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## Introduction

Historic preservation is about preserving historic buildings. Note that I did not say "older" buildings, but "historic." Just because a building is old does not mean that it is historic. Historic means that the building has some significance in the historic sense. It has to represent an historic person, an historic event, or be a unique example of a particular architectural style.

To determine if a building is historic, an historical architect is hired to evaluate the building. An historical architect is defined as "a licensed architect who specializes in the identification, research, treatment, and management of historic structures, sites, and landscapes."

To determine if a building is historic, a historical architect is hired to research the history of the building and its former owners and/or occupants, determine if any alternations have been made over the years, review the condition of the building and determine the significance of the building based on the main historical categories.

In the State of California there are three main criteria for determining historical significance:

Criterion 1 - Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage?

Criterion 2 - Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past?

Criterion 3 - Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values

The California Office of Historic Preservation, which is part of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, has set up a standard process for historic evaluation. For recording the evaluation, the Office of Historic Preservation uses the form DPR 523.

A large percentage of historical evaluations come from development projects submitted to a city. A lot of cities have ordinances where changes to older buildings, even including demolition, have to be reviewed by the planning department. This process usually includes an historical evaluation if a building is older than a specific number of years, is on a historic building register, or some other criteria.

The developer or the building owner hires an historical architect, who then performs the evaluation, which is recorded on the DPR 523 form, which is then submitted to the city. The DPR 523 becomes part of the project package and is considered a public document. Development project are usually shown on a city website, which usually includes the DPR 523, where anyone can download it.

As someone who is interested in local history and local historic preservation, I have been collecting DPR 523's for over 20 years. As I've read the DPR 523's, I've noticed how much good history is contained in them. The historical architects do a lot of research on the persons and families related to each building. This research is then turned into a few paragraphs or even a few pages documenting these persons/families. These family histories are locked away in these state forms and are rarely read by people interested in local history, mostly due to the fact that a lot of people do not know that these DPR 523s exist.

The purpose of this document is to extract these histories from a number of DPR 523's from the City of Fremont and put them into one easy to find and ready document. The text is pulled directly from the DPR 523's with minimal edits. Information about the buildings is not included, only the historical information about the owners / occupants of the buildings.

The original authors / historical architectural firms are documented in each entry. The Table of Contents list the address of the building discussed and the historical architect or firm that did the work. It also lists the family names of those documented.

The Washington Township Museum of Local History has been a resource for historical architects researching Washington Township (Fremont, Newark, & Union City) and is referenced in a number of these histories. One of the main purposes of the Museum is to archive local history and it is nice to see it being used by historical architects.

Timothy Swenson  
*Washington Township Museum of Local History*

# 1. 43341 Mission Blvd - Page & Turnbull

## Sunderer Family, Owners and Occupants, 1895-1969

As previously described, the subject building was originally constructed as the residence and boot shop of Joseph Sunderer, an early settler and the first shoemaker of Mission San Jose. Joseph was born in Baden-Baden, Germany in 1843 and arrived in Mission San Jose in 1867.<sup>21</sup> The following year, he opened a shoemaking shop in the settlement, supplying custom-made shoes, boots, and slippers to the Spanish leaders, prominent families, and pioneer settlers of the area. In 1872, the Sunderers rented a house on Vallejo Street (now Mission Boulevard), which they later purchased in 1877. In 1884, the house was destroyed by a fire that swept down the street. During the fire, Joseph's quick thinking reportedly saved the old Mission building from destruction when he suggested using wine from a local vintner to put the fire out.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, he served as the first fire chief of the town's fire department. The Sunderers built a new house and boot shop on the same site as their first home but this, too, was destroyed by a second fire in 1894. The existing building at 43341 Mission Boulevard was the family's third house and was completed in 1895 after the fire of 1894.

Joseph was a leading figure in the centennial celebrations for the founding of the Mission in 1897, raising funds for the celebration. He was also credited with bringing the Dominican Sisters to Mission San Jose to establish a convent there in 1892.

In addition to his work as a cobbler, over the course of his life he served as an insurance and Wells Fargo agent, town constable, pound master, road overseer, school trustee, and secretary of the Ancient Order of United Workers. Joseph died in 1933 at the age of 90. A 1985 walking tour guide of the historic Mission San Jose district notes that a lane passing by the property was "Sunderer's Lane, named for the early resident. It was in this area that the street would be roped off as far as the mission itself for bull and bear fights" in the rancho years.

The Sunderers had four children, a son named August and three daughters, Abbie, Rose, and Josephine. All four grew up at the family house on present-day Mission Boulevard. Abbie was born in Germany in 1863 and traveled to Mission San Jose in 1868 to reunite with her father, who had arrived one year earlier.<sup>30</sup> She appears to have lived in Mission San Jose for her entire life and worked as a housekeeper. She died in 1949 at the age of 86.<sup>31</sup> August was born in 1874 and became an architect, working for a number of years for the firm that designed Stanford University.<sup>32</sup> He also designed many private and public buildings in Washington Township, including the I.D.E.S. hall, and served as a draughtsman for the Sanborn Map Company's fire insurance maps of the town, as well as Newark's Carter Bros. railroad cars. August also founded Mission San Jose's first band. August died in 1916 at the age of 42.

Rose was born in 1879 and graduated from San Jose State College (then known as San Jose Normal School). She taught at Mission Grammar School from 1902 to 1904 and then worked as a teacher in Richmond before returning to Mission San Jose in 1946. She was also the organist and choir director of St. Joseph's Church. After her return to Mission San Jose, Rose lived at the family house on Mission Boulevard with her husband, retired army engineer and World War I veteran Roscoe Rex Whiteside. Roscoe died in 1961. Rose followed him five years later, dying in 1966 at the age of 87. At the time, she was the oldest native-born resident of Mission San Jose.<sup>37</sup> After Rose's death, the property



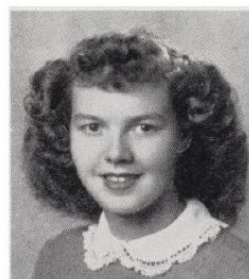
*Left Image: Joseph and Rosa Sunderer in front of the family's boot shop and residence.  
Right Image: Joseph and Rosa Sunderer in boot shop in the front room of their house.*



*Sunderer family in 1880. Left to right: Rosa, August, Josephine, Abbie, Rose, Joseph.*

### **Robert and Pauline McIvor, Owners, 1969-2017**

Robert and Pauline McIvor became the owners of the subject property in 1969 and continued to own the property until Robert's death in 2017. Robert McIvor was born in Mission San Jose in 1930, one of four children of Burton and Marie McIvor. Robert graduated from Washington High School in 1948 and married fellow Washington High School graduate, Pauline Nikas. After completing high school, Robert began working at his father's hardware store, McIvor Hardware. The business had originally been founded by his father in 1922 as a blacksmithing and horseshoeing business. In the 1940s, Burton expanded the business and began selling washing machines. Recognizing the demand for tools and plumbing equipment to fix the machines, Burton transitioned his business into a traditional hardware store. Over time, the business was located at three different addresses in Mission San Jose, the last at 43350 Ellsworth Street, directly behind the subject property. After Burton's death, Robert ran the family business with his wife until 2008. The couple's daughter, Barbara, and her husband continued to manage the business until shortly after Robert's death in 2017. McIvor's Hardware closed one year later after 96 years in business.



*Robert & Pauline McIvor - 1948  
high school yearbook*

## **2. 42425 Mission Blvd - William Kostra - Basin Research Associates.**

### **George O. Darrow and subsequent owners through 1950**

In November and December 1919 a single man named George Oliver Darrow purchased lots 13 and 14 of the Palmdale Company lands. The two lots totaled thirty-five acres in area, faced in the Niles-Mission San Jose Road (today's Mission Boulevard) and were bounded on the southwest and southeast by a creek. Today's property at 42425 Mission Boulevard occupies a small portion - about 4.7 acres of the thirty-five acres that Darrow purchased in 1919.

Darrow was born in 1884 in Minnesota, to German parents, and came to California at an unknown date. During the 1910's, before buying this land, he first owned a bakery and ice cream shop at nearby Niles, and subsequently the Old Mission Inn auto park, restaurant, pool hall, and liquor establishment, in Mission San Jose. His World War I draft card states that he owned a cafe and grill at the time of registration. Upon purchasing the two Palmdale Company lots he changed occupation by establishing a winery on that property. He also built two homes, and presumably the barns, that now stand at 42425 Mission Boulevard. According to local resident Robert McIvor (interviewed in 1999), the grapes were grown on Darrow's property and the barns were used as the winery. How Darrow was able to operate a winery during Prohibition is unknown. He still operated the winery in 1930, the year he and his wife Edna sold the property, according to the census of that year. According to Robert McIvor, they then moved the winery business to another part of town.

Which of the two houses on the property was built first is unknown. It may be that the main house was built first, and the smaller house was built later for unknown purposes. It could also be that the smaller house was built first, when Darrow was still single, and that he built the larger house later in the 1920's, after he was married and as income from the winery came in. At any rate, the bungalow form and details of the main house are quite consistent with that of houses that were built in the 1920's. When he was interviewed in 1999, Robert McIvor, the owner of McIvor Hardware store and a life-long resident of Mission San Jose, and whose father owned a blacksmith shop in the town during the early 20th century, seemed to know that Darrow had built both houses, along with the details of Darrow's occupations.

Darrow sold the property in 1930 to Jefferson and Hattie Mann, about whom nothing is known. The owners subsequent to the Manns were Jack and Marian Prouty. The Proutys grew cauliflower and fava beans on the property and in the late 1940's Jack Prouty was superintendent of schools for nearby Irvington.

### **Judge Edward A. Quaresma**

In 1950 the Proutys sold the property to Edward A. and Emma Quaresma. By this time the property surrounding the two houses and the barns had been reduced to about five acres (roughly the same as in 1999). The Quaresma family lived in the larger of the two residences while the smaller residence was occupied by a nanny and later, as they became older, the Quaresmas' sons.

Edward Quaresma was born in 1907 in San Luis Obispo County. His parents were Portuguese-speaking immigrants from the Azores who owned their own farm. He received his B.S. and Bachelor of Law degrees from Loyola University in Los Angeles and was admitted to the bar in 1931. He opened his own law office then, reportedly accepting some payment in barter due to the Depression. Soon he held the posts of Assistant District Attorney for San Luis Obispo County and City Attorney for Arroyo Grande.

In 1938 Quaresma moved his residency and law practice to Irvington, which was part of today's city of Fremont. At the time he was only one of two practicing attorneys in all of Washington Township, which comprised today's cities of Fremont, Union City and Newark. In 1939 he married Emma Savio, whose parents lived in Centerville. During World War II, due to his skill in Portuguese, he joined the U.S. Government Board of Economic Warfare as assistant to the Special Representative to Brazil, at the U.S. Embassy in Rio de Janeiro.

After the war he returned to Washington Township, reopened his law practice in Niles, and continued this practice until 1954. He also served as judge for nineteen years, beginning with his election as Washington Township's Justice of the Peace in late 1946. When the local court was upgraded to become a Municipal Court in 1959, he became the Municipal Judge for Fremont, Newark and Union City, and remained so until his retirement as judge in 1966. He then resumed private practice as a probate lawyer in Fremont.

Quaresma stated that during his early years as a judge the court calendar was not very busy; there simply wasn't much crime in the township's small towns. That change after Fremont incorporated in 1956, the areas between the town suburbanized, and the population increased. His service as a judge only became full-time once he became Municipal Judge in 1959.

Quaresma held many other posts and participated in many causes upon his return to Washington Township after the war. During 1948-1954 he was a trustee of the Washington Union High School district and was the chairman of its board for a year. He also was a founder of the Washington Township Hospital District. At unknown dates he organized Chambers of Commerce in Alvarado (part of today's Union City), Newark, Irvington, Mission San Jose, and Niles, and after the City of Fremont formed in 1956, he incorporated and became the president of its Chamber of Commerce. He served as president of the Fremont Rotary Club (1950's or 1960's), Eagles, and Washington Township Men's Club, and as a director of the local Red Cross, March of Dimes, and Girl Scouts. He also led the local Red Cross and cerebral palsy drives "several times." In 1964 he became the founding director and first president of the Bank of Fremont, and one article called him a "guiding light" in its formation ("A Dedicated Servant", News-Register, February 1, 1966, p. 13). He remained a director of this bank until his death in 1985. Finally, he served on the advisory board of California State University, Hayward (1970-1971).

Many of these activities occurred during Quaresma's residency at 42425 Washington Boulevard (i.e. beginning in 1950). These include sixteen of his years of service as a judge, several years at least of his private practice, his founding of the Fremont Chamber of Commerce, four years of his service on the Board of the Washington Union High School District, and his founding presidency of the Bank of Fremont (beginning in 1964). It is likely that much of his work for the Red Cross, the Rotary Club and other organizations also occurred while Quaresma resided at this house.

No profiles of Quaresma have been published in history books about Fremont. Instead, several retrospectives on his career were published in local newspapers during his lifetime, both before and after he retired as a judge. They were uniformly glowing, but lack the distance in time that is preferable for a historical evaluation of a property such as this one. One article, "A Dedicated Servant" (News-Register, February 1, 1966), written when his retirement was announced, called him one of the area's "finest and most dedicated public servants" and said he was "held in the highest esteem by practicing attorneys for his fair and impartial judgments." It added "even more than that, he has given freely of his time and talent to community activities."

### **3. 42232 Mission Blvd - William Kostra**

#### **Before the Dias family's ownership**

The early history of this property has been traced from Mexican times to 1902, before any of the buildings here were built. According to Basin Research Associates historians writing in 2001, this property was part of a huge, and late (1846) Mexican grant to Andreas Pico and Juan Baptista Alvarado. The legality of this grant was disputed, and only in 1867 was the title settled; and then title to parcels were granted by the government to many parties. Florence and Edward Palmer of Oakland held this and adjacent property in early 1882, when they subdivided their land and sold a parcel of sixteen acres, including the subject property, to Joao Antoine Amoral.

During at least 1893-1902, and probably later as well, the owner of these ten acres was John D. F. Mathews, a farmer (in 1894) and a vineyardist (in 1907) from the Azores. He and his wife Mary lived in Mission San Jose during these years, and while it would seem likely they lived on this land, that is not known. He may have built the oldest building on this property, namely, the board. According to Edward Dias, this was originally a horse board, and the construction date "1911" was engraved on its concrete foundation. There was once an old farm house on the property located "behind" today's garage, one that was replaced by the 1949-1951 house and that no longer stands. It also may have dated to Mathews' time of ownership.

#### **The Dias Family**

By 1917, the owners of this land were Antonio R. Dias, a farmer, and his wife Mario, both Portuguese immigrants who lived in Milpitas before living here. They may have erected the all-steel windmill that is on the property, and which according to Edward Dias is perhaps eighty years old. It originally delivered water to a tank house that was replaced in the 1960's by today's concrete cistern. Two other, very minor buildings, may also date from early years. These are the storage shed next to the garage and the wood storage shed, each of which existed as long as Edward Dias can remember.

Antonio and Maria's son Manuel (1897-1990), and his wife Mary Rodrigues (born 1918), also farmed the property. They had nearly 100 apricot trees near the rear of the property, and the couple also raised peas. Mary kept about 700 chickens in the two poultry houses, which were built in the 1950's and early-to-mid-1960's, respectively. The 1948 International Harvester tractor was owned by Edward Dias' brother. He leased land elsewhere in Fremont and used the tractor to grow vetch for cattle feed.

Besides farming, Manuel also worked in the building trades. He was listed as a carpenter in the 1940 census and before the end of the decade he began building houses on his own. He only had a sixth-grade education, and so never received a contractor's license, which explains why he did not advertise as a building in the classifieds section of the phone book. Nevertheless, he built many homes for others in the Fremont area, put on the roofs of houses that other contractors built, performed major remodeling, and built some barns. He did most of this work during the 1950s and 1960's, mainly during the summer months. Thus, the Dias family had a dual economy of farming and building.

Manuel Dias' own house of 1949-1951, on the subject property, was not the first house that he built. but it was the first that he built using pumice block. Dias was a proponent of such bricks, which were made by Superior Blocks of San Jose, but "they didn't catch on," according to Edward Dias. During construction Mary Dias mixed the mortar while Manuel laid the bricks; a family friend, Edward Azevedo, helped with construction. According to the Basin Research Associates historians,

"they had someone else build the roof." Edward Dias states that the form that made the clay roof tiles was in today's Union City. However, these tiles were very similar to roof tiles on a house in Niles that were made by the Interlocking Roof Tile Company, owned by Gene Passagno and located on Niles Road in Niles during 1950-1954. Many houses in Fremont had roof tiles of this kind.

Edward Dias has provided addresses for three other houses his father built; the Boitano house at 44175 Mission Boulevard (built in 1957-1958), 7000 Mill Creek Road (1960-1961), and a house for Dr. Gearheart at 3500 Mill Creek Road (early 1960's). The Gearheart house may have been a major addition by Dian instead of an all-new house, and is said to have adobe bricks over a wood frame.

#### **4. 34615 Fremont blvd - Michael Corbett**

##### **Dr. James M. Selfridge**

James Mairs Selfridge, the first owner of this site, was a pioneer township physician who became a well-known Oakland doctor. The son of a blacksmith turned farmer, he was born in 1924 in New York, where he received his initial medical training. He first came to California in 1952, briefly residing at Mission San Jose. In 1855, he went back East to marry and finish his education. He returned to California with his wife and child in 1857, bought property in Alviso and built a house. In 1866 he moved to Oakland; his death there in 1906, at the age of 81, was widely noted (Oakland Tribune 1906a-c).

Dr. Selfridge was a convert to homeopathy - "a system of alternative medicine created in 1796 by Samuel Hahnemann, based on his doctrine of like cures like, according to which a substance that causes the symptoms of a disease in healthy people will cure similar symptoms in sick people... Homeopathy is a pseudoscience and its remedies have been found to be no more effective than placebos." (wikipedia.com). Selfridge moved to Oakland to further his new medical beliefs. "He helped to organize the State Medical Society for Homeopathic practitioners and in 1874 became a charter member of the later Pacific Homeopathic Medical Society of California and cooperated in 1878 in securing the coalition of the two bodies into the California State Homeopathic Medical Society, of which he has been twice President, and of the Oakland Homeopathic Hospital and Dispensary Association, which institution is now known as the Fabiola Hospital, of which he was the first surgeon." (Lewis 1892) In Oakland and Berkeley, Selfridge also served as a lecturer on anatomy and physiology at the College of California and as attending physician to the State Asylum for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind.

Selfridge's association with Alviso dates to his return to Washington Township in 1857, the year after the school district was formed. He settled "near Centerville, and soon built up a good practice, He there erected a home, where five children were born to him, one of whom died in infancy." (Lewis 1892) He "was the first physician to take up a regular practice in the township. His practice was large, and he was one of the familiar features of the time as he rode about the country in his sulky, visiting the sick." (Country Club 1955) He served a term as county coroner, 1858 to 1860. In the latter year, the household consisted of Selfridge ("physician"), his wife, their two children, a laborer, and a young woman. The house sat on a 25-acre parcel partitioned from the corner of a 100-acre tract. Livestock consisted of four horses, three milk cows, and one pug. The sole product was butter. It seems to have been less a working farm than a country residence for a working physician. (U.S. Census 1860-1900; Allardt 1874; Oakland Tribune 1876; Thompson & West 1878)

## **John Lowrie**

John Lowrie, the new owner of the Selfridge property, was a prominent farmer based in the Centerville-Alviso area. He owned hundreds of acres in Washington Township and dealt regularly in real estate. In one five-year period in the 1870s, he bought and sold several large tracks around Alviso and Centerville, ranging in size from 100 acres to 225 acres. In this context his purchase of the 20-acre Selfridge property was a negligible transaction. It is now known why he purchased the parcel or to what use he put it. It did not directly adjoin any of his other tracks, though it was near his home. It is not known if the Selfridge house still stood or if new structures were built; assessor's records indicate that there were buildings on the land in the years 1893-1902. Lowrie and his heirs may have leased the property to tenants or used it to house their own workers, incorporating the land into the family's larger agricultural enterprise (Allardt 1874; Pacific Rural Press 1876; Thompson & West 1878, Alameda County Assessor, 1893, 1900-02)

A native of Scotland, Lowrie settled in Washington Township in 1857, when still in his teens, and married several years later. His Irish-born wife, Mary, bore him four children. The 1870 census shows Lowrie with 595 acres worth \$36,500 and personal property worth 430,000, among the highest valuations in the township. Annual wages and board for his laborers totaled \$6,000 - again, one of the highest outlays in the township - and his lands were producing 7,000 bushels of wheat and 4,000 bushels of barley a year. Implements of machinery worth \$2,000. He owned 10 horses, 17 milk cows, and 20 head of cattle. Lowrie also helped pioneer fruit cultivation in the area. In 1874 he was one of the founders of the Centerville Fruit and Vegetable Drying Association, and by the 1880's had more orchard acres than most township farmers. His properties included the 200-acre tract in Centerville and a 100-acre tract in Alviso adjacent to the home place of John Beard. The family lived on the latter parcel, in a large Gothic Revival house set among gardens. (U.S. Census 1860-1900; Sacramento Union 1874; Thompson & West 1878; Alta California 1886)

Lowrie's last venture was as the principal stockholder of the Alaska Gold and Silver Mining, Milling and Trading Company, incorporated in 1882 by a group of township farmers. He was one of several partners lost at sea in October 1883, when their ore-laden ship sank in a gale off the coast of Alaska. Lowrie was 45 when he disappeared. There were rumors of survivors, and insurance companies sent detectives to Alaska, amid allegation of an insurance scam gone wrong. All this made the settling of the Lowrie estate a messy affair that dragged on for years. Mrs. Lowrie finally prevailed in 1883; then she died, at age 54. In 1894, the estate was distributed among the four children - two sons, J.C. Fred Lowrie and George P. Lowrie, and two married daughters, Mary E. Mickle and Josephine Walton. (Sacramento Union 1882; Alta California 1884-1890; San Francisco Call 1891-1894; Alameda County Assessor 1900; Country Club 1965)

The brothers and sisters and their families resided on the partitioned 200-acre property in Centerville, where they ended up living for many more years. The old home place in Alviso was subdivided into four parcels and eventually sold. The former Selfridge property on the same road was divided into two 10-acre parcels, owned by J. C. Fred Lowrie and Mary E. Mickle, and kept as rental properties. Both tracts were eventually sold to Portuguese families. The easterly parcel, owned by Fred Lowrie, was sold in 1914 to Frank and Mayme Roderick; the Mickle parcel was sold around the same time to the Rose family. (Oakland Tribune 1898; Alameda County Assessor 1900, 1902, 1917; Nusbaumer and Boardman 1900; U.S. Census 1900)

## **Frank and Mayme Roderick**

Frank Silva Roderick Jr. (1884-1960) and Mayme Amaral Roderick (1896 - 1994) were both California natives whose Portuguese parents came to America from the Azores. In 1914, they acquired a 10-acre farm on the Alvarado-Centerville Road. Their new address was Newark RFD,

Box 82 (now 34615 Fremont Boulevard). The Rodericks had one child, Eleanore Mae, born March 12, 1919. Census records identify Frank Roderick Jr. as a farmer, and assessor's records show that the property was continually improved during his lifetime to support a small farm - a barn, sheds, and tanks installed between 1916 and 1925; a pumphouse and shed, built in 1934; a well and pump, added in the late 1950's. He grew seasonal produce which he sometimes sold from a stand in the front of the house, like other farmers along the road. His grandchildren recall beans, potatoes, and corn being grown on the farm in the 1940's and 1950's, and a couple of horses. His wife worked to help support the family. (California Death Index; U.S. Census 1920, 1930; Oakland Tribune 1947; Azevedo 2014)

### **Manuel and Eleanor Azevedo**

The Rodericks attended St. Anne's Catholic Church in Alvarado and it was there, in 1939, that the parish priest, Father Flatley, married their daughter to Manuel Joseph Azevedo (1911-1987). Also descended from Portuguese immigrants, Azevedo was born in Marin County. His parents died when he was young, and he and his two sisters were raised by relatives who operated a dair farm in the Central Valley. He came to Washington Township to go to high school, meeting his future wife at local dances. (California Death Index; U.S. Census 1920; Azevedo 2014)

Frank and Mayme Roderick had previously given the newlyweds a small parcel of land adjoining their residence. Manuel and Eleanor had a house built on the lot during their engagement - the design matched that of a house in Hayward owned by an older cousin of Mayme Roderick - moving in shortly after they were married. The Azevedo's lived in the Mediterranean Revival house at 34621 Fremont Boulevard all of their lives, raising three children, Marlene, Kathleen, and Michael. The daughters went to Alviso School; the son attended Holy Ghost Catholic School in Centerville. They grew apricots, peaches, loquats, figs, chestnuts, oranges, and lemons in the family property. Manuel worked most of his adult life for the Leslie Salt Company, rising to the position of supervisor; he oversaw harvesting operations at the shoreline salt ponds along the Union City-Hayward border. (Azevedo 2014)

Ownership of the farm had remained with the Rodericks, and following Frank's death, in 1960, title passed to his widow, then 64. Faced with limited income and rising taxes, Mayme decided to sell most of the property. Most of the outbuildings were razed in the latter half of the 1960's, leaving only the two homes. (Alameda County Assessor 2014c) It was around this time that property was sold for development; the garden apartments on the farm site were first accessed in 1970-71. In a 1971 aerial photograph, the complex appears to be the first new residential development in the area. (Oral History Associates 1989) The apartment project coincided with infrastructural improvements by the city government, including water and sewer lines and the widening of Fremont Boulevard. Both houses lost about 40 feet of front yard, reducing setbacks to a minimum. (Azevedo 2014) The Roderick farm originally had a frontage of about 330 feet and a depth of 1,325 feet, covering 10 acres. The two houses now sit on parcels with a composite frontage of about 176 feet and a shared depth of about 144 feet - about six-tenths of an acre, comprising about six percent of the original property.

Mayme Roderick lived to be 97. Following her death, in 1994, both houses passed to her widowed daughter. Eleanor Azevedo died in 2013, at age 93. (California Death Index) Her obituary noted that she "resided in the Alviso district of Fremont her entire life. She attended Alviso School and Washington High School... She loved spending time with her grandchildren, working in her garden, cooking and traveling. She was proud of her Portuguese heritage and was an active member of both the S.P.R.S.I and the YLI [Young Ladies' Institute]. She was also a devoted parishioner at St. James Apostle Catholic Church." The properties at 34615 and 34621 Fremont Boulevard were then inherited by her two surviving children, Michael Azevedo and Kathleen Bellini, the current owners.

## **5. 3811 Washington Blvd - Ward Hill**

The parcel at 3811 Washington Boulevard was originally part of the Lands of the Ex-Mission San Jose. A number of smaller parcels along what was then known as the Mission Road were subdivided as part of the Horner Tract. Following California's statehood in 1850, the legality of the 1846 grant of Ex-Mission San Jose Land to Pico and Alvarado was disputed. The Horner brothers and other claimants (including numerous squatters) did not receive clear title to their property until the case was settled in the 1860s. Under the authority of an 1863 Act of Congress ("An Act for the relief of the occupants of the Lands of the Ex-Mission of San Jose in the State of California"), the land was surveyed and partitioned into parcels. Each successful claimant received one or more parcels, as shown on Dyer's Plat of the Lands of the Ex-Mission San Jose (1864). William Y. Horner was granted Parcel 26, comprising 154.17 acres in Irvington. Legal title to the land was finally conveyed (or reconveyed) to Horner in 1872.

### **Frederick Mowry**

An early owner of the 3811 Washington Boulevard parcel was Frederick Mowry, son of Origin Mowry, founder of Mowry's Landing (Mowry is the owner on the County Assessor Block Books 1898-1902). The Irvington Sanborn map of 1908 shows a small house on the property near the east boundary (the house was about half the size of the house extant today). By about 1915 Elmer Graybill, who worked as a painter, owned this parcel (Assessor Block Books 1917, 1919). The 1920 U.S. Census shows Graybill, his wife Gladys and their two daughters living on Mission Street in Irvington. Graybill sold the property in 1921 to Otto Hirsch who later built the larger Bungalow Style house extant today at 3811 Washington Boulevard (then known as Mission Road or Street) as a rental property.

### **Otto Hirsh**

Otto Hirsch was a prominent businessman in Irvington. Born in 1873, Otto Hirsch was the son of Joseph and Caroline Hirsch, native of Germany. Joseph Hirsch came to San Francisco in 1854 during the Gold Rush. The Hirsches moved to Washington Corners in 1867 where they opened a general merchandise store (Sandoval 1985:165). The store was on what is now Fremont Boulevard near the Five Corners. Joseph died in 1896 and his three sons, William, Edwin and Otto took over the management of the store and the family's property. William later started his own business: a hardware and plumbing store in Clark's Hall, the brick building (now a café) at Fremont Boulevard and Washington Boulevard (later became Rose's Hardware, then a feed store). Edwin bought out the interest of his younger brother Otto in the family general store. Otto then became active in real estate and insurance in Irvington. Otto developed the Dependable Garage (next to the Odd Fellows Hall) in 1917, the town's first auto sales and service operation, in addition to local fruit orchards (Holmes & Singleton 2005:52, 84). During the 20th Century, other Hirsch family members developed shopping centers and other businesses in Irvington. In 1955, Otto's son Allan Hirsch developed the Mark Rick Center (named after his two sons) next to the Dependable Garage. Otto also served for awhile as the Postmaster of Irvington and was the owner of the Mission San Jose Water Works. Hirsch died at his home in Irvington in October 1956. After his father's death Allan Hirsch had a local elementary named for his father.

Hirsch never lived in the house at 3811 Washington Boulevard. According to the 1930, Otto lived on the Centerville Road (later at 365 Broadway, now part of Fremont Boulevard). According to the 1930 U.S. Census Manuel Soito, a clerk, his wife Elsie (no occupation) and their daughter Beverly lived in this house as renters. By 1940 the Soitos still lived at this location but now they owned the house (U.S. Census 1940). According to Assessor Block Books, Hirsch owned this property until at least 1937. Elsie Soito lived in the house alone after her husband's

death in 1952. In 1969 Mrs. Soito sold the house to Flora Medeiros who rented the house (she lived at 903 Bedford Street in Fremont). The Medeiros family sold the property in 2003. The property had several different owners over the next four years. The current owners purchased the property in 2007. The house has been vacant for the last six years.

## **6. 1031 Walnut Ave. - Page & Turnbull**

### **Guardino Farm/Ranch**

Salvatore (Sal) Guardino (1920-2013) and his wife Bette (or Betty, 1923-2013) purchased the 15.835 acre parcel from Louise J. Tyson and Edna Irene Tyson and a 7.9175 acre parcel of land from Edna Irene Tyson in two deeds dated December 6, 1949.<sup>8</sup> This parcel was a portion of lot 1 of the original estate of William Tyson. No information was found on members of the Guardino family in local history clippings files at the Fremont Public Library or in online scans of the Fremont Argus newspaper, but information was gathered from U.S. Census data and other public records.

Sal Guardino was born to an Italian father and American mother. He grew up in San Jose as the fifth of nine children. His father was listed as a farmer in 1918 and as a fruit buyer in 1920. Sal's paternal grandfather, also named Salvatore, was a fruit farmer who immigrated to the United States from Italy in 1900 and lived in San Jose.<sup>11</sup> In 1940, at the age 20, Sal was a produce truck driver. He worked at the Tyson-owned orchard at 1031 Walnut Avenue for several years before he purchased the property in 1949.<sup>12</sup> By 1954, he and Betty lived in San Jose at th 131164 N. 10 Street and they were building a new house at 1031 Walnut Avenue. In 1956, Sal Guardino was the secretary-treasurer of Standard Produce Co. of San Jose and lived in San Jose at 13841 Almaden Road. It appears that they moved into the house at 1031 Walnut Avenue about that time, and they were listed in a Fremont telephone book at that address in 1960.

A pole barn and dry yard were built in the 1950s north of the house and were used for fruit drying. The barn, which was located just north of the current boundaries of the property, was demolished ca. 1987 and replaced with residential development. The shed to the east of the house was constructed in the late 1950s and may have been used for fruit packing when it was originally built. However, it has been used as a storage shed for many years since and is no longer associated with farming.

In 1970 and 1980, Sal and Betty deeded two portions of their property to the City of Fremont. Throughout the 1970s, the "Guardino Ranches" was listed in Argus newspaper advertisements as having a produce stand at 830 Peralta Boulevard (later addressed 830 Mowry Avenue). The 1970 advertisement was for dried apricots and walnuts, and the 1974 advertisement was for walnuts, squash, dried apricots, and bell peppers. A 1976 advertisement listed strawberries, sweet navel oranges, and lettuce. Another 1976 newspaper article mentioned that the produce stand did not sell produce raised on lands adjacent to the stand, but that the Guardinos had a farming operation near the city of Stockton. This was a farm operated by Sal's younger brother, Jim (1934-2010), who partnered with Sal to form "Guardino Bros." Jim farmed cherries and walnuts in Linden, outside of Stockton, for his entire career. Sal's grandson, Greg, also explained that Sal farmed land in Patterson, in the Central Valley, and obtained other produce at the Port of Oakland to sell at the produce stand. It is unclear whether any of the produce sold at the stand on Mowry Avenue was harvested from the subject property. That produce stand no longer exists.

## **7. 48495 Ursa Drive - Architectural Resources Group, Inc.**

### **Silva Orchard**

The subject property at 48495 Ursa Drive mirrors the subdivision of the land in Alameda County from large ranchos into increasingly smaller parcels of land and the rise and decline of small-scale, family-run orchards in Warm Springs and beyond. By the 1870s, Colonel Calvin Valpey had emigrated from Nova Scotia, Canada, and settled in Warm Springs. He developed Warm Springs Landing and owned 400 acres of former Rancho Agua Caliente land that encompassed the subject property. He constructed a house at the north end of the property (not extant) and developed the remainder as a small farm that produced hay, eggs, and apples. His wife inherited the property following his death in 1880, and she subdivided it among their six children. Horatio B. Valpey received a 24.80-acre parcel that included the subject property. By the turn-of-the-century, his sister Mary Alice Craycroft and her husband John Wesley Craycroft had acquired the parcel.

In 1905, the Craycrofts sold the 24.80-acre property to Henry Curtner, another pioneer rancher, who proceeded to divide it into two parcels. Guilherme and Maria Faria purchased the front 12.35-acre parcel fronting Warm Springs Boulevard, and his brother-in-law Antone F. Silva (1869-1954) and Louisa de Gloria Silva (1884-1958, sister of Maria Faria) purchased the rear 12.35-acre parcel, which includes the rectangular plot of land with an easement for a road leading west to the main road.<sup>17</sup> Both the Farias and Silvas were immigrants from the Azores, islands in the Atlantic that are part of Portugal. In 1888, Antone Silva immigrated to the United States, followed by Louisa in 1901. They married in 1902, and they had five children: Antone, Rose, Emily, Mary, and Joseph Silva.

In 1905, the Silva family established an orchard on the 12.35-acre property and eventually replaced the main residence ca. 1930. A building at the northeast corner of the property has been anecdotally identified as a drying shed, suggesting that the family may have sold dried apricots rather than fresh fruit for sale at local cooperatives. The property also has a cluster of walnut trees at the southeast corner, along with a walnut hulling at the rear shed, indicating that the family also produced dried walnuts at some point.

Both the Silva and the Faria orchards were sold off over time. In 1937, the Farias sold their property to Jesse Lewis Silva (no relation), who held the property until 1954. In 1976, the parcel was divided with the larger 10-acre parcel becoming a residential subdivision and leaving a 2.23-acre property with the farm complex and reduced orchard. It would later be demolished and replaced with residences after 1999. The subject property followed a similar development pattern. In 1954, Antone Silva died and left the property to his wife, who passed away in 1958. Their son Joseph T. Silva (1910-2000) and his wife Isabelle P. Silva (1914-1999) inherited the property. In 1979, they subdivided the property, retaining just 2.67 acres with the residence, ranch buildings, and a portion of the orchard. The larger portion was then developed with single family houses. Today, the third generation—Robert V. Silva and his sister Patricia Mae Silva—own the small parcel.<sup>20</sup> This property appears to be the last agricultural parcel with a remnant orchard along Warm Springs Boulevard, as residential subdivisions have replaced the orchards that were once located along its length.

## 8. 3524 Peralta Boulevard - Kara Brunzell

Peralta Boulevard, which has been known over the years as Vallejo Road, Niles Road, Fremont Avenue, and Centerville-Niles Road, was one of the earliest roads in Washington Township, and appears on maps of the area by 1857. The tiny village of Centerville was clustered around the intersection of modern Fremont and Peralta Boulevards. The area northeast of the intersection was used primarily for agriculture through the end of the nineteenth century. Howard Overacker built his farmhouse on the north side of Peralta Boulevard, and other farms in the neighborhood also included residences. After the turn of the century, the extension of the railroad to Centerville spurred population growth and residential development along Niles Road.

### August May

August May acquired acreage on the south side of the road and laid out the August May tract in 1906. The August May tract was the first Centerville subdivision recorded in the twentieth century. As the real estate values in Centerville increased during the second half of the nineteenth century, farmers such as Manuel Lewis Veirra and James Allen Trefry had subdivided large agricultural parcels for sale. The parcels they sold ranged in size from one to forty acres, were often sold off gradually over a period of decades, and tended to be irregular in shape. This pattern resulted in piecemeal, incremental development, as individuals built new houses on farmsteads or small parcels near downtown. The roughly ten-acre May tract, in contrast, was divided into 43 mostly orthogonal lots. The tract, which was bounded on the north by the Centerville-Niles Road (today Peralta Boulevard) and Centerville-Irvington Road (today Fremont Boulevard) on the southwest, was roughly triangular. Mostly regular lots that were about 50' x 200' fronted Centerville-Niles Road. A new street called School Street (today Parish Avenue) had lots on both sides that were much deeper. Although still about 50' wide, most were over 300' deep. The diagonal boundaries of the tract dictated that several lots were irregular in size and shape, such as parcels 1 and 23 along Centerville-Niles Road (at the northeast and northwest corners of the triangle). After subdivision, May began selling the smaller lots to individuals, who constructed small houses on most lots between 1906 and 1930. Lots 31 and 32, which backed up to the parcels along Centerville-Niles Road and fronted onto Parish Avenue, were triangular in shape and much larger than the other lots in the subdivision.

Rather than being developed in the years after subdivision, this area continued in agricultural use. 9 August May was born in 1866 in Alvarado. His father, August May, Sr., emigrated from Prussia and worked as a butcher. He came to California in 1852, living in San Francisco briefly before moving to Alameda County. August May, Jr. followed his father into work as a butcher as a young man. He married Jeanette DeCoto in 1891, and the couple lived in Alvarado. In 1902, May organized the Alvarado Bank (later the Bank of Alameda County) and became its cashier. He later became a bank president, farmer, and capitalist, and was one of the largest local landowners. Jeanette DeCoto May was the daughter of Ezra DeCoto, an early settler who founded the nearby town of DeCoto. August May died in 1940, while Jeanette lived until 1954. She was socially prominent and engaged in local charities until the end of her life. Census records do not reveal any children born to the Mays. The May family never lived in Centerville, and the tract appears to have been a speculative investment.

In 1910, Centerville was growing in population and becoming a shipping hub for agriculture due to the new railroad line. With few exceptions, the families that lived along Centerville-Niles Road in 1910 were Portuguese or Portuguese American. Virtually all the men were farmers or farm laborers on truck farms, fruit farms, or "home" farms. None of the women were employed outside the home. Over half the farmers reported themselves as farming on their "own account," meaning they were running their own farms. This fact, along with the deep and narrow shape of the lots, suggests August May marketed them as small individual farmsteads. During the early twentieth century, fruit

trees were the dominant crop in the area, which allowed very small farms to operate profitably. The area just to the south of this row of houses, like much of the neighborhood, was devoted to fruit trees at this time. However, small profitable orchard operations were usually about 25 acres, which was much larger than these roughly quarter-acre lots. So if the house lots in the August May tract were used for farming, it was most likely a supplement to earned income or part of a larger operation.

### **Silva Family**

According to the Residential Building Record, the house was constructed in 1916. In all likelihood, it was built by Angelina (Angie) N. and Anthony (Antone) Nunes Silva. Anthony Silva was born in Centerville in 1891 to Portuguese immigrant Frank Silva. Anthony's younger brothers Joseph and Manuel were born in the next few years, and Angelina N. Dias was born in 1898. The couple married in Centerville in 1914. Their children began to arrive shortly thereafter: Robert about 1916, Janice in 1919, and Audrey in 1921. In the first few years after their marriage, the family lived in Alameda, where Anthony worked as a stove moulder. Anthony Silva became a partner in Silva Bros., a well-drilling company which was operated from the property by 1924. Until the 1980s, there was a large barn next door to the house, probably built by the Silvas to house their well drilling equipment about the time they opened the business.

By 1920, the area remained a locus for Portuguese immigrants and their descendants, but industry had developed in Centerville as the population grew, and occupations were more diverse by this point. Only half of the employed residents of the neighborhood were working on farms. The remainder labored in canneries, lumber yards, and the local stove factory. There were also proprietors of small businesses including a widow running a boarding house and a barber with his own shop. The neighborhood remained strongly working-class, however. The U.S. Census began collecting information on home ownership in 1920, and almost everyone living in the immediate neighborhood was an owner.

In the 1920s, the ethnic and occupational diversity of Centerville-Niles Road increased markedly. By the end of the decade, only half the people in the neighborhood were owners, probably a reflection of the hard times the Depression was bringing. Few seem to have been unemployed, however. About half the people living on the street were still working in agriculture. Occupations outside agriculture were far more diverse than a decade earlier, however. The stove factory workers and carpenters were now joined by domestic servants and grocery clerks. Professionals also resided in the neighborhood, which boasted an attorney, two teachers, an aviator, and a grocery store proprietor. Ethnic diversity had also increased markedly. There were still several Portuguese families, but there were just as many Japanese immigrants in the area. In addition, there were now native-born Californians as well as people of Chinese, English, and Irish descent nearby. And with a woman teacher and several female Japanese farm-workers, it had become more common for women in the area to be employed outside the home.

Angie and Anthony Silva lived on the property with their children (and operated their business there) from 1924 through Angie's death in 1943. Anthony Silva appears to have remarried to a woman named Mary by the 1950s, and lived in the house with her until the early 1960s. In 1959, Silva attempted to have the property zoned for commercial use, but the City of Fremont rejected his request (although he continued to operate the well-drilling business from the property). By 1964, Mary and Anthony had moved to Elm Street, but the business remained on Peralta Blvd. Anthony Silva died in 1972 and was buried alongside Angelina Silva.

In 1956, Fremont was incorporated and began to be developed for tract housing. This signaled the end of agriculture as a profitable enterprise in the area, and historic aerial photos show the nearby

orchards being phased out in the 1950s, as trees that died were not replaced. Centerville went into an economic decline during the 1960s due largely to this shift. By the late 1960s, the orchards had many fewer trees, and they were removed completely in the early 1970s. The backyards in the neighborhood were fenced in the 1980s, altering the area's rural feeling. Part of the area that had orchards was converted to baseball fields, and over the years the rest was developed into housing. In the early 1990s, some of the houses along Parish Avenue that had been adjacent to the orchards were demolished, and a modern subdivision developed. Meanwhile, across the street to the north, developers started building large townhouse complexes, continuing the densification of the neighborhood into the new century.

In 1965, Mary and Anthony Silva sold 3594 Peralta Boulevard, as well as the adjacent parcels<sup>16</sup> they owned, to Florine M. Vail. Florine Mabel Vail was born in Colma in 1919. By 1930, she was living with grandparents in Pasadena, and had moved to Cloverdale by 1935. By the time she was 20, she had married Bernard Vail. They lived in San Francisco in 1940. By the early 1960s, the Vails were operating a tool and die shop in downtown Centerville. After purchasing the house and the adjacent property to the east from the Silvas the Vails moved their tool and die shop to 3516 Peralta Blvd.<sup>17</sup> About 1983, there was a fire on the property, apparently in the barn, and the barn was demolished in 1984. The Vails sold the property to Max and Laverne Forrest in 1985, who appear to have constructed the current commercial building at 3516 Peralta Blvd. About 1990, the Vails remodeled a shed at the rear of the property into the ancillary dwelling, which does not appear to have been permitted.

## **9. 42186 Palm Avenue - Four Winds - Ward Hill and Denise Bradley**

### **Historical Background: The Four Winds Growers**

The founder of the Four Winds Growers, Floyd Dillon, began his business career working in Bay Area department stores, specializing in the merchandising of women's clothing. From the 1930s to World War II, the Dillon family moved to Wisconsin where Floyd continued to work in retail introducing the latest California women's fashions to the Mid-West. The Dillon moved back to California in 1944-45 looking for a new venture to pursue, finally settling in Carmel.

Working with fruit trees in his own yard, Dillon got the idea that GIs coming home after the war would be interested in buying small box or tub dwarf citrus trees as an ornamental patio plant, a complement to the California leisure lifestyle promoted after the war by magazines like *Sunset* (who helped promote interest in dwarf citrus in the magazine). Dwarf pear and apple trees (trained as espaliers) had been available for many years but a dwarf citrus had not.

In 1946, Floyd Dillon first met with botanists at University of California, Los Angeles and Citrus Experiment Station, University of California, Riverside who were working on developing full sized orchard trees. A dwarf tree is defined as a tree with a maximum height of eight feet and not considered suitable for commercial orchards. The University test blocks contained citrus trees on dwarfing fruit stocks. Such trees were exactly what Floyd was for use in ornamental home gardens. Floyd originally started his commercial nursery specializing in dwarf citrus trees on rented land at the C. Mavro Warren ranch Piru, Ventura County, California. The first Four Winds Growers trees were sold to Belmont, California nurseryman Ernie Birk, then owner of the Espalier Nursery. Dillon began looking for a new location for his nursery in 1954 when a disease inflicting citrus trees – the Quick Decline Tristeza Virus – began spreading to Ventura County from the south. Shipping citrus out of the infected area in Southern California would be prohibited, severely restricting the nursery business. Dillon's research indicated that the Mission San Jose area had a frost free microclimate good for growing citrus trees. The growing Bay Area was also a good

market for his dwarf trees. In 1954, Dillon originally rented from Mr. Tibbetts the back part of a lot adjacent to the west side of the Four Winds Growers present location (this lot has been largely developed with houses).

After Mr. Tibbetts died in 1956, his widow asked the Dillons to move the Four Winds Growers. Fortuitously the Cernich family decided to sell their 6 acre parcel (planted with an apricot orchard) adjacent to the Tibbetts property. The Cernich property included the small house near Palm Avenue, a barn, tank house and another building the Dillons originally used as the nursery office. The barn was extensively remodeled with the large sliding doors on the north and south sides of the building. Floyd and Mildred Dillon lived in the house. After Floyd died in 1963 Mrs. Dillon continued to live in the house until 1972. Various nursery employees have lived in the house since 1977. Floyd's son, Don Dillon, Sr. who had been involved in nursery business since 1954 took over operation of the nursery in 1963. Don Dillon, Sr. was also involved in the early organization of the City of Fremont (incorporated in 1956) he was on the City Council from 1962 to 1978. Don lived with his family in a Fremont house on Paseo Padre Parkway. In 1970 the Dillons moved a new office building to the nursery replacing their office building. The new office building constructed in 1968 had been the sales office of the nearby Las Palmas housing development. The greenhouse was built in the late 1960s. The construction of Interstate 680 just south of the nursery occurred in 1969-70.

In 1978, the nursery purchased the approximately 10 acres to the east of the original parcel. In 1983, Don Dillon, Jr. built a house and garage near Mission Creek on the newly purchased parcel, replacing the earlier Bettencourt house at this location. In 1987, Don Dillon, Sr. was recognized as California's —Nurseryman of the Year. In recent years, Don, Jr. has managed the Fremont operation. The nursery also leases today part of City of Fremont parcel adjacent to their property. In recent years the nursery has been moving its growing operation to Winters, California (1988) and propagation to a newly acquired (2004) property in Watsonville. Floyd's great grandson, Aaron Dillon, a fourth generation of the Dillon family, heads up the Watsonville operation. The Dillon nursery has been immune to foreign competition that has affected the California nursery business because in order to control diseases it is illegal to import citrus trees into the state.

## **10. 527 Old Canyon Road - Architectural Resources Group**

### **A.J. Severance**

One of the earliest extant maps, dating to 1878, shows the property owner as A. J. Severance. Later historical accounts indicate there may have been other occupants on the site prior to Severance's ownership. The book History of Washington Township (1904) provides a brief early history of the property:

Mr. Barnes was a squatter on what is now the Ellsworth place; he sold to Mr. [Daniel] Sanborn and his brother, who in turn sold to D. D. Henion. Mr. Henion sold to Severance & Peet, who transferred it to the bank from which H. G. Ellsworth purchased it.

According to Thompson & West's Official and Historical Atlas Map of Alameda County, California (1878), A.J. (Asahel Jones) Severance owned 197 acres in the area, including the land on which the subject property now stands (Figure 3). The exact date that Severance acquired the property, however, is uncertain, nor is it clear how Severance operated the property.

Voter registration documents indicate that Severance lived at the Nucleus House at Market and Third Streets in San Francisco in 1871; by 1877, he resided in Niles. Contemporary newspaper articles reveal that Severance was involved in several mining ventures, including the Barcelona Central Mining Company, the Colorado River Colonization Company, and the American River

Dredging and Mining Company. He conducted a number of businesses in San Francisco in the 1870s and 1880s, acting as the proprietor of the Diamond Drill Company and an importer and breeder of thoroughbred Merino sheep.

### **Henry G. Ellsworth**

Around 1880, Severance sold the property to Henry Goodrich Ellsworth, a prominent farmer and Washington Township pioneer. Henry Goodrich Ellsworth was born in 1835 in Indiana to Edward A. Ellsworth and Jane McCamy. Edward died in 1837, two years after Henry's birth and just before his daughter, Ellen, was born. Jane remarried Elias Lyman Beard in 1843 and they had a son, John L., born in 1845.

Henry Ellsworth first arrived in California in 1850 with his mother, Jane, and stepbrother, John Beard. Henry's stepfather, Elias Lyman Beard, preceded the family, arriving in California in 1849. Upon settling in Washington Township, E.L. Beard acquired a significant portion – about 368 acres – of former Mission San José lands from Thomas O. Larkin (Figure 4). There he tended to the fruit orchards established by the padres and constructed a flour mill with Henry.

Henry married Harriet "Hattie" Pierce Bryant in 1866. Sources indicate that Henry purchased Severance's property in 1880 and planted a large orchard and vineyard there. Around 1894, Henry constructed a two-story house facing present-day Mission Boulevard. Henry died in 1897.

In 1907, Hattie filed a subdivision map with the Alameda County Assessor, creating the Ellsworth Subdivision. She also subdivided her land across Alameda Creek in the area of the subject property into the Niles Glen Subdivision at around the same time. Hattie continued to live on the ranch through 1950s, although the surrounding land continued to be developed. The Ellsworth's farmhouse at 38416 Mission Boulevard still stands, and has been incorporated into the Fremont Frontier Motel complex.

The Ellsworth Subdivision consisted of twelve lots running along the southern bank of Alameda Creek, across the water from Niles proper. In June of 1907, Evalyn T. Burnett purchased Lots 11 and 12, a portion of which form the subject property. According to the deed, certain "express conditions, which [were] to be binding upon [Burnett]" were stipulated:

That within five years from the date of this conveyance no building shall be erected or placed upon the land herein conveyed, to be used or which shall be used for any other purpose than that exclusively for a dwelling house, together with the necessary out building and stables connected therewith. In the event of a violation of any of the above conditions, the title to said land shall immediately revert to the part of the first part [Hattie], her heirs and assigns shall have the right to re-enter upon said land.

The next accessible deed is dated 1939 and conveyed the land from F.J. Young, a widower, to Ramon Barnum, a single man. No information about F.J. Young was found. Barnum was born in 1911 and lived in Alameda County area for most, if not all, of his life. He served in the Navy during World War II and was a Freemason. He died in 1995.

In 1968, Barnum deeded a portion of Lot 12 to the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, reducing the property's size considerably. In 1977, James L. Vasko purchased the property and then sold it to the current owner, Douglas K. Avery, in 1996.

## 11. 39392 Blacow Road - Page & Turnbull

Prior to the late 1950s, the 1.19-acre property addressed as 39392 Blacow Road, was contained within a 41.5-acre tract in an area comprised of agricultural properties to the south of the town of Centerville. According to Thompson and West's Official and Historical Atlas Map of Alameda County (1878), and real estate records recovered at the offices of the Alameda County Assessor and Clerk-Recorder, the subject property was owned by J.M. and/or Manuel Silveira de Quadres between 1868 and 1910 (Figure 48 and Figure 49). The property was most likely originally used for hay, wheat, grain, fruit, or dairy farming, based upon the predominant agricultural industries in the Centerville area ca. 1868 to 1910. Quadres sold his 41.5-acre tract in 1910 to brothers John and Antone Oliveira, who were Centerville-born, second-generation Azorean-Portuguese immigrants. According to the 1910 U.S. Census, the Oliveira brothers resided at a farm along Niles Road in Washington Township, and were engaged in fruit cultivation. The exact date at which John and Antone Oliveira shifted their fruit farming operation to the subject property is not known. Both brothers listed 'Farm Road 115' near Newark as their residence in 1918 when registering for selective service, but additional records for each brother in the 1920 Census were unable to be recovered. In 1929, Antone and Mary Oliveira commissioned Niles-based home builder Frank Duarte to construct a one-story, wood-frame bungalow at the present-day 39392 Blacow Road. Along with the subject building, several additional residential buildings, including a bungalow occupied by John Oliveira and his family, were present at the property according to the 1930 Census and historic photographs on file at the Washington Township Museum of Local History.

The earliest photographs of the residence date from 1929 to the early 1940s, and portray the residence as it was originally built – as a one-story bungalow with a side-gabled roof and four-columned portico at the primary façade. The exterior was clad with narrow, wood shiplap siding and finished with flat wood trim at windows and door surrounds. The side-gabled roof featured overhanging eaves with exposed rafters and modest fascia boards. A brick chimney was installed near the location of the current chimney. A detached automobile garage was likely constructed concurrently with the residence or soon following to the immediate northeast in the present garage's approximate location. A photograph taken shortly after the building's completion shows an additional bungalow to the northwest, which is believed to have been the home of John Oliveira

By 1940, Antone and Mary Oliveira's adopted daughter, Emiline, her husband Lawrence Rose, and their children had moved into the subject building, where they resided with Antone and Mary Oliveira through 1946. In order to accommodate additional occupants, a second story was added to 39392 Blacow Road ca. 1940. Contemporaneously, John Oliveira continued to reside in a separate residence within the 40-acre property. Between the late 1940s and 1954, the 41.5-acre parcel was sold off in parts, with the subject 1.19-acre parcel conveyed to Victor M. and Primitiva Ranoa in 1954. The Ranoas acquired the 1.19-acre parcel from Clyde W. Lindsey of Lindsey Builders, a San Jose area builder-developer, who acquired the parcel at a date unable to be determined through research at the Alameda Clerk-Recorder. U.S. Census Records and historic telephone directories for Alameda County indicated that members of the Oliveira family continued to reside at the subject property through the mid-1940s. Based upon aerial photography, the dairy farm established by the Oliveiras almost a half-century earlier continued to operate into the early 1960s. The dairy complex, however, was located on a separate parcel that was subdivided by the mid-1960s.

Subdivision of large, formerly agricultural parcels in the vicinity of 39392 Blacow Road began in 1959, with the platting of the Fremont Village subdivision. Located primarily to the east of Calaveras Avenue and north of Blacow Road, this subdivision extended eastward to the west property line of 39392 Blacow Road. In 1963, the Twenty-Eight Palms subdivision was platted and

flanked 39392 Blacow Road to the east. Thus, by 1963, 39392 Blacow Road was surrounded by subdivided housing tracts to the north, east, and west. Both subdivisions were platted by Lloyd R. Bradhoff and Ruth L. Bradhoff

### **Frank Duarte, Builder-Contractor (1928 Original Design)**

Frank Duarte (1893-1982) was born in Niles, Fremont to Azorean parents who settled in Niles three years earlier. Duarte apprenticed with a local contractor prior to establishing his own construction business. According to the research of Basin Research Associates, Inc., “Duarte began apprenticing with a contractor in Decoto at the age of 14...Over the course of his career, prior to his retirement in 1959, Duarte helped build a number of houses and commercial buildings in Niles [,” including homes on 2nd and 3rd streets and the post office. 38 Between 1925 and 1927, Duarte developed Duarte Avenue in Niles, including his own residence at 14 Duarte Avenue, which was determined eligible for listing in the California and National Registers under Criterion 3 (Architecture) through survey evaluation in 2001.

### **John (1884-1977), Antone (1876-1970) and Mary Oliveira (1884-1955)-Owners and Occupants 1910-ca. 1954**

Antone and John Oliveira were born in Centerville in 1876 and 1884, respectively, to Anthony and Maria Oliveira, who were among Centerville’s pioneering Azorean families of the late-nineteenth century. The Oliveira family lived at 4209 Baine Avenue in Centerville, where Antone and John were raised along with twelve other siblings through ca. 1900. In 1904, Antone and Mary Oliveira were married. By 1910, the brothers had begun fruit cultivation in Centerville and shifted to dairy farming at the subject property by the 1920s. . In 1910, John and Antone Oliveira acquired a 41.5-acre parcel which contained the 1.19-acre parcel at 39392 Blacow Road. In 1929, Antone Oliveira and his wife, Mary, moved into the residential building at 39392 Blacow Road. John Oliveira also resided at the property in a separate similar dwelling. During the 1920s and 1930s, Antone and Mary Oliveira raised their adopted daughter, Emiline, at the subject building, while Antone and his brother, John, operated a dairy farm on the property. In addition to dairy farming, John Oliveira “was active for more than three decades in public school affairs, serving first as a trustee of Moores Landing School...for 20 years. Between 1931 and 1945, Oliveira served as a trustee of the Washington Union High School district.” During the Oliveira’s ownership of 39392 Blacow Road, they rented two additional dwellings on the property (non-extant) to laborers who worked at their on-site wholesale dairy.



*Left Image: Two members of Oliveira family at house soon after construction in 1928.  
Right Image: John Oliveira Jr., early 1930's*

## **Lawrence Rose (1909-2010) and Emiline Rose (nee Oliveira) (1913-2015)-Occupants ca.1940-ca.1946**

Emiline Rose was adopted during her youth by her aunt and uncle, Mary and Antone Oliveira; Emiline was considered the Oliveira's daughter thereafter. Emiline resided at 39392 Blacow Road with her adopted parents between 1929 and ca. 1931, when she married Lawrence Rose. According to accounts in the Tri-City Voice, Lawrence and Emiline resided in Irvington for a brief period after their marriage and started a family. By 1940, the subject building was occupied by an expanded roster of Oliveira family members, including Emiline and Lawrence Rose. Their sons David and Leroy, and daughter Emiline, resided at 39392 Blacow Road between ca. 1940 and ca. 1946, at which point the Rose family moved to another house in nearby Irvington. In 1937, Lawrence Rose, a baker by trade, and Emiline founded Sunrise Bakery, which expanded locally into the mid-1950s and maintained locations in Centerville and Newark. Lawrence Rose retired from Sunrise Bakery in 1974, having worked previously at the Irvington Bakery in Irvington, and the Mighty Nice Bakery in Hayward.



*Left Image: Oliveria family member in front of house in the 1940's*



*Right Image: Emiline Rose and sons David and Leroy in the 1940's*

## **Victor M. (1902-1983) and Primitiva T. Ranoa (1919-?-)-Owners and Occupants 1954-1977**

The following biographical information of Victor M. and Primitiva T. Ranoa is excerpted from the Tri-City Voice:

*Primitiva Taclindo was born in the Philippines on July 20, 1919. Her parents were Crispin and Fortunata Taclindo. Crispin moved his family to Maui in 1924 to work in the sugar cane fields. He had been a teacher for 22 years prior to coming to the plantation where he was hired as a clerk in the plantation store. Primitiva attended Maui High School and graduated from the Hawaiian Mission Academy in 1938. She met Victor M. Ranoa who managed plantation workers. They were married that year. In a life filled with many business ventures and personal accomplishments, they somehow managed to become the parents of 11 children of all whom distinguished themselves as productive contributing members of society. In their early years of marriage, Primitiva and Victor owned and operated a grocery and meat market in Honolulu. Primitiva managed the business and also became an insurance agent for Beneficial Life. When World War II broke out, she worked briefly in Pearl Harbor selling U.S. War Bonds then returned to the store.*

*In 1950, Victor came to the mainland to be a sheet-metal worker at Hunter's Point [shipyard in San Francisco]. Primitiva came a year later with seven of the children. At first, they lived in Richmond. Two years later, they moved to Washington Township to work on Allan Hirsch's strawberry farm. The family lived for a year in the camp house on the farm until they bought the [subject property at 39392 Blacow Road]. 47 This was their home for the next 27 years. "Vic" and "Prim" became sales representatives of the Phil-Am Travel Agency of San Francisco. They also led tour groups to the Philippines, the Orient and the Caribbean. Locally, they were active in several civic and social groups. Prim was chosen a commissioner of the City Beautiful Committee of the City of Fremont in*

1976. The couple also began helping immigrant Filipino families adjust to Tri-City life and assisted many in obtaining U.S. citizenship. They founded the Filipino Circle Club, Inc. in 1960. Prim served for eight years as president, eight as secretary, and earned a life membership. Prim also served many years as a Filipino court interpreter.

Primitiva worked as a nurse's aide at Washington Hospital from 1958 to 1973. She then joined Peerless Stage Lines, a regional bus company in Oakland. Vic and Prim bought the Japanese Language School on Bonde Way in Fremont from Allan Walton in 1975. They then remodeled the school and opened Ranoa Oriental Food Store. This was a Filipino "Mom and Pop" store known as "Long House" that was popular with the locals. Eventually, the language school became a basic English skills tutoring operation for Filipinos moving into the area, many of whom were nearly illiterate when they arrived in the US. The ambitious couple also owned and managed "Vic's Restaurant" in Union City. The Ranoa children, seven boys and four girls, graduated from a variety of courses in colleges and universities. Five of them served in the armed forces.

After Vic died in 1983, Prim moved to her mother's house in Irvington. She taught "Coping Skills for Seniors" in the New Haven School District and worked as a senior adult educator for the Fremont Unified School District for twenty years. In 1990, Prim met Francisco Patis Gador, a widower and civil engineer from the Philippines. They were happily married for nearly 10 years before Frank passed away. [In 2004,] Prim traveled to Manila as a nominee for an international award representing the Filipino Communities of Northern California. She received a Gawad Geny Lopez, Jr. Bayaning Pilipino Award in recognition of her devotion to Filipino values of humanitarianism, industry, determination and dedication to public service.

Victor and Primitiva Ranoa sold 39392 Blacow in 1977 and continued to reside in Fremont, CA.



*Left Image: Ranoa family member in front of house in the 1960's.  
Right Image: Ranoa family member with bride in the 1970's.*

## **12. 3500 Mill Creek Road - Kara Brunzell**

### **Property History**

The first known building on the property was a hunting cabin constructed by the Castro family in 1834. The Castros were the owners of Rancho San Lorenzo in the Castro Valley/Hayward area, but travelled to Mission Peak in search of wild game. The cabin is presumed to have been located near the site of the house at 3500 Mill Creek Road. In 1867, Mission San Jose pioneer Elias Beard received a land patent from the State of California for over 1,300 acres of land on the slopes of Mission Peak just to the east of Mission San Jose. James R. Keene, who is shown on an 1878 county property ownership map as the owner of most of the land on either side of Mission Creek, is

the property's next known owner. In 1881, an investment corporation, La Societe Francaise d'epargues et de prevoyance mutuelle, purchased the land, which Howard Overacker acquired in 1885. Overacker raised livestock and grew grain on the property.

Howard Overacker, like Beard, was among the earliest American settlers in Washington Township. Overacker came to California from Ohio and settled in the Centerville area in 1852 to grow fruit. He built an impressive residence on the Centerville farm in 1867, served two terms as County Supervisor between 1862 and 1877, and began serving as a trustee of the Washington and Murray Township Water Company in 1871. Overacker's brothers, Adam and Michael, also moved to Washington Township. Overacker and his wife Deborah had five children. Their youngest son, Michael Justus Overacker, was born in 1876, while the family was living on the Centerville farm.

Michael Overacker, who was also known by his middle name, studied Ethics at Stanford University before following his father into the family agricultural business. Around 1900, he married a woman named Margaret Kerr, who had emigrated from Ireland in 1893. In 1900, Howard Overacker gave Michael a half interest in the ranch on what was then known as Mission Peak Road (the road's name was changed to Mill Creek Road in the late 1940s). At first, the young couple lived with Michael's parents on the Centerville ranch. Shortly after the turn of the century Michael Justus and Margaret Overacker built a house on the Mission Peak Road ranch, where they lived from about 1906 until Michael's death in 1946. After taking over the ranch from his father, Michael Overacker continued to raise grain and livestock. By 1910, Michael and Margaret had three children, Margaret, Katherine, and Michael Justus, Jr. In 1912, a fourth child, Howard, was born.

In 1933, Michael Justus Overacker, Jr. rented the ranch from his parents. He married a woman named Ferne Ammous in 1936. Michael and Ferne's children, Rebecca, Pat, and Michael III were born between 1939 and 1943, and grew up on the Mission Peak Road ranch. Michael Overacker, Jr. discontinued grain growing and focused on raising sheep and a small number of cattle. By the mid-1950s, with 600 sheep and 50 cattle, Overacker had a major Alameda County sheep operation. Circa 1940, Michael and Fern Overacker constructed the house at 3500 Mill Creek Road, while Howard and Theo Overacker, (who had married the same year as Michael and Fern), constructed their own house at 3670 Mill Creek Road. In 1943, Margeret and Michael Overacker, Sr. deeded the house lots, which were northwest of their own house, to sons Michael Jr. and Howard.

In addition to his successful ranching operation, Overacker was active in local politics in the 1950s. Involved with the local Chamber of Commerce, he was a member of the committee studying incorporation in the early 1950s, and in 1956 was elected to Fremont's first city council. Overacker was elected mayor in 1958, but a group called Fremont Taxpayers League initiated recall proceedings against him in September of that year. Although the recall was withdrawn, he announced his retirement from politics in late 1959, after a year of bitter local infighting. Overacker purchased a 1,000 acre ranch in Salmon, Idaho, and sold his house on Mill Creek Road.

Elmira and Dr. James Warren Gearhart purchased the house from the Overackers in 1960. A surgeon, Gearhart began his local practice in order to be involved with starting Washington Hospital in Fremont, which opened in 1958. The family moved to the area the same year, living in Irvington before moving to Mill Creek Road in 1960. The Gearharts enlarged the house in 1962 – 1963, roughly doubling its square footage with an addition at the southeast end of the original building. The Gearharts' five children were born between 1943 and 1951. The Gearharts were active in community affairs, and James led a boy scout troop. Gearhart led the emergency response team at the hospital, and received an award in 1969 for developing a disaster response program. The Gearharts were active supporters of state and local Republican political candidates.

Elmira Gearhart, who had received a bachelor's degree in 1947, returned to school while the family was living on Mill Creek Road. She attended San Jose State, earning a master's degree in history in 1966. Elmira was appointed to the local school board and began teaching history at the College of the Holy Name in Oakland the same year. In 1969, Elmira resigned from the school board and was appointed to the Alameda County Grand Jury. She later attended law school, and passed the bar exam in 1975. The couple divorced in the late 1970s after their children were grown. In 1976, the property was subject to a trustee's sale, apparently due to a mortgage default caused by the financial strain of the divorce.

Wess and Ruth Peterson purchased the house from the Gearharts, and lived there throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Wess Peterson, whose full name was Harry Westbrook Peterson, spent his career in the Fremont school system. He was first a teacher, and in 1969, he was appointed as Personnel Director for the Fremont Unified School District. He later became the district spokesman. Ruth Peterson worked at the library, and the couple had three children. In 1990, they named one of their daughters, Laurie Rojas, as successor trustee. The Petersons do not appear to have made major alterations to the layout of the house, but they replaced the windows circa 1991. Laurie Rojas inherited the property after the death of the Petersons in 2008. She utilized it as a rental property on and off until 2013, when Shiyu Zhang and Zheng Gao purchased the house.

### **13. 36501 Niles - Michael Corbett**

#### **History of the California Nursery**

The predecessor of the California Nursery was established in San Jose by John Rock in 1865 under the name "Rock Nurseries" (see Hill et al. 2002a for a more complete history of the California Nursery). Rock moved the business to a larger site near Milpitas in 1879 and, finally, to a still larger 463.38-acre site in Niles in 1884. The new property in Niles occupied a portion of the 17,705-acre Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda, granted to Jose de Jesus Vallejo (brother of General Mariano Vallejo) in 1842. Vallejo lost the property in 1862 to a real estate speculator, Jonas G. Clark.

During Vallejo's ownership from 1842 to 1862, several adobes and perhaps other structures were built for use in vast agricultural operations including wheat, potatoes, and other crops; horses for work and cavalry; oxen, cattle, and pigs; and tanned hides for leather. One of these adobes, a one-story structure, still stands on the property today. It is not known how long other structures of that era survived.

When the transcontinental railroad opened through Niles in 1869, the value of property in the area increased substantially. In addition to the climate, suitability of the soil, availability of water, and drainage characteristics of the land, the proximity of the railroad was a fundamental reason for locating the nursery on this site. Defining the original northern edge of the California Nursery property, the line of the Central (later Southern) Pacific railroad provided ready access not only to San Francisco and the Bay Area but also to national markets.

In 1884, Jonas Clark sold the property to John Rock. To serve the very different operations of a nursery business Rock and succeeding owners laid out the grounds with roads and paths and built new buildings and structures over time for an evolving business. The building now known as the Vallejo adobe remained in use "primarily as a storehouse." (Hill et al. 2002a: 3) The operational headquarters of the California Nursery (i.e. most of the buildings and structures of the nursery) was built up in the area around the adobe adjacent to the railroad and main county road.

From its establishment at this site in 1884 until 1927, the California Nursery was a wholesale business, selling directly to farmers, orchardists, great estates, businesses, and institutions. During John Rock's ownership from 1884 to 1899: The California Nursery Company, as the new facility was called, " 'became a great experimental farm, where all varieties of plants, secured from various countries, were tested and those suited to the climate and soil conditions of California were distributed throughout the state' (Duval). Rock's 1888 catalogue listed 700 types of ornamental plants, 500 varieties of fruit trees, and 273 varieties of roses . . . The nursery's work force in 1898 consisted of 100 to 220 employees (and 32 horses) during busy season. Most of the employees resided in Niles, Decoto, and Centerville; around 12 families lived on the premises. . . . By 1888, improvements included a residence, barn, tankhouse, windmill, and several greenhouses. Numerous other structures— barns, tankhouses, workers' cottages, bunkhouse, mess hall, packing sheds—were added as the grounds were developed.

An experimental farm with staff quarters and greenhouses adjoined the operational area on the west." (Hill, Minor et al. 2002a: 4-5) Among structures still standing on the property, only the tankhouse remnant (ca. 1890) was built during Rock's tenure. It is not known how long the other structures might have survived.

During the tenure of the next owner, William J. Landers, from 1899 to 1917, the business was still managed by John Rock until his death in 1904, and subsequently by William V. Eberly. Four of the buildings standing on the property today were built during the Landers-Eberly era: the office building, restroom, and President's house all built around 1907, and the packing shed built about 1910 when the Western Pacific Railroad built a line through the property.

In 1917, Landers sold the property to the George C. Roeding Company, which became the California Nursery Company. "Based in Fresno, the Roeding Company was a prominent nursery business that operated the Fancher Creek Nurseries and Fresno Nursery in that city with sales outlets in Modesto and Sacramento . . . The George C. Roeding Company, which oversaw these enterprises, became the largest nursery business in the state, supplying millions of fruit trees for farms and ornamentals for landscaping." (Hill et al. 2002a: 4) There were over fifty buildings on the property in 1918, the year after Roeding took over. (Jensen) Under George C. Roeding, Sr., the operation continued largely as a wholesale business: "the California Nursery became the headquarters of a regional chain of wholesale nurseries in Northern and Central California specializing in fruit and ornamental trees." (Hill et al. 2002a: 4) He began opening the nursery to the public in the 1920s (Oakland Tribune 1921: 45 and 1922: 55) and established a Sales Department in 1923. Then, in 1926 before he retired, he introduced retail sales. (Roeding 2011). No new buildings or structures are known to have been built at the Niles location during his tenure.

In 1926, management of the business was taken over from George C. Roeding, Sr., by his son, George C. Roeding, Jr., and after the father died in 1928 ownership passed to the son. In 1927, the business became primarily retail. (Roeding 2011) "Retail outlets were opened in Walnut Creek, Menlo Park, and Sacramento. A mail-order service and a landscaping department augmented the business. . . . it enjoyed continued prosperity through the 1940s with wartime demand for fruit trees in home orchards and wartime contracts for landscaping military bases, factories, and housing projects. In 1950, the nursery had 50,000 retail customers and 150 employees with an annual payroll of \$250,000." (Hill et al. 2002a: 4) The "decision to transform the nursery into a retail operation resulted in several building projects. In 1931, the Vallejo Adobe was reconstructed to serve as a marketing logo and reception cottage for the new business. In 1932 the Garden Store—the first of a chain of retail outlets in Northern and Central California—was erected by the main entrance of the nursery. The rustic Gateway was built around 1938. Around 1940, the Office Building, situated across the entrance road from the Garden Store, was remodeled to harmonize with the 'Old Adobe' marketing image." (Hill et al. 2002a: 5)

After 1900, the size of the property was diminished by a number of transactions leaving about 227 acres for the nursery business by 1930 when George C. Roeding, Jr., took over. By the late 1960s, there were 63 acres, and when the property was sold to the City of Fremont in 1972, there were 20 acres. Through all of these changes, the operational core of the business remained largely intact, including a scattering of buildings and structures. Among the surviving buildings and structures, examples remain on the property from all of the owners: Vallejo, Rock, Landers, and the Roeding family. In addition, examples remain from the two principle uses of the land: the Vallejo Adobe from the early period of ranching and farming and several buildings and structures from the nursery era. And, from the nursery era, examples remain from the two periods of operation: the tankhouse, office building, restroom, president's house, and packing shed from the period of wholesale operations prior to about 1930, and the Garden Store, remodeled office building, and gateway from the period of retail sales.

The California Nursery closed its business here in 1972 (it continues in 2012 with a limited mail order business), but a nursery business continued to operate under a series of owners and tenants. From 1968, the Lowell Berry Foundation owned the property. Portions of the nursery business were operated by Raymond P. Hochleutner in the 1970s and by Shig Nakamura from the 1970s to 1990s.

### **The Garden Store**

The introduction of retail sales at the California Nursery in the 1920s, and the overall shift in business from wholesale to retail in 1927 brought with it the need for new retail facilities. By 1933, "salesyards" at eight California locations — Niles, Loomis, Sacramento, Stockton, Modesto, Bakersfield, and two in Fresno — were advertised in the company catalog (California Nursery Co. 1934: 79) Subsequently, additional branches were opened in Menlo Park and Walnut Creek. The earliest known retail facility in Niles was illustrated in 1923 as a lath structure with a sign announcing "Sales Dept." (Oakland Tribune 1923: 13)

In the same general period of time, the establishment of a Landscape Department in 1930 provided "A complete Landscape Service" for homeowners and businesses. (California Nursery Co. 1934: [1]; California Arts and Architecture: October 1931, p. 56) Frances Baldwin Roeding, wife of George C. Roeding, Jr. "developed into a noted Garden Designer" (Sandoval 1974: 24) and may have been involved in this part of the business.

These twin needs for the same market resulted in the design and construction of a new facility for both in 1933. The new Garden Store was designed to provide space for retail sales and to promote the services of the Landscape Department to retail customers by the proximity of the two functions. The building was built by Bill Cull (Roeding 2012). The specific location was determined by the extension of First Street (now Niles Boulevard) westward from Niles into the property in August 1931. (Hayward Daily Review 11 August 1931, p. 7) The exact date of completion of the Garden Store is unknown, but appears to have been in mid to late 1933 based on an advertisement in October 1933 referring to "our new Garden Store" (Oakland Tribune 26 October 1933: 11) and a newspaper article in December 1933: "The California Nursery Company has just opened its large new Garden Store" (Oakland Tribune 14 December 1933: 14)

In the first catalog published after completion of the Garden Store, the 1934 Garden Book (copyright 1933), a sketch of the new Garden Store by Robert Ingram appeared on the cover with the statement inside that the building was "new this year," with the dual purpose of " 'everything for the garden,' as well as the headquarters for the Landscape Department." (California Nursery Co. 1934: 1) Undated photographs of the building that appear to have been taken not long after it opened (from the cars parked in front and the styles of clothing on visitors) show an unobtrusive temporary sign on the roof (and no flagpole in front). According to a long-time prominent landscape

architect Ernst Wertheim who first visited the California Nursery in 1939, before World War II the Garden Store functioned more as a place to greet customers than as a retail store; after the war it became a more conventional retail sales facility. Beginning in 1934, the Garden Store was a focal point of annual spring shows for daffodils and tulips that were held for many years.

### **Architect: Frederick Holberg Reimers (1889-1961)**

Frederick Holberg Reimers was born in Lake County, California 1 June 1889. His parents, Johannes and Fredericka Marie Arntz Reimers were born in Norway. Frederick's father (1856-1953) had a long career in the arts and was a friend of the composer Edvard Greig in Norway, and of Jack London in California. Johannes Reimers wrote a novel and was recognized as a painter. He was best known as a "landscape gardener" before landscape architecture was known as a profession. He worked for George C. Roeding, Sr. in Fresno in the 1900s when he designed Roeding Park, a well-known early example of landscape design in California. After the Roedings purchased the California Nursery Company in Niles, Johannes Reimers continued to work for them, designing "the garden for the headquarters . . . in the Old Adobe Building" about 1923. (Culbertson 2008)

Frederick Reimers grew up in Fresno and entered the University of California in 1912 graduating with an A.B. degree in 1915 after studying in the School of Architecture as a special student. The U.C. School of Architecture, under the direction of John Galen Howard, was modeled after the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Reimers and fellow special student W. R. Yelland, later a well-known designer of residential scale buildings that looked like they came from fairy tales, worked for Bernard Maybeck in 1915-1916.

While working for Maybeck, Reimers was issued Architectural License No. 854 on 27 March 1915, a notable accomplishment in a short time after completing his university education. In 1916, he opened his own office. At the time he registered for the World War I era draft on 26 May 1917, Reimers lived in Berkeley (2637 Rose Street), was a candidate in the ROT Corps (Reserve Officers Training Corps), and was employed by the United States Government (U.S. Army?) at the Presidio of San Francisco. During the war, Reimers was a First Lieutenant in the Army, serving as an engineer, and afterwards was long associated with the American Society of Military Engineers.

Reimers architectural license was cancelled while he was still in Europe where he may have traveled after his service with the Army. In 1961, for the Baldwin Memorial Archive of the American Institute of Architects, his widow stated that he "Traveled and studied architecture in France, England, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, and South America." When he returned in 1921, he opened his own architectural practice in Oakland and was granted a new license, No. 1337, on 2 September 1924. In the 1920s, his office was in the Tribune Tower, the most prominent address in Oakland. In 1923, he married Jane Howard, daughter of Edward A. Howard, a successful lumber merchant in Oakland and San Francisco. Frederick and Jane had one child, Frederick, Jr., born in 1926, later a dentist in Mexico city; he was also a painter, like his father and grandfather.

A partial picture of Frederick Reimers' architectural work is available from published sources — contract notices, newspapers, and architectural journals. In the ten years between his return from World War I and his design of the Garden Store at the California Nursery, he designed a typically varied number of building types and styles for an architect of his period with training in the methods of the Ecoles des Beaux Arts. His choice of styles exemplifies the Beaux-Arts idea of suitability — that there is no one universal best style, but that the character and appearance of a building should reflect its purpose, considering that the purpose of a building is more than its literal use and includes the expression of relationships with cultural symbols and associations.

For example, in the 1920s he designed at least two apartment complexes with the imagery of Normandy villages, conveying a blend of associations with the idea of home, with protection against the elements, and with the unlimited possibilities of life in California. In 1928, he designed a 45-room Tudor style mansion in Piedmont for E.J. Sweetland, a fellow artist who made a fortune as the inventor of oil filters for automobiles; the image of the place represented Sweetland's view of his own stature in the community. And, also in 1928, Reimers designed the Mediterranean style Sigma Pi fraternity house (now Phi Gamma Delta) in Berkeley like an old men's club with accommodations to the comfortable life of a villa in the mild climate of Tuscany.

Another recurring strain in his work of this period was an interest in the architecture of the Missions and Early California. His best-known work in this area is the Spanish Colonial Revival style Vallejo Junior High School with elements inspired by the Mission churches, which won an A.I.A. award in 1931. But he also designed many houses that reflected a feeling for the least monumental buildings in the varied groups of buildings that formed the Missions. One of these in particular, a house for Mrs. J.M Mendel at the Monterey Peninsula Country Club, might be seen as a forerunner of the Garden Store at the California Nursery. Set in a natural landscape, the most conspicuous feature of this low, horizontal house was its perimeter porch of unpeeled redwood log columns and rafters, a branch of which connects separate buildings on the property. (Raiguel 1926)

Also around the time of the Garden Store of 1933, Reimers began designing buildings that reflected the influence of Modernism. In 1931, he designed the Income Securities Building in Oakland, a six-story office building in the Moderne style. In 1935, he designed the Moderne style Howard Buick Building in Berkeley. In 1937, he designed a branch of the red-and-white grocery chain store and the Moderne style Friden Calculator Machine Building, both in Oakland. And, beginning in 1941, he worked as part of a team of architects designing housing for wartime workers in Richmond and Oakland.

Along with his architectural work, Reimers was an artist, noted for his pastels of the Bay Area, plein air watercolors, and easel paintings. (Dunbier 2005) And, in a completely different arena, he was a founder and longtime director of the San Francisco Federal Savings and Loan Association with fellow architects Henry H. Gutterson, Charles F. Masten, Lester W. Hurd, and W.I. Garren. In 1930, Reimers moved his office from Oakland to San Francisco where he shared space with Garren and Masten & Hurd at 233 Post Street until 1937 or later. Except that he shared space with these other architects, little is known about Reimers' office — only that in 1933-1934 Wallace Redmond Stout worked as a draftsman for him. By 1945, Reimers occupied his own space at 79 Post Street, the Federal Savings Building. All of these architects were active in the St. Francis Wood and Forest Hill subdivisions in San Francisco.

Reimers was also prominent in professional activities. He was president of the State Association of Architects and president of the Building Industry Conference Board. He served three terms under three governors, of the State Board of Architectural Examiners, including a term as president.

#### **14. 537 Morrison Canyon - Michael Corbett**

This property is referred to by the Planning Division as 537 Morrison Canyon Road, its address. Authors of studies of this property including Joseph Taylor at the Tile Heritage Foundation and Steven Soukup in California Tile, call it "Casa Irisada," for a house by that name in a Kraftile brochure that is an early version of the house. Casa Irisada means "House of the Rainbow."

With regard to its association with the Kraftile Company and its purposes of serving as a kind of model house showing Kraftile products, Taylor referred to it as a "demonstration home." Because it

was built by Kraftile's president, Albert Clay Myers, and then sold to another Kraftile officer, Homer E. Leash and was occupied by Myers from 1930 to 1936, it was part of the Kraftile "family" for its first six years. The name "Kraftile Demonstration House" seems descriptive both of its original purpose and its early history.

Because of the complex historical associations of the house and that it is significant under criterion B of the National Register in connection with two of its owners, Myers and Robert A. Blacow, another name for the house, representing its entire history, is the Myers-Blacow House.

## **OWNERSHIP**

### **Agricultural Period**

The property at 537 Morrison Canyon Road was part of the extensive lands of Mission San Jose beginning with its founding in 1797 by Franciscan missionaries under the authority of the Spanish crown. The property remained part of the mission's land, consisting of about 30,000 acres (Thompson & West 1978:14) after control of California passed from Spain to Mexico in 1821. After Mission San Jose was secularized in 1836, its lands were managed by former Governor Mariano Vallejo's brother, Jose de Jesus Vallejo, until 1843 when it was returned to the Franciscans. In 1846, the Mission San Jose lands were granted to Andres Pico and J.B. Alvarado. (Kyle 1990: 6) Through fifty years from 1797 to 1846, the principal use of the mission lands including the future site of 537 Morrison Canyon Road was cattle grazing.

The rancho of Pico and Alvarado included within its boundaries what became the Centerville, Irvington, and Mission San Jose Districts of Fremont. In 1850, two years after California was ceded to the United States, American settlers John M. Horner and Elias L. Beard acquired Alvarado's undivided interest in the rancho. The partners grew potatoes, vegetables, and grain on a vast scale. They also surveyed and sold land. In 1853, Beard and Horner declared bankruptcy. Their property then passed into the hands of creditors who subdivided and sold all the land. In 1859, the legality of the grant to Pico and Alvarado was disputed in the courts and found to be invalid. Landowners did not receive clear title to their property until the case was settled under the terms of an 1865 Act of Congress ("An Act for the Relief of the Occupants of the Lands of the Ex-Mission of San Jose in the State of California"). The settlement was based on an 1864 survey by the U.S. Surveyor General's Office, shown on E.H. Dyer's map Plat of the Lands of the Ex-Mission San Jose. (Minor 2003)

The 1864 Dyer Map shows the boundaries of 148 properties confirmed by the court, each designated by a survey number. The property at 537 Morrison Canyon Road is in the southern end of Survey No. 34 which consisted of 200 to 300 acres (hard to read, possibly 269 acres) owned by William Morrison. William Morrison (born 1821 in Dearborn, Indiana) was the brother of Perry Morrison (1818-1914) who by himself and with his partner, William Tyson, was a successful early farmer and large landowner in Washington Township.

Adjacent to Survey No. 34 on the southwest was Survey No. 61, consisting of 78.21 acres owned by Frank Rose (originally Rosa). Frank Silva Rose (1838-1891) was born in the Azores and came to the United States by 1858 when he married Susan Bradey (1836-1901), a native of Ireland. (ancestry.com family tree) The Rose's farmed Survey No. 61 and had eleven children while living there. The Roses son, James (1870-1948) — their seventh child and fourth son — married Katherine (Kate) Kaher (1875-1943), a native of San Francisco, in 1893. By 1896, James and Kate bought a farm in the area. On 14 October 1902 they bought another property consisting of 14.255 acres in Survey No. 34, adjacent to the land of James' parents. This property included the future location of 537 Morrison Canyon Road. They bought it from Jane Stevenson who, at an unknown

previous date, had bought this portion of Survey No. 34. Jane Stevenson and her husband John T. Stevenson owned substantial amounts of land in Washington Township. John, born in Michigan about 1830, arrived in Alameda County in 1852. Jane, born in Ireland in 1836, came to the United States in 1859. By 1878 the Stevensons owned 540 acres in Washington Township (Thompson & West 1878: 171) After John died, between July and October 1902, Jane sold off several small properties in 1902 and 1903, including the future site of 537 Morrison Canyon Road.

Surveys No. 34 and 61 were in an area of Washington Township that has been called “upland.” It is neither the rich alluvial farmland that stretches westward toward the bay nor the “mountains unfit for cultivation” labeled on the 1864 Dyer map. The uplands had limited use for cultivation and was probably mostly used for livestock with small areas for crops and orchards. This land would have been less valuable and less expensive than much of the township.

An official county map of 1924 shows that the future site of 537 Morrison Canyon Road was part of a more-or-less semi-circular shaped property bound by Morrison Canyon Road (also known as County Road 1670) on the west and Survey No. 61 on the east. About 200 feet down Morrison Canyon Road to the southwest was the Western Pacific Rail Road line. At that time, the property was about 14.25 acres in size. (Posey 1924)

As a indication of the low value of the land for agriculture, in 1900 James Rose listed his occupation as “teamster” in the census. The Roses continued to farm the land however, and by 1930, they had an apricot orchard on the property.

### **Residential Period**

On 7 July 1930, the Roses sold a portion of the property to Albert Clay Myers under an agreement that included a down payment of \$750 followed by five annual payments of \$850 for a total of \$5,000 plus interest. As part of the agreement, the Roses were required to “fill, cultivate, and care for the apricot orchard . . . during the year 1930-1931.” They would be responsible for “cultivation, pruning, picking and gathering of fruit” and would be entitled to all compensation for sale of the fruit. (Alameda County Recorder 1930)

The property Myers bought was 8.550 acres of the 14.255-acre parcel. For reasons that are not clear, this was described as 6.550 acres with an additional 2.0 acres along the east side to be surveyed later. It was stipulated that the survey had to be done before the deed was transferred.

### **Albert Clay Myers (1889-1941)**

Albert Clay Myers was born in 1889 in Los Angeles where he grew up with his parents and a sister. His education stopped after three years of high school. In 1907, when he was eighteen years old, he worked as a laborer. In 1910, when he was twenty-one and still living at home, he was listed in the city directory as an engineer. No other information has been found about his education and training, but he must have learned much from his father.

Myer’s father, Thomas L. Myers, worked in various aspects of the brick and clay products business. In 1900, he was listed in the census as a brickmaker in Los Angeles. In 1910, he was a “commercial traveler” selling clay working machinery. By 1914, he was working in Minneapolis for the American Clay Working Company which sent him to Oroville, California to inspect the clay at a site that was soon developed by the Oroville Clay Products Company. (Sacramento Union 12 May 1914) Elsewhere, he was described as “a clay expert” in relation to this effort. (The Clay Worker 1914) In 1922, he obtained a patent for a drier “of the kind described for use in drying articles of tender clay.” (Ceramic Abstracts 1922)

When he was 22 years old, in 1911, Albert Clay Myers got married. His wife, Helene was born about 1887 in Germany and came to the United States as an infant (her maiden name is not known; among many listings in many sources, only one gave her a middle initial, "M"). Nothing else is known about her family background or education except that she attended college for one year. She was naturalized as a citizen in 1910, 1911, or 1913, depending on the source. A ship's passenger list in 1930 said she was naturalized in 1911 "by marriage." She was living in Oakland in 1944, but her whereabouts are unknown after that.

In 1917, Clay and Helene lived in Staten Island, New York, according to his draft Registration Card of 5 June 1917. (He listed himself as Albert C. Myers on his draft registration form, but most listings throughout his life were either as A. Clay Myers, or sometimes Albert Clay Myers — variations that complicate searches for information about him). At that time, he was superintendent of a fire brick plant of the Richmond Brick Company located in Greenridge, Staten Island.

By 1918, Clay and Helene had moved to Washington Township, Alameda County, California. In that year, "Helene M. Myers," a housewife residing in Niles, was registered to vote (as a socialist; in later years she was a Republican, a Democrat, and Non-partisan). According to the 1920 census, they lived near DeCoto but Clay's voter registration placed him in Niles. At that time he was "the plant superintendent" of the California Brick Company located between DeCoto and Niles (on the site later occupied by Pacific States Steel Company; now housing, commercial, etc.) By September 1922, Myers moved to Richmond where he and James White Hislop established Hislop & Myers, Manufacturers of Mantle and Faience Tile. Shortly this became the Clay Glow Tile Manufacturing Company and, in 1923, became the California Art Tile Company. (Wyman 2003: 69) The Myers adopted a daughter, Ruth, who was born about 1923 when they were living in Richmond, although it is not known when the adoption took place.

After about three years, Myers left California Art Tile and moved back to Washington Township, this time to work for Kraftile. According to a small newspaper item in April 1925, "Mr. and Mrs. Clay Meyers [sic] and Mr. and Mrs. Hislop of Richmond were visitors in town last Wednesday. (Hayward Review 9 April 1925)

Apparently, at that time, Myers and Hislop were still partners at California Art Tile. Later than year, or in early 1926, Myers went to work at Kraftile. By 1927, he was both president and plant superintendent. As president, he had an office at 55 Montgomery Street in San Francisco, a prestigious and central location. As plant superintendent, he worked in Niles.

A little over a year after he began, the important regional architectural journal *Architect & Engineer*, ran a brief article, "New Company Enters Tile Field": "Under the management of one of the best known tile men on the Pacific Coast, Mr. A. Clay Myers, the Kraftile Company of Niles, California, has commenced the manufacture of highly fired faience tile for walls and floors on a large scale." (*Architect & Engineer* 1927: 129) Under Myers, Kraftile was transformed from an ordinary maker of roof tile to a maker of a range of tile products including structural block and high-profile art tile.

Because of a lack of directories and other records, it is not known where the Myers lived until late 1928, when on 9 October 1928, they bought a house at 844 Woodland Avenue in San Leandro. They paid off the mortgage on the house a little over a year later, by 29 November 1929. This was a wood frame, stucco clad, Mediterranean style house with a red-tile roof (possibly made by Kraftile) built in 1926. In 1929, the San Leandro directory listed Clay and Helene Myers in this four bedroom, two bath house with Mrs. Ruth Myers, Clay's mother — the household would have included their daughter Ruth as well. In February 1929, while living in this house, the social notes column in the local paper reported "Mrs. Clay Meyers [sic] of San Leandro called on Mr. and Mrs. F.V. Jones on

Sunday.” (Hayward Review 15 February 1929) Mrs. F.V. Jones was sometimes listed as the author of the “Niles Notes” column.

On 11 April 1930, according to the census, Clay, Helene, and daughter Ruth lived in a rented house in San Leandro at 863 Oakes Boulevard. Clay and Helene must immediately have left town after the census, as ship passenger records show them leaving Havana, Cuba on 19 April 1930 and arriving in New Orleans on 21 April 1930. Perhaps Myers had gone to Havana for business reasons, or simply for inspiration, as the city was renowned for its cement tiles, both for the process of their manufacture and their rich patterns and colors.

On 7 July 1930, Clay Myers purchased the site at 537 Morrison Canyon Road in his own name (the Woodland Avenue house in San Leandro had been bought in 1929 with both Clay and Helene on the deed). In August 1930, “Niles Notes” reported: “A beautiful Spanish home is being built east of Niles for Clay Meyer [sic] of the Kraftile Company. Mr. and Mrs. Meyer formerly lived in Niles but are now making their home in Broadmoor [San Leandro]. Their many friends will be glad to have them make their home in Niles once more.” (Hayward Review 22 August 1930) Tile was delivered for construction of the Morrison Canyon Road house on 29 September 1930. (Garcia Collection) Mrs. F.V. Jones reported on 10 October 1930 that they would move into the house soon: “Mr. and Mrs. Clay Meyers of Broadmoor will move to their new residence in Morrison canyon within the next two weeks. Their beautiful new home which is situated on a hill east of town has a marvelous view of the whole valley and the bay beyond. Mr. Meyer is general manager of the Kraft Tile industry in Niles and he and his family will be warmly welcomed as residents of this district.” (Jones 1930) Sometime between 14 December 1930 and 14 February 1931 (both dates appear in the records). Clay Myers and “Mrs. Helene Myers” sold the contract for sale to Homer E. Leash — even though she had not been listed on the purchasing contract. (Alameda County Recorder 1931)

Soon, however, things began falling apart. Within a little over a year Clay and Helene were divorced and Clay was marrying again, to Adelaide Gilbertson. The exact dates of these events are not known.

Despite the divorce and sale, Clay Myers appears to have lived in the house for most of the next five years, possibly renting the house from Homer Leash, or perhaps in some other kind of arrangement, discussed below. Different directories in January 1931 showed his residence to be 863 Oakes Boulevard in San Leandro where he and Helene had lived, and on Morrison Canyon Road (no street number was given). He was listed again on Morrison Canyon Road in a sequence of directories and other sources, up to March 1932 or later. Then in September 1933, Clay Myers lived at 442 Superior Avenue in San Leandro and Helene lived at 2015 Durant Avenue in Oakland.

In April 1930, Adelaide Gilbertson (1898-1969 or later) lived in Chicago with her parents. At that time Adelaide, who had an eighth grade education, had a hairdressing shop on the sixth floor of the 38-story Pittsfield Building, “Chicago’s Finest Office Building” — “a location unsurpassed for members of the Medical and Dental professions, specialty shops of the higher grade, and offices.” (Chicago Directory 1928: 256-257)

It is not known when or where Clay and Adelaide met, but as Clay traveled on business to Chicago, both to the Kraft Cheese Company headquarters and to a branch sales office of Kraftile, as later reported in a newspaper article (Hayward Daily Review 28 August 1933), it seems likely that they met there.

The timing of these events is of interest because of correspondence between Steven Soukup, a Santa Monica architect and historian of California art tile, and Robert Garcia, owner of and resident of the

house from 1975 to 2015. Garcia worked for the previous owner, Mrs. Robert Blacow, after her husband died in 1967. The Blacows bought the house in 1936 from Homer Leash who was a business associate of Clay Myers and perhaps also a friend, as Leash bought the house from Myers but then rented it to him for five years. Mrs. Blacow must have learned about the Myers from Leash and passed on what she remembered to Garcia forty odd years later.

According to Garcia, “Mr. Clay Myers was married to Adelaide . . . Mrs. Myers, as the story goes, designed the tiles at the plant. Her interest was to design her dream house for her family. Construction of the all tile model home started in the early 1930s. Mr. and Mrs. Clay Myers . . . lived in the house for only about two years.” After March of 1936, “Mrs. Myers then left for Los Angeles to live, never to return to her Niles home.” (Garcia, 1998)

Clearly, the story has jumbled some of the details, confusing the two wives. If Mrs. Myers wanted “to design her dream house for her family,” it seems more likely to have been the first wife, Helene, who with their daughter had lived in several places over almost twenty years as Clay took different jobs in the tile business. They lived together during the entire period of the design and construction of the house in 1930 and moved into the house together with their daughter. If anybody had a reason to move away to Los Angeles and never return, it was Helene. But Helene and Ruth lived in San Leandro and Oakland for at least the next several years and Adelaide lived with Clay in San Jose and stayed there after he died.

Other writers have implied or speculated that Myers sold the house because of hard times during the Depression. (Soukup 2004: 23-24; Taylor 2015: [3]; Brunzell 2016: 12) However, because Myers sold the house to Leash, a fellow officer in the Kraftile Company, it is not clear that individuals in the company suffered so severely and immediately from the country’s economic problems. It seems highly likely that Myers sold the house because of his personal financial obligations associated with his divorce from Helene. Or, because the house was sold to Leash, perhaps Leash wanted to keep it connected to Kraftile for business reasons.

Research so far does not resolve these questions. It is not clear whose dream house it was or who would have designed tile. However, it appears that if Myers’ wife “designed the tiles at the plant” and considered this her dream house, it had to have been Helene Myers who did and said these things. Nothing is known about Helene’s background to suggest that she might or might not have designed tile. After the divorce from Clay, Helene worked in clerical jobs for the W.P.A. and not as an artist. (The W.P.A. also hired artists) As a hairdresser, Adelaide may have had aesthetic inclinations, but nothing else is known about her to suggest that she might or might not have designed tile. After Clay died the only things known about Adelaide are that shortly after his death, she sold her half interest in the clay products business he owned at the time, and that she was involved with the Order of the Eastern Star, a Masonic group open to masons above a certain level — all men — and women in their families, including widows.

In March 1932, “A. Gilbertson” was listed in the telephone directory in an apartment building at 62 Oakes Boulevard, a few blocks down the street from Clay and Helene. Perhaps the divorce was complete around this time as on 15 December 1932, Clay and Adelaide had a son, Thomas Clay Myers, born in Alameda County. On 29 January 1934, they had a second son, Robert Clay Myers. No date for Clay and Adelaide’s marriage has been found despite a search in public records.

After residing briefly at 442 Superior Avenue, from July 1934 to March 1936 the telephone directory listed Clay Myers on Morrison Canyon Road again. When Homer Leash, from whom Myers appears to have been renting, sold the house in March 1936, Myers moved to 293 Broadmoor Boulevard in San Leandro. Although Leash was the legal owner, an ad was taken out by Myers to sell the house:

“Sacrificing at 1/3 of cost, Beautiful modern country estate on hillside; 8 1/2 acres; 2 1/2 acres apricot orchard. All tile 5-room Spanish home. All tile double garage with maid’s room, bath. Owner leaving city. Must be seen to be appreciated. A. Clay Myers, Morrison Canyon Road.”

Was Myers simply acting as an agent for Leash? Or had Myers retained ownership through some private arrangement with Leash? The answer is unknown.

Myer’s career at Kraftile and his residency in the house at 537 Morrison Canyon Road are known through a number of ambiguous and conflicting sources. He became president of Kraftile in 1927 and served in that position until, according to an article in the Tile Heritage Foundation newsletter, he “was relieved of his job as the company’s president in 1931.” (Taylor 2015: [3]) According to the California Heritage Museum book *California Tile*, Myers was succeeded as president by “E. Ridgway, treasurer of Kraft Cheese Co.,” then by Homer E. Leash, an officer of Kraftile and president of the International Wood Products Company, from 1933-1935 by James L. Kraft, and from 1935 to 1975 by Charles W. Kraft. (Soukup 2004: 24) An article in the local newspaper in mid 1931 referred to Myers as president of Kraftile, responsible for an Alameda County exhibit at the State Fair for that year. (Hayward Daily Review 31 July 1931)

According to Brunzell, “Myers remained with the company, acting as vice-president through 1933.” (Brunzell 2016: 12) A continuing role as a company officer is supported by newspaper articles in 1933 that referred to him as superintendent of the Kraftile Company plant” and as “general manager of the company.” Myers “had been in the east for several months in the interests of the company, conferring with officers of the parent cheese making company” and returned a week after the Kraftile plant was destroyed by fire. Six weeks after the fire, Myers announced to the press that the plant was “rebuilt and thoroughly modernized.” (Hayward Daily Review 28 August 1933; 2 October 1933)

During this difficult period for Kraftile, two patents which had been filed by Myers in 1930 and 1931, when he was president of the company, were approved — both on 25 July 1933. It is not clear how long Myers remained at Kraftile, but it may be that he left after the patents were approved and started another company in the area. According to Robert Garcia “Both Clay and Adelaide started a tile company, going bankrupt sometime before March of 1936.” (Garcia Collection 1998) No other references have been found to this company.

Whether Myers continued to be associated with Kraftile or not, he appears to have resided in the Morrison Canyon Road house until Leash sold it. He was listed as residing at 537 Morrison Canyon Road in the March 1936 telephone directory and was registered to vote from his residence at 293 Broadmoor Boulevard in San Leandro on 3 November 1936, indicating that he had moved by that time. Leash received the deed to the property from James and Kate Rose on 24 July 1935, indicating that he had made the required payments and also had a survey made of two acres on the east side. (Alameda County Assessor 1936: 537, 88, p. 102) Then on 14 March 1936, Leash sold the property to Blacow (Alameda County Recorder 1936) This sale must be the cause of Myers’ move to San Leandro. The move indicates that Myers still had work in the area.

Then an article in a San Jose newspaper in October 1936 announced the opening of a new venture, Myers Ceramic Products Company. With this new business, Myers and his family moved to San Jose, where they rented a house at 1385 Hanchett Avenue. The company was located in an “old pottery plant . . . on the Santa Clara-Alviso Road” which would “start operations as soon as machinery is received from the East” where “an official” was “now . . . buying equipment.” The new company would “manufacture glazed tile such as is used in bathrooms.” (San Jose News 3 October 1936) Myers worked in this company with a partner, Lester F. Hinz, until his death in

March 1941. (San Jose Mercury Herald 25 March 1941) Adelaide inherited Clay Myers' half ownership of the business, which she sold to Hinz on 19 December 1941. (Montgomery 2015)

Adelaide Myers lived in San Jose in the same neighborhood until at least 1969, the last year she was listed. Clay and Adelaide's son, Thomas, was still living with Adelaide in 1954. Apart from his birth in 1934, no mention has been found again of their second son, Robert, who appears to have died before the 1940 census, as he was not listed there or in his father's 1941 obituary.

Myers Ceramic Products Company remained in business in its original location until 1961, when it was closed "to avoid unionization." The original plant was demolished in 1973 but the company was revived, at least for the period 1977 to 2000, at a different location, at 600 Mathew Street near the San Jose airport. (Montgomery 2015).

### **Homer E. Leash**

*Italicized sections below are taken directly from Kara Brunzell's draft DPR (Brunzell 2016). Changes to her language are not italicized.*

*Homer E. Leash received the deed from the Roses in July of 1935 after meeting the contract requirements, as the Myers had been unable to do. Homer Leash was born in Indiana in 1879. His wife Aura, who was four years younger, was originally from Wisconsin. The couple lived in Washington State and had three children between 1904 and 1910. The Leash family lived in San Francisco during the 1910s. By 1920, they had moved to Hayward, where Homer was at first a millwright at a fiber mill.*

*The family lived in Hayward until the end of the decade. Leash retained his position in the Kraft box subsidiary during his active involvement with Kraftile, as the two companies operated side-by-side. The box company changed its name from K & L Box & Lumber ("K" stood for Kraft and "L" stood for Leash) to International Wood Products about 1927. In 1930, the Leash family lived in Hayward. The Leash family appears never to have lived on the Morrison Canyon property. In 1936, the International Wood Company box factory closed, and the Leash family moved to Oregon, where Leash opened a new box factory.*

### **Robert A. and Effa Steele Blacow**

*Italicized sections below are taken directly from Kara Brunzell's draft DPR (Brunzell 2016). Changes to her language are not italicized.*

*Leash sold the property to Robert and Effa Blacow in March 1936 before moving with his family to Oregon. Robert Adolphus Blacow was born in Washington Township in 1889, one of five children. His mother Lena was a homemaker and a member of the prominent DeCoto family, after whom the nearby town of DeCoto was named, (now part of Union City). His father Richard farmed Merino sheep. Robert's grandfather, also named Robert Blacow, was born in England and came to California in 1849. After a brief attempt at mining, he settled in the Centerville area and began farming. When he became a successful sheep farmer, the family built a large house across from the current site of Washington Union High School and became active in local affairs.*

*Robert grew up in Centerville. As a young man, he worked in the Hall of Records, where his uncle, Fred C. Horner, was County Assessor before becoming a clerk at the Bank of Alvarado where his cousin, John Blacow, was "cashier-manager" in 1910. In 1914, he married Effa Mae Steele, a 1912 graduate of UC Berkeley who grew up in San Andreas, Calaveras County and worked as a school teacher in Irvington. At the time of their marriage, Effa was described in the newspaper as "a highly*

accomplished young lady” and Robert, who held the position of Cashier at the Bank of Alameda County in Alvarado, was described as “a prominent young man of Washington Township” who was well known and highly regarded.” (Museum of Local History [1914]) When they were first married, they lived in the home of Robert’s uncle, Fred C. Horner, on the Centerville-Irvington Road (now Fremont Boulevard).

*In 1919, Robert became the branch manager at the newly-opened Niles branch of the Bank of Alameda County. As branch manager, it seems likely that Robert played an important role in the design and construction of a new bank building in Niles in 1929. The Blacows had an active social life and were frequently mentioned in the local newspapers. Among items were "community dinners," "bridge luncheon," trips, and charitable works. One example was a notice in 1930: "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Blacow entertained 26 friends at a dinner party in a Niles restaurant, which was followed by a card party at their home. (Oakland Tribune 15 June 1930) Their home at that time was on Main Street in Centerville. Both were active in organizational activities. Robert was a mason, a member of the O.E.S. lodge, and a charter member and director of the Niles Rotary Club. In 1936, the Blacows moved to 537 Morrison Canyon Road, where they spent the rest of their lives.*

In April 1936, they bought furniture, including a sideboard, china cabinet, dining room table, and armchairs from W&J Sloane, a San Francisco location of a fashionable New York store. (Garcia Collection) In 1938, after the Bank of Alameda County was sold to the Central Bank of Oakland, Robert continued as manager of the Niles branch. During World War II, Robert was active in the Rotary Club “war loan drives.” After the war, in 1945-1946, he was “Chairman of the township planning commission.” (Rotary 1962: 15, 18) In the early 1950s, when the bank changed hands again — this time bought by the First Western Bank & Trust — he continued as manager until his retirement in 1955, after which he served as chairman of the Advisory Board for the three First Western Bank branches in Washington Township.

Soon after his retirement, when the City of Fremont was incorporated in January 1956, Blacow was appointed the first City Treasurer, a position that he held for over ten years, until his resignation on 22 April 1966. A later newspaper article described him as “Fremont’s first and only city treasurer following incorporation.” (Museum of Local History 1975) He died a year and a half after his retirement, on 12 December 1967, at the age of 78.

Referring to his house and its environment, a 1960 article in the *Oakland Tribune*, during the period he served as City Treasurer, concluded: “Bob and his wife Effa live in one of Fremont’s show places, a hilltop home above Morrison Canyon overlooking what was first his grand-father’s sheep ranch, which later became apricot orchards, now disappearing to make way for Fremont.” (Williamson 1960)

Sometime after passage of the Williamson Act in 1965, the property was enrolled in the program which lowered tax rates in exchange for keeping land in agricultural and open space uses. It is not known when this was done, but the property was eligible for two years before Robert Blacow died. Effa Blacow continued living in the house until her death on 28 October 1975. The Blacows had no children and appears to have left the property at 537 Morrison Canyon Road to someone who helped her at the end of her life. According to Harry Avila, long-time pharmacist and local historian “One of my pharmacy delivery boys, Bobby Garcia, was later employed by Mrs. Blacow and was extremely kind, courteous and vital to her needs in later years. It’s my understanding Bobby was gifted the house for his role.” Avila’s wife, Janet wanted to buy the Blacow home circa 1975 and visited with Effa “but it was not for sale.” (Avila 2015)

## **Robert Garcia**

Italicized sections below are taken directly from Kara Brunzell's draft DPR (Brunzell 2016). Changes to her language are not italicized.

*In 1977, after Effa Blacow died, the Blacow estate transferred ownership of the property to Robert Garcia. Bob Garcia was born in Alameda in 1952 and grew up in the Niles area. After attending Cal State Hayward, he taught in the Newark School District for many years. Garcia appears to have removed the orchard from the property immediately after his acquisition of the property, because it was gone by 1979. According to a newspaper article, a nearby property was not able to get enough water from its well for farming suggesting that there may have been similar reasons for removing the orchard at that time. (Argus 1977) He replaced the orchard with an extensive hobby ranch which appears to have been designed to attract and accommodate groups, perhaps children's groups. Nothing is known about who might have come except for a single newspaper item in 1984 about the annual picnic of the Toyon Branch of the Baby Hospital association in Niles, accompanied by a photograph of the living room of the Kraftile House. Garcia kept sheep and other animals on the property, and by 2009 had retired from teaching and was tending his hobby ranch full time.*

Garcia made numerous alterations to the property and buildings during his 35 years of ownership. Changes included the conversion of the garage to use as a dwelling, construction of the adjacent small dwelling, construction of the laundry room addition northeast of the original house, and replacement of most original windows in the house as well as construction of the various features of the hobby farm. *He owned and lived in the house until his death in 2013.*

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPERTY**

County records indicate that by 1920, there was a building and an orchard on the property. (Alameda County. Assessor. 1920: 88B) The building was valued at only \$100 and may have been an agricultural shed or barn, or possibly a small dwelling. While the Rose family owned the property and managed the orchard, they lived elsewhere, variously listed as Alvarado or Niles.

This orchard was referred to in the sale contract from James and Kate Rose to A. Clay Myers on 7 July 1930. There was also an ambiguous reference in that contract to buildings on the property (the buyer, i.e., Myers "shall also keep the buildings [i]n said land insured for at least the sum of [illegible]") — but that reference was crossed out. Topographic maps of the period (1906, 1911, 1923 and 1928) do not show any buildings and the earliest aerial photographs, beginning in 1946 also do not show any buildings except those that were built in 1930. Assessor's Block Books in 1920 and 1928 show the value of improvements to be \$100, and \$200, respectively. This may indicate the presence of a small simple building such as a house or barn, or something else like a well or possibly an orchard. The value of improvements in 1931 jumped to \$2,750, referring to the new tile house, and a separate figure of \$400 for the garage.

On 7 July 1930, Albert Clay Myers purchased the property at 537 Morrison Canyon Road and began planning to build a house both as a Kraftile "demonstration" house and as a family home. The house was under construction by August 1930 when an item appeared about it in the Hayward Review. According to another item in October, the house was completed and the Myers family was about to move in. (Hayward Review 10 October 1930) Receipts itemize tile delivered for building the house on 29 September 1930. The dates of these sources suggest that the house was built very quickly, an important selling point for Kraftile.

As can be seen by the structure, materials, and style of the house, garage, and pumphouse, all were built about the same time. A photograph of the house under construction also shows the garage being built. The driveway with its loop in front of the house would have been built at the same time. The basic organization of the formal landscape would also have been created at that time, including the patio, lawns, and walk ways around the house and the lawn that contains the pumphouse at its edge. It is not known when the Batchelder tile sculpture of the woman with an urn was placed.

A 1945 oblique aerial shows the area around the house. (Brunzell Figure 14) The earliest useful documentation of the site as a whole is a 1946 aerial photograph (historicaerials.com) that shows the property much as it must have appeared when it was completed. This black and white aerial photo shows dark patches around the house, in the area encircled by the driveway, and in the pumphouse space, apparently lawns that were made possible with irrigation from the pumphouse. Likewise, the orchard along the east edge of the property is set in dark ground, the result of irrigation of the trees. Along the driveway from Morrison Canyon Road there is a ragged-edge growth of trees with intermittent patches of unwatered natural grass. The largest of these open patches is east of the pumphouse lawn and separated from it by a growth of trees.

In a series of aerial photographs, in 1948, 1958, and 1960, this landscape is little changed except for gradual growth of trees and seasonal variations. (historicaerials.com) A 1965 aerial photograph (BATSC 1965) continued this pattern with one notable change — that the open patch east of the pumphouse lawn now appears darker, as if it has also been watered. Thus, at this point, there appear to be three lawns: one around the house, one associated with the pumphouse, and one east of the pumphouse lawn. This new pattern persisted in the aerial photos of 1966, 1968, and 1979. According to the Residential Building Record, six sheds and a gazebo were estimated to have been built about 1985. However, while the 1987 aerial (the first one in color) may show a complex of new small buildings, it is the 1993 view (Google Earth, black and white) that first clearly shows new buildings. This photo also shows that trees and vegetation, especially on the north side of the driveway, to have been largely cleared. Beginning in 2002 (in color again), all aerials show yet more new construction, consistent with the Residential Building Record estimate of 1995 for the construction of three sheds and a greenhouse. Since 1993, trees and vegetation can be seen to have grown up around the new buildings and in the earlier open space north of the pumphouse lawn.

In the fall of 2015, the two bedrooms at the rear of the house were substantially demolished and the roof removed by the owner. Since 2015, the lawns, trees, and other vegetation have been untended.

## **HISTORIC CONTEXTS**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CITY OF FREMONT**

The establishment of the City of Fremont might be viewed in three stages: planning for incorporation of the city, incorporation and organization of the government, and initial development.

At the end of World War II, Washington Township was still predominantly agricultural with a scattering of small towns. The area was served by an overlay of county roads and state highways. Unlike most comparable areas, Washington Township was connected to major cities and transportation terminals by its railroads which provided direct links to Oakland, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York. Because of the railroads, industrial plants had been located here. Its most inclusive institution was the Washington Union High School District which covered most of the township. The district consisted of six elementary schools and a single high school. Situated

between San Jose and Oakland, as the post-war development boom began, Washington Township faced new problems.

In 1945-1946, there was a “township planning commission” chaired by Robert A. Blacow. (Rotary 1962: 18) Little is known about this commission except that its very existence indicates a consciousness of common concerns within the area of Washington Township. In the early 1950s, the idea of incorporating all or part of Washington Township into a new city took hold, resulting in the formation of committees, the preparation of studies, and the organization of the new city. Among the many issues facing the area that the incorporation movement hoped to address were uncontrolled development which would soon increase with opening of the Nimitz Freeway; the threat of annexation, possibly piecemeal, by Hayward and San Jose; distant government by the county supervisors; uncoordinated local government by special districts; development of infrastructure; implementation of local planning; and implementation of home rule. Many of the early meetings to address these issues were held at the International Kitchen a popular restaurant in Niles, at Wally Pond’s pharmacy in Irvington (Oral History Associates 1989: 20-28), in the homes and businesses of various leaders of the incorporation movement and in meetings of the chambers of commerce and the service clubs (among the places that have been identified are the home of Bruce Michael, the Patterson Ranch, and the Niles office of Vern Ellsworth — the Blacow home was not among those mentioned).

Following a period of campaigning led by the local chambers of commerce, most of the township — the communities of Niles, Centerville, Irvington, Mission San Jose, and Warm Springs, and the areas around them — voted for incorporation on 10 January 1956. The vote also chose a mayor and five city council members.

Two weeks later, on 24 January 1956, the City of Fremont legally came into being. The first act of the city, shortly after midnight on that day, was the appointment of three essential city officials: city attorney Leroy Broun, fire chief Frank Madruga, and city treasurer Robert A. Blacow. The first meeting was in the cafeteria at Washington High School. Other early meetings were “in the living room of Mayor Stevenson’s house.” Shortly, the city government moved into the recently vacated Mission San Jose Elementary School, “Fremont’s First City Hall.” (Oral History Associates 1989: 48)

Over the next four years, the city became established through the organization of the city government and its departments. The planning department, which those in the incorporation movement had seen as a key feature of the new city, began developing a general plan and produced its first guidelines in 1956. The Nimitz Freeway opened in 1957, spurring the development of more subdivisions. The development of Central Park began in 1959. The General Motors plant opened in 1962. When the new Civic Center Building was completed in 1969, it represented the culmination of the formative period of the City of Fremont.

Robert Blacow played important roles in each of these three early stages of the establishment of the City of Fremont. As chairman of a township planning group, in 1945-46, he was the leader of the earliest known effort that resulted in the creation of the City of Fremont. At the time of incorporation, he was one of the first appointments of the new city government, to the essential job of city treasurer. In the formative years of the city, he served for ten years as city treasurer, through the development of much of the infrastructure of the city — and he did this as a volunteer, at no cost to the city, an extremely generous civic gesture.

## **CITY TREASURER**

As city treasurer from the first day of the incorporation of the City of Fremont, 24 January 1956, until his retirement on 22 April 1966, Robert Blacow occupied one of the fundamental positions in municipal government, established in state law as well as by long tradition.

In keeping with this, the Annual Budget of the City of Fremont described Blacow's work each year, with minor variations. In 1958, his work was described as follows" "The City Treasurer is appointed by the City Council and serves without pay. He advises the Finance Department on the custody of all funds, makes recommendations as to the investment of temporary surplus funds and signs all warrants." (Fremont Annual Budget 1958-1959: 33) In 1965, the budget described the requirement for Blacow's work: "The Treasurer position is required by law and statutory duties included but are not limited to: receive and safe keeping [sic] of all money, comply with all laws governing the deposition and securing of public funds. The Treasurer also acts as trustee in assessment districts." (Fremont Annual Budget 1965-1966: 41)

As early as 1957-1958, many of the day-to-day reporting tasks that might otherwise be performed by the city treasurer, were done by an employee of the Finance Department: "the budget and all financial reports/activities are actually the responsibility of the Administrative Assistant/City Clerk." (Cutter 2016) This suggest that Blacow's role may have been in the areas of policy and oversight rather than in the traditional day-to-day work of a city treasurer.

During Blacow's tenure, "In the early 1960s there was a movement in California to abolish the position of City Treasurer." (Association of Public Treasurers 2016) Following Blacow's resignation, the city treasurer position in Fremont was changed. The treasury function is a logical responsibility of the Finance Department because of centralized financial controls and record keeping. Commercial banks today provide the actual safekeeping of public funds. The Director of Finance has acted as Deputy Treasurer and is now acting Treasurer as part of his regular job responsibility." (Fremont Annual Budget 1966-1967: 43)

## **INDUSTRY IN FREMONT: CLAY PRODUCTS AND KRAFTILE**

### **Introduction**

Industries of various types have been an important component of the economy of Washington Township since Jose de Jesus Vallejo built a grist mill — Vallejo Mills — near the future site of Niles in 1841. This was the first in a long line of food processing industries in Washington Township, a logical outgrowth of the dominant use of land in the area for agriculture.

Over many years, the development of various types of infrastructure provided a foundation for the expansion of food processing industries and for the development of industry in general. The first of these was rail, with the main line of the nation's first transcontinental railroad built in 1869 through the township after passing through Niles Canyon on its way to Oakland. The rail network was expanded beginning in 1910 with a new line from Niles through Centerville to Newark. Also in 1910, a second transcontinental line was built through the township from Niles Canyon to Oakland. A branch of this line was built through Irvington to San Jose in 1914.

In 1902, high voltage electric lines were built through the area from the Molelumne River. The capacity of these lines was increased several times, resulting in the establishment of a major electrical substation at Newark in 1919. This was substantially upgraded in 1931.

By 1909, the network of roads that had arisen in the earliest years of American settlement in the township, connecting the communities with each other, to farms, and to bay landings, and linking them to Oakland and San Jose, had begun to be improved and incorporated into county and state road systems. (Oakland Tribune 24 May 1909)

The presence of roads and railroads with connections to local and distant markets together with adequate power generated small industrial districts in the towns of Centerville, Irvington, Niles, DeCoto, Newark, and Alvarado. These districts typically included lumber yards, warehouses for hay and grain, and fuel depots. Particularly important for the development of industry in the twentieth century were the distribution stations for petroleum products at Irvington in 1912 and Niles in the 1930s.

This growing and evolving infrastructure provided the basis for a variety of industries. Among other food-related industries established in the area after Vallejo's Mill were a sugar mill in Alvarado beginning in 1870, a winery near Irvington begun in 1881, and numerous fruit drying and canning operations starting in the 1870s-1880s. Chief among these were large canneries, notably the 1915 F.E. Booth & Company Cannery in Centerville, the 1918 Schuckl Cannery in Niles, and the K. Hovden-Pearce Cannery in DeCoto, by the early 1920s. New canneries were built and existing ones were expanded in every decade from the 1910s to 1950s.

The principal impediments to industrial development were uncertain supplies of water and a shortage of labor. Nevertheless, other types of industries developed. Among manufacturers were the James Graham Manufacturing Company, established in Newark in 1882 to build cast-iron stoves and related products, the Reid Brothers hospital supply factory in Irvington in 1922, and the Steiger & Kerr Stove Company in the vacated Reid Brothers plant in 1939. In their own categories of industry were numerous salt companies along the bayshore begun before the turn of the century, and the California Nursery which moved to Niles from Cupertino in 1884.

While the supply of water for agriculture and industry was not secure — the Spring Valley Water Company had rights to water that were the regular object of litigation — the presence of Alameda Creek and other water courses in the alluvial flat lands of Alameda County had, over millennia, left deposits which gave rise to two important local industries, both associated with construction.

## **Sand and Gravel**

The earliest of these was the sand and gravel business. Gravel quarries were already identified along Alameda Creek by 1878. According to a recent study of the quarry pits, "The area is historically important as it is the site of the first gravel quarry operation in California. It served to supply the gravel needs of the first transcontinental railroad in 1867." (Fremont n.d.) According to a recent history of Niles, "Niles attracted the first gravel mining operation in 1868." (Holmes and Singleton 2004: 7) James Shinn and his son, Joseph, mined sand and gravel on their property along Alameda Creek before 1900.

William H. Ford of Niles, who arrived by 1891, at an unknown date "began extracting sand and gravel from alluvial deposits along Alameda Creek. He founded a succession of companies that were consolidated in 1927 as the Associated Gravel Company. Sand and gravel made Ford rich as concrete became a common building material in twentieth century California." (Basin Research 2002: no. 74, p. 3) Ford owned the Niles Sand and Gravel company.

Gravel mining was a steady enterprise for decades, resulting in large, water-filled quarry pits: "The first gravel pits in California are here at Shinn and Grace Ponds." An aerial photograph in 1940

shows what looks like a single large pit bordered closely by the town of Niles and by farmland. (Holmes and Singleton 2004: 84)

During or after World War II, gravel quarrying in the area increased substantially. “Companies that quarried in the Alameda Creek area include Rhodes and Jamieson Co., Lone Star Co., Pacific Cement and Aggregates, [Pacific Coast Aggregates], Flintkote Co., Ideal Basic Industries, Kaiser Gravel Co., Inland Aggregate, Quarry Products, Niles Sand and Gravel. Henry K. Kaiser founded Kaiser Gravel Company in 1949.” In addition, “The El Cerrito Ready Mix Company began buying materials from the quarry companies at Alameda Creek in 1948.” (Fremont n.d.)

## **Clay Products**

One of the most important industries in Washington Township, from the beginning of Euro-American settlement to the late twentieth century has been the making of clay products. Beginning in 1797, the builders of Mission San Jose made adobe bricks from local materials. In 1806, a visiting German scientist noted that there was “excellent earth for the manufacture of bricks (adobe) so that most buildings were constructed of them.” (Schuetz-Miller 1994: 186) With the arrival of the Americans, short-lived brickyards were established on the sites of clay deposits including the James and John Hagan Brickyard built in Washington Corners (now Irvington) in 1874, moved to Centerville in 1875, and closed in 1876. The Hagan’s bricks were used for Clark Hall (1876) in Irvington. Another brickyard with a wood-fired kiln was built by Michael Connelly to make bricks for a seminary (that soon became the property of the Dominican sisters) in 1882 (demolished 1998) (Mosier 2013)

In the twentieth century, the manufacture of bricks and other clay products became one of the basic industries of Washington Township in terms of employment and production. Clay products businesses in the area are listed below. Each location is given a number. Under each number, each business at that location is listed.

1. Niles Canyon, 1 mile east of Niles on the south side (Western Pacific Railroad stop). Initially 53 acres.

A. California Pressed Brick Company, 1907-1913. Established by a group of Niles businessmen at a clay deposit discovered during construction of the Western Pacific Railroad. Incorporated with capital stock of \$1,000,000. Equipment included three types of kilns. The plant made various types of bricks. Face bricks were used in Western Pacific depots. Paving bricks were used by Southern Pacific and in chimneys at Mission San Jose. Opened in 1909. Closed in 1911. Reopened 1912-1913. Employees: 50

B. California Pottery Company, 1915-1929. The California Pottery Company bought the California Pressed Brick Company after the former closed “for the purpose of expanding it’s sewer pipe operations.” (Mosier 2006) Western Pacific Railroad established the Dresser stop in Niles Canyon in 1923 for the shipping of clay from this site to another plant in Oakland.

C. Western Clay Products Company, 1929-1960. New name of the California Pottery Company. Began production of tile, terra cotta, flue linings, and sewer pipe in 1931.

D. Mission Clay Products Company, 1960-1992. Western Clay Products was bought by a Whittier company in 1960 and changed its name to Mission Clay Products Company. Made sewer pipe and bricks. After “the late 1990s” it was “dismantled.” (Mosier 2006) Employees: 50-60.

2. Pabrico Siding, DeCoto (Western Pacific Railroad stop between Niles and DeCoto). Initially 49 acres

A. Oakland Paving Brick Company, 1909-1912. Source of the name "Pabrico," this property was purchased in 1909, the same year that the new Western Pacific Railroad line opened. Established by a group of Oakland businessmen, the company was incorporated in 1910 with capital stock of \$200,000, began operating in 1911, and closed in 1912. The largest building was 976 feet long with kilns 625 feet long. It made paving bricks and other types of bricks from a large clay pit on the site. Capacity: 250,000 bricks per day. Employees: 30.

B. California Brick Company, 1913-1926. Established by new investors who bought Oakland Paving Brick Company and incorporated in 1913 with capital stock of \$400,000. New equipment including two continuous kilns, each 600 feet long. It made paving bricks, other types of bricks, and hollow tile blocks for partitions called "Dickey Mastertile." Dickey Mastertile was used in many prominent buildings in San Francisco and northern California including Veterans Hospitals in Livermore and Palo Alto, Stephens Hall at the University of California, the Palace of the Legion of Honor, and two office buildings, Mills Tower and the Alexander Building, in downtown San Francisco. It was also used in an apartment building at 325 East 12th Street, Oakland (1921) and in the Alliance Land Company at 1600 Harrison Street, Oakland (1922), in the Alameda County Nurses dormitory in San Leandro (1923), and at the Leal Theater at 3911 Washington Boulevard (1922) in Irvington. California Brick Company paving bricks were used at the Alden and Golden Gate branch libraries in Oakland, common brick was used at the Masonic Home in Union City (1913), the Hanson Lumber Company in Niles (1931), and the Odd Fellows Hall at 37695 Niles Boulevard (1930). Face brick was used at Santa Clara Union High School, and in what is now Fremont it was used at 37397 Fremont Boulevard (n.d.), 37657-37663 Niles Boulevard (1930), and the Niles State Bank (1923).

C. W.S. Dickey Clay Manufacturing Company (1926-1937). The Dickey company bought the California Brick Company by 1920 but kept the old name until 1926 when it became W.S. Dickey Clay Manufacturing Company. This was known as Plant No. 18 of the Dickey Company which was a large business based in Kansas City. The plant superintendent within the period 1918 to 1922, was A. Clay Myers, later at Kraftile. The plant made many kinds of bricks, roof tile, architectural terra cotta, and "Dickey Mastertile." Closed 1937. Site sold to Pacific States Steel Company and plant demolished. Employees: generally 75-150.

3. Pabrico Siding, Niles (Western Pacific Railroad stop between Niles and DeCoto).

A. Kraft Clay Products Company, 1924-1926. In 1924, Charles H. Kraft, owner of the Kraft Cheese Company of Chicago, moved an existing business making cheese boxes with Homer E. Leash from Hayward to Niles (Anonymous 1949) The name of the company, using the initials of its founders, was the K & L Box and Lumber Company. The company bought property from the California Nursery Company on the north side of Niles Boulevard about a mile west of the center of Niles between the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific rail lines. With scraps of wood from the box business and large deposits of good clay discovered on the site, the company began a second business on the same property. "Kraft Clay Products Company produced handmade Spanish roof tiles, ashtrays, lamp bases and pottery which were fired in wood-burning updraft kilns known as 'beehives' because of their shape." (del Valle 1997)

B. Kraftile Company, 1926-1997. In February 1926, the Kraft Clay Products Company was incorporated as the Kraftile Company, a separate business from the K & L box company, while both remained on the same site. In 1927, A. Clay Myers was president, and the officers were Charles H. Kraft, James L. Kraft, E. Ridgway (a banker) and Homer E. Leash. The new company built new

facilities including oil-fired down-draft kilns and two brick stacks, each fifty-feet high. Over the years of its operation from 1926 to 1996, in addition to the decorative art tiles, the company manufactured “glazed structural wall and partition units, glazed swimming pool overflow gutters, patio tile, quarry tile, standard brick, Roman face brick, split pavers, enameled brick, acid-floor brick, and acid tank block.” (Mosier 2005) By July 1927, “the output of the plant was 1,000 square feet of tile daily.” (Dietrich 1928: 41) In addition to clay quarried on site, from the beginning Kraftile mixed in clay from the Lincoln Clay Products Company owned by Gladding-McBean, in Placer County, and also from around Folsom in Sacramento County. Sand came from Ione in Amador County. (Kraft 1992; Basin Research Associates 1998: 7; Soukup 2004: 23) The company generally had around 65 to 85 employees.

During the period leading up to and during construction of the house at 537 Morrison Canyon Road, and for many years after it was built, Kraftile’s best-known products were its glazed art tile and its glazed hollow tile blocks for structural walls and partitions. Its art tiles have been variously described as “decorative faience tiles derived from Moorish, Spanish, Persian, and Tunisian designs” (Soukup 2004: 23) as Saracenic (i.e., Arabic), and as Japanese, Hawaiian, Florentine (Italian), and Indian (Native American). Because of recently discovered information about a trip to Havana in 1930 by company president A. Clay Myers, it may be that Cuban tile designs also influenced Kraftile (this tile was not ceramic but encaustic, so the possibility could be investigated that Kraftile was influenced by the designs but not by the materials or manufacturing process of Cuban tile).

The other notable product of this period was glazed hollow tile blocks, called Kraft-Enamel. “In 1930, with the depression, Kraftile pioneered glazed wall unit production on the [Pacific] Coast.” By 1949, Kraftile would be “the largest producer . . . of glazed wall units west of the Mississippi.” So prominent was Kraftile in the field that regardless of the manufacturer, “glazed wall units in this part of the country are often referred to as ‘Kraftile’.” (Kraft 1949). These products “played a large part in the construction of governmental, military and public buildings including many schools, universities and hospitals” on the West Coast. (del Valle 1997) Three local examples of the use of these blocks are known: the Veterans Memorial Building of 1930, the Hanson Lumber Company building of 1931, and the house at 537 Morrison Canyon Road of 1930, all in the vicinity of Niles (Mosier 2003) The extent of use of “glazed wall units” is unknown, but an indication can be inferred from incomplete company records that state, for instance, that eighteen unspecified installations in hospitals were made before 1940, and among 131 projects between 1940 and 1964 were sites all over California, in nine western states, in what was then the Territory of Hawaii, and in the Canal Zone. Many of these were major buildings for the State of California, branches of the military , and well-known public and private institutions. (Kraftile 1940-1964)

Kraftile’s decorative tiles, promoted by the company as “precious jewels of architecture” represented an important product of the art tile industry in California according to numerous sources including a two volume collection of essays on California Tile (Taylor 2004), the California Division of Mines and Mining (Dietrich 1928: 41), The Encyclopedia of American Art Tiles (2005), the newsletter of the Tile Heritage Foundation (2015), and many other sources. Despite this, relatively few examples of Kraftile’s art tile have been positively identified. Among known installations of the tile are the house at 537 Morrison Canyon Road, Niles; 1770 Pine Street and 719 Bay Street, apartment buildings in San Francisco built ca. 1926-1931; “eight glazed terra cotta murals on the Silurian Springhouse” in Waukesha, Wisconsin, ca. 1928-1929 (Tuinier 2015); 798 South Second Street, San Jose, now the Neptune Society from the early 1930s; a swimming pool in Dayton, Ohio, 1932; the Sunshine School of 1938 in San Francisco; a permanent exhibit booth at the California State Fair in Sacramento of 1939; the main lobby of the Kraft-Phenix Cheese Corporation, Chicago, in 1939; and a 1936 reproduction of an ancient Babylonian frieze

considered the earliest representation of domestic dairy animals and practices (one of several originals is in Chicago at the Kraft-Phenix Building and the only other known survivor is at Ohlone College in Mission San Jose), originally shown at the 1939 Treasure Island Exposition. Additional research is necessary to identify other examples of the company's art tile work

Many other product installations are known but whether they were decorative tile, glazed blocks, or some other product is not known. A 1930 company catalog listed the following installations ("A few of the buildings in which Kraftile Company products have been used."): the New York Central Railroad station in Buffalo, New York, colleges in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Tallahassee, Florida, a 250-home residential development in Cleveland, Ohio for John D. Rockefeller, and the home of silent movie star Thomas Meighan in New Port Richey, Florida. In California the catalog listed Stockton High School in Stockton and the Christian Science Benevolent Home, Park-Presidio Junior High School, and Roosevelt Junior High School in San Francisco.

During World War II, Kraftile made structural tile blocks and other, non-clay products including Quonset Huts. After the war, the company returned exclusively to clay products, mostly glazed wall units and tiles for various purposes. "Kraftile had an annual gross income of \$650,000 in 1950, and had grown to be one of the largest companies in Niles with 85 employees . . . A celebration mounted for the company's 25th anniversary on February 1, 1950 reflected the importance of Kraftile to the local economy." (Basin Research Associates 1998: 9) As part of the celebration, all 83 employees at the time were paid in silver dollars with the idea that as those dollars were spent locally the importance of the company would be demonstrated.

Among notable projects in the later years of the company were floor tiles in shopping malls all over California, floor tiles at thirteen BART stations, and the Fremont, Newark, and Union City city halls. The Fremont City Hall has been demolished. Post-war advertisements featured "patio tile" in suburban ranch style homes in Oakland, Glendale, and Danville, California. By the 1970s, "Kraftile developed a network of several hundred dealers in the Western United States. Through sales representatives the company expanded its market to the eastern United States and Europe." (Basin Research Associates 1998: 9)

Portions of the plant appear to have been sold off over the years, leaving a 15-acre site in 1984. (Dinkelspiel 1984) The Kraftile plant was closed in 1996 and demolished within a few years for a housing development.

#### 4. Off Niles Boulevard between Niles and DeCoto: 500 King Avenue, Niles.

A. Interlocking Roof Tile Company, 1926-1976. Established by Joseph Pessaqno, an Italian immigrant, and run by him and his sons for fifty years, using clay from a nearby deposit "(3.8 miles) ENE of Fremont in the Hayward Hills." According to newspaper ads: "the Improved Interlocking Roof Tile . . . provides a handsome, durable roof that is guaranteed for the life of the building." (Oakland Tribune 30 December 1928) and "machine pressed." (Hayward Daily Review 16 July 1949) The site is now occupied by a housing subdivision.

#### 5. Off Niles Boulevard, DeCoto, with a second site off Whipple Road, DeCoto, near Hayward border.

A. M and S Tile Company, ca. 1935-1960. The M and S Tile Company was already in operation in 1935 when a fire seriously damaged the plant. (Hayward Daily Review 12 March 1935) This is the earliest record of the plant that could be found in newspaper searches and it is not known how long it had been there before that. According to a newspaper ad, M and S was "California's Only Manufacturer of Genuine Hand-made Spanish Mission Tile [and] . . . furnished all of the Spanish

Mission tile used in the restoration of the San Carlos Mission, San Antonio Mission, San Rafael Mission, and many others.” (Hayward Daily Review 8 July 1952)

6. Warm Springs: “next to the Western Pacific railroad at 48311 Warm Springs Blvd. near Starlite Way.” (Mosier 2007) 21 acres.

A. Laclede-Christy Clay Products Company, 1948-ca. 1951-1953. This was a branch of the Laclede-Christy Company, founded in St. Louis in 1844. The company specialized in the production of refractory brick or fire brick. Equipment: one down draft kiln. The plant did not use any local clay but imported “Missouri bond clays.” (Mosier 2007)

B. Harbison-Walker Refractories Company, ca. 1951-1953 – 1966. The Laclede-Christy plant was sold to Harbison-Walker of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania around 1951-1953. Harbison-Walker descended from a company founded in 1865. They had a sales office in San Francisco since 1925, and by 1951 “found that it was more economical to ship raw material to manufacture bricks in California than to ship the fragile bricks directly from its eastern plants.” Equipment: included several kilns. Employees: 12 workers. “The site today is part of the Warm Springs Business Technology Park.” (Mosier 2007)

7. Intersection of Wells and Willow Streets, Newark.

A. E.J. Lavino and Company, 1952-1966. Built on a 44-acre site by “a major basic refractories manufacturer from . . . Philadelphia” at a cost of \$2,500,000. (Mosier 2010) Used imported clays and local magnesia produced by the Westvaco Magnesite Company in Newark. Employees: 40-65 workers.

B. Continued under same name after purchase by International Minerals & Chemical Corporation, 1966-1971. Employees: 45 workers. Plant demolished.