

Oral History Committee

Mill Valley Public Library

Mill Valley Library Association

Mill Valley, California

ELEANOR "DOLLY" (MRS. JAMES) JENKINS

An Interview Conducted by

Helen Dreyfus

V. 46

© 1977 by the Mill Valley Public Library

Mrs. James (Eleanor "Dolly") Jenkins

Born May 9, 1889 in San Rafael, California.

Summer resident of Mill Valley from birth;
permanent resident from 1910 to 1936.

Interviewed December 1977 in her home at
1101 Green Street, San Francisco.

The following manuscript is open for research purposes.
All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right
to publish, are reserved to Mill Valley Public Library.
No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication
without written permission of Librarian, Mill Valley Public
Library, 375 Throckmorton Avenue, Mill Valley, California
94041. Requests should include identification of specific
passages to be quoted, anticipated use of passages, and
identification of user.

ELEANOR "DOLLY" JENKINS

Index

Abbott, Leonard	19	Caruso (singer)	13
Adams, Maude	13	causeway fill (main road to sandpit, Stinson)	23
advertisement for Blithedale Hotel, 1908	24	causeway washouts in winter	23
Allen, Ida Johnson	32	charades in parlor	10
Ashton, Helen and identification of people in picture	18	children and summer play	24
auction, 1890	19	children's births	27,28
badminton court, Blithedale	10	Chinaman with a real queue	17
Bagshow's store	29	Chinese cook, box kites and mashed potatoes	23
Baldwin, Emma	16	Chinese servants	3
Baldwin, Mr & Mrs Stewart	16	Cliffords, Elsie and Evelyn	20
"Mr. Barber, manager"	24	Clinton, Helen	10
Bates, Mr and Mrs	11	clothes in 1880's	17,18
bean soup, scorched	29	coach and four	5
Mrs. Bess	20	coast road	14
Mrs. Beyford and children	20	cockroach at bottom of milkcan	29
Billings, George, shipping & insurance magnate	18,19	Coit, Lillie	15
Billings, Kay	18	"coming out"	14
The Billings' place	30	Corte Madera Avenue as a trail, 1890	19
Billings property deed dated October 15, 1896	19	Corte Madera Creek	19
birth	cover	Corte Madera del Presidio grant	2
birthplace	24	Cottage Avenue & Eldridge Avenue (loc.)	30
Blake, Anson	17,18	cottages	9,10
"Blithedale" (poem)	8	Cushing, Harriet	1
225 W. Blithedale	30	Cushing, John (brother)	25,27
Blithedale, separate from MV	12	Cushing, Dr. John	1,32
Blithedale and parents' marriage, 1881,1886	25	Cushing, Sidney Barlow	2
The Bridges' place	30	Cushing genealogy, 1900	2
Blithedale Canyon	31	dam location	25,30
Blithedale Canyon, suits to stop railroad	21	dam ruined by railroad	12,22
Blithedale Hotel	3,4,18	dances	10
Blithedale Station	5	Dipsea Inn parties	14
Blithedale Romance	7	Dolly, Aunt	1
Dr. Boericke	31	Doss, Margot Patterson	29
Boericke, Ruth	12	The Double Bowknot solution to design problem	21
Bolinasites	23	Dreyfus, Helen	Interviewer
bowling alley, Blithedale	10	earthquake, 1906	13
California Historical Society 1958 (or 1959)	8,9,18	Eastland, Joseph Green	7
capsule plumbing	16,17	Eldridge, John O., grandfather	24
		225 Eldridge Avenue	21
		Episcopal Church	15,16
		Erskine, Mildred	28,29,30
		fancy-dress parties	11

father, builder of Mountain		Kimball cottage	19
Railway	20	kite, singing	23
father's trip to Mount Lowe	21	Larkins, Shirley, typist	32
Mr. Ferguson, coachman	20	Lee, Allan	24
Finn, Mrs. John	28	letters, anonymous	28
first house (wedding gift)	26	Marion (Aunt)	6
flatcar, Tam Scenic railway	21	Marin County, 1873	1
flatcar, first rider on		marriage, January 5, 1910	26
Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway	21	Marshes' Japanese gates	30
Foster, Lou, 1906	13	McBean, Athol	16,17
4th of July dance	10,11	McBean, Peter	16
508 4th St. San Rafael,		McClung, Major, shooting by Coit's	
1881	24	rent collector	15
fruit trees in Blithedale		McClung girl	16
Canyon	31,32	Mrs. McGinus, 1st passenger on train	21
gas works	24	MacHale, Sally (daughter)	27,28
The Geislars	20	milkhouse (structure described)	5,16
grandfather Eldridge	24	milkhouse fire place, pool table,	
grandfather Cushing's death	3,9	and bar	9,10
grandfather Cushing's occu-		Mill Valley before it was a place	1
pation	2	Miller, H.M.A. & son Chris	20
grandmother's garden	31,32	Molders, Malcom, 1880's	20
grandparents' arrive,		Monteagle children's recitations	15
Marin County	1	Monteagles	10
grants cleared, 1882 & 1886	2	Mr. Moore	15
Green Roof Cottage	25	Moore, Duval (4 yrs, 1883)	16
"Green Roof Cottage & the		Moore cottage	9
Diablo meridian"	30	The Moores	10
Green Roof House	31	moss exhibits	30
Greenway balls in San		mother	24,25
Francisco	14	mother's death	27
Hanson, Lucretia	28	mother's house in San Rafael	15
Hayakawa, S.I. & Margedant	26	mountain railway	21,30
The Hayes' place	30	mountain railway incorporated, 1896	19
homeopathy	1	mountain railway plans, 1890's	25
homesteading	2	mountain train	5,6
horse tent	23	Miss Murison's School, San Francisco	13
horseback riding friends	12	Norris, Charles G.	11
hot soup lunches	28,29	North Pacific Coast Railroad, 1875	5
The Houghtons, Ruth and		"old adobe" rumor about milkhouse	6
brother Shirley	20	"Old Dog Tray" (Stephen Foster song)	17
house built on piers at		one-man strike against railroad	21
Stinson	23	Outdoor Art Club	28
house in Bolinas, 1936	27	Outdoor Art Club location (area be-	
house on Cushing grant	2,3	ginning of Cushing property)	4
Japanese candle lanterns in		own "to the middle of the creek"	19
trees during parties	11	PTA-ites	28,29
Jenkins, James (husband)	26,27	pantomimes at Blithedale	17
Jenkins, James (husband),		parlor charades at Blithedale Hotel	3
death, 1960	27	Parlor Cottage	3
Jenkins, Eleanor	27	parlor gatherings, Blithedale	17
Jenkins, Jimmy (son)	28	the parlor house	9
Keiler, Jean (Ward)	18	"patent" (a homestead)	2
Kent, Albert	25	patients from San Francisco	3
Kent, William	22,23	Payne, Maude	20
Killion, Dorothy, editor	32	picture: a quiet evening in the parlor	15

picture: Chinaman, 1883	17	Strawberry (loc.)	8
picture: pantomimes at Blithedale	17	Strawberry Point, 1875	5
picture: statecoach & identification of people	8,9,18	supplies	5
pony ride to Dr. Boericke's	31	Mr. Sutro's bill of boarding for horses	20
pony ride to school	13	309 Tamalpais Avenue	31
Prisoner's Base, played on ponies	13	tea in the tents (Blithedale)	10
railroad, southern Marin	5	telephone exchange, "Blithedale"	7
railroad and Bolinas, Stinson and Muir Woods	22	telephone rates, 1893	8
Ransom, Ernest and Kate		telephones, first 2 in Blithedale	7,8
1880's	20	Tennessee Valley, "windswept"	32
The Reddings 1880's	20	tennis court, Blithedale	10
redwoods in intersection	4	tents at Blithedale in summer	10,16
Reed house, 1873	1	Thomas, Molly	15
rent collector	15	Thomas, William	17,19
Richardson Bay trestle, 1875	5	Thompson, Kathleen	11
Richardson land grant	19	Thompson, Lester (beau)	25
Ripley ("Believe it or not")	4	Tiburon turnoff on Highway 101 (loc.)	5
Robinson, manager of Blithedale	9	train-stop, Blithedale	8
San Rafael High School, 1904	13	transportation	5,13,14
sandpit, Stinson	23	Upham, Ben	30
sanitarium (Blithedale)	4	wattle and the milkhouse	16
Saucelito grant	2	Ward, Roy	18
Colonel & Mrs. (Grandma) Schwedburg	15	Ward property	18,19
schooling, father's	6	Warner, Alysse	12
schooling, San Rafael	12	watering cart	15
Schumann-Heink	13	West Blithedale	4
Mrs. Scovell's Classical School for girls, NY, 1907	13	Wigmore, Mr. and Mrs., 1880's	19,20
showers with cold stream water	10	Wilson, Ruth, editor and transcriber	32
"The six gates to open" between Blithedale and train stop	5	winter storms	23
skimming cream	5	the Yellow House	9
"smallest park in the world"	4,29,30,31		
soup delivered to school in milkcans	29		
squatters on end of Stinson sandpit	23		
stagecoach (picture)	8,18		
Miss Stewart's private school	12		
Stinson Beach property purchase by Kent	23		
Stinson Beach sandpit and Dipsea Inn	14		

ELEANOR ("DOLLY") JENKINS

Helen Dreyfus

This is Helen Dreyfus, talking to Mrs. James Jenkins, one of the early residents of Mill Valley. She was a very close friend of my mother's, so I'm going to call her Aunt Dolly.

Dolly Jenkins

Good!

Mrs. Dreyfus

Aunt Dolly, let's put this historically. When did your grandparents come to Mill Valley originally?

Mrs. Jenkins

Babs, it's hard to believe, but there wasn't a Mill Valley when my grandfather and grandmother^{1/} first moved to Marin County. This was around 1873, and there was no settlement in what we know today as Mill Valley. The Reeds had a house, and there may have been one or two more, but that's all.

My grandfather and grandmother were married in San Francisco in 1856. Grandfather came from Providence, Rhode Island, and my grandmother from Burlington, Vermont. As far as I know, my grandfather was a homeopathic physician. I was brought up to believe so. A couple of the historians of Marin County have

1/Dr. John J. and Harriet Cushing.

said, "Oh no, he was a druggist." Or he was the kind of doctor in California in those days whom everybody called "Doc" because he knew how to bind a wound, and so on. I don't know why they say that. The Cushing genealogy, written in 1900, gives him as a homeopathic physician.

The other day I went down to the library here in San Francisco and looked up an old register. In that register it shows him as a physician. It shows two addresses, one apparently an office and the other his home. This listing goes from the middle sixties to around 1870 or '73.

In 1873 my father^{1/} was seventeen, and my Aunt Marian was fourteen. I was always told that my grandfather's health was failing and that he and my grandmother looked for a quiet place in the country where he could spend his last days. I suppose my grandfather decided he couldn't practice any more. He heard of a piece of property in Marin County that had been left out of two old land grants. There were two parcels, one of around 200 acres and the other about 150. One was from the Corte Madera del Presidio grant and the other from the Saucelito grant. He applied to the President in Washington for a homestead -- a patent, I think you call it. There was some difficulty (I don't know what it was all about), and the patent wasn't granted until about 1883.^{2/}

There are a few mysteries about my grandparents' early life in Marin County, as far as I'm concerned. One of these is

1/Sidney Barlow Cushing.

2/The grants were not cleared until after Dr. Cushing's death; 226 acres were granted in 1882 and the remaining 158 acres in 1884.

that there was a house on the property -- a darling little house. An oil painting of it has been in the family for a long time. Who had lived there? I was always told that an Englishman lived in it, but I was never interested enough to ask any more questions than that. Obviously the house must have been vacant when my grandparents applied for a patent; they couldn't have applied if somebody had owned the property.

They settled in this little house and immediately began building small cottages about the place for guests. There was one cottage called the Parlor Cottage. I don't think I ever went into it, but I'm sure there were bedrooms upstairs, and there must have been a rather large room downstairs which the guests used as their parlor. The small house in which my grandparents lived was, I imagine, turned into a dining room -- that is, the large room downstairs was turned into a dining room and kitchen for the guests.

There were Chinese servants. I have a picture of a queued Chinaman in a parlor charade that they had at the Blithedale Hotel. He is standing in the foreground as a touch of reality for a ship going to China.

I imagine the hotel residents were my grandfather's former patients. I'm trying now to make up a hotel roster of the people who came to Blithedale. It includes almost every big name you ever heard of in San Francisco, and they came summer after summer. The place grew and grew and grew.

My grandfather only lived until 1879, but they kept on running the hotel.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Where was it exactly? Down in the flat area by West Blithedale?

Mrs. Jenkins

Let's see, how can I describe it? Do you know where there's a big clump of trees in the middle of West Blithedale? Ripley once wrote about it as the smallest park in the world. It was a silly thing. There was a clump of redwoods that turned out to be right in the middle of the roadway, at an intersection. My mother had to deed the property to the town to preserve those redwood trees.

The Cushing property really began very near where the Outdoor Art Club is. It went right up the canyon and a little way up the ridge on the Corte Madera side. My mother paid some taxes in Corte Madera.

Everybody who talks about the Blithedale Hotel and writes about the Blithedale Hotel says it was to be a sanitarium. I've heard my mother say over and over again, "It never was going to be a sanitarium!" Since I've been looking up old dates and notes, I'm perfectly sure she was right. My grandfather was a dying man when he went to Marin County. He died a very few years after they retired. Had he not been very ill, he wouldn't have given up his practice in San Francisco.

Blithedale was a lovely place for people to come and maybe recuperate, but the cottages were kind of grim! I don't think there was any hot running water or central heat. No telephone. So many things that we're used to in the present day. Like ice; where did they get ice?

When my grandparents went over, there was no railroad in Sausalito. For the first few years they had to drive all the way to Sausalito to get a boat for San Francisco. Later, I think in about '75, the North Pacific Coast Railroad started. From Sausalito it crossed Richardson Bay on a trestle to the end of Strawberry Point. It went up the other side of Strawberry Point and stopped at a station called Blithedale. I think it must have been not far from the present Tiburon turnoff on Highway 101. It then went through a cut, over to San Anselmo. The cut is still there. After the railroad was completed, the Cushings and their guests used to drive in a great big coach and four to meet the trains over at Blithedale Station. There were six gates to open between the hotel and the train stop.

I'm skipping around a bit, but another thing that interests me is where they got their supplies. You may think, "Why didn't they go down and shop in Mill Valley?" Well, as I say, there was no Mill Valley until nearly fourteen years after my grandfather applied to the President for a grant of public land. There were very few houses and no stores or anything of that kind. It puzzles me. I don't know where they could have gotten their supplies or how they kept them.

One of my only recollections of my grandmother is of going into her milkhouse. It had thick, thick walls of cement holding alternate rows of rather large stones and heavy boards that looked almost like branches of trees. There were large pans of milk on shelves around the walls, and my grandmother had a little skimmer that she used for skimming gorgeous yellow cream from the pans. It was like crinkly silk.

Later, when the mountain train came into being, the conductors

used to point out the milkhouse and say, "That is an old adobe that was built by the Mexicans — one of the oldest buildings around these parts, or anywhere else for that matter." I always laughed, because I knew it was my grandmother's milkhouse. It wasn't an old adobe.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Was your father raised in Mill Valley? Did your grandmother stay there after your grandfather died?

Mrs. Jenkins

Yes, but I wonder where he and my Aunt Marian went to school? I imagine his schooling was learning to build the cottages. He probably learned to survey and all those things just by doing them, more than anything else. He and Aunt Marian couldn't have commuted to school for those first three years. You would have had to drive to Sausalito — and there weren't very many boats going over to San Francisco. Certainly there were no schools in Mill Valley.

You see, I didn't begin to wonder about these things until fairly recently.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Until it was too late to ask anybody.

Mrs. Jenkins

Oh, much too late!

Mrs. Dreyfus

But he did grow up in Mill Valley?

Mrs. Jenkins

As I say, there was no Mill Valley until a good many years later. The telephone exchange was listed just as "Blithedale."

Mrs. Dreyfus

Did your grandfather call it Blithedale?

Mrs. Jenkins

I should have told you at the beginning that my grandfather called it Blythedale because he had read Hawthorne's "Blythedale Romance," and he loved it. I got it the other day and read it, and it's a very strange story. I don't think there were too many novels at that time. This is kind of half mystery, half metaphysical, but it was a great thing in those days. He loved the name, and he called the hotel Blythedale.

Riding up to San Rafael the other day I noticed way out on the highway is a sign that says Blithedale. I said to the children, "That sign is there because your grandfather read a book." This really is true.

As I say, the telephone exchange was listed as Blithedale. Mr. Eastland^{1/} and my grandmother had the first two telephones in

^{1/} Joseph Green Eastland, early settler.

that part of Marin County. This was in 1893. The advertisement boasted that you could telephone to San Francisco, Santa Rosa, Petaluma, and San Rafael, but you couldn't telephone after a certain hour in the late afternoon. I recently tried to find out how much you paid for a telephone in those days. The girl said she couldn't find Mill Valley, but she did find San Rafael about that date and found that you paid by the year. You paid \$50 a year. This breaks down to about what we pay now -- and think what the telephone company has done. You can telephone anywhere in the world, any time of the day or night. I don't know about the North Pole, but almost any place in the world.

As I said in the beginning, the people who came over to Blithedale were some of the most interesting and intriguing people in San Francisco. I just presume they must have been my grandfather's patients. They were all so talented. I have a darling watercolor painting in the hall, and I just received from one of my cousins a lot of poems written by various guests. One of them is called "Blithedale."

I'll show you a picture of the stagecoach getting ready to go over to Strawberry. A map in one of the books that I found, written about the railroads, shows the train-stop as Blithedale. It's the only place where I've seen the station called Blithedale. Otherwise people referred to it as Lyford's or something of that kind.

Oh, I see this picture says, "Off to Sausalito," so it was not on its way to Lyford's!

One day someone at the California Historical Society called me. This was in about 1958 or '59. The man said, "Mrs. Jenkins, have a picture here of Marin County. It's very nice, and we want to

buy it. But our committee doesn't like to have things presented to them for purchase unless we can name the place." I said, "How do you know it's Marin County?" He said, "Mount Tamalpais is in the background, so it's obviously Marin County." He asked if I could help them identify the location, so I went out there. The instant I saw the picture I said, "That's my grandfather's place." Don't you think it's strange that I was the one they called?

Jim and I bought the picture and presented it to the society. I kind of wish we'd kept it. But they seem to be fond of it, because it's always out. Sometimes it's in the library, and other times it will be up in the main house.

The other day two people from the historical society came and looked through my photographs. They want me to name all the cottages. I can do that. This is the Parlor Cottage, and this eventually turned into the main house. This we used to call the Yellow House. This one on top of the hill I don't know. This one was the Moore Cottage. This was the Monteagle Cottage. They came year in and year out to stay there.

Mrs. Dreyfus

After your grandfather died, did your father take over the running of the hotel?

Mrs. Jenkins

Well, by the time I was old enough to pay attention to what was going on, it seems to me he rented it to somebody to run. I believe he ran it himself just one year. Somebody by the name of Robinson had it for several years. Mrs. Robinson was very smart about things. They pulled out the back of the milkhouse and put

in a fireplace and a pool table and made it into a bar -- changed from beautiful, crinkly cream to spirits!

I remember Helen Clinton saying you could tell when people in the cottages got up in the morning because they would take their showers with cold water right out of the stream, and there would be these shrieks. You'd know just what stage they were in their dressing.

In the summertime there were not only the cottages but tents that they put up. Usually around the eighteenth or twentieth of June, after school had closed and people had started to come over, we'd have a horrible downpour. All the people in the tents would get wet, their clothes would get wet, and you'd hear these terrific moans and groans from everybody. For some reason I always felt kind of responsible.

The Moores and Monteagles, besides having the same rooms in the cottages every year, would have tents. I suppose the hotel set them up for them. This is where they would sit in the afternoon and serve tea. You would go to the Moore tent for tea one afternoon and somebody else's tent for tea on another afternoon.

Gradually different things were added to the grounds. I have some pictures of a small badminton court with a little, low net and women with long skirts playing. I think one of them is my mother. Eventually a tennis court was built and then a sort of bowling alley. It wasn't an elegant bowling alley but one where you'd bowl the pins down and then pull a rod and make the pins come up again.

We used to have charades in the parlor and a couple of dances every year. There would always be great decorating for the Fourth

of July dance. I can remember Japanese lanterns hung between the trees, with candles in them. My father would just sit on the porch all evening, watching the candles! It must have been the most dangerous thing in the world.

We'd have impromptu fancy-dress parties, one or two a year. One year when I was in my teens there was a very attractive young couple there; the gentleman was very handsome. I think his name was Bates — or his wife had been a Bates. Anyway, I went in his frock coat, and he wore his wife's dress. I don't know how this was cooked up. If you've ever seen a frock coat you know that they button down the front and go way down below a man's knees. They're very impressive-looking. But — I got into horrible trouble, because ladies didn't wear trousers in those days. There was someone at the party named Kathleen Thompson, who later turned out to be — why don't you tell us?

Mrs. Dreyfus

Mrs. Charles G. Norris.^{1/}

Mrs. Jenkins

Well, she wrote me up in the San Francisco papers — and was I in trouble! My mother felt disgraced. Oh boy, how I hated Kathleen, for a long, long time — though I forgave her in the end. I would love to see that article now, to see if it was as spicy as I remember it and as the results warranted. Everybody looked down their noses at me for having been such a hussy.

^{1/} Kathleen Norris, a very well-known author and an aunt of Mrs. Dreyfus.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Did you know Kathleen Thompson when the family lived in Mill Valley?

Mrs. Jenkins

Blithedale was sort of separate from Mill Valley. I did know Ruth Boericke and Alysse Warner. We rode horseback. But unless it was somebody who rode, I didn't know them.

Mrs. Dreyfus

You didn't go to school in Mill Valley?

Mrs. Jenkins

No. My schooling was very strange. I don't know whether you want this in the tape.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Yes, we do. Where did you go to school?

Mrs. Jenkins

I went to Miss Stewart's, a little private school on Fifth Street in San Rafael for just a handful of young people. I went there from the time I was about five until I was twelve or thirteen.

Mrs. Dreyfus

You went to San Rafael every day?

Mrs. Jenkins

Oh, we lived in San Rafael in the winters. Miss Stewart's was just a block and a half away from our house, but, believe it or not, we all rode ponies to school. Almost every child had a pony, and we had the most wonderful time. We used to play Prisoner's Base on ponies -- Fifth Street in San Rafael. We'd scrape out lines and line up and dare each other.

I went from there to San Rafael High School. That was about 1904, I guess. I stayed there just a short time. We were -- well, we were supposed to be behaving badly. I can't imagine anything like it now. Once in a while we did go down in the basement and pass around one cigarette among five or six of us. This may have happened two or three times. Then we had a geometry teacher who had very big feet, and we used to go up to his desk and ask him questions and stand on his feet deliberately.

We weren't doing anything very bad, but mother got worried about me and decided she'd send me for a little bit of polish to Miss Murison's School in San Francisco. So I left San Rafael High School and my dear friends there. Lou Foster also went to Miss Murison's, so we commuted together. We started in January '06, but it didn't last very long. In April came the earthquake, and the school was through for the year. The following year I went to Mrs. Scovell's Classical School for Girls in New York City, 2042 Fifth Avenue. It was at 126th Street and Fifth Avenue, now in the depths of Harlem. I stayed there for a year. And that was the end of my going to school.

I came back to Marin County and signed up to go to several operas and lots of wonderful plays. I saw Caruso, Schumann-Heink,

Maude Adams. The next winter I came out. Coming out consisted of being allowed to go to the Greenway balls in the city, and so on. I didn't have a big coming-out splash, but there were a lot of parties and things. I began to go to grown-up parties.

Mrs. Dreyfus

This was in San Francisco? Would you go all the way from San Rafael?

Mrs. Jenkins

Friends in the city would invite me to stay. You couldn't have gone from Marin County. There was only one ferry, around midnight, so you couldn't go to a ball and get home on that. I had friends among the girls who came out at the same time, and I used to spend the night in the city.

Another thing we did that was such fun was to have wonderful parties at the Dipsea Inn, which by this time had been built right in the middle of the sandspit at Stinson Beach. Eighteen or twenty teen-agers would go over -- by different means of transportation. I used to ride over. Sometimes I walked over. Some of them would drive over. We'd stay for one or two nights and just have a gorgeous time.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Was there a road over to Stinson Beach?

Mrs. Jenkins

There wasn't a road over the mountain but there was the coast

road. In the summers I would go from Mill Valley. My mother's house was in San Rafael, so that was our residence most of the year. I think almost every summer we did go to Blithedale.

One thing now entirely outdated was the watering cart that used to go around the Blithedale grounds many times a week. It was a wagon with a big tank on top and was drawn by two horses. This was to lay the dust in front of the buildings.

Here is a picture we have titled "A Quiet Evening in the Parlor." This man is Major McClung. Someone from the historical society who had heard me talk about Blithedale saw a story in the Chronicle that said Major McClung had been shot dead in Lillie Coit's room. This was quite intriguing to me, and I was a little disappointed to find that it wasn't a scandal! Mrs. Coit had a relative who collected the rents for her from her extensive properties. He got the idea that Major McClung was trying to get his job away from him, so he popped him off — right in front of her, which was not too nice.

The girl in the gingham dress in this picture is Mollie Thomas, and here is Mrs. Schmedburg, Grandma Schmedburg.^{1/} I don't know what Colonel Schmedburg did; I want to find that out. Here's Mr. Moore and Mrs. Monteagle. They were pillars of the Episcopal Church.

My mother used to get very annoyed because every Saturday night in the dining room the Moore and the Monteagle children would stand up around the table and recite:

^{1/} Spelling not verified.

"And now it is Saturday night.
"We've tried all the week to be good.
"We've not said a single bad word,
"And we've done everything that we should."

Mother thought that was a little over-possessive of them!

Here is a picture of one of the tents, with all the people gathered around. I think it's a darling picture of those young people.

Here's the milkhouse. You can see that it isn't adobe.

Mrs. Dreyfus

I think it's what they call wattle in England.

Mrs. Jenkins

Here is Duval Moore at the age of four. This was taken, he thought, about 1883. This is the little McClung girl. This was taken at a fancy-dress party, and, believe it or not, this is Athol McBean. They went to the Blithedale Hotel. I wrote a note to Peter McBean the other day, because I'm sure there are old pictures of the hotel lying around. People would have no idea what they are — unless they were very interested. However, Peter didn't seem to know anything about it.

Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Baldwin used to go over. Emma Baldwin was the first one who told me about the McBeans. I was curious about what kind of plumbing they had, and she said they used a sort of capsule, which was then dragged out somewhere behind a horse

and disposed of — how, she didn't know. Mrs. Baldwin, at ninety-something, chuckled when she recalled Athol McBean trying to ride on one of the capsules, with Mrs. McBean screaming from an upstairs window, "Athol! Get off that!"

In the evening the guests congregated in the parlor to chat, read, and play checkers or cards. They must have had many song-fests. Anson Blake once wrote me about the happy evenings at Bli-thedale. At least three or four times a week Mr. William Thomas would sing "Old Dog Tray." That was one of his favorite memories.

Here is the picture I mentioned of one of the pantomines put on at the hotel. See the real Chinaman with a real queue? This picture is dated 1883. I don't know who any of the people are, but aren't they attractive-looking and aren't they wearing beautiful clothes?

Mrs. Dreyfus

Are they weeping because someone is sailing away?

Mrs. Jenkins

Yes, I think so. Don't you see the cardboard ship in the background? I would guess it's on its way to China. This young couple is weeping onto the same handkerchief. That probably was very devilish! But look at their clothes. Yards and yards of material. How did they keep them clean? Were there any dry-cleaners in those days? What did you do?

Mrs. Dreyfus

They certainly are not washables. And look at the ruffles.

Mrs. Jenkins

They look like silks, don't they?

Here is a picture of the stagecoach. There is a story I want to tell you about the stage. I used to see Anson Blake once in a while at meetings of the California Historical Society. When I heard that he went to the Blithedale Hotel in the early days I thought I'd take two or three of my pictures and see whether he knew anybody in them. Unfortunately he wasn't at the next meeting. I was walking out after the meeting with Helen Ashton, and I said, "I'm so disappointed. I have a picture of the old Blithedale stage, and I wanted Mr. Blake to tell me who the people were." She said, "Well, maybe I can." I said, "Nonsense, this was taken in 1883. How could you possibly tell me?" But I showed her the picture, and she said, "That's my mother, and that's my father, before they were married." I've had the funniest things like that happen to me.

Mrs. Dreyfus

You mentioned the tennis courts, bowling alley, and so on. Did they later become the Ward property?

Mrs. Jenkins

Well, I was talking to one of the Ward girls the other day — now Jean Keiler. She's a granddaughter of George Billings,^{1/} and she and her husband live in the house that was at the gate of the

^{1/} Early shipping and insurance magnate whose daughter May married Roy Ward.

Billings property.^{1/} She has a deed from my grandmother dated October 15, 1896, but it covers only part of the Billings land, a small part.

Mr. Billings bought his original property at the auction in 1890, so it would have been part of the old Richardson land grant. The Billings land extended from the middle of Corte Madera Avenue (then just a trail, of course) to the middle of Corte Madera Creek. Many properties are bordered by creeks, and you usually own "to the middle of the creek." I don't know why; it seems a very strange thing.

At any rate, in order to straighten up his property line, Mr. Billings later bought from my grandmother the land from the middle of the creek west to the railroad right-of-way. This was done at the time the mountain railway was incorporated in 1896.

Let's see if I have given you the names of all the old-timers who went to Blithedale — all I have thought of to date.

There were the William Thomases. Their whole family used to stay. The oldest Thomas, Mrs. Kimball, once told me that her father was the only one who built his own cottage. She didn't know what the arrangement was, but I suppose the property reverted to the Blithedale owners when Mr. and Mrs. Thomas didn't want to use it any more.

Then there were the Leonard Abbotts and their son, Leonard. They were well known in San Francisco. Earlier than that, in the

^{1/}160 Corte Madera Avenue.

1880's, there were a Mr. and Mrs. Wigmore, and Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Ransom and Kate Ransom. Kate Ransom was later Mrs. Bess.

Did I mention the Malcolm Molders? Then there were the Reddings.

Mrs. Dreyfus

It must have been kind of an in place to go.

Mrs. Jenkins

You must remember this was before the days of the automobile. Before people started going places for the weekend, they went for the entire summer.

Somebody sent me a little piece of a bill for the board of horses at Blithedale. It's for Mr. Sutro. His coachman was a Mr. Ferguson.

Here are some more early names: The Geislars,^{1/} the Houghtons — Ruth Houghton and her brother Shirley. Maude Payne. The H. M. A. Millers and their son Chris. The Cliffords — Mrs. Clifford, Elsie and Evelyn. The Beyfords — Mrs. Beyford, Oscar, Anita, Vera, and Ollie, a girl about my age.

Mrs. Dreyfus

I see from this article that it was your father who built the mountain railroad.

^{1/}Spelling not verified.

Mrs. Jenkins

Yes, but the thing that made the greatest impression on me at the time (though I don't know why) was that he made a trip down south to Mount Lowe, where they had some kind of scenic railway that went up to the top of the mountain.

I just vaguely remember that there was a lot of difficulty in building the railway. The people up Blithedale Canyon were bringing suits to try to stop construction. You know, it did cause a little trouble and excitement! I can remember later, after I owned a house in Mill Valley,^{1/} that when the mountain train went up the canyon it would hit a certain point and my house would shake just like an earthquake.

I can remember there was a sort of one-man strike against the railroad. I don't blame him much. The train was going to go practically underneath his porch a couple of times a day. In the end it was settled happily. I do remember hearing that they put him on a flatcar and gave him the honor of being the first person to ride on the Mount Tamalpais scenic railway. My recollection is that Mrs. McGinnis was later honored by being the first passenger on the first train.

When the railroad was ready to open they had a large party under the redwood trees in Blithedale Canyon, near the dam. They entertained the newspaper people, reporters and so forth. Champagne corks were popping, and they took them up to the top of the mountain.

I had a hard time forgiving the mountain railroad because there

^{1/} 225 Eldridge Avenue.

was this perfectly fascinating little dam in which you could swim. It was big enough to hold a small boat, and it was there I learned to row. The trestle for the tracks went right over the dam and ruined it forever. It just broke my heart.

The Double Bowknot is about halfway up. My recollection is that when the professional survey was made they started up from the bottom and down from the top. I believe the story is that they found they were out of line when they met, so they made the Double Bowknot. They had to work out some way to get the line together at a proper grade, and the Double Bowknot solved the problem. It's on a little plateau with a wonderful view, so it was really a happy mistake. Maybe you could check this story by looking at the old survey.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Well, I'll rely on your memory.

Mrs. Jenkins

Later there were plans to take the railroad down the Bolinas side to Stinson Beach, but that didn't work out in the end.

Mrs. Dreyfus

They did take it down into Muir Woods.

Mrs. Jenkins

Oh yes, it went into Muir Woods. Mr. Kent and my father were very great friends, and they did all those things together.

We spent a summer on the sandspit; Mr. Kent was buying all that property.^{1/} My father was planning to bring the train down and was helping Mr. Kent open up the property.

To get to the sandspit from the main road around the bay, a little causeway had to be built, which required a fill. One recollection of my youth was my father getting upset because every winter the causeway washed out. Of course they would have to rebuild it.

There was some litigation about Mr. Kent's acquiring the property from the original Bolinasites. The reason we spent the summer on the sandspit was so we could counteract the squatters who were living at the other end of the spit. I was about twelve or thirteen, I guess. We were told never to go up to the end of the spit because there were squatters up there. I didn't quite know what squatters were. Since then I think I've met quite a few of them in my Bolinas sojourns.

We had a little square house built on top of piers, since they didn't know whether the water covered the spit in the big storms of the wintertime. The house consisted of a kitchen and dining room. There was a Chinese cook who made the most wonderful mashed potatoes. I don't know how he did it, but he would make a thick brown crust on them. He could also make marvelous box kites. They had a bamboo strip at the top that would sing. The higher the kite went, the harder it would sing, which was very exciting.

We had three or four tents with wooden floors. The sand would blow in under the sides of the tent and blow into the beds and everywhere. We also had a big horse tent, with an old horse and a

^{1/}Stinson Beach.

cart. I don't know why I didn't have my pony over there; maybe it was too hard to get him over. Every afternoon we would go to the Belvedere ranch and get eggs and milk for the next day. We would swim every day. We had a lot of our school friends visiting us, and it was lots of fun for us. I don't know how my poor mother stood it. It must have been a little grim for her.

Here is an advertisement for the Blithedale Hotel. It says they could accommodate 125 in rooms. "Adults in rooms, \$12.50 - \$15.00 per week. In tents, \$10.00 per week. Special rates for children. Families or parties upon application. Address Mr. Barber, Mgr., Mill Valley, Marin County." This seems to be dated 1908.

Mrs. Dreyfus

A hundred and twenty-five is really a lot of people.

Were your parents living in San Rafael when you were born?

Mrs. Jenkins

Yes, I was born in San Rafael. My Grandfather Eldridge^{1/} built a house there in 1881.^{2/} That's where my mother lived. Her mother had died, and her father moved to San Rafael. He was very much interested in the gas works. My uncle, Allan Lee, was in charge of the gas works. There used to be meetings in their

^{1/} John O. Eldridge.

^{2/} Then 508 Fourth Street, just east of the old courthouse.

front living room, and I can remember sitting on laps while meetings were going on. They were sort of informal affairs.

Mother, writing about her early days, said she saw Blithedale for the first time in about 1881. I suppose she went again later, as there was a courting going on. In 1886 she and my father were married. They went immediately from the wedding ceremony down to Southern California for a few days of honeymoon and from there to Chicago, where my father took care of Mr. Albert Kent's business. I call him Grandpa Kent, Mr. Kent, Sr. They stayed in Chicago for about a year and then came back to the San Rafael house. John and I were born there.

I can't remember the first time we stayed in Blithedale. We didn't go there every summer. We used to just go there sometimes. I do remember one summer when we stayed in the original old house, up over the dining room of the hotel. There were two or three rooms there. Another summer we spent at the back of the hotel, and another in the Green Roof Cottage.

In the nineties my father began to plan and build the mountain railroad. He built a tiny house just outside the hotel grounds, which ended at that time at a gate across the road that went down to the dam. There was one room and a kitchen and a bathroom — and a big table out in back where we would eat outdoors. He used to go there and stay when he was kept over by railroad business and was too tired to make the trip back to San Rafael. I used to go down and stay with him very often — not to keep him company, I'm sorry to say, but so I could see my beloved (at the moment) Lester Thompson on the train in the morning. He would commute to San Francisco, and I would be commuting to San Rafael, but at least I would get a glimpse of this gorgeous creature for

about ten or fifteen minutes.

Later, when we began to go to Blithedale every summer, my father added three bedrooms and another bath to that house, so it made plenty of room for the family to live in.

When Jim and I married,^{1/} mother decided that for a wedding present she would build us a house on property that was right behind her little house. She built us a very comfortable house there. I don't think it cost very much to build, but I'd hate to tell you what it sold for the last time it was sold. It was fantastic.

It grew into quite a large house. It was on a steep sidehill, so there were rooms underneath, then the living room and bedroom floor, where we were, and then we finished off the attic as the children grew older, so there were two big bathrooms and two big bedrooms upstairs, besides a lot of extra space in hallways, and so on.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Did you sell to the Hayakawas?^{2/}

Mrs. Jenkins

No, I can't remember the name of the people we sold to.

^{1/}January 5, 1910.

^{2/}Dr. S. I. and Margedant Hayakawa, present owners of the property.

After my mother's death I went east to help Sally^{1/} with something -- I think another baby was coming, or something of that kind. By that time Jim and I had bought our little house in Bolinas, and we loved it. We went there every single weekend. So I said to Jim, "Let's sell the Mill Valley house and rent a little apartment in San Francisco and keep the Bolinas place," which we did. It was a very satisfactory arrangement. I used to come back from taking care of the Bolinas garden, and here would be the hydrangeas in the Mill Valley garden all wilted and needing water, and it was just too much.

We got the Bolinas house in 1936, and we kept going there for a good many years -- until Jim's death in 1960. I kept on going for a couple of years; then I decided I shouldn't be driving a car, and if you don't drive a car you can't get to Bolinas.

Two of my children were born at home. (Eleanor was born at Mt. Zion Hospital.) I hear young people nowadays who think they're so smart, talking home births. Well, we certainly did it in those days.

Mrs. Dreyfus

I was born at home.

Mrs. Jenkins

Were you born at home, too? My brother John and I were born in the San Rafael house. My older daughter, Sally, was born there,

^{1/}Mrs. Jenkins' daughter, Sally MacHale.

too. Jimmy, my son, was born in the Mill Valley house. That was the most remarkable birth in the world; I still don't understand it. The doctor came down from San Rafael. It was a stormy night, and he thought he'd better spend the night. Mother came up to the house, and the four of us played bridge until bedtime. I went to bed — and in the morning, there was Jimmy! That was it.

Mrs. Dreyfus

That really is remarkable!

Aunt Dolly, were you one of the founding members of the Outdoor Art Club?

Mrs. Jenkins

No, and I was never an Outdoor Art Clubber. I was one of the first PTA-ites, and I was about the second president. I think Mrs. Finn^{1/} was the first president, and she died. Was I green! I didn't know what PTA was all about. Sally was just beginning to go to school.

I used to get anonymous letters. Some of them said I was old enough to know better, and some of them said I was too young to understand. I wish I'd kept some of them. One of them had a little pressed violet inside, and I've always thought it was from Lucretia Hanson. It was a way of being kind to me, helpful.

Mildred Erskine and I, through the PTA, established a simple hot lunch, just a bowl of soup. We had a little money, and we

^{1/}Mrs. John Finn.

bought Chinese bowls. The soup was to be brought up from Mr. Bagshaw's store in a big milkcan -- not Fred, but Fred's father. It was delivered at noontime five days a week. We heated it on a coal-oil stove and dished it out. It was a different soup every day. One day it was bean soup, and unfortunately it got a little scorched. There was an awful to-do in the PTA meetings about the scorched bean soup. Boy!

I've never told this to anyone, and I don't think I should tell you now, but I will. Another day, when we got down to the bottom of the milkcan there was a large cockroach! We kept that a deep, dark secret. No one but Mildred and I saw it, and no one knows about it to this day. Now the world will know!

Well, I've never heard of anyone dying from eating a cockroach, have you? And, anyway, it had no missing parts.

Mrs. Dreyfus

No. As a matter of fact, I think some cultures fry them and eat them as a delicacy.

Mrs. Jenkins

A man on one of the talk shows the other night was boasting about the worms he ate. He said he'd give lectures and pick out a nice, juicy earthworm and eat it. Almost always, half the room would have to get up and go out. He said they are very nutritious, just full of things that are good for you.

Margot Patterson Doss has suggested that I go over to Mill

Valley with her some time and walk up from the trees (the smallest park in the world), past the Green Roof Cottage from which all the surveying was done. When you read any of the early descriptions they say, "The Green Roof Cottage and the Diablo Meridian." Then we would go on up to the old cement porch of the hotel, which I still think of as being something very new. I suppose it was put on about 1907 or '08. Then on past where the dam was, past the Japanese gates of the Marshes, and on to the place where the tracks started going up the grade. Then we would come back on the other side, along Corte Madera, past the old homes of the Billings, and so on. That makes a very nice walk, a nice circle. I must call her soon and do that. That's something she could write about.

There's one place that I wish was still there, but somebody told me it wasn't. Just above Corte Madera, across from the Billings, the Bridges, and the Hayeses, you went uphill a little way, and then along a narrow but well-kept path, and there was a mossy bank. Did you ever go along that little path? Every once in a while, when there would be a flower show, Mildred Erskine and I would have a moss exhibit. We didn't know one thing about moss, but nevertheless, we found out there are loads of different varieties. We could make the loveliest table, with buckeye branches hanging down, all covered with moss. We labeled our exhibit with botanical names, book in hand. We did that with great success at several flower shows in San Francisco, Mill Valley, and Burlingame.

The dam that I speak of -- well, if you went into Ben Upham's backyard^{1/} and walked straight down the hill you would see the end of the dam that went over the creek there. It's about where Cottage Avenue comes down from Eldridge Avenue. Of course you can't get

^{1/}225 West Blithedale.

in to really see it now, because you'd be going through everybody's backyard.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Is the Green Roof House still there?

Mrs. Jenkins

The Green Roof House is still there. As you first come in to Blithedale Canyon, past the smallest park in the world, it's the third or fourth house on the right-hand side. (I can't tell you, sitting here.) It's a little plaster house. I'm sure it was built in those early days, and I don't know why it's such different construction from all the other cottages that were built then. It must have been more professionally done.

We spent one summer in the Green Roof Cottage. I think I was about nine years old. I can remember that my father was sick. For some reason my mother thought he ought to have a doctor, and she thought of Dr. Boericke, who was up on Tamalpais Avenue.^{1/} Of course there weren't any telephones, so I was sent on my pony to ride up the hill to ask if Dr. Boericke could come down and see my father. It was a great adventure for me.

Mrs. Dreyfus

Who do you suppose planted those fruit trees in Blithedale canyon?

^{1/}309 Tamalpais Avenue.

Mrs. Jenkins

They were in what I considered my grandmother's garden, so I suppose they were planted either by my grandmother or Mrs. Allen's grandmother.^{1/} I don't know how long she was there. I wish Mrs. Allen knew something more about it. I did ask her what had happened. Think of the loneliness of that woman, with a child, and the man away. And then to be told that he was dead and gone. Imagine living there all alone, no telephone, not many conveniences. How did she get her food? I'd like to know how long she stayed there after her husband's death. Mrs. Allen did say to me, "A doctor befriended her." I perked up and said, "Was it Dr. Cushing?" But she said, "No, it wasn't Dr. Cushing." I said, "What did she do?" She said (and this makes me more dismal than ever), "She went down and lived in a house that the doctor owned in Tennessee Valley." Of all places, Tennessee Valley to me is the most dismal! Blithedale had beauty all around it, but Tennessee Valley is the most windswept...

(Editor's note: At this point the tape, and the interview ended.)

^{1/}See Oral History interview with Ida Johnson Allen, pages 6 and 7.