in the corner, is a very ordinary but useful faucet and for many years the ferns dripped and were lovely.

In winter the water falls into the Grotto with a satisfying tinkle and splash almost Italian, which is music to California's metered ears. From the Grotto basin it is gently and respectfully led by open green-tiled conduit into the Long Pool. That ends its visible course; but it is again conveyed underground to the Reservoir on the edge of the canyon, where it can overflow back into its rightful channel and do duty still again down through the ravine to the Canyon Pool before it goes on to the fields below.

When we could not have a wet axis above the Settling Pool, we made a dry one. From the pool up the hillside we planted two rows of Douglas firs and placed a rock seat at the head. Between the trees are rocks and prostrate junipers.

On the wall and steps of the Grotto is a plant of *Ampelopsis heterophylla* var. *brevipedunculata* (Hortus: var. *amurensis*). Whether the name tried to keep up with the vine or the vine to its name, both are lengthy; but if you judge by charm and grace, the vine wins. It has beautiful foliage and is such a rampant grower it has to be cut back heavily each year. It is deciduous and has inconspicuous flowers like most of its group. The small berries that follow change through lilac to turquoise blue to deep blue and often all the colors are present at one time. With us, however, the panicle is not very full and the berries are too small to be colorful from a distance. Whether it is from a heavy cold soil or a climate not warm enough, we do not know; but it has been fruiting better with the yews.

On this wall also is *Decumaria barbara*, a deciduous native vine of Virginia and down to Florida and Louisiana, growing along the stream courses. It is doing well here and is very attractive in leaf and when covered with its large corymbs of feathery white flowers. It has a rarer relative in the deep canyons of China.

The only color in this area other than that of foliage and rocks is the deep blue tile of the Grotto basin, the two jars at its side, *Ipomoea Learii*, once entirely removed but now a more modest volunteer, a few blue flowers in the narrow bed with a touch of crimson geranium. In summer as you come from the burned and blackened hillsides and turn down into the garden, the varied greens of lawn in sun and shadow, the rich *Magnolia* foliage, the warmer tones of the eugenia hedge, dark yews and the varying greens of the hillside of conifers,—all emphasize the restfulness of the color nature has used as her background.

The little square gardens on each side are setting for small Chinese pottery figures. In the Pink Garden on the north is the Goddess of the Sun holding up her white disk; and opposite and facing her in the Yellow Garden on the south is her companion, God of the Moon, with dark disk and his foot raised in the signal of the actors when about to pass from the stage. Their colors are the Chinese white, soft greenish blue and dark blue, with faces and hands unglazed. Originally they were chimney-pots with holes in the base for the smoke to emerge, which had stained the faces dark; but rain and sun have been bleaching them back to their original fairness.

In the northwest corner of the Yellow Garden is the evergreen *Maytenus Boaria*, of the family *Celastraceae* and a native tree of Chile. Its multiple trunks give it unusual fullness of foliage, which is soft and feathery and it arches and droops gracefully over the road in front of the house. The small orange-colored fruits split and disclose a shining black seed that must be very attractive to birds, for seedlings appear in different parts of the grounds. This particular tree traces its history back to the Mayten in the old Prof. Joseph LeConte garden on Bancroft Way, which dropped its seeds over the fence into the Clinton Day garden. Mrs. Day dug up this seedling and presented it to the new garden.

The dominating tree in the Pink Garden is *Pyrus Kawakami* in the southeast section. This Evergreen Pear has been allowed to develop a double trunk. The trunks in themselves are very ornamental with rough dark brown bark. All parts of the trunk and branches are gnarled and contorted and picturesque. The bright cheerful green foliage is flung out in joyful abandon in long sweeping pendant branches. Some thirty feet in height now, it has an even greater spread and it is trying to take the entire area under its protecting arms. Its bloom comes very early in spring, if not scattered almost through the winter; but our tree has not at any time given us the heavy flowering seen in the south. It seems to bloom a little more each year, so perhaps there is hope for it later, if the difficulty is not a lack of hot weather. However, the beauty of its foliage needs nothing else to recommend it. The fruits prove it a true pear but they are only the size and shape of a pea and of the rusty pear coloring so that you have to hunt long before you can find them. It has sometimes been recommended for an espalier, but when you look at our tree it is hard to think of it as such. We have seen very inferior plants grafted on quince stock; apparently that is not advisable.

Looking from here along the rows of *Magnolia* trees on the lawn it is interesting to see the variation in foliage and habit, in the bloom and in floriferousness. Perhaps no two of them are exactly alike. The leaves vary from broad, full and wavy to long, slender and straight. Some flowers are full-petaled, some almost single. Fruits are more or less colored, the trees never all in bloom at the same time, but for only a brief period is there no bud or bloom.

The two little groves beyond the square gardens were planted to toyons in our young and innocent days. It was a native on the place and

we wanted something that would take but little care and be a quick wind protection. We visualized a glowing mass of warm color in the depths of winter when we could say to our friends, "Come, help yourself to Christmas-berry decorations." We are older and wiser now. The birds plant it all over, but we do not again. Consult Professor Essig's book on Insects and, indexed under *California Christmas-berry*, you can read scientifically but not with so much warmth of feeling, all about its special varieties of thrips, aphids, two kinds; scales, two; white fly, four; black fly, tingid, borers, four; beetle, weevil, moth, caterpillar, two. It needs constant spraying and we gave up the struggle a short time ago; but in wartime we could not spray adequately anyway. We have tried to ignore the deformed leaves and smutty berries; but last year was too cool a season for even thrips and we were delighted to have for the first time some good masses of berries. That will not make us spare the trees, however, for in the spring when all else is fresh and green and growing, they are at their shabbiest. Also, they are growing lean and lank, our own fault for planting fuchsias among them. So out they are to come to be replaced gradually by trees more thrifty.

In the center of each grove is a small round shallow pool, into which have come water-plants of one kind or another.

Following the path between the Pink Garden and its grove you face the Reservoir at its north end. It is a twelve-foot circular pool surrounded by an unclipped hedge of *Pittosporum undulatum*, the Victorian Box. Always a good evergreen, with deliciously fragrant flowers and orange-colored fruits it is pruned only enough to hold it in its place. A short time ago the garden had a gift of a Chinese pagoda of glazed pottery and the first question of everyone was where it could go. The seclusion of the Reservoir has proved ideal for it, and it now rises from the center, a ten-foot tower of lovely soft Chinese blue. It has touches of a darker blue and a tawny orange that is just the color of the *pittosporum* fruits. The light yellow *Momidius guttatus*, native of the place and water-loving, is happy at its base.

To the right is the Spring Path. Some of the flowering apricots, *Prunus Mume* and hybrid *P. Bireana*, with the wild plums, *Prunus cerasifera*,—why don't people use more of this lovely green type?—and its purple-leaf form, *P. c. Pissardi* start the season's blossoming, while narcissus and hyacinths and grape hyacinths bring spring to the ground. Later there are apples, crabapples, cherries, including *Prunus campanulata*, and crataegus to follow.

This leads up to the Hillside of Conifers. One of the finest of the pines is on the path beside us, *Pinus canariensis*. Grown from seed after we came out here they are now 40 to 50 feet tall, still slender and columnar, although the books speak of their broad, round-topped crowns. The long slender drooping needles give it a soft billowy texture very different from the vertical lines of the young branchlets of *Pinus halepensis*. Redwoods follow along the watercourse on the north, together with some of the Monterey pine, of which there are others at

the top of the hill. Seed was given us of *Abies concolor*, the White Fir, *Abies magnifica*, the Red Fir, *Pinus halepensis*, the Aleppo Pine, *Pinus muricata*, *P. Torreyana* and others. The beautiful Red and White Firs we grouped over the hillside with some *Abies grandis* and an *A. amabilis*, and *Pinus halepensis* as a nurse crop to break the wind. The firs have had a struggle, and *A. amabilis* is entirely gone. Perhaps the nurse crop has been more greedy than it should; but even in another place two *A. nobilis* have progressed but slowly.

The double row of the Douglas Fir, *Pseudotsuga taxifolia*, on the axis are growing well, but the Sitka Spruce is not so happy here as on the warmer soil of the western slope. Further south on the hillside our native *Pinus Coulteri* is very thrifty on serpentine soil similar to that of its own mountains, but three *Pinus ponderosa* are not happy in these lowland conditions, and they grow slowly; while *Pinus Thumbergi*, the Japanese Black Pine, grows, but as an alien in a strange climate. A group of *Pinus monophylla* grow lustily a little apart; but *Pinus patula* from Mexico with long drooping needles, further over in the field, feels our cold.

Two trees of the exotic-looking Chinese Fir, *Cunninghamia lanceolata*, "Collin-wood" in China, on the other side of the road are responding well and one of them fruited freely this year. *Abies Pinsapo* on the entrance road likes its adobe bed and bore a few cones a few years ago, although it has not done so again. We are waiting for abundant rainfall to bring more. Other conifers, some of our choicest, are in other parts of the garden.

On the entrance road and around the turn the tree used for height is the *Quillaja Saponaria*, the Chilean Soap-bark tree, so-called because of the properties of its bark. The seed was the gift of Miss Katherine Jones. It is tall and very graceful with light green leaves suggestive of an oak. It is of the Rose Family, but the flowers do not look like the rose. They are of a greenish yellow with small petals and prominent stamens and come in large masses on the tree. So far it has stood cold and wind, endured heavy pruning and moved well when that was necessary. Although it has no showy period, it has no shabby period. It is a good foliage tree.

These form our background as we look to the east.

This descriptive essay was continued in five more issues of the journal, Vols. VI and VII., pp. 314-318, 358-361, 382-386; 23-27, and 68-72.

Katherine Davies Jones, the fourth of seven children, was born of Welch parents in 1860 in a log cabin in Berlin, Wisconsin. In Wales, her father had been a singing master and her mother, daughter of the schoolmaster, was a singer of reputation. In this country, her father was first a colporter, selling Bibles and singing throughout the country, but soon he became a Congregationalist minister and was sent out to build and establish churches in rural communities, always moving westward. The children raised the family's food, were clothed by the occasional missionary barrel, an exciting event, and attended rural schools.

From the time she was sixteen until the family moved to Murphy's Camp, Calaveras County, California, in 1880, Katherine taught during the summers and attended school during the winters, going to Salem High School, then Normal School at Peru, Nebraska, and Latin School at Lincoln, Nebraska, followed by a year at the University of Nebraska. In Calaveras County, where her father's preaching station included six or seven churches, Katherine worked and saved until she was able to return to the University of Nebraska. After seven months, however, she was recalled to Murphy's Camp by the illness of her mother. Later that year the family moved to South Vallejo, California, where Katherine at first conducted a private school of her own and then taught for some six years in the public schools.

Through her aid, Guernsey, her younger brother, went to the University of California, where he graduated in 1891. Katherine sometimes visited her brother at Berkeley and attendance at some of Professor LeConte's lectures on zoology renewed her desire to return to college herself. She entered the University of California and graduated in 1893. For a year she taught biology and music at Hayward, but her health forced her to give up her teaching there and she returned to Berkeley. At first she assisted Professor Jepson in his botany class and Professors Ritter and Torrey in their zoology classes. She taught herself typing and stenography and in 1899 was working in Professor Hilgard's office under A. V. Stubenrauch. Then for a time she gave such valuable private assistance to Professor J. Burt Davy in agrostology that he asked for her transfer to the Department of Agriculture. After changes in the department there she kept the records of the Botanic and Economic Gardens of the Department of Botany. This work under J. Burt Davy and H. M. Hall influenced her career greatly and aroused her interest in exotics, but her special interest in acacias came from her effort to help Mr. Stubenrauch, who had returned to California in charge of the seven Experimental Stations of the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture. He had her appointed to carry on his office work, and, to help him with the bulletin on *Acacia* he had

to prepare, she took up the study of the genus *Acacia* on her own time. When he was called back to the Washington office, Katherine was asked, on very short notice, to prepare the treatment of *Acacia* for L. H. Bailey's *Cyclopedia of Horticulture*. Later, when Professor Bailey was preparing a new edition, the one in current use, Professor Satchell declared that Miss Jones was the best, if not the only, person in the country capable of revising the section on *Acacia*.

In 1910 Professor E. B. Babcock needed someone in Agricultural Education to gather seeds to be sent to the schools of the state, and again Katherine was called upon as the one person available who had the necessary training for the work. This led, in the next year, to her academic appointment on Professor Babcock's staff to teach in Agricultural Education. That summer she went East to study and visit schools in order to prepare herself for the work. On her return, she first assisted in the classwork but later had full charge of the courses.

The Department of Landscape Gardening was organized in 1913 under the direction of Professor Gregg, and, as he had just come from the East, he found Katherine's wide knowledge of our exotic flora of great value. A course in Plant Materials was to be given by Mr. R. T. Stevens who was in Europe; so Katherine started the course and after Mr. Stevens returned she continued to assist with the botanical aspects. When Mr. Stevens resigned in 1917, Katherine found herself teaching five classes, including all of the Plant Materials. As there were no adequate textbooks in this field, she organized the work herself, prepared keys to the plants as well as descriptions emphasizing the aspects of the plants that pertained to landscaping. She was thorough, conscientious, and inspiring to her students, and through them, her work became widely known and praised. At Harvard students were told that if they had passed her work satisfactorily, no further examination would be required of them for entrance to the Plant

Material classes there. Her students tell how they would follow the spry, tireless figure, like a flock of chickens, from one tree or shrub to another during an hour of each laboratory period while she told them of origin, habitat and uses; then they would return to the laboratory and study in detail specimens of these same plants, making leaf prints and writing descriptions, and she would drill them intensively in the subject matter. Such methods as these may seem elementary, but to this day, many of her former students admit that when confronted with a plant their immediate reaction is "botanical name, common name, origin." Katherine always maintained an interest in her pupils and liked to keep track of them, especially when they continued in fields that made use of the training that she had given to them, and her pupils, in turn, thought much of her and through the years kept in touch with her. A never-ending source of joy to her were the greeting cards that arrived from former students each holiday season.

In addition to her teaching, Katherine carried on a time-consuming and extensive correspondence with the general public, giving help whenever asked. When she retired from the University in 1930, she turned to private teaching, to writing, and to the furthering of more accurate nomenclature and botanical information among the nurserymen, the garden clubs and the general public. The California Horticultural Society and California Garden Clubs, Inc., honored her, and she stands as one of the notable women of California in the advancement of the botanical and landscape side of horticulture. Her herbarium, collected over a period of nearly forty years and especially rich in specimens of *Acacia* has been given to the University of California.—**MABEL SYMMES.**

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Rather more than usual, this issue has been dependent on those who have previously contributed articles. The one new writer is Mrs. Anson Blake, whose paper on Tulip species, based on her personal experience, we are proud to have appear in our pages. That her large garden on the outskirts of Berkeley has only been open to very close personal friends or by invitation is wholly understandable, as she has had to conserve her limited time and strength, but her contributions to our monthly exhibits have been evidence of her character as an adventurous gardener. She has been responsible for the first introduction many of our members have had to many plants, especially shrubs and bulbs. Her paper is particularly welcome.

W. Quinn Buck is an assistant in the Division of Ornamental Horticulture at U. C. L. A. His development of a tetraploid hemerocallis may well mark an era in the breeding of daylilies, hardy herbaceous perennials of great value where summers are hot or winters are cold.

Ten years ago, when President of the California Horticultural Society, the Editor recommended the experimental beginning of a quarterly Journal and found himself made responsible for the job. He knew this would be a difficult task, but it has on the whole been a pleasant one and certainly rewarding. He wants to take this opportunity to thank that fine group of gardeners, amateurs and professionals, who have made the Journal what it is. Now he feels that the burden of editorship should pass to someone else, younger, with different contacts and new ideas. His personal preference has always been for writing rather than editing and he hopes to become a fairly regular contributor to the Journal's pages. He wishes to devote his now limited energy to gardening and iris breeding, and to have time for some further writing he has in mind. Though he has no sundial in his garden, he realizes that its familiar message, "It is later than you think", applies to us all.

To all contributors, to the Associate Editor, and to his wife, who has unofficially carried much of the load of work inseparable from his task, he takes this last opportunity to express his thanks and appreciation. For the temporary Editor, Miss Cora R. Brandt, he asks your every help. Having been closely associated with her professionally and in the Society for half his long lifetime, he has every confidence in her ability to take full responsibility for the Journal, but on the active participation of our members and other contributors she too must be as dependent as the retiring Editor has been.

Sydney B. Mitchell.

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CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

300 MONTGOMERY ST., SAN FRANCISCO 4, CALIFORNIA

June 10, 1952

Mrs. Anson S. Blake,
70 Rincon Road,
Berkeley, California.

Dear Mrs. Blake:

I have been wanting to write you for a couple of weeks, and have only been prevented by lack of time. But I felt that I really wanted to tell you again how very much I have appreciated your reminiscences of Mr. Correvon, and to add that Mr. Howell, who, as you know, is our Botanical Editor--and who usually pays attention only to botanical terms--found himself quite completely carried away. He not only agrees with me, but says that he should think every horticultural paper in the country would want to reprint it for it is the valuable kind of personal comment that is so seldom available.

We both hope that you will be willing to continue this good work, and perhaps give us a picture in your own words of our old friend, James West. Mrs. Mitchell tells me that she is more than willing to again act in the capacity of amanuensis. I haven't forgotten, either, that you had in mind a paper on poisonous plants, but we'll leave the decision as to which should come first to you.

I do hope that you are not having too difficult a summer. Perhaps I'll see you next Monday, as I am sure you will not wish to miss Mr. Williams's talk on plants for the rock garden if you are able to come.

Very sincerely yours,

Corra R. Brand

Editor

CRB/es

MEMORIES OF HENRI CORREVEON

By A. D. S. BLAKE
Berkeley

It was in 1925 that I first made the acquaintance of Henri Correveon. I had known him until then only as an authority on Alpine plants, of world-wide reputation, and as the owner of the famous nursery of Floraire in Switzerland.

At that time we were embarking upon the planting of a new garden when a friend who had lately returned from a prolonged stay in Switzerland told me of a very beautiful shrub she had seen growing in the Alps. She could not tell me its name but said she could draw me a map of exactly where it grew. The map she drew was quite detailed, mentioning the turns the path took as it ascended the mountain, passing at one point through an old cow-barn and entering the shadow of a ravine where the plants grew taller than in the open and were in places higher than one's head. Her enthusiasm fired my own, and I decided to write to Dr. Correveon for further information. The promptness of his reply was characteristic of him. He wrote, "It is our mezereon. I am sending you seeds. Soak them in hydrochloric acid for a night before planting." The seeds germinated and passed their infancy successfully, though they never reached maturity, but a correspondence had begun for me with Dr. Correveon, full of pleasure and profit.

I gradually learned more of Floraire and of the man who founded it. From his boyhood Henri Correveon had been a passionate lover of flowers, especially those of the Swiss mountains around him. In 1876 he took over the nursery garden of his grandfather in Canton Vaud and embarked upon horticulture as a career. He had studied horticulture in Geneva, Zurich, Frankfurt, Erfurt and Paris, and was well prepared. Later he moved to Geneva and established Floraire on an old vineyard of five acres, for the propagation and acclimatization of Alpine plants from seed. He had seen the havoc being wrought by heedless people among the rarer plants in the Alps and had already founded a society for their protection and preservation. It continued to be a mission with him as long as he lived. He became a prolific writer as well as a gardener. Twenty-seven books on horticultural subjects stand as his accomplishment. His memory was infallible. Over 23,000 species were grown at Floraire. He became the world's greatest authority on Alpine plants, but there was no plant that was not of intense interest to him. He was in touch with universities and botanical gardens of all countries, and students and visitors came to him constantly for information and consultation. He lived, breathed and had his being in growing things, and there was only one passport to his regard,—that a person to some extent should share his interest. A story was published in the London Times of the visit to him of Sir Austen Chamberlain while he was in Geneva as Great Britain's delegate to the League of Nations. Sir Austen wrote, "It was too early for flowers but a gardener loves to see plants growing only one degree less than to see them blossoming. Whilst walking

'round I happened to remark upon a group of *Tulipa Clutiana* whose leaves were pushing up though the buds were not yet showing. On the same day an English lady came to see the garden and Dr. Correvoon mentioned my visit. 'Ah,' said the lady, 'you have had our Minister of Foreign Affairs; it was a great honour for your garden.' 'Pooh!' exclaimed the Doctor, 'there is a Minister of Foreign Affairs in every country but there is only one who can identify *Tulipa Clutiana* by its leaves.' My reputation was made. There was one subject at least of which I knew more than my colleagues."

It was early in 1926 that I received a letter from Dr. Correvoon saying that he had been invited by the Garden Club of America to give a series of lectures in the eastern United States and had accepted. He had never been in this country and had hesitated to come for many reasons. It was hard to spare the time from his own work for such a long trip and members of his own family had protested on account of his age. He was to give a course of lectures at the landscape school at Lowthorp, followed by lectures at other points in the east. Invitations from many parts of the country began to pour in, and it was finally decided to extend his tour to the Northwest Pacific and thence south to California. The local garden club of which I was a member asked him to give a lecture on Alpines, and we were fortunate in obtaining a hall at the University where it could be held. Duncan McDuffie made the arrangements and my husband and I invited Dr. Correvoon to be our guest while he was in this region. While in the east someone had been delegated as his guide, but after leaving the Atlantic coast he had to fend for himself. I heard no more of him until I received a letter from him in Oregon giving the date of his arrival in Berkeley and adding, "Will you please to meet the train, for your country is so big and one little Swiss is so small." We met the train and found our guest without difficulty—a man slightly under average height with broad shoulders, a small pointed beard and clear eyes, and full of an energy and enthusiasm in no way dimmed by his strenuous program of lecture and travel but somewhat appalled by the distances and great spaces which he had encountered as he crossed the continent. He had been shocked by the overheated houses of the east and quite evidently felt it a relief to be where the climate was more temperate. He wished to see everything at once, and during his entire visit was worried by the consciousness that at his age he would not come again and so must include everything at this time. A walk through any garden with a man like Dr. Correvoon is a delightful experience. There is nothing that does not interest him, and what he has to say renders each plant more interesting to its owner. As he walked through ours he found it hard to express himself rapidly enough. He had a way of giving a slight wave of his hand toward something, interjecting a comment on it as he passed to something else. Once, with a glance at a group of young acacias, he threw out the remark "Acacias hate lime" as he passed on. At a bit of rock wall, he pointed to a small *Hutchinsia* between the rocks and said, "That is a rare one." He was very fond of fragrant things and often pinched the foliage of the plants he was passing. Two things impressed him especially; one was the *Fremontia*, which was in full bloom, and the other the red *Eucalyptus*

ficifolia on the avenue leading to our entrance. I never had the heart, when he mentioned the eucalyptus later in his letters, as he often did, to tell him they had all been cut out and replaced by Japanese cherries.

We were building a high dry rock wall at the time of his visit, and he could give much advice on it and on the planing in the crevices. I had his catalogue and asked him to check in it the seeds of special interest which I could send for. He always spoke of it as "our living wall." When we came to a young cedar by the path he asked what I called it and when I said, "the Cedar of Lebanon," he answered, "Ah! that is not the true one. I will send you seeds from the mountains of Lebanon." After his return the seeds came. They grew, and today I have two true cedars of Lebanon as a souvenir of his visit. At present they are about twenty-five feet high, with shorter needles than I have seen in the ones grown in nurseries here, of a less luxuriant growth and with a suggestion already of the ruggedness so apparent in the pictures of the ancient forests of Palestine which King Solomon despoiled to build his temple and his palaces.

Dr. Correvoon was full of interest while here in a new method of growing the more difficult Alpines in sphagnum. It had been successfully tried at the botanic gardens of Pavia and Genoa, and Correvoon himself had succeeded with some of the most difficult Alpines by following the method. He has described it at length in the book he wrote after his return from his American trip.

His only criticism of the general landscaping he saw while here was that in planting trees we planted too much with the vertical line and too little with spreading effect. Perhaps the fact that gardens occupy smaller and smaller areas here may explain this somewhat.

Number 12, Wheeler Hall was filled on the night of his lecture with garden lovers from the entire region, for no other lecture was being given in the bay area. There was only one drawback, which could have been nullified later when amplifiers had come into use, that his speaking voice was not a strong one. Garden visits in Berkeley followed. A day was spent with the McDuffies in their garden, another visit was at the Spens Blacks'. In San Francisco Golden Gate Park was visited under the guidance of Eric Walther and a call was made on Mr. McLaren at the Lodge. The variety in Golden Gate Park as well as its beauty was quite overwhelming to him. "I seldom go anywhere," he said, "where I do not know the plants I see, but here there are many, many things I do not know." Every new plant was an adventure in itself to him, and in later years he always referred to Golden Gate Park as "a marvel." His other San Francisco visit was to the Western Nursery of Charles Abraham. He and Mr. Abraham were kindred spirits and their conversation covered much and was fast and furious. He ordered a collection of succulents from Mr. Abraham to be sent to Floraire. Unfortunately they arrived in bad condition, and Dr. Correvoon wrote me of his disappointment that only one survived the long trip.

Time was the most unfortunate factor in Dr. Correvoon's visit here. His first evening in Berkeley was devoted to a discussion of his itinerary. He had been told in Washington by the head of the Department of Agriculture

that he must see the redwoods and the Yosemite Valley. He seemed to have an impression that each could be done in an afternoon after luncheon, and was surprised to learn that he might not be able to see either and keep his other engagements. He had several fixed dates. He was to address the Garden Club in San Diego on a certain day under the auspices of Miss Kate Sessions. He also wished to see Carl Purdy at his gardens for he had long corresponded with him. He wished to stop for a day in Santa Barbara and before leaving Berkeley he must see the University of California Botanic Garden. Years before he had obtained from it a seed of our native bay tree, the *Umbellularia californica*, which had enchanted him and had now reached the great height of six feet in its home in Geneva and, as he put it, "incensed the air." With all this, he had to keep a lecture engagement in Denver on a certain date as he returned. Duncan McDuffie undertook to study timetables and try to resolve his program to a working basis. It was not an easy task. Finally it was arranged that a visit should be made to Carl Purdy which would allow him to go with his host into the redwood country. He returned from that visit in a state of ecstasy. When he entered our house on his return he struck his forehead with his hand and exclaimed, "I am saturated from beautiful!" It had rained on the trip, and nothing can be wetter than a redwood forest in the rain. We were not surprised to learn that there were times on the trip when he had to wear a pair of Carl Purdy's shoes. We did our best to discourage the visit to the University Botanic Garden for it was in the midst of moving from its original site on the campus near the Library to its present location in Strawberry Canyon. A garden being moved is not an inspiring sight but Dr. Correvon was undimmed, and the visit had to be included in the program. I fear he saw more students than he did plants. The University's classes were just being dismissed and students flooded the campus, the girls arrayed in short raincoats which covered short skirts; bobbed hair was the fashion of the season, and it was not always easy to distinguish the girls from the boys. Every now and then Dr. Correvon would nudge me and, indicating the student in front, would ask, "Now is it man or is it wife?" and would add, "They never would allow it in Switzerland." The one difficulty which could not be resolved in his itinerary was to include a trip to Yosemite and to reach San Diego in time for his lecture there. Finally, to the dismay of Mr. McDuffie and ourselves, Dr. Correvon announced that he *must* see the Yosemite Valley, he had been told to do so in Washington, and he added, "I renounce San Diego; it is the tropics, and I do not like the tropics." A number of rather agitated telegrams passed between Miss Sessions and the committee of arrangements here and it was explained to Dr. Correvon that a hall had been engaged for his lecture and tickets sold, and that it could not be changed. Very, very reluctantly the trip to the Yosemite was abandoned. Later, when the engagement in San Diego had been kept, his delight and enthusiasm in what he found there knew no bounds.

The final hours of his visit were devoted to a brief trip to Chinatown (he always called it our China City) where he wished to purchase some gifts for the relatives at home.

I continued to keep in touch with Dr. Correvon and in 1930 received with much interest his last book, *Rock Garden and Alpine Plants*, published by the MacMillan Company and dedicated to "the Royal Horticultural Society of London and the Garden Club of America," with a foreword by Leonard Barron, whom he had known many years. One cannot think of Dr. Correvon without also remembering the picturesqueness of his use of the English language. Leonard Barron recognized that his own special use of English was a part of his individuality and in editing his latest book retained the phrasing as Correvon himself gave it, adding, "It is assuredly better that he should deliver his own message."

After his return to Switzerland our correspondence continued, his handwriting becoming more difficult to decipher as his eyesight grew gradually dim. His life was saddened by the death of his wife and his interest centered more and more in his subsidiary garden, called La Cheverrie, an adjunct of Floraire high on the Jura on the site of an ancient monastery occupied later by a small goat dairy. It was developed for the growing of the high Alpines which were difficult to acclimatize at the lower level and in the drier climate of Geneva. It was at La Cheverrie that Dr. Correvon could seek out the secrets of success with the most difficult of the Alpines. He spoke of La Cheverrie as the joy of his old age.

In early January of 1936 there came to see us a young Alsatian friend of Dr. Correvon's bearing a letter of introduction saying he had been a student at Floraire and "a voluntarian worker" there. Correvon had advised him that while visiting a sister in San Francisco he should see our garden. We were in the midst of one of the worst freezes California gardens in this region had ever known. The pools in the garden were solid ice which could be walked upon. The garden had been blasted as though fire had passed over it, but though there was nothing to show a garden visitor but redwoods and other conifers Mr. Bux Band could give to us direct news of our Swiss friend at Floraire. After his return he became a correspondent himself and it was from him that we finally received the word of Dr. Correvon's death in 1939. Mr. Band wrote, "Our friend is gone. He entered the hospital for an operation on his eyes on the morrow and went to sleep happy in the thought that he should again see his beloved flowers, and he did not awake."

Floraire lives on, as he had hoped, under the direction of a son and of a grandson both well equipped to carry on the work so well begun.

INCREDIBLE, UNFORGETTABLE JAMES WEST, PLANTSMAN (1886 - 1939)

by Jack Napton

On a crisp, sunny Fall day in 1932, a man who called himself "James West" steered his dilapidated Chevrolet roadster up the winding gravel road between the University of California Memorial Stadium in Berkeley and the Botanical Garden at the head of Strawberry Canyon. The small, deeply tanned man at the wheel squinted through gold-rimmed glasses that were always slightly askew on his face. "West" had been employed by Dr. T. Harper Goodspeed, Director of the Botanical Garden, to help plant the cactus and succulent garden.

* * * * *

In 1938, Dr. T. Harper Goodspeed attended an International Horticultural Congress in Berlin. Near the front of the auditorium in which general sessions were being held, in a section reserved for "VIP's", he recognized a familiar face. He went forward to greet Egon Victor Moritz Karl Maria, Prinz von Ratibor und Corvey, Prinz zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst. The German Prince offered Dr. Goodspeed the use of his Mercedes-Benz limousine during his stay in Berlin. The German Prince was also the man known as "James West."

* * * * *

Few facts can be found concerning the mysterious James West, but these few are indeed fascinating. The dearth of information about him would seem surprising, for there are many persons in the Bay Area who remember him, some who worked with him and a few who considered him a friend. West was, it seems, a man who simply did not talk about himself, and, reciprocally, never asked personal questions.

Imogen Cunningham, the distinguished photographer, horticulturist

and connoisseur of the San Francisco scene, who was his close friend, says: "West wasn't a liberal in the crusading or political sense, but he never, never questioned another person's looks, speech, ideas—anything about them. He didn't necessarily like everyone he knew, but he never said anything unpleasant about anyone."

He was one of the founding members of the California Horticultural Society. Some of our members remember that he attended the meeting held at the home of Mrs. Cabot Brown following the "Great Freeze" of 1932. It was at this meeting that the original concept of the Society came into being.

West was one of the creators of the University of California Botanical Garden. He was landscape-designer, as well as procurer and installer of material. He located plants to be used, supervised the grading, found and moved in large rocks, staked out paths, and finally, upon completion, placed names on the plants.

Because of his marked propensity for self-effacement, he has remained to this day a man of considerable mystery and a paradox. A brilliant eccentric, his horticultural and botanical knowledge were both voluminous and precise. He was a man of small stature and slight build, but he possessed phenomenal physical stamina. Of noble German birth, West spoke English beautifully, without a trace of accent. A man of Thoreau-like taste and style in his personal life, he had constant and easy access to his family's considerable means in Europe, through a San Francisco attorney who handled his affairs. West was indeed a notable personality in the rather special world of succulent plant enthusiasts—a group

not without considerable color of its own.

Imogen says, "One of the most remarkable things about him is that he had no German accent. This is probably the reason his aristocratic background remained unknown for so long. I'm sure he had a British tutor as a child. His English was not only impeccable, but at times almost poetic."

"But West," she continues, "I will never forget. I knew him so well. We kept a special bed made up for him in our home. You never knew when he might show up. He would wander in at ten o'clock at night, talk plants until 3:00 a.m., then get in bed and chain-smoke. My husband wasn't jealous of West, but he wasn't fond of him. He would say: 'West—smoke, smoke, smoke; talk, talk, talk.'"

"I first met him when my husband was teaching at Mills College, in the late 1920's or early 30's. It was West who introduced me to the California Horticultural Society. Oh, I had taken some plant pictures before then, but I didn't really know anything about the material. I called all succulents 'cactus,' and that sort of thing."

Imogen remembers that West made many lectures before plant groups in the East Bay Area in the early 1930's. She and a friend, now dead, became close friends with him and the trio made field trips and excursions together to see and photograph unusual plants and gardens. Many of the photographs made by West can be found in issues of the *Cactus and Succulent Society Journal* of this period, accompanied by his crisp, precise botanical descriptions of the material pictured.

Although records show West as having a San Rafael boarding-house as an address in these days, Imogen says he lived in a tent in the yard behind the house.

This unpublished portrait of the late James West, by an unknown photographer, was probably made in the 1930's in the San Francisco Bay Area. Original from the collection of Robert Foster of Whittier, California.

"He convinced the landlady he would be more comfortable in his own small tent. I was never inside it — nor anyone else that I know of — and don't know if it even had a board floor. He would barely open the flap when he went in and out, and no one was invited inside. He did have a bare electric light, though."

None of those who knew West seem to have had any precise knowledge of when or how he came to the United States or California. He told Imogen he had come here from Canada, but she is uncertain how long he was there.

"James West must have been in his 40's when I knew him," she says. "His hair was greying around the temples. But, honestly, I don't believe anyone ever knew how old he

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was or when he had left the Continent. As I said, he just didn't talk about himself.

"Dr. Goodspeed asked him to go on the University of California Peruvian Expedition because of his fantastic physical stamina, for much of the work was planned for elevations of 8,000 to 10,000 ft. Goodspeed had seen West work for ten to twelve hours in the boiling hot sun at the Botanical Garden and became convinced that he would be an asset."

In his *Plant Hunters of the Andes*, 1941, Goodspeed said of West:

"Prince Egon, or James West, as he was known to a large circle of acquaintances in California, was a most valuable member of the party. The breadth of his botanical interests and knowledge, and, in particular, his wide contacts with ornamental horticulture in California and elsewhere, provided him with the proper background for the type of collection that was assigned to him. His linguistic accomplishments were of service on many occasions when one language avenue after another had to be explored before a common one could be found. He continued to travel and collect for me in Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina, long after Florence and I had to return to California early in 1936, and he remained in South America for some time after he ended his connection with the first expedition. Unfortunately he was unable to be with us during the second expedition to the Andes in 1938-1939."

As to the "linguistic accomplishments" referred to above by Goodspeed, Victor Reiter and "Jock" Brydon, (now Director of the Strybing Arboretum), both of whom knew West, believe he was very much at home in at least five languages, and perhaps more. The author recently had occasion to cite an early philological discussion of West's in an article on *Echeveria* in the *Cactus and Succulent Journal*. Reference

was made to a piece of West's concerning the pronunciation of *Echeveria*, which he wrote in 1935. Scholarly and informative, it traced the name into the exotic Basque language.

Jock Brydon remembers West from his days at the University of California Botanical Garden. He worked there with West and remembers him, "... working with a fury in his BVD's and open sandals, in the boiling hot sun of rock-strewn Strawberry Canyon, oblivious to the world around him."

Jock continues, "One thing about James West I will always remember: he was truly a gentleman — a genteel person in the best sense of the word. No matter how eccentric his dress or mode of living, West had that indefinable quality that comes from good breeding and extreme sophistication. I never heard him raise his voice. He never indulged in arguments with anyone."

Victor Reiter agrees on the "liberal" or permissive nature of West. "Of course," Victor says, "Eric Walther told people quite frankly he had left Germany because he was too 'liberal' to be comfortable there. I suspect something similar in the case of West, but the guy just never talked about himself, and you didn't know."

"By the way," Victor adds, "West was an accomplished botanical draftsman. Few people knew it. He once brought me a set of drawings he had done of *Pachyphytum oviferum* that were so beautiful they should have been framed."

"On West's assumed name I can give you an insight. I once asked him why he chose the name 'James West,' and he replied: 'Well, I took 'James' just because I liked it, and 'West' because I had settled in the American West.'"

Both Victor Reiter and West's fellow-countryman, Eric Walther, knew his true identity, but respected his feelings and did not divulge the

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knowledge they had of him. "I don't think the anonymity bit was anything sinister or complicated," says Victor. "He saw the U. S. as an egalitarian country and just felt 'When in Rome ...'"

What happened to James West after he left the Bay Area?

He accompanied Dr. Goodspeed and the University of California First Expedition to the Andes in 1936, but, except for the almost accidental meeting with Goodspeed in Berlin in 1938, he was never again seen alive by anyone who had known him in the Bay Area.

Two sources provide the only information to fill the gap from James West's departure from the Bay Area to his death by drowning in Germany in the late summer of 1939.

The first is contained in an interview with Jerome Landfield of San Francisco, by Susan Smith of the San Francisco *Examiner* in April, 1952. Mr. Landfield was socially prominent in the Bay Area, having retired from the U. S. diplomatic service. His wife, Luba, a Russian countess, had known Prinz Egon von Ratibor as a young man in pre-World War I European court circles.

This picture of James West appeared on the front cover of the *Cactus and Succulent Journal of America* in June, 1937, with the caption: "James West somewhere in South America." At this time, he was a member of the University of California's first expedition to the Andes. This rare, autographed print is from the collection of Robert Foster of Whittier, California.

Landfield came into the picture in 1935, when James West needed someone to assist him in establishing his identity for passport purposes to secure clearance for departure with the University Expedition to the Andes.

In Landfield's words:

"He (James West) then told me the reason for coming to see me and revealing his identity.

"Professor Goodspeed of the University of California, was about to leave on an expedition to South America to seek new plants in the Andes region, and he had asked West to accompany him. West was eager to go, but, at the same time, wished to make sure of his return to the United States.

"To obtain a return visa he needed an affidavit from someone who had known him before and could testify to the legality of his presence in this country. Naturally I was happy to oblige him, and a few days later made the necessary affidavit at the immigration office in Oakland."

For several months he sent postcards from South America to the Landfields; but then, suddenly, silence.

A year or two later Landfield met Dr. Goodspeed at the summer encampment of the Bohemian Club at Russian River, and immediately brought up the subject of the strange disappearance of James West. Goodspeed volunteered that although West did some valuable work on the expedition, he was entirely irresponsible. He would disappear for several days and then turn up without explanation. Finally he disappeared altogether.

Goodspeed then related the episode at the International Horticultural Congress in Berlin, where he had recognized West sitting in one of the front rows. West, he said, welcomed him warmly if nothing untoward had happened in South

America, and Goodspeed simply went along with it.

In this interview Landfield mentioned having been at lunch with Prinz Egon von Ratibor in 1915 at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. Also in attendance were Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Crocker. It was shortly after this early meeting that Prinz Egon assumed the name of "James West" but the years from 1916 to 1929 are obscure. From bits and pieces of conversation remembered by those who knew him several facts emerge. Victor Reiter says West "... went to sea for a time because he told me he wanted to know how it felt to work on a ship." Also for a time he worked in the lumber country around Fort Bragg and Eureka.

Landfield says that the Allied naval blockade of World War I stranded the young German prince in America, and cut off his funds. He continues, "Driven by necessity he found work in a lumber camp and naturally dropped his title and changed his name."

From lumbering, West seems to have gone to Arizona. Here he read botany, studied and worked as a gardener and landscape-horticulturist. It seems natural that cacti and succulents would become his primary interests while working in this area. West probably came back to California from Arizona in 1928 or 1929.

At late as 1947, the death of James West was still a mystery to his old friends in this area. In February, 1947, Cora R. Brandt, Secretary of the California Horticultural Society, sent the following letter to Scott Haselton, Editor of the *Cactus and Succulent Journal of America*, in Pasadena:

"Dear Mr. Haselton,

Mr. Eric Walther has asked me to write you in answer to an inquiry you had sent him in regard to the death of our old friend James West.

Unfortunately, there is little that I can tell you beyond what is contained in the brief note that appeared in the July number of our *Journal*, which was to the effect that word had been received of his death very early in the war (WW-II). The information was obtained by Mrs. Imogen Partridge (Cunningham), who was a close friend of his during his stay in America, and who had asked Dr. Glenn Hoover, of Mills College, to make inquiries concerning his welfare while he was in Germany for the American Government. Dr. Hoover reported that he had learned from the *Almanac de Gotha* of his death but was not able to find any details. Mrs. Partridge has no further sources of information.

Very truly yours,
Cora R. Brandt."

In 1953, one year after the publication of the material contained in the Landfield interview, the following letter was received at the San Francisco *Examiner*, by Susan Smith, from a lady who signed herself: "Alexandra von Dewitz, nee Grafyn (Countess) Hoyos von Essen-Ruhr." The stationery was that of the "British Center, Essen."

"The newspaper cutting containing your column of second of April 1952 gave us a big thrill . . . and furnished us with a further chapter in the life of our mysterious 'Uncle from America' who illuminated our childhood and passed through our life for one brief summer in 1938.

"James West' was the eldest brother of my mother, and the story of how he vanished in America during the first World War, gave food for many of the adventure stories of our childhood.

In the late 1920's (sic) * about the time of his 50th birthday, he sudden-

ly decided to contact his family again, and I shall never forget my grandmother's tears of joy at the receipt of his first letter after fifteen years.

"He told her he had taken the name of James West during World War I and that he was very happy in California. He explained that he would never be able to live in the old country after the freedom of America."

The Countess Alexandra says she does not recall the exact date but she clearly recalls his return to Germany shortly thereafter — "A small, wiry, weather-beaten man wearing an Indian poncho . . ." and constantly carrying a large calabash gourd (sic) in which he carried *yerba maté*, sucking it through a beautifully carved *bombilla*. The Countess says that her uncle told them about Professor Goodspeed and the expedition to the Andes.

She says he suddenly disappeared again, this time in Germany, but that postcards arrived frequently from him from various parts of Europe and Germany. Then:

"Suddenly," the Countess wrote, "the postcards quit coming: . . . there was nothing. He vanished into thin air. Then, in the late summer, 1939, my mother received a call from our estates in Silesia from her second brother's wife, Princess Moritz von Ratibor. She said Uncle Egon (this was James West's real name) had been found dead — drowned in the river Spree. Later my mother, aunt and myself attended a quiet little ceremony in one of Berlin's oldest cemeteries where we buried him.

"It is a pathetic coincidence that some in America thought him to be a German agent, for some in Germany

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*This chronology is confused. Prinz Egon von Ratibor was born August 31, 1886, and would have celebrated his 50th birthday in 1936. It was shortly thereafter that he returned to Germany from South America.

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believe that he found his end at the hands of Nazi thugs who believed him to be an American spy."

The Countess does not refute this "belief" in the rest of her letter, which continues:

"Personally, I believe that he came to the end of his life's adventure in the spirit in which he had lived. There is never an end and never a beginning, only the present moment.

"I want to thank you for still remembering one who to us was, and still is, very dear."

A Letter from James West to Mabel Symmes, 1923? or 1924?

± Lemito

June 2

1923

Dear Miss Symmes,

Many thanks for your kind letter and the check, which letter I have some conscientious scruples in accepting in return for something so begrudging. Anyhow, I can promise that you will have the pick of anything I may some day be able to do, which will really merit your approval.

I do indeed want criticism, - infinitely more than kind insincerities, and I appreciated yours immensely.

To tell the truth, I brought
the things over more to see
what you would say to them,
than for any other reason,
having recognized in you
an understanding soul,
which one has not the luck
to find every day!

I regretted my inability
to paint the other evening,
when I found what I thought
the point of view for the house,
a little more end-on and
from higher up than in my
drawing. I had gone primarily
to listen to your thrushes;
it was after a clear sunset,
and the house in the after-

glow under a lavender sky, rising warmly out of the green darkness of your delightful private wilderness was a vision of beauty. The Thrushes song, sad and thrilling, enhanced the magic of the hour. But the feeling of it all could not be secured in monochrome.

I have been struggling a little with water colors the last day or two, just across the ridge into Wildcat Canyon, trying unsuccessfully to get something out of the bare golden hills and green ravines, a scene which is my California par excellence.

But I am afraid I am
abusing your patience with
these ramblings.

Please tell Mrs. Blake that
the honeysuckle is edging blue,
also that I have discovered
a veritable bird's paradise
in the grove of willows at
the county line, just across
San Pablo Ave. an otherwise
rather unlovely neighborhood.
I have also found two meadow-
larks nests within a few
feet of my house with six
eggs each.

Very sincerely yours

Wm. Brewster

James West

CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

MEETING

MONDAY EVENING

AUGUST 21, 1950

at the

SAN FRANCISCO COMMERCIAL CLUB
465 California Street7:30 P.M.SUBJECT: WATER GARDENS

There will probably not be many of us who can offer specimens of the plants under discussion at this meeting, but we can, as always, bring other items of interest for display. Do your share!

NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE

Remember that \$2.50 (\$4.25 for a Joint Membership) will cover a membership from now until the end of the year,--four meetings and two issues of our Journal. If you have in mind prospective members, now is the time to bring them in.

Cora R. Brandt, Secretary

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

June 19, 1950

The subject of the program was Lilies. Dr. Albert M. Vollmer discussed the subject in general, and told why, though among the oldest known flowers, the true lilies are still rare in cultivation. Following his talk he showed many slides of various lilies, including new and rare species grown at Beltsville, Maryland, from the Rock collection, some of Griffith's hybrids, the Buckley auratum hybrids, and California lilies in their native habitat. Dr. Noble Logan exhibited a fine collection of pot-grown lilies, and told of his methods of growing them. The paper covering his talk will appear in the October Journal.

Dr. Donald Pratt led the discussion of plant material.

BULLETIN of the
CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURE SOCIETY

August 1957

The August meeting will be held Monday August 19, 1957, 7:30 p.m.
in the Morrison Auditorium, California Academy of Sciences,
Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

PROGRAM: Dr. Elizabeth McClintock will give a talk entitled:

"Let's have a look at plants and their families"

NOTES FROM THE JUNE MEETING: Mrs. Anson S. Blake spoke on "Pioneer Gardening in California". Through the years of the California Horticultural Society Mrs. Blake has been a regular contributor to the Plant Material portion of our meetings by bringing specimens from her Berkeley garden, and whenever called upon being ready to tell something of her experiences with these plants. It was a real pleasure to have her as speaker of the evening tell us how she developed this garden during the past 30 years. Her garden can now be considered to have reached "maturity" for the specimens which she planted during the early years have now reached their full development, many of them are in fact now reseeding themselves.

By way of introduction Mrs. Blake stated that her present garden was not her first. When she and Mr. Blake were married in 1894 they made a home on a piece of land which had belonged to Mr. Blake's grandmother near where the University of California cyclotron is now and it was here that she had her first garden. In 1922 the University asked to have the Blake's property for the expansion in connection with the new stadium. So the Blake's moved to their present home in north Berkeley.

Following are some of the plants discussed by Mrs. Blake:

Laurus nobilis, the evergreen European bay-tree, was one of the first trees planted.
Cryptocarya rubra, evergreen Chilean tree related to Laurus, seeds itself now.
Hoheria populnea, evergreen tree from New Zealand, seeds itself prolifically.
Hoheria sexstylosa, less prolific and therefore more desirable.
Carocarpus traskiae, Trask mahogany, evergreen shrub, found only on Catalina Island.
Maytenus boaria, the Mayten, an evergreen tree from Chile, seeds itself freely.
Eugenia hookeriana, shapely evergreen tree from Australia, somewhat tender, froze down in 1932 but came back.
Masnia grandiflora, evergreen tree from s.e. U.S., 12 planted showed variation in size and shape.
Pyrus kawakami, evergreen ornamental pear from e. Asia, has spread of 35 feet now.
Cedrus atlantica 'Argentea', the Atlas cedar, produced cones now.
Pinus canariensis, Canary Island pine, froze in 1932 but came back.
Abies concolor, the white fir, and Pseudotsuga taxifolia, the Douglas fir, both native.
Chamaecyparis lanceolata, the China fir, also produces cones.
Sequoia sempervirens, California redwood. About 50 redwoods were planted, either from seedlings or cuttings. They now are about 75 feet tall.
Nothofagus cliffortioides, from New Zealand, is related to the North American beeches.
Fagus sylvatica, the queensland kauri, is from Australia.
Populus tremuloides, quaking aspen, found in North America.
Chamaecyparis arborescens, small leaved divaricately branched shrub from N. Zealand.
Catha edulis, khat or qat, from Arabia, Arabs make stimulating drink from leaves.
Ilex paraguariensis, mate, from S. America, used in Paraguay as a drink.
Albizia viscosa, Pistacia chinensis, Actinidia chinensis, Acmena smithii.

The sources of many of Mrs. Blake's plants were seeds from the Royal Horticultural Society, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Charles Abraham, Golden Gate Park, Henri Correvon, Arnold Arboretum, Botanical Society of South Africa.

VARIETYEXHIBITOR

<u>Lilium</u> hybrids: Lillian Cummings, and specimens from Jan de Graaff's Hollywood and Mid-century series	Sydney B. Mitchell	Berkeley
<u>Gerbera Jamesonii</u> (double forms)	Toichi Domoto	Hayward
<u>Iris Kaempferi</u>	Mrs. Anson Blake	Berkeley
<u>Oxypetalum caeruleum</u>	" " "	"
<u>Ixia columellaris</u>	" " "	"
<u>Ecoronia elatior</u>	Mrs. Edna Raffo	San Francisco
<u>Hydrangea macrophylla</u> var.?	Dean Malcolm	Oakland
<u>Lilium canadense</u>	Mrs. Robert Tuckey	Kentfield
<u>L. Bolanderi</u>	H. K. Roberts	Guerneville
<u>Petunia</u> Fire Chief	Mrs. Charles Billig	San Francisco
<u>Viola aetolica saxatilis</u>	Ray Williams	Watsonville
<u>Primula auricula</u> (show)	Robert E. Saxe	San Francisco
<u>Thalictrum kiusianum</u>	" " "	"
<u>Rhodohypoxis Baueri</u>	" " "	"
<u>Eriogonum crocatum</u>	Mrs. H. N. Hansen	Lafayette
<u>Aster yunnanensis</u>	W. C. Blasdale	Berkeley
<u>Fitzingeria californica</u>	Edythe Foster	San Rafael
<u>Verbascum olympicum</u>	Frank B. Duveneck	Los Altos
<u>Escallonia</u> Mrs. Helene Strybing	Golden Gate Park	San Francisco
<u>Metrosideros lucida</u>	" " "	"
<u>Santadeschia macrocarpa</u>	S. H. Parmelee	East Palo Alto
<u>Rhododendron Kyawi</u>	Mrs. M. F. A. Giauque	Berkeley
<u>Azalea Geisha</u>	" " "	"
<u>Alstroemeria</u> Ligtu hybrids	La Rochette	San Francisco

Constance Hansen, Recording Secretary

LIBRARY NOTES

Recent acquisition:

Clements, Edith S. Flowers of coast and sierra, with 32 plates in color.
226 pp. Gift of Cora R. Brandt

MRS. ANSON S. BLAKE

The Journal of the California Horticultural
Society, April 1956, Vol. XVII, No. 2.

Editor's page: "We welcome the opportunity to publish a picture of Mrs. Anson S. Blake, truly 'the First Lady of Our Society.' A list of the plant material from her Berkeley garden shown and discussed at our regular meetings is presented as a special tribute and record."

A List of the Plant Material Shown and Discussed at the Regular Meetings of the California Horticultural Society

By MRS. ANSON S. BLAKE

(List compiled from the available Bulletins in the archives
of the Society)

1940

Banksia aemula (November)
Citharexylum montevidense (May)
Periploca graeca (May)
Pycnostachys urticifolia (November)
1941
Billardiera longiflora (September)
Deutzia pulchra (May)
Epidendrum radicans (September)
Eucalyptus lehmannii (August)
Gladiolus byzantinus (April)
Sphaeralcea fendleri var. *californica*
(June)

1942

Acacia koa (February)
Cercis siliquastrum var. *alba* (April)
Cercocarpus traskiae (March)
Ferraria undulata (April)
Myrrhinium salicinum (March)
Noltea africana (March)
Paeonia mlokosewitschii (March)
Protea mundii (March)

1943

Erythrina coralloides (June)
Gladiolus grandis (June)
Watsonia densiflora (June)

1946

Aracia jonesii (April)
Fascicularia pitcairniifolia (September)
Ixia columellaris (June)
Nerine howdenii (November)
N. sarniensis (November)
Phillyrea decora (April)
Rose 'Chapeau de Napoleon' (June)
Semele androgyna (June)

1947

Alstroemeria violacea (June)
Arthropodium cirrhatum (June)
Camellia sasanqua 'Showe No Sakae'
(October)
Clematis crispa (September)
C. 'Nellie Moser' (September)
C. viticella (June)
Cypella herbertii (September)
Euryops spathaceus (February)
Fritillaria meleagris var. *alba* (April)
Homalocladium platycladum (October)
Lachenalia tricolor var. *aurea* (March)

Leucadendron grandiflorum (February)
Liriope muscari (September)
Mespilus germanica (October)
Moraea spathacea (March)
Narcissus minimus, small garden form
of *N. pseudo-narcissus*, (January)
Petrea volubilis (May)
Protea lepidocarpodendron (April)
P. mellifera (September)
P. neriifolia (April)
Rhododendron macrophyllum (October)
R. scottianum (May)
Setaria palmifolia (August)
Tulipa marjolettii (April)
Wigandia caracasana var. *macrophylla*
(May)

1948

Aconitum volubile (August)
Buplenrum fruticosum (August)
Calothamnus rupestris (January)
Casimiroa edulis (November)
Cattleya luteola (March)
Clematis cirrhosa (November)
Eryngium alpinum (August)
Eucalyptus lehmannii (January)
Ficus diversifolia (February)
Fritillaria imperialis (March)
Gaudichaudia cynanchoides (January)
Gladiolus byzantinus (June)
Hakea oleifolia (February)
Iris reticulata (February)
Lachenalia pustulata (March)
L. tricolor var. *aurea* (March)
Leucosium autumnale (August)
Luculia intermedia (October)
Montanna grandiflora (November)
Solanum laurifolium (September)
Thunbergia gregorii (September)
Tulbaghia violacea (October)
Watsonia densiflora (June)

1949

Alhuca nelsoni (June)
Asparagus scandens var. *deflexus*
(January)
Cattleya citrina (April)
Clematis 'Mrs. Robert Brydon' (August)
Cotinus coggygria (*Rhus cotinus*) (June)
Crinum powellii (June)
Cyclamen X atkinsii (February)
Dioscorea caucasica (August)
Hebe cupressoides (June)
Iris histrioides var. *major* (February)
Ligularia clivorum (August)

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- Millettia reticulata* (formerly erroneously exhibited as *Lonchocarpus nicou*) (November)
Nerine flexuosa (October)
Parkinsonia aculeata (November)
Pinus gautula (January)
Platanus racemosa (October)
Pleioblastus viridi-striatus var. *vagans* (February)
Rhododendron micranthum (October)
R. protistum (February)
Salvia pratensis (April)
Schinus lentiscifolius (January)
Tulipa acuminata (April)
T. fosteriana (March)
T. kaufmanniana 'Brilliant' (March)
T. praestans (March)
T. sylvestris (March)
T. viridiflora (April)
Yucca aloifolia (May)
Y. baccata (May)
Y. glauca (May)
- 1950
- Acacia riceana* (March)
Agapanthus africanus (August)
A. orientalis (August)
A. pendulus (August)
Babiana stricta (April)
Cotinus coggygia (October)
Haemanthus coccineus (September)
Hebenstretia comosa (September)
Ilex insignis (February)
Iris kaempferi (June)
Ixia ciliata (June)
Leucadendron grandiflorum (February)
Oxypetalum caeruleum (June)
Pistacia chinensis (October)
Pittosporum daphniphyllodes (April)
Pontederia cordata (August)
Protea mellifera (September)
Uniola paniculata (October)
- 1951
- Dipidax ciliata* (February)
Gladiolus gracilis (February)
Iris bakeriana (January)
Magnolia grandiflora (fruiting branches) (January)
Narcissus bulbocodium (February)
- Passiflora caerulea* (August)
P. manicata (August)
Pelargonium salmoneum (August)
Tritonia crocata (May)
- 1952
- Anemone blanda* (March)
Asphodeline lutea (May)
Aster ericoides (September)
Barflonia juncea (May)
Calluna vulgaris (June)
Conium maculatum (June)
Coprosma areolata (August)
Eryngium planum (September)
Fascicularia pitcairniifolia (November)
Iris vartanii alba (January)
Juniperus communis compressa (February)
Kauzeca ericifolia (June)
Lonicera pileata (September)
Magnolia X soulangeana (October)
Nerine (Barr's hybrids) - (November)
Osmanthus ilicifolius (January)
Quercus dentata (October)
Selinum tenuifolium (August)
Tulipa praecox (February)
T. schrenki (February)
Viburnum cylindricum (January)
- 1953
- Agapanthus orientalis* (June)
Arthropodium cirrhatum (June)
Aster kumleini (September)
Debregeasia longifolia (September)
Gaura lindheimeri (September)
Millettia reticulata (October)
Moraea spathacea (March)
Rhododendron falconeri (March)
R. scottianum (Maddenii Series) (June)
Sophora tetraptera (March)
Tulipa fosteriana (March)
T. greigii (March)
T. nageri (March)
T. saxatilis (March)
- 1954
- Nerine flexuosa* (October)
Pinus armandii (October)
Pistacia chinensis (October)

N.B.: In the Jan. 1943 Journal, the editor notes:
 "No award has ever been given to the person or persons contributing most to the plant material shown at our meetings, but I am quite satisfied that, if one were instituted, it would go first to Mrs. Anson S. Blake."

ADELANTÉ

NEWS FROM THE BLAKE GARDEN

WORK AND STUDY AT THE

BLAKE GARDEN by Carole Goldberg

For some students, the term "work study" means only an ordinary job offering them a means to continue their studies in their chosen fields. Happily, for landscape students, Blake Garden provides a limited number work study positions during a 5 week summer period which gives them both the chance to earn some money and the opportunity to learn more about their field through first hand experience.

As one of three work study students who worked at Blake this past summer, I came away with a few colleagues, quite a lot of firming up muscles and a healthy respect and new awareness of plant materials and their growth habits. Initially, I singly expected I would be able to identify most of the plants in the Garden having had the two plant materials classes offered by the landscape department. I found instead that the long list of ornamental and native plants I learned earlier in the year represented only a very small portion of the plant palette at Blake. I discovered a host of species of illex, eucalyptus, melaleucas, rhododendrons, pittosporums, junos, etc. with which I was unfamiliar. In addition, there were trees, shrubs and ground covers thriving in the Garden that weren't even listed in Sunset's Western Garden Book which I naively assumed was the "who's who" of the plant world. Working daily in the garden I also began to get a better idea of the scale and form of nature plants. It is one thing to read that a certain tree will grow to 60 feet and quite another to see a 60 foot tree looming above you.

Plant maintenance was another area of awakening. For someone like myself, who has an apartment filled with a variety of salt burned, pot bound and either over or under watered and/or fertilized houseplants it never occurred to me that some plants exhibit such growth that they can make miserable nuisances of themselves. Take *Maytenus toaria* for example. The dainty, graceful above ground appearance of this tree is diabolically deceptive. The tenacious roots of this prolific plant are so firmly anchored in the ground that complete removal of the hundreds of unwanted "little" seedlings is difficult if not impossible -- particularly in an area as large as the Garden where the permanent staff is relatively small. And who would have thought it would have taken three people almost a week to get rid of a bed of diseased *Hypericum* spreading by underground stems, intent plowing down about 2 feet, hoeing, raking and picking out by hand the tough, stringy roots and stems. Even after we had hauled away four truckloads of the plant's mangled remains, we were never able to get them all.

Working at Blake was also an excellent way of putting into action some of those horticulture techniques I learned about in LA 112. Also, some things, like pruning for a plant's natural form, weren't as simple as expected. My first experience in making a large *Oenothera* resulted in a shrub that some thought looked rather "like a hippopotamus walking backwards."

Other jobs, like putting in a new irrigation pipe, were more successful; and I'm hoping that at least knowing what pvc, street L's and T's are will help take some of the mystery out of LA 122 (irrigation) when I take the class this spring.

One important point, all students who work at Blake, must be eligible for work study. This means you must submit your financial aid application by the April deadline (last year it was April 15th).

So, those of you who are interested in a summer job that's out of doors in a lovely area in Kensington with a terrific Bay view, don't wait until the last minute to do something about it.

PLANTS WORTH SEEING THIS AUTUMN

HERBACEOUS PLANTS

F *Crucialia multicaeva*
F *Belladonna major* 'Christmasc-Bloss'
F *Iris longistylis* Douglas Iris
F *Oxalis crassifolia* Little Pickles

SHRUBS

AC *Berberis thunbergii* 'Atropurpurea'
F *Callistemon viminalis*
OF *Colocaster* species
F *Illex acicularis*
OF *Leucanthes arbutifolia* Christmas Berry
F *Forsteria tuberosa*
F *Leptospermum scoparium* 'Apple Blossom'
OF *Laurencia nitida* Box Honey-suckle
F *Makonia teretifolia* Chinese Hollyhedge
F *Skimmia japonica*
OF *Staphylea trifoliata*
F *Viburnum tinus* Laurestinus

TREES

AC *Acer circinnatum* Vine Maple
F *Cassia tomentosa*
AC *Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea' Copper Beech
AC *Parrotia persica*
OF, AC *Pistacia chinensis* Chinese Pistache
AC *Quercus pedunculatus* Pin Oak
AC *Zelkova serrata*

KEY: AC Autumn color
F Flower
OF Ornamental fruit

ADELANTE; Published by the Blake Garden, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of California, Berkeley 94720. Sponsored by a University Fellowship and issued quarterly.

Inquiries may be addressed to Linda Haymaker Bigham, Editor, c/o Blake Garden.

HISTORY OF THE BLAKE GARDEN

PART THREE by Linda Haymaker Bigham

When Anita Blake died in 1962, the family garden and house passed into the hands of U.C.'s Landscape Architecture Department. Although the land had legally been given over in a trust deed to the University in 1957, it was not until Blake's death that the estate became open for new kinds of operational consideration.

The first U.C. employee for the Blake Garden was Walter Voddan, hired in 1957 as Sr. Nurseryman. Walter had a degree in Ornamental Horticulture from San Francisco City College and previously had managed his own business. When he arrived, he remembers the garden as "a shambles" -- very overgrown everywhere, with the only useable and tended portions being those areas in which the two sisters could easily walk and work. The two guided Walter's work in the garden. Mrs. Blake was a "lovable old tyrant," supervising the yearly pruning from her old wooden stool and insisting Walter mist down the dry rock walls planted to annuals and perennials at three o'clock every day. Miss Symmes took Walter under her wing; she taught him about the vast plant collection of the garden and discussed its design schemes and horticultural maintenance. The five year transition period from the Blake-run operation with Walter was to prove an invaluable link between the old and new and set the stage for thoughtful garden care.

It was difficult for the Landscape Architecture Department to decide what to do with their eleven acres. Ideas were kicked around and use plans discussed. The Department Chairman, H.L. Vaughn, typified the Department's feeling in 1961 when he stated that "of the physical features essential to teaching and research in Landscape Architecture -- laboratories, libraries, classrooms, plant collections, and well designed garden space -- the last two are the most difficult to obtain and keep. The Blake Garden provides them in incomparable fashion." But merely recognizing the value of the property did not make it immediately useful to the Department.

A position of Blake Garden Director was established in 1957. It was hoped that this person would organize to more fully utilize all aspects of the garden. The first two directors reviewed the garden. Mai Arlayest intensively surveyed, mapped, photographed, and cataloged the terrain and plant cover. Dr. Ivo Raabe introduced technological garden improvements like weather stations, soil sterilizers, new varieties of roses and chrysanthemums, etc. But it was with Geraldine Knight Scott that consultation changed to guidance and management, and a work plan for garden development and change evolved. Responding to a request of Department Chairman Leucis Vovich in 1963, she began an intensive compilation of Blake Garden information that culminated a year later in A Long Range Development Plan for the Blake Estate. This plan included Blake Garden history, photographs, maps, maintenance diagrams, site development proposals and long range goals.

Mrs. Scott's proposal discussed the conflict between preserving the garden resource as recreational open space or developing it to meet new urban needs. It examined the garden as it was and broke it down

into explicit maintenance areas of low, medium and high. It called for a simplification of garden paths and planting, and an opening up of the numerous overgrown sections. Perhaps the report's greatest value was that it compiled an immense amount of previously hard to find information into one volume, easily read and portrayed with fine graphic skill. The proposal also included hypothetical "futuristic" plans for the garden development to 1980; this plan kept the formal garden and Redwood Canyon intact but extensively developed the rest of the estate to an art and garden center, studio buildings, outdoor classroom theatre, picnic areas, project and test sites, student dormitories -- and a small lake! Most of this was never constructed, of course. To implement most of Geraldine Scott's development plan would have required a budget that the department did not have. Perhaps, in some ways, that was good -- since the useful economy of the new design necessarily would have displaced Blake Garden's romantically private feeling.

Aside from theoretical research, Mrs. Scott was the first director to spend a lot of field time with the Blake Garden staff. In 1965 and 1966 she managed programs of tree removal, service road renovation, extensive pruning, planting, and weed eradication. It was under her guidance that the whole unusable eastern portion of the garden was redesigned to include a large flat lawn with a classroom seating area, plus service areas for the Blake Garden equipment. She was also responsible for architecturally simplifying the old rose garden in the eastern area.

From 1962 to 1969 the Blake House served as a residence for women graduate students. The venture was financially unsuccessful and the house was vacated. In 1967, when Charles Hitch was elected President of the University, the house went under extensive renovation due to the Regents' decision to modernize and restore the house for use as the President's residence. Geraldine Scott, no longer garden director, was rehired by the University to landscape the accesses adjoining the house. In front, she redesigned the residential forecourt and entrance gate; in back she designed the lower lawn and conferred over detailing of the patio and stairway with architect Ronald Brechlin. Mrs. Scott also did a lot of the preliminary survey for the upper parking lot and supervised the new garden lighting. In 1969 the Blake House remodeling was completed and the President and his family moved in.

The Garden's last director was Russell Beatty, who held the part-time position from 1967 to 1973. He oversaw numerous student projects and helped on the Children's Adventure Garden in 1971, 1972, and 1973. Miss Beatty and graduate student Chris Patillo co-authored the Blake Garden Freeze Damage Survey of 1971 and 1972.

Since 1974, the Garden has not had an official director. The former directors have continued to be helpful in solving new garden problems as they arise. Today, the Garden Staff consists of 3 2/3 full time employees -- Walter Voddan, Senior Superintendent of Agriculture, Bill Jones, Senior Nursery Technician, and Bob Latz and Linda Bigham, Nursery Technicians.

PRELIMINARY LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
for the BLAKE ESTATE

by Geraldine Knight Scott
Landscape Architect

Department of Landscape Architecture
University of California - Berkeley

November 1964

BLAKE ESTATE
KENSINGTON

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FOREWORD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

The long-range policies and general plans in this study are offered as guides for developing the Blake Estate into a property of maximum value for teaching, research, and service to the profession of landscape architecture, and selectively, to the public. The study is intended for information and discussion only and is in no sense a definitive document.

Policies and plans for the extended use of this handsome property given to the Department of Landscape Architecture have evolved slowly. Because the deed permitted life-long residency to Mr. and Mrs. Blake, the years from 1957 to the time of Mrs. Blake's death in April 1962 were spent in maintaining the garden according to her wishes. It served then, as now, primarily as a teaching laboratory in plant identification and planting design. Professor H.L. Vaughan, former Chairman of the Department, and Dr. Robert Raabe, plant pathologist and acting director of the garden, developed some general principles and initiated departmental discussion of policies and goals. Summaries of these emerging policies appear in reports made by Professor Vaughan in 1961 and by Dr. Raabe in 1962 and 1963.

The present study was undertaken in February 1963 at the request of Professor Francis Violich, Department Chairman. At the same time a Blake Garden Committee of three faculty members - - Geraldine Scott, Lecturer (Chairman); Mai Arbogast, Lecturer; and Assistant Professor Michael Laurie - - was named to supervise management and assist in the formulation of long-range goals. In June 1964 a new and enlarged committee was established, including Professor R.B. Litton, Jr. as Chairman, Dr. Robert Raabe, Associate Professor of Plant Pathology, Assistant Professor Roger B. Martin and Geraldine Scott. Mrs. Scott was assigned to direct the work at Blake Garden succeeding Dr. Raabe. This committee was asked to review and criticize the

present report and make proposals for its wider circulation for review by all related departments. The committee will also correlate Blake Estate management with the teaching program.

The Blake Estate, situated in Kensington, is described in the LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, June 1962, as "a residential property specified by the donors for use of its highly developed garden plantings by the Department of Landscape Architecture, thus insuring utilization compatible with the high-quality residential area in which it is located."

The drawings in the present report represent stages or alternative proposals for the conversion of this residential property into a facility correlated with teaching and research in the Department of Landscape Architecture. Provisions for use by departments with related interests have also been considered, as suggested in the deed of gift.

The graphic plans and planning policy statements offer general guidelines only; in recognition that changes in the curricula of the College of Environmental Design are under consideration and that conversion to a quarter system will bring about even more drastic changes; alternative plans for several parts of the estate are included. To allow for adjustments to changing circumstances and to make the best use of the plan, a responsible advisory committee with broad representation is needed. Professional staff services will be needed to prepare detailed plans for programmed uses as funds become available.

A large endowment will be needed to implement the plan and see that the Blake Estate serves the purposes this study shows to be desirable. For example, since the estate offers a good location for scholars in the environmental arts and sciences to work and for students to live, funds - - heretofore few and meager - - should be sought for student scholarships and teaching and research fellowships, as well as for needed facilities and physical development of the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first note of appreciation must go to all of the members of the faculty of Landscape Architecture who, by sustained interest in horticulture and continuing friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Blake, prompted the gift of this property to the University of California for teaching and research in Landscape Architecture. The Department is fortunate to have had Mrs. Mai Arbegast as the first director of work at the garden. With her thorough background in scientific method and landscape architecture, as well as a respect for history, Mrs. Arbegast collected maps, records, and photographs referred to throughout this report. Under her direction a planimetric survey locating all major facilities and plants was made. This was keyed to a comprehensive plant list which entailed identification of many species. Through respect for the general wishes in managing the garden, Mrs. Arbegast gleaned important facts about soils, winds, planting practices and the age of many trees on the site. Without her records, photographs, and quantitative analysis, this report and all future work at the Blake Garden would be without foundation.

Dr. Robert Raabe of the Department of Plant Pathology deserves praise and gratitude for his supervision of the garden. Appointed on a half-time basis in July 1961, Dr. Raabe undertook, with characteristic enthusiasm, the never-ending task of renovating an over-grown garden, which, as Mabel Symmes (who made the first plan for the garden) commented, "is a sad business at best and harder when you do it piecemeal." His program of weeding, seedling and underbrush removal and poison-oak eradication cleared the way for a contour survey made by two students, Carlisle Becker and Michael Wheelwright. That survey provided the basis for all the studies in this report as well as maps for many student problems.

Harry Tsugawa, B.L.A. 1961, named Assistant Landscape

Architect for this project, made the early maps, studies and tree evaluations. Hugo Burgemeestre took many of the record photographs which appear in this report and in the large scrap-book made by Mrs. Arbegast.

Parker Smith and Richard Modee, graduate students, completed the contour survey of the lower portion of the property and made a contour model which exhibits the turbulent character of the site more clearly than drawings.

The rendered plans and sections are the work of John Coe, senior student, while the perspective sketches of proposed facilities are the contribution of Michael Laurie, Assistant Professor and member of the first Blake Garden Committee.

Walter Vodden, Senior Superintendent of Cultivations at the Blake Garden has contributed to this study in many ways; by assisting with surveying, by locating records and data, and by recalling the plant preferences and horticultural practices of Mrs. Blake and her sister. His loyalty, patience, and good will during the period of changing garden management and the development of long-range goals merit commendation.

To all of these contributors must be added the name of Margaret Hays, Secretary of the Department of Landscape Architecture, who with her assistants, especially Ava Lydecker, worked on budgets, typed lists and reports, and brought this report into being.

Geraldine Knight Scott
Landscape Architect
Lecturer, Department of Landscape Architecture

I. SITE DESCRIPTION AND EARLY HISTORY *

Location: Recalling the spring day in 1922 when the family went out to choose the site of their new home in Kensington, Contra Costa County, Mrs. Blake said that the property at that time "was a mile from where the little street car ended, and it was open land, largely pasture land, but sloping down from the top of the ridge above us to the more level land below. It was bounded by two little lines of drainage, really streams at that time, and there were wild flowers everywhere; houses were not in sight. Down below we faced El Cerrito, that big mound on the shoreline, with an adobe of the Castro family which was still there. Down at the foot of the grade not far away was the 'metanza,' a slaughtering field for the cattle owned by the Spaniards. Along our southern stream was a trail.... followed by the coyotes that went for the offal from the slaughtering field. When we got there we heard almost the last howls of the coyotes. There were not many left, but everything else was left, and it seemed as though we would never have a garden."**

Terrain: Today the estate no longer seems remote. It is less than four miles from the main campus of the University in a well-developed residential area, and there is a bus service to its Rincon Road gate. Although the property includes only 10.5 acres, it seems much larger because of the unusually rugged terrain. Sloping off in a southwesterly direction, the land drops more than 100 feet in a distance of 750 feet. The eastern portion above the house declines at an easy grade of five to seven percent, while areas below decline in grades varying from fifteen to fifty percent.

See Inventory of Existing Facilities - Appendix b

* "The History of a Pioneer Garden," a paper read by Mrs. Blake at a meeting of the California Horticultural Society in the fall of 1957. Further remarks by Mrs. Blake quoted in this report are from the same paper.

Climate: Strong prevailing winds vary from northwest to north in summer, bringing in thick fog which drips from the needles of many conifers. Drying winds from the northeast come in fall and winter. Rain-laden winds blow from the southwest or northwest. "My greatest fear was the wind," wrote Mrs. Blake. But Charles Abraham, well-known nurseryman, advised, "Go! More wind, less frost. Go and plant your windbreak!" Heeding his counsel, the Blakes started their garden in 1925. Annual rainfall has varied from eleven to twenty-four inches, according to Mrs. Blake. (Rain gauges were installed in 1962). Temperatures generally range from 36° to 95° , but 17° was recorded at the estate in the phenomenally cold month of December 1932.

Drainage: One of the two streams mentioned by Mrs. Blake is near the northern boundary; the other is close to the southern property line. The northern stream, which dries up in summer, is now shaded and protected from erosion by the redwood grove, rhododendrons, and mixed plantings to the west. The banks of the southern stream have not been so well protected by planting or other means: The upper portion of the stream spreads out to form a marsh; lower down, it has cut a deep channel. Moreover, a spring, or seepage water, from a point southwest of the house runs into a hollow and forms another marsh in wet years.

Soil: Mrs. Blake found "Every kind of soil, serpentine in some places, gravel in another, and adobe packed hard by the pasturing of the cattle." A layer of serpentine rock underlies a large portion of the garden, rising near the surface in the upper or eastern area and lying at various depths elsewhere throughout the property. This complex rock forms a cliff which divides the property. High in magnesium content and very dense in some places, the serpentine layer is not easily penetrated by tree roots, which probably accounts for the weakened condition of many trees.

Rock Outcrop: All the rock for walls, steps, and path

edgings came from the site and is described by Gregory A. Davis as lawsonite-pumpellyite-glaucophane schist. In an article in the American Journal of Science, December 1960, Mr. Davis writes: "This occurrence, although similar to others in the area, is characterized by an unusually fine development of lawsonite as veins and as lithologic layers parallel to the foliation of enclosing glaucophane schists. The locality is near the western edge of the estate, now the Blake Gardens, a research facility for the Department of Landscape Architecture of the University of California, and it and other outcrops of glaucophane schist on the grounds will be preserved."

"Lawsonite and pumpellyite are found on the estate in a large block of glaucophane schist, twenty feet high and twenty-five feet across, apparently resting on serpentinite. The locality is probably within the Hayward fault zone, the main trace of which lies several hundred feet to the east. This schist block and others of similar or larger size in the area are regarded as tectonic inclusions within serpentinites of the fault zone, although it is impossible to ascertain whether the Blake Garden's block is now in situ."

Plant Cover: The first garden plan for the property was made by Mrs. Blake's sister, Miss Mabel Symmes, an early student in the Department of Landscape Design. She provided for a garden to serve two houses, one of which was later sold and is now the Carmelite Monastery north of the redwood grove. Approximately twenty-five hundred plant species and varieties from many sources throughout the world were planted. Many have since matured or died. Extensive collections of ferns, vines, South African bulbs and unusual conifers were developed as well. Mrs. Blake and her sister exchanged seeds with horticulturists in many lands, and their herbarium collections are now distributed to eleven herbaria throughout this country and Europe. Articles on the garden and its development were published in the Journal of the California Horticultural

Society from 1945-47.

Shelter belts of Laurel, *Cryptocarya*, Coast Redwood, Canary Island Pines, Acacias, and *Hoherias* were the earliest plantings on the new and barren site. Many varieties of *Melaleuca*, *Eucalyptus* and other Australian plants which were introduced extensively seem to have thrived in spite of the serpentine rock layer. Some plants had achieved mature growth even before the garden was deeded to the University. In 1957 the property had the romantic charm of a much older garden in a warmer climate, due to the luxurious growth of some species, notably the laurels, evergreen pears, magnolias, Canary Island Pines, *Actinidia chinensis* and many other vines and climbing roses.

The years have proved that many trees were planted too close together, some because they were new introductions whose mature size and form could not be predicted, and others because they were planted as windbreaks or to reduce glare. Competition for light or food, failure of introduced species to adapt to soil or climate, and inadequate maintenance since World War II have reduced the number of species that flourished earlier. However, many fine specimens of unusual plants are to be found throughout the garden. Horticulturalists come especially to see the *Eucryphia nymanse* (variety Mt. Usher) a columnar tree bearing white bell-shaped blooms in August and September, or the fruit of the Chinese Gooseberry Vine (*Actinidia chinensis*) nearby. Other notable plants include good specimens of *Coprosma areolata*, *Dodonaea viscosa*, *Drimys winteri*, *Quercus myrsinaefolia*, *Lithraea caustica*, and *Ilex paraguensis*, the leaves of which are used in South and Central America to brew the drink called matte. Here, this plant forms a dense shrub with medium-sized glossy leaves of particularly pleasing texture.

Most of the work at Blake Garden during the past three years has consisted of plant removal, renewal, and attempts to create some spatial quality in the jungle of plants, weeds

and seedlings that threatened to engulf large sections of the garden. The overcrowded condition has been mitigated during the past two years by extensive pruning and tree removal. Plants long neglected are being brought into proper form and balance. Seedlings which had practically taken over certain sections are being removed. However, at least one fair specimen of each variety is being retained until others are propagated, even if the plant is poorly located by planting design standards. Investigation of the weaker specimens which have been removed shows that many of these plants had very poor root systems.

The first new plantings are to be found along the entrance road, where the previous effect of all medium to fine textured, medium green plants (mainly Acacias, Melaleucas, and Quillaja saponaria) was particularly monotonous. Plants with larger dark green leaves more in scale with an entrance to a semi-public property have been started. As they develop, their color and textural contrast will lend some distinction to the area without requiring undue maintenance.

House: Blake House was designed by the architect Walter Bliss, whom Mrs. Blake described as "a warm personal friend and also a garden lover." When she expressed concern about the wind, he said, "Oh, I'll build you a house that is a windbreak." He proceeded to fulfill his promise with a structure one room deep, extending along contour, and according to Mrs. Blake, "very effective for the planting."

The house, like the garden, has elements of excellence although it is representative of the eclecticism of the 1920's. Formerly it was filled with fine books, antique furniture, Persian rugs and chests from many lands, all collected by the owners in their extensive travels. The great hall, living room and dining room still contain many handsome things appropriate to the spirit of the period in which the house was built. In 1962 the house was reconditioned by the Prytanean Alumnae

Association to serve as a dormitory for graduate women students.

Sculpture: Typifying the taste of the 1920's, the formal garden is reminiscent of the Villa Tusculana at Frascati, Italy. However, it displays an oriental tone as well: Several pieces of oriental ceramic sculpture are situated at focal points in the garden, while three large Chinese urns appear elsewhere on the estate. The enclosed garden at the north end of the house contains two pieces of oriental stone sculpture, a marble goddess of a late period, an early sandstone figure and a large ceramic urn.

Greenhouse: A large campus greenhouse, declared surplus in 1960, was purchased and reconstructed in the southeast corner of the garden. It is accessible by an entrance from Norwood Place. With a new headhouse attached, this facility has added 3,000 square feet of valuable teaching and research space to the property. Nearby, a pre-fabricated unit for tools and dry storage has been erected to increase the efficiency of maintenance operations and simplify class demonstration. This new installation permitted the removal of a glasshouse and tool shed, both of them old and inadequate, thereby opening up an area for lawn and improving the spatial quality of this central section of the garden.

III. LONG-RANGE GOALS

GENERAL ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES

This long-range study aims to show how the Blake Estate can be developed into a facility which will a) advance the teaching and research potential of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Berkeley, b) permit collaborative studies with other related outdoor arts and sciences, c) allow the Department to initiate broad environmental studies through collaborative projects with related outdoor arts and sciences, and d) serve the profession and a limited public through demonstrations and conferences.

In the Blake Estate, the Department of Landscape Architecture has a piece of land whose characteristics are more appropriate to future departmental and college needs than they were for the creation of a distinguished private garden.

While the primary use of the estate should be for teaching in the broadest sense, the clear need for comprehensive research, for testing of materials and methods, and for demonstrating the qualities of a man-made environment call for a site where multiple activities can be carried on without friction. That irregularity of contour which separates the Blake property into distinct areas with access from three sides seems ideally suited to these needs. It would allow simultaneous yet independent activities to be conducted in teaching, research and public service.

The dynamics of growth and change evident throughout the Blake Estate offer infinite opportunities for teaching landscape architecture. It would be of inestimable value, in fact, for students in environmental design to make daily observations by living on the estate itself.

Commenting on a proposed center for architecture and allied design fields similar to the one at Palo Alto for Advanced

Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Dean Martin Meyerson said in 1963 in his first talk to the faculty: "I think it would be best to establish such a center at a major university. This university would be an excellent location for such a center. Indeed, if our colleagues in landscape architecture are willing, and if the University administration is willing, the Blake Estate could be a magnificent setting for such a center."

The Blake Estate, deeded to the University "for teaching and research purposes" of the Department of Landscape Architecture, is indeed an appropriate location for such a center. The proposed facility would be devoted to research in physical and visual design problems of the environment and in methods for dealing with these problems. Such research would seek to deepen our understanding of the environment with regard to man's perceptual and ecological reactions and to the ways in which he shapes the environment to his needs. The research center would thus be basic to all design fields involved with the environment. In the setting of the Blake Estate, relatively cut off from distracting influences, scholars would be in direct contact with a varied terrain and landscape admirably suited to those studies most directly related to the immediate forces of the physical environment. At the same time, those working on environmental design problems of a broader nature would find the setting to be a valuable resource as a microcosm of the regional scale.

SPECIFIC ACADEMIC POLICIES

The following recommended policies for maximum use and development of the Blake Estate for teaching, graduate study, research and public service have been considered in the order of their importance to the Department of Landscape Architecture, allied departments of the University, the profession of landscape architecture and a limited public.

Teaching - Undergraduate Curriculum

The Blake Garden should receive more intensive use by all classes in the Department of Landscape Architecture. By nature of its size, topographic variety, and richness of plant cover, the estate is a valuable landscape teaching resource. It should be departmental policy for all professors and instructors to base at least one problem each semester on some potential of this property.

A summer course demonstrating the newest and best methods of soil preparation, planting operations and maintenance practices should be developed and offered at the Blake Estate. Such a course might be an extension of the week of demonstrations held in the summer of 1964 as a part of the LA 49 course, or it might be a new course offered jointly by the Department of Landscape Management at Davis and the Department of Landscape Architecture, Berkeley.

The resources of the site, together with such accessories as maps and records should be made available for student problems in other departments in the College of Environmental Design. In addition, various departments in related sciences should be permitted to conduct controlled experiments in approved areas of the estate.

The plant cover, which is of primary importance for instruction in identification, adaptability, cultural requirements, landscape characteristics as modified by light and distance, plant composition and ecological relationships, has additional

value for instruction in horticulture and landscape maintenance practices. Here, sprinkler irrigation observations including pressure checks, precipitation rates and coverage have instructional value. Maintenance of this plant cover should be raised to appropriate standards consistent with use. (See Maintenance Diagram).

The Soil - Soil survey, testing, and management techniques should be demonstrated here.

The land form, in its variety and site characteristics should be preserved because it offers unusual opportunities for instruction in both design and construction, such as walk, ramp and step gradient observations, field proposals, combinations and limits of each. Studies in outdoor space perception, measurement, notation, modification, mood and use have a broad potential at this site which should be fully exploited by all instructors.

Construction materials and techniques employed in the older portions of the garden should be augmented by the use of other and newer materials and methods wherever these may be appropriately employed in the design and installation of new facilities. An orderly display of samples of construction materials should be developed and maintained adjacent to the tool house and project area. Such a materials depot should be designed to permit mock-ups of unit materials, with panel backgrounds for the study of color and value contrasts in sun or shade, and as affected by artificial lighting. Measurements of light absorption or reflection could also be made here.

The visual qualities of the plant cover, land forms and construction materials have instructional value for other departments in the College of Environmental Design. Limited use of the garden should therefore be extended to these departments.

Base maps, plant lists, weather charts, and records of every aspect of the history, development, and maintenance of the garden should be kept in a systematic way as basic data for

instruction in both the artistic and scientific aspects of landscape architecture.

The existing greenhouse, head house, and proposed shade house are valuable and necessary facilities for teaching and maintenance operations.

Extended University Uses

The stated qualities and facilities of the Blake Garden indicate its value for summer courses in maintenance, workshops or professional short courses demonstrating new materials and methods, as well as extension or refresher courses attracting both professional designers and home owners. Courses at the Blake Garden should be planned and scheduled for 1965-66 and continued at appropriate intervals. The Department of Landscape Management at Davis and any or all of the departments of plant sciences on this campus should be invited to use the Blake Garden under clearly stated terms.

Graduate Study

Graduate students in landscape architecture and related fields should be informed of the exceptional opportunities for intensive studies or theses available at Blake Garden and should be encouraged to use this departmental resource. Blake House would be admirably suited as living quarters for senior or graduate students. A brochure which outlines the opportunities for advanced study and fellowships at the estate should be prepared and sent to all applicants.

Research

It is proposed that an environmental design research center be established at the Blake Estate. Funds would be needed primarily for the building of suitable quarters and facilities for study by a limited number of scholars and for development or redevelopment of portions of the grounds related to such facilities and studies. About twelve to fifteen persons could be accommodated for individual or group work without interfering with the Department's anticipated activities in regular teaching, research, and public service.

Those various levels of teaching and public service activities in the physical design of the environment which result

from the general research can be programmed at this location. Environmental design studies not dependent on this setting, or those needing more direct contact with the general library and other facilities or personnel, should be conducted on or nearer to the main campus.

The research center and related activities will enhance the Department's own work and be appropriate to the location, physical characteristics and existing development of the site.

Research projects using the Blake Garden as a laboratory should be encouraged. Major experimentation, however, should be permitted only after detailed plans for such research have been approved by the Blake Garden Committee.

For example, a project in sand lot grading, using a tractor such as an Agricat to place ten or more cubic yards of sand in order to study the topographical resultants might require the use of a sizeable area for a term or a year and would therefore be considered major experimentation. On the other hand, an experiment in recording the sound produced by water drop as modified by volume and fall might make use of natural seasonal flow in the streams, involving little or no equipment or dislocations. An extended study of this subject however, in which research is greatly needed, could become costly and disruptive.

Experiments in concrete casting for finish manipulation and the effects of water - cement ratios could be conducted in a small work area or become messy operations if not rigidly controlled.

Public Service

The garden should not be opened to the general public except at stated times or by appointment to groups with clearly related interests.

Special facilities, such as a test or demonstration garden, shadehouse, and an outdoor classroom or garden theatre should be designed to serve the home owner also. A continuing exhibit

of the principles of landscape design, materials, and methods is a form of public service which could and should be developed and maintained in a convenient section of the estate.

Blake House

Operation of the house by the Prytanean Society as a dormitory for graduate women students is a compatible use of this facility. At the termination of the lease in 1968 the house should be made available to senior or graduate students of landscape architecture and other departments of the College of Environmental Design. Since the house is not large enough to be an economic operation, additional small dormitory units should be located in the area east of the house above the grotto. During the summer months the house could be used as a conference center.

Conclusion

The Blake Estate has great value to the university community and to the neighborhood simply as open space possessing historic and aesthetic qualities which should be preserved. Although it now serves the Department of Landscape Architecture mainly as a teaching facility, its use is limited by its residential character and the crowded and overgrown condition of the plantations. Conversion of the property to serve the stated purposes of teaching, research, and public service while requiring time and a budget for both capital expenditures and augmented maintenance, will give the Department of Landscape Architecture an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in developing interrelationships among the environmental arts and sciences. By extending the use of the estate to other departments in both the College of Agriculture and the College of Environmental Design under approved terms, the cost of both development and maintenance can be justified. The many and varied uses proposed can be accommodated at the Blake Estate because of its natural attributes. Judicious planning and programming are essential to a realization of the full potential of this property.

Location Diagram

BERKELEY CAMPUS PROPERTIES IN THE EAST BAY, 1962

1972 Blake House. The main entrance and reflecting pool.

1924 Blake House. During landscaping.

1924 Blake Garden. From the main entrance.

BLAKE HOUSE, the residence of the President of the University of California, and Blake Garden were given to the University by Mr. and Mrs. Anson Stiles Blake, both of whom were alumni.

The Blake family had a long association with the University. Mr. Blake's grandfather, Anson Gale Stiles, for whom Stiles Hall, the Berkeley Campus YMCA, was named, had been a trustee of the College of California, which later became the University of California. Mr. Blake himself was active in Stiles Hall as a student and served as Chairman of its Advisory Board from 1902 to 1952. Mr. Blake was a man who found time to pursue, in addition to his family quarry business in Richmond, his work in California history as well as share in his wife's interest in the garden. He and Mrs. Blake collected Asian and European art objects and antiques. Many of these are in the house today.

Mrs. Blake was an enthusiastic horticulturist and assembled in the ten-acre garden some 2500 different species of plants from all over the world. Her sister, Miss Mabel Symmes, who lived with the Blakes, studied landscape architecture at Berkeley and was largely responsible for the planning of the formal gardens. From the beginning, individual faculty members and their students used the garden. After the Blakes deeded the house to the University of California, the garden was, and still is, maintained and used by the Department of Landscape Architecture as a teaching laboratory.

In 1967 the Regents of the University decided that Blake House should be restored and used as the President's house. Many of the furnishings have been dispersed to the libraries, art departments and Chancellors' houses of the nine campuses. Today the furnishings in the house are part Blake bequests, part purchases made by the University in 1968, and part the property of the current president.

THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE AND BLAKE GARDEN

KENSINGTON, CALIFORNIA

Below are a few highlights of the history of Blake House:

1922-24 Planning and building of the house.

Architect: Walter Bliss

1957 Mr. and Mrs. Blake deed their house and garden to the University of California, "reserving unto themselves and the survivor of them the right to occupy the property for life."

1959 Death of Mr. Blake

1962 Death of Mrs. Blake

1962-64 The House serves as a residence for women graduate students.

1969 The restored and modernized Blake House becomes the President's House.

Architect: Ronald Brocchini

Interior designer: Anthony Hail

1972 Blake House. View from the west.

GERALDINE KNIGHT SCOTT
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

1130 STERLING AVENUE · BERKELEY 8 CALIFORNIA · THORNWALL 3-8722

March 9, 1972

Professor Donald Appleyard, Chairman
Department of Landscape Architecture
Room 202, Wurster Hall
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Professor Appleyard:

I am writing to you about a matter of grave injustice that concerns the Department of Landscape Architecture not only in its relations with the University of which it is a part but also in its relations with the profession of landscape architecture.

Recently when I visited Blake Garden I was given a copy of a new leaflet entitled The President's House and Blake Garden. Upon reading this publication, I found that it contained inaccurate statements about the garden and the Department of Landscape Architecture. I also failed to find my name mentioned as landscape architect in charge of planning and directing the remodeling of the garden, including areas so closely related to Blake House as to be virtually parts of it.

Not knowing precisely who prepared this leaflet, I am presenting my grievances to you as chairman of the University department that was given, by deed, the primary use of the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Anson Blake for instruction and research. I have already learned that Professor Russell Beatty, the faculty member who is currently in charge of the garden, was unaware of the publication of the leaflet and thus was not consulted about it. From my conversation with him I judge that you, too, knew nothing about the preparation of the leaflet.

I believe that you will agree that common courtesy required the submission of copy for an informational publication about the Blake Estate to the department mentioned in the deed of gift as having preferential use of the property.

The leaflet gives the impression that Miss Mabel Symmes, sister of Mrs. Anson Blake, "was largely responsible for the planning of the formal gardens," that few if any changes in the original scheme have been made, and that the Department of Landscape Architecture has merely maintained the grounds and used them "as a teaching laboratory" since 1957, when the property was deeded to the Regents. As you know, and as many garden clubs and civic organizations know, except for the reflecting pool and areas immediately in front of Blake House, the garden has been extensively altered and improved in recent years and now bears little resemblance to anything Miss Symmes and the Blakes knew in their time. All changes have been planned and carried out under the direction of the Department of Landscape Architecture and its representatives, particularly myself in the years 1962 to 1968. From 1958 to 1961 Mai Arbega had the property surveyed, inventoried the plants, and made a photographic record of the entire site.

Upon the death of the Blakes, when the department began making studies for long-term replanning of the garden, there were no open spaces lending themselves to public use. The garden was a horticultural jungle, so overgrown and shady that

many shrubs and trees were distorted in their development, so dense that there were no views from one part of the garden to another and few vistas of the bay. In preparing my report entitled A Long-Range Development Plan for the Blake Estate, which the Department of Landscape Architecture issued in November, 1964, I proposed particularly to create several areas for public use and enjoyment, to improve the circulation of the garden, and to provide easier access and necessary parking areas. Mainly in accordance with proposals embodied in that report, Blake Garden has been converted from a horticultural preserve serving only limited purposes to a quasi-public establishment exemplifying the contributions that the profession of landscape architecture can make toward increasing the usefulness of a varied and interesting site. Specifically, these spaces have been added: the large lawn near the entrance court, the terrace on the west side of the house and an open area below it, several vista points and overlooks, and various study areas. Creating these new areas in Blake Garden was necessarily exceedingly difficult because many fine trees and shrubs had either to be preserved or transplanted.

As evidence that the garden now is suitable for uses that would formerly have been impossible, I cite two commencements held there by the College of Agriculture, plans of the College of Environmental Design to hold its next post-commencement party there, and many picnics and outdoor parties that various organizations have scheduled on the grounds in recent years.

I think that any member of the profession of landscape architecture who considers the way in which Blake Garden has been enhanced by the application of sound principles of landscape design will conclude that the profession has been slighted by omission of the name of the landscape architect who effected the above-mentioned changes.

At a time when the University is charged with discrimination against women, I think it is also unfortunate that the institution denies, or appears to deny, recognition to a woman landscape architect who is one of its own graduates.

The writer of the leaflet to which I refer may say that the "few highlights" presented pertain only to Blake House and that that is why only the names of the architect and interior designer have been listed, but I cannot accept such an explanation because the title of the leaflet is The President's House and Blake Garden and some information about the garden, though misleading, has been included. Further, as I pointed out at the beginning of this letter, some of the additions to the garden, such as the terraces off the house, are almost integral with the building. Any fair-minded architectural magazine publishing an article on the house would give the name of the landscape architect as well as that of the architect.

If the University believes in giving proper credit to the Department of Landscape Architecture, the profession of landscape architecture, and to me as a member of the profession and as a loyal alumna, I think it can do no less than withdraw all copies of the present leaflet and issue a new one with a text that adequately describes the replanning and redevelopment of Blake Garden and lists my name as landscape architect.

This should be done, moreover, as soon as possible because the San Francisco-East Bay City Panhellenic, for instance, will hold a fashion show and box luncheon at the Blake Garden on May 17 and should not receive copies of the present leaflet. It would indeed be ironic if a leaflet that discriminates against a woman landscape architect with thirty years of professional practice should be distributed at an event held for the purpose of raising money for scholarships, one of which will go to a woman student working for a degree in landscape architecture.

I am sending copies of this letter to the persons listed below because you yourself were not associated with the Department of Landscape Architecture during much of the redevelopment period at the Blake Garden and may not know the full history of the Blake Estate, whereas most of them do. I trust that you and all of them will agree that justice must be done.

Sincerely,

Geraldine K. Scott
Geraldine Knight Scott

cc: Dr. William L. C. Wheaton, Dean
College of Environmental Design

Professor Garrett Eckbo
Department of Landscape Architecture

Professor Russell Beatty
Department of Landscape Architecture

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Blake Garden

LINDA HAYMAKER

Blake Garden, on Rincon Road in Kensington, California, is the property of the University of California, Berkeley, and is open free to the public between eight and four-thirty on weekdays.

It is not surprising that the eleven-acre estate known today as Blake Garden is a part of the University of California at Berkeley. Its owners, Anson Stiles Blake and Anita Day Symmes Blake, were closely involved with the university, following in the footsteps of their families.

Both families had become well established in the San Francisco Bay Area before the turn of the century. Mrs Blake's family had prospered from her grandfather's electrical fixture business in San Francisco. In the East Bay, Mr Blake's family had succeeded in the businesses of real estate and street paving. Anson's grandfather, Anson Gale Stiles, was affiliated with the university in its early days and was a member of the board of trustees of the College of California. (Stiles Hall at U.C. Berkeley was built with Blake family funds and named in honor of Anson Stiles in 1891.) At the time of their marriage in 1894, Anson and Anita's relatives were described as "prominently known in society, mercantile and literary circles and . . . representative pioneer families."

In 1895 the Anson Blakes had moved to property in Berkeley near the western border of Strawberry Creek, where they built a residence adjacent to properties belonging to his mother and brother, with connecting gardens. They lived here for almost thirty years, until they had to surrender the land to the university to make way for the Memorial Stadium. In 1922 they decided to move onto land holdings in Kensington, and construction of the house and garden began.

At that time the surrounding hills were covered with grasses and chaparral. The Blake property had fine outcroppings of Lawsonite rock, a generously rolling terrain, and a beautiful view of the bay below. The area seemed so remote from town (at four miles out it was beyond street car lines) that the Blakes called their new home *La Casa Adelante*, Spanish for "over there" or "far away."

Blake landholdings there originally included some forty-five acres divided into four pieces, one for each of the Blake children. Anson and Edwin built houses on their adjoining parcels; the other two were not built upon and were eventually subdivided. Edwin's residence, just north of Anson's, is now a Carmelite monastery.

Early Developments

The Blake property slopes downhill in a southwesterly direction, and the wind and fog coming up off the bay from the Golden Gate can make the site occasionally cool and damp. A long Spanish-style house designed by Walter Bliss was constructed on the top third of the parcel, providing both a grand view and an effective windbreak. The eastern garden, above the house, is sheltered and flat, and below are rugged, breezy slopes with grades of up to fifty percent.

The two people most responsible for planting Blake Garden and for its upkeep during the first forty years were Anita Blake

Blake Garden soon after construction of the house. Edwin Blake's property is on the lower left, Anson Blake's on the upper right.

and her sister Mabel Symmes. Before the house was completed, thick bands of trees were planted for windbreaks—hoheria, laurel, coast redwood, Canary Island pine, acacia, and eucalyptus. These soon provided leeward protection for more delicate plants. Miss Symmes, a landscape architecture student at the University of California, Berkeley, designed a graded path system that transformed the easily eroded grassland into a series of defined, accessible sections that could be more fully used and cultivated: the formal garden, redwood canyon, spring walk, rose garden, oak ridge, bog, and conifer hill. By preserving open spaces with long views, contrasted with dense shrubbery

and masses of trees, Miss Symmes retained much of the expansive feel of the site without sacrificing comfort.

Much of the original garden design reflected a desire to enhance the natural features of the site. The formal grotto and reflecting pool diverted hillside spring and rain water into a major focal point. Two streams draining the property were stabilized with vegetation: one, shady and moist, was planted with rhododendrons, redwood, dogwood, maples, and woodland understory; the other sprouted sun-loving oak, buckeye, and mayten. Rock present on the site was used for garden walls, steps, an open roadside drain, path and pool edging, and dry

The reflecting pool and grotto in 1924.

Mrs Anson Blake in the garden.

Blake house.

walls. Several large blue-gray outcroppings of Lawsonite remain as striking features west of the house.

The soil at Blake Garden is generally shallow and heavy. Mrs Blake found "every kind of soil, serpentine in some places, gravel in another, and adobe packed hard by the pasturing of the cattle." The two women kept earth amendment to a minimum and chose plants adapted to particular garden microclimates. Although both seem to have been fond of exotic plants, and particularly flowering herbaceous plants, they reserved only certain areas for intensive cultivation—the formal garden and the rose garden—while the redwood canyon, conifer hill, bog,

and Australian hollow were designed with plants that would thrive with little care. Working within the limitations imposed by soil quality, the two sisters brought to these areas a diverse and distinct character that is still apparent.

Many unusual and untried plants, especially from other Mediterranean climates, were introduced to California in Blake Garden. In the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s the garden developed into an impressive plant collection. About 2,500 species and cultivated varieties were obtained from sources throughout the world, including many ferns, vines, South African bulbs, and unusual conifers. Mrs Blake and her sister

Plan of Blake Garden, 1957.

exchanged seeds with horticulturists in the United States and in Europe, and their herbarium collections made of plants in the garden have been distributed to eleven herbaria on the two continents.

The sisters appreciated Asian art, and many

pieces of fine glazed statuary, tiles, and old ornamental urns were prominently placed. Many of them can be seen in the formal garden today.

The interest Anita and Mabel took in their garden is still remembered. It is said that one

of Mrs Blake's friends, following a strict order from Anita to bring back some *Cyclamen neapolitanum* bulbs from her trip to Europe, passed them through customs in the toe of her slipper. Miss Symmes reportedly supervised every cut during the annual pruning of her roses. And Mrs Blake, overseeing the move of wagonloads of plants from the Berkeley garden to the garden in Kensington, would not allow a tree, shrub, or herbaceous plant to be either removed or planted without her approval. These stories suggest the great love these women had for their plants. Their devotion to the garden is still felt by visitors.

University Stewardship Begins

When Anita Blake died in 1962, the house and garden passed to the university's Landscape Architecture Department. Although the land had been deeded to the university in 1957, and the first university employee for the garden, Walter Vodden, was hired that year, it was not until both Blakes died that operation of the estate could be modified. The five-year transition from the Blake-run operation with Walter on hand proved an invaluable link between the old and the new and set the stage for thoughtful renovation. Through the two sisters Walter learned about the vast plant collection in the garden and discussed its design schemes and maintenance requirements.

The position of garden director also was established in 1957. The first two directors reviewed the garden. Mai Arbegast surveyed, mapped, photographed, and cataloged the plants and terrain. Bob Raabe introduced technological improvements such as weather stations and soil and plant treatments and brought in new cultivars of roses, chrysanthemums, and other plants. But it was under Geraldine Knight Scott that consultation turned to management, and a work plan for developing the garden evolved. Responding to a request of Department Chairman Frances Violich in 1963, Mrs Scott began an intensive compilation of Blake Garden information that culminated a year later in *A Long-Range Development Plan for the Blake Estate*. This plan included

a history of the garden, photographs, maps, maintenance diagrams, site development proposals, and long-range goals.

Mrs Scott's proposal noted the conflict between preserving the garden for recreation and developing it to meet emerging urban needs. It examined the garden as it was and identified areas of low, medium, and high maintenance. It called for simplification of paths and plantings and opening up of overgrown sections. The report also compiled an immense amount of previously hard-to-find information into one readable, well-illustrated volume, and it included hypothetical plans for garden development to 1980. One plan kept the formal garden and redwood canyon intact but extensively developed the rest of the estate into an art and garden center, with studio buildings, outdoor classroom theater, picnic areas, project and test sites, student dormitories, and a small lake. The other envisioned a center for advanced study in environmental design, with facilities along the eastern and southern portions of the garden and enhanced circulation and plantings in the formal garden, redwood canyon, and the west. Budget restrictions prevented full implementation of either plan, but circulation and access were much improved in 1967-68, following Mrs Scott's design.

Aside from her contributions to theory, research, and design, Mrs Scott was the first director to spend considerable time in the field with Blake Garden staff. In 1965 and 1966 she managed programs of tree removal, road renovation, and extensive pruning, planting, and weed eradication. It was under her guidance that the southern portion of the garden was redesigned to include a large, open lawn with a classroom seating area, and service areas for equipment. She also oversaw much-needed structural delineation of the formal garden and simplification of the old rose garden.

From 1962 to 1964 the Blake house served as a residence for women graduate students, but the venture was financially unsuccessful. In 1967 Charles Hitch was elected president of the university, and the regents decided to modernize and restore the house for use as the president's residence. Geraldine Scott, no longer garden director, was rehired by the

The formal garden today. Photograph by the author.

university to improve the entrance and access to the house. In front, she redesigned the residential forecourt and entrance gate; in back she designed a lower lawn and conferred with architect Ronald Brocchini over the detailing of the patio and stairway. In 1969 the Blake house remodeling was completed and the president and his family moved in.

As director from 1967 to 1973 Russell Beatty supervised students in the design and construction of several garden features, including an arbor, stream crossing, and overlook area. He also sponsored the children's adventure garden with Chevron Chemical Company.

The 1970s saw a shift in responsibility for garden design and maintenance due to both funding shortages and a growing popular interest in horticulture. The position of garden director was discontinued and staff members became more directly involved in selection and propagation of plants. The freeze of early December 1972 and the drought of 1975-77 altered both choice of plants and maintenance, while increased environmental awareness reduced the use of chemicals to a minimum. The work of local native plant experts such as Wayne Roderick and James Roof, and the horticultural designs of Lester Hawkins, Marshall Olbrich, Roger Warner, and David Bigham influenced subsequent planting at Blake Garden. Many California natives, along with South African and Australian plants, were introduced or reintroduced into the west section, particu-

larly drought-tolerant herbaceous plants. Later, in the early 1980s, renovation of the formal garden was influenced by growing interest in the English-style perennial border and owed much to the wide selection of plants available at Western Hills Nursery in Occidental.

The Garden Today

The residence at Blake Garden today is not open to the public; it is independently staffed and reserved for functions of the university president. The garden is used for education, research, and plant display. Faculty and students of landscape architecture, horticulture, and botany, as well as the gardening public, are fortunate to have this valuable resource nearby.

Many of the plantings of the 1920s and 1930s are now senescent, and underused and neglected areas of the garden need development. Large trees continue to decline and require phased removal and replacement, while shrubs and herbaceous plantings need constant refinement as more is learned about their performance in different locations on the site. In this process, the use of a greater range of plants, improved horticultural practices, and a systematic process of design will be important factors in accommodating future research and development needs while retaining the best features of the original design. ♣

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