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GEORGE R. PIMLOTT

An Interview Conducted By

Betsy Andresen

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GEORGE PIMLOTT

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MR. GEORGE R. PIMLOTT

Born September 1, 1905 in San Francisco, California.

Resident of Mill Valley since 1906.

Interviewed March 25, 1975 at the home of
Betsy Andresen, 69 Catalpa, Mill Valley.

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GEORGE R. PIMLOTT

Betsy Andresen

Mr. Pimlott, how long did you live in Mill Valley?

George Pimlott

We were there about forty years. I think my parents came in 1906, during the earthquake. I was born in San Francisco and went through the earthquake. After that we came to Mill Valley.

Mrs. Andresen

Then you went to school in Mill Valley? What school did you go to?

Mr. Pimlott

Summit School, the old one. We were the first class that graduated from Old Mill School. Then I went through Tam.

Mrs. Andresen

Then you know Bill Provines?

Mr. Pimlott

Bill Provines and I graduated from grammar school together. You know, I have to laugh at some of these people. I don't consider Bill Provines an old-timer -- or Lucretia Little, either. They came when we were already here.

Mrs. Andresen

You seem to know a lot about the old landmarks of Mill Valley. Can you tell us something about the old businesses?

Mr. Pimlott

I was thinking about it just the other day, and this morning I drew this map of downtown Mill Valley in the early days.

If you start where Old Brown's Store is, the freight shed used to be down below that. Where Old Brown's Store now stands, ¹that was the firemen's dance hall. Coming up the street, Taylor's Toy Store was out in front. Next to that was a French laundry; I don't remember the Frenchman's name now. Next to that was Charlie Chapman's pool hall. Then there was a vacant lot, and next to that was Deffebach's stables. Incidentally, those stables were where they kept the two-horse teams for the local taxis in the early days, before the automobile. Mr. Roth drove one of those, and the other was driven by a man by the name of Budar. The Budar boys were quite well known in Mill Valley, too.

Right next to that was Brady's saloon. My dad told me that years ago there was only one saloon in Mill Valley, and they paid \$1,000 a year license. It was an exclusive deal. I think when Mill Valley was called Eastland, they couldn't have any saloons.

Next to that was the Eastland Bakery. It was run by the Hack family. Coming on up the street, the Pacific Market was next. This was run by Gus Oppenheimer, who later married Al Bagshaw's mother. On the other side of that was the Modern Bakery, and that was run by a fellow by the name of John Miller. On the corner we had Lockwood's Pharmacy.

Turning the corner and going up Throckmorton, on the left side of the street was Kingswell's where Esposti's was for a time. ²/ Lots of people think Esposti's was the "old" business; it was Kingswell's candy store. Next to that was Ben Price's cigar store. On the other side of that was a shoemaker. Edna Park's father was a shoemaker there.

There was a little store next to that; I've forgotten what it was, but the big one next to it was Columbo's candy store. In the same building was the original Hub

1/ 38 Miller Avenue

2/ 127 Throckmorton Avenue

Theatre, which later became the Hiker's Retreat.^{1/} Then there's an alley, and then there's Dowd's Stables. The building on the other side of Dowd's was there, but I can't remember what store it was. It always seemed to be changing hands. The building next to it, on up the street, was built years later, the Maurer Building. That was the Freize property. Mr. Freize married one of Maurer's daughters. That was a beautiful building when they first put it up -- it was just on the wrong side of town!

Across the street in the early days was the Madrone Hotel. That was up on the bank, in the flat up there.

Mrs. Andresen

Is that where all those little houses are today?

Mr. Pimlott

Yes, right opposite the Maurer Building, up in the flat. The old Madrone Hotel was our first Boy Scout Hall. I don't remember the Madrone Hotel ever being in operation as a hotel. It seemed to be kept up, but it was just vacant buildings, as far as I was concerned. I do remember it when it was a scout hall.

Coming down toward town from the Madrone Hotel, the next building, on the corner, was the MacNamara Building -- not the way it is now. It looked like an old English house before they remodeled it. That's when Dr. Wilson Goddard went in.

If you turned the corner and went up Madrone, toward the old library building, the next thing was the headquarters of the Mill Valley Record. Next to that was Keaton and Dowd's Mortuary. I can remember they used to have one of those old horse-drawn hearses and us kids wouldn't get within fifty feet of it.

On the other side of that, right across the street from the old library, are the only pepper trees I know of in Mill Valley. That used to be Dowd's rockcrusher. They used to crush rock there in the early days. Down underneath they kept all the old wagons and stuff.

^{1/} 153 Throckmorton Avenue

Across the street from the rockcrusher, on Madrone, was the Gomo residence. Just below it was the Gomo blacksmith shop. I remember it well, because I was a friend of his two sons, Lloyd and Harold. They later moved to Menlo Park.

The Hub Theatre that most people remember was built later, right in front of the blacksmith shop, facing on Throckmorton. I think a fellow by the name of Sutherland built that.

Mrs. Andresen

Is that where the Oddfellows Hall is?

Mr. Pimlott

The Oddfellows Hall used to be in the Keystone block. I believe now they're at 142 Throckmorton.

Going back up Madrone Street to the library, if you went on down Lovell toward City Hall from the Gomo residence, there was a little house -- I don't know who owned it, but there was a Chinese laundry in the middle of it. Down further was McMiller's blacksmith shop. McMiller used to have a ranch in Olema.

Let's try to keep these streets straight, now.^{1/} If we go back to what you think of as the Oddfellows Hall^{1/} (the old Hub Theatre on Throckmorton) right next to it was Dowd's shoe store. He was George Dowd, related to Irvine and Charles. I don't know what relation, but anyway he was a Dowd, and that was his shoe store.

The building next to the shoe store belonged to Ralston White. It was an early-day home. Is it still there?

Mrs. Andresen

No, that's all^{2/} been torn down. It's the Fidelity Savings and Loan now.

^{1/} 142 Throckmorton Avenue

^{2/} 130 Throckmorton Avenue

Mr. Pimlott

Ralston White had his offices there, and James E. Chase, Attorney-at-Law, was in there too.

Katz's Meat Market was next to it in the early days. I can remember his daughter; we used to call her Lizzie Katz. Next door to the meat market was the old barbershop, owned by a fellow named Gish. He and my dad were pretty good friends, I guess, because Gish had orders, when I needed a haircut, to grab me and pull me in. It was probably 15¢ in those days, not \$4.00. I always stayed clear of that side of the street!

Next to Gish was a little place -- Will Falley, Mill Valley, Real Estate. On the other side of this was a store that was later DeLasaux's Liquor Store. In the early days it was O. S. Pritchard, Dry Goods. For the life of me I can't remember what was in that store after Pritchard. There used to be a store run by the Reiman family, whose house stood where the present post office is. Maybe his store was in there before DeLasaux.

I do remember the store on the corner. That was the Walter F. Allen Grocery Store -- Heinz 57 Varieties! It was right on the corner of Throckmorton and Bernard. They later sold to Safeway. Or was it Skaggs?

That brings us to Bernard Street. Going up Bernard Street on the opposite side you would come to Skanki's shoe repair. Everybody in town in the early days knew Little Jap, Little Skanki. He was older than I was, and he was about so big.

Mrs. Andresen

He was Japanese?

Mr. Pimlott

Yes. During the war they were all interned, and we never saw him again.

The Keystone Block has changed hands so much. For a while PG&E was there, and the R&M dress shop. Along in the middle of the block, way back in the early days, was the Sunset Market owned by Wheeler Martin. After the old man

died, Ed Martin ran it. Bagshaw bought it from him. It really dates back.

There was also a barbershop in there, run by a Spaniard named George Chavez. He's the one I used to like to go to. For a while the post office was in there. Bill Nostrund, for the Kent estate, was the one who really fixed that building up so it looked like something. For a while it belonged to John Rea, who was an ex-preacher.

Between Chavez and the building where Rutherford's Drug Store is, there is where the mountain railroad tracks went. On the other side of the tracks was Jones's tailor shop. I can remember Jones because he used to have a big old dog he called George. Jones was the Mayor of Mill Valley at one time.

Next to the tailor shop was the mountain railroad office, and next to that was the Bank of Mill Valley, where the Bank of America is now. Behind that (and it's still there) was the Masonic Hall.

The fire department was a little bit different in those days than it is now. It was a horse-drawn fire wagon. Us kids always beat the fire department to the fire! On the other side of the fire department was the water company; their office was a little house set back from the street.

Over there was Cervelli's Market. I understand that in the early days Mr. Cervelli was a butcher boy for Katz. Before PG&E moved to the Keystone Block it was next door to Cervelli's, but I don't know where it was before that. And, of course, next to that was the Outdoor Art Club.

Across the street from the Outdoor Art Club was a garage. I have a picture of it here. Later on it was the Ever Ready Garage and Myer's Cleaners. Incidentally, I remember it well because my dad sold bicycles. He gave my brother a bicycle. I put up a big holler because I didn't get one, too, and my folks said, "You don't even know how to ride a bicycle." I insisted that I did know how. I jumped on my brother's bicycle, took off down the hill, went around the flagpole, and came right back up. It was the first time I had ever been on a bicycle! I remember it because it was an imported bicycle, a Crown, probably a 26-inch. There was no coaster brake; you had to pedal all the time. But anyway, I got the bicycle.

Next to that was the Holtum Building. It belonged to "Cannonball" Holtum. Now don't laugh when I tell you that. Apparently he had been in the service in the early days, and they shot him out of a cannon. Holtum was a funny old bird, an old Dutchman. The Holtum Building was sort of an orphan up there all by itself. Later on it became El Paseo, and then the Sequoia Theatre went in there, but at that time the Holtum Building was the end of it.

On down toward town was a little old house that was the Suey Kee Market. Everybody in those early days knew who Suey Kee was. After the Suey Kee Market there was another stable. Later on Varney Brothers Hardware used it for a storeroom -- and I do know that Blithedale Creek^{1/} goes right smack under it. I can't remember the stable being used as such. Maybe someone had some horses there, but I don't remember.

Where the Sequoia Theatre is, there was nothing but bay trees and so on. Behind that on Sunnyside, was the Thoney house. Thoney was fire chief, and later on some of his sons were. Thoney came over from San Francisco, and he had about eight boys.

Between Suey Kee Market and the old stable was an alley. There's where the old post office was -- on the other side, right next to where Varney's was. It wasn't Varney's in those days; I can't remember what was there before their time. I think the Mill Valley Hotel was upstairs there. The building is still there.

Right on the corner, on the other side of Varney's, was the Mill Valley Hardware and Fuel Company. They used to bring the trains in there and unload coal and ice. A man by the name of Mr. Cralious was a clerk in there -- he and Al Louden, Joan Louden's father. I think Mr. Kappelman owned that; he lived up on Summit Avenue. He was an old-timer, too. That was the only hardware store in Mill Valley. You could get anything you wanted in the place.

The old train station and the wooden platform were there. There was a wooden canopy where you got off the trains. One time a boy by the name of Charlie Bradburn

^{1/} Corte Madera Creek

crawled under the wooden plank walk and came out with a \$5 gold piece. People would drop their money through the cracks in the walk, and they couldn't get under there; there was only about eighteen inches of space. Later on us kids used to crawl under there and look for money. We had to be careful for the third rail, but we used to find quite a bit of money around where they made change and people dropped money.

In the early days as many as eight and ten train cars would come into Mill Valley on a Sunday. There might be five or six thousand people. They'd take off and go hiking all over the place. That's why Mr. Odlin started the Hiker's Retreat. The hikers wanted a place to change clothes before they started up the mountain -- and then they'd come back and get a shower before they took the train back to the city.

In those days we lived in what they called Cascade Terrace, where the big steps start. We were the closest house to Old Mill Park; it was sort of our backyard. I was always the kid who got what was left over from all the picnics in the park. To this day I hate Swiss cheese. The picnickers would eat all the good stuff, but they wouldn't want to carry anything back to the city, so they'd give me all the leftover sandwiches of Swiss cheese. I can't even look at it to this day.

We used to do a lot of hiking, too. I'd hike bare-foot over to Muir Woods, sometimes to show people the way.

Mrs. Andresen

What was there to see on the way to Muir Woods in those days?

Mr. Pimlott

The city slickers always went up Cascade to the big steps. Right at the top of the steps the Grethel family had a little soft-drink stand. There was a shortcut there to the trail that went down to Muir Woods. I remember one time a woman who was hiking down there in high heels fell and broke her neck.

Grethel owned property in downtown Mill Valley -- all those buildings around Eastland Bakery and in there. He

had one son, Bernard Grethel, who taught electrical engineering at Heald's College in San Francisco. That's been a long time ago, because I was going there then.

But going back to the trail to Muir Woods: Before you got down into Muir Woods there was Joe's Place. That was Tommy Bickerstaff's father, Joe Bickerstaff. He was game warden, too, for a long time. That's how Tommy used to get the first limit of trout every season, I think. There used to be a \$10 or \$15 prize for whoever caught the first limit of trout, and I think Tommy Bickerstaff always got it.

Years ago we could fish in Muir Woods. Nobody stopped us. Later on, when they made it into a National Monument, you couldn't take anything out, not even a fish. I think Tony Freitas, the ballplayer, got arrested for fishing in there.

You know how Muir Woods got to be Muir Woods, don't you? My dad told me that in the early days it was going to be condemned for a watershed. The only way they could save it for the public was to give it to the government for a National Monument. It would have made a good watershed, of course, but that use wouldn't have been as good as Muir Woods. Congressman Kent was instrumental in getting the federal government to take it over.

Mrs. Andresen

Did you walk over to Big Lagoon?^{1/} Was it popular in those days?

Mr. Pimlott

Oh yes, we walked over there all the time. But it wasn't popular; there wasn't anything there. Big Lagoon was the first name of it. Then it got to be Bellow Beach, because Bellow owned it. Then it went back to Muir Beach, which is the proper name for it because Muir Creek comes into it.

In the early days there was nothing at Big Lagoon but a game club. Us kids used to run up and down that beach

^{1/} Muir Beach

naked all week long. They arrest them nowadays for doing that! We were beachcombing. Actually, that's the best beach in Marin County, because it has more or less a southern exposure. Big Lagoon and Little Lagoon were beautiful. There wasn't a house or anything there. Nothing but this game club.

But getting back to hiking on the mountain. After you got to Grethel's stand at the top of the steps, if you wanted to go to the top of the mountain you took the Pipeline Trail. It got its name from the eight-inch pipe that went to the reservoir up on top of the hill. Along that there were more soft-drink stands. I know because my brother had one; that's where I learned how to make change. They'd sell chocolate bars and soda water and lemonade. When I wasn't very old I had my own little stand at the bottom of the steps. I'd sell lemonade and chewing gum, Hershey's nut chocolate bars, and things like that.

The place where Mountain Home Inn is now was an old house that used to belong to a fellow named Adam. On the other side of that was an old brick building that belonged to the Newbegin family of the Newbegin book store in San Francisco. I think Bob Newbegin had a stand down there. These were just weekend stands, see, for the hikers. I think the Sierra Club later acquired that brick building.

The road ended at the Adam House, where Mountain Home is today. The railroad cut through there to go down to Muir Woods. The present road to Stinson Beach was a continuation of the old Pipeline Trail. That would take you eventually down to Stinson Beach. Or you could take the Dipsea Trail through Muir Woods, across by Lone Tree, and down to the beach.

Mrs Andresen

Was the area around Park School developed when you came here?

Mr. Pimlott

Gosh no! The hill opposite Park School -- that was the Boyle home; Hugh Boyle had his big home up on top of that hill. It was quite a few years later before they developed that.

The Boyles and the Deffebachs were all tied in with

the Reed Estate. That's how they got that land. Reed had the original Mexican land grant. I guess Hugh gave the property to the town for Boyle park.

Mrs. Andresen

Did you play baseball in Boyle Park?

Mr. Pimlott

Gosh yes! I think we called our team the Tamals. We were pretty good, too, as I remember.

Mrs. Andresen

Was Schallock a member of the team?

Mr. Pimlott

No, he wasn't old enough.

Mrs. Andresen

He was one of our famous ballplayers.

Mr. Pimlott

Well, we had a famous one too. Don't undersell Tony Freitas, who was a famous pitcher. He went to Old Mill School. In fact, he wasn't good enough to make our team. I used to kid Tony about that. After he got to be a famous pitcher, I'd say, " You know how you got to be such a good pitcher, don't you? By knocking squirrels out of the trees with rocks." We had quite a few baseball players in the town. Tommy Bickerstaff used to be second to none as a baseball player. And did he love it!

Mrs. Andresen

Who built the ball park?

Mr. Pimlott

The town. It just gradually built up. Originally there were two great big ditches on either side. One creek comes down from around Buena Vista, and another comes in from the golf links. Those two creeks came together right behind where the grandstand was, and then it eventually came on

down to this creek. They were deep ditches. I can remember when they filled the first one. They dumped a lot of old cars right behind the grandstand, the backstop, and filled it up. Eventually they filled the other ditch, and that made it beautiful. Before those days they could knock a ball over into the willows and they'd have a hard time finding it.

Before the golf links were there, that was Warner's Canyon. That belonged to Mrs. Alexander Warner, and it was a beautiful place.

Mrs. Andresen

There were no houses in there at that time, were there? Wasn't Boyle Park clear on the outskirts of town?

Mr. Pimlott

Oh yes, that was way out in the sticks. Nobody wanted that!

It seems to me I can remember an old fire wagon right down here on Fern or someplace near here, one of those old hand trucks. There were two of them down here. They had two wheels and the fire hose, and they were pulled by men. For years one of them was here, I'm pretty sure. I don't think they had a water tank; I think they just grabbed those little hand trucks and pulled the hose someplace to use it. That was their volunteer fire department.

Mrs. Andresen

Was it in a sort of shed?

Mr. Pimlott

An open shed, yes.

Mrs. Andresen

I understand that something like that was on this corner.

Mr. Pimlott

That was it, then; and there was another one around

here somewhere. I can remember those things quite well.

I can remember they had a Mount Tamalpais Fire District. On top of the mountain they kept a big box that looked sort of like a coffin. If you got into the box there were brush hooks, axes, burlap sacks, and other equipment for fighting fire. You don't see those any more. I don't know how long they'd last these days; someone would steal it all. In those days, when men went up to fight a fire on the mountain, all the equipment was there.

I think the first big fire on the mountain was 1913. When West Point Tavern burned -- I think that was in 1928 -- I was in San Francisco. It was clear, and I could see smoke at the top of the mountain. I came across on the ferryboat, found out the tavern was on fire, changed my clothes, went down and caught the train, went up to fight the fire, and got there with some other fellows to find the tavern was gone. Somebody pulled the stove out of the tavern, and in the oven we found they had been cooking chicken. So we were just in time to get a chicken apiece.

We used to go up the Pipeline Trail. I wouldn't use the Pipeline now. If I wanted to get to the top of the mountain in a hurry, I'd go up the Cascades where the Old Mill dam was and take the fire trail to Mountain Home. Of course it would be faster if you'd drive up or take a bicycle up and leave it where the dam was, then hike to Mountain Home and take the hogback¹ right up the mountain. We used to do that. Then we'd stay up on the mountain until late at night, and we'd ride the gravity car down from the top with Vollmar Thoney or Pat Patterson. Usually Volly.

Quite often there weren't any passengers coming down in the gravity cars, so we'd get in with Volly and come down the mountain. And I mean we came! We'd come down past West Point, the Double Bowknot, then on down the mountain and into Mill Valley, ringing the bell all the way.

You know what the Double Bowknot was for, don't you? That was to make a switch so one car could go down to Muir Woods. In the early days when the mountain railway went up there, if you wanted to go to Muir Woods (and if there

¹/Throckmorton Trail

were not too many of you) they'd put you in a gravity car, and you'd go down to Muir Woods in a gravity car. Later in the day the engine would go down and pick you up -- haul the gravity cars back up to the Double Bowknot. On top of the mountain they left some gravity cars for people who were late -- particularly the fellows who were working there. Volly knew us kids, so we'd ride down with him in a gravity car.

It's a shame they tore that railroad out. When you think of the ride out of Fort Bragg on the old "skunk" train -- why that can't begin to compare with the mountain railroad.

Mrs. Andresen

I suppose the depression had something to do with it. They were more expensive to maintain....

Mr. Pimlott

And I think the poor old mountain railroad was blamed for starting the 1929 fire. That wasn't funny, that fire. I remember I went up Tamalpais Avenue to the fire and left my car down by Old Mill School. There wasn't much I could do to help fight the fire -- mainly because we didn't have any water. Anyway, when I got back to my car, the fire was within a block or two. It burned clear down to Alcatraz Place. If it had been any closer it would have got the fire department!

There isn't very much you can do if a fire gets a good start. It creates its own breezes. I've seen flames jump 200 feet, with an explosion just like a blowtorch. The only place to be then is out of the way. Those of us who lived here knew what the fire would do, and we knew our way out, but it wasn't very safe for outsiders to come over and start helping when they didn't know the country.

Mrs. Andresen

Getting back to baseball, did you play baseball at Tamalpais High School with Mr. Wendering?

Mr. Pimlott

Yes, he was my coach. I still have my big block T for baseball.

Mrs. Andresen

Didn't he have a winning team for twenty years or something like that?

Mr. Pimlott

For baseball you couldn't touch Tam. He didn't coach football, but he had baseball. He always had a winning team. We were in a different league, too; we played a lot of San Francisco teams. We didn't play San Rafael. There was too much rivalry between San Rafael and Tam. If you started to figure out the professional ballplayers that came out of Tam.... I can think of the Martins. I don't think Tony Freitas went to Tam. Maybe he did; I can't remember. I know his brother George did.

Mrs. Andresen

Was that the Freitas family?

Mr. Pimlott

At one time Mr. Freitas was the Superintendent of Streets for Mill Valley. He lived almost at the end of Throckmorton. The last house on Throckmorton belonged to Dr. Kemp. But right near the end was the Freitas place. I remember I used to get apples there. He had a beautiful apple orchard; the apples must have been five inches in diameter.

Mrs. Andresen

Your father was in business in Mill Valley, wasn't he?

Mr. Pimlott

Yes, and so was I. My father was in the real estate business for a while, but he didn't like it. He said you had to be a crook to be in it. He didn't like any part of it. He was originally an electrician. When he came to San Francisco from the east he was an electrician. I think it was in 1907 that they had a lockout in San Francisco -- that is, the employers locked out all the unions. I think that's when he went into the real estate business, but how long he was in it I don't remember.

After I went to work we had Electricians, Inc., which

was my dad, myself, Bob Gerrish (who is still in business) and Ed Watson. We had a store in the Sequoia Theatre building. We had all the business there was, but there wasn't much. The depression dried it up.

Mrs. Andresen

The name Pimlott strikes a bell somehow.

Mr. Pimlott

You're probably thinking of Pimlott Lane, way up on top of the hill by Edgewood. It comes off around Molino and Edgewood. My father helped develop that area, though we never lived there. There's another street up there named Seymour; he was in on it, too. You might as well get a street named after you! We have Ralston Avenue named for Ralston White. Throckmorton is named for Samuel R. Throckmorton, an early developer. For a good many years, Pimlott Lane was nothing but a name on the map. When I was working on Golden Gate Bridge a sergeant said to me one day, "George, do you have anything to do with Pimlott Lane in Mill Valley? A fellow came in here for a commute book and gave his address as Pimlott Lane." "Well," I said, "I'm related to Pimlott Lane; it was named for my dad."

Mrs. Andresen

You worked as an electrician on Golden Gate Bridge?

Mr. Pimlott

Yes, I was on the bridge for thirty-five years before I retired.

Mrs. Andresen

And before that you worked with your father?

Mr. Pimlott

Well, I worked with my father for a good many years, and then I left and went to work for Hills Bros. Coffee Company in San Francisco. Then I came back and went to work for my dad again. I think I was just born to be an electrician. Sometimes I'd work on my own. Later on, my dad did all the electrical work at Tam High, and I worked there when I was a student.

Mrs. Andresen

Under Mr. Wood?^{1/}

Mr. Pimlott

Yes, under "the duke." And Harry Russell, too. When I first went to Tam, Harry was the hooky cop. He was a nice fellow. Everybody liked him. We still see him every once in a while. He's getting along in years. I think he lives in San Diego.

Harry says to me, "George, students nowadays aren't like you kids." Another fellow and I (Henry Clouette -- he was raised in Mill Valley -- his father was an engineer for the Northwestern Pacific) very seldom went to school on Monday. We'd take off over the hills to Muir Beach with our lunches and enjoyed ourselves. I think Harry knew it, and he was probably sorry he couldn't go with us. That was the kind of a fellow Harry Russell was.

Mrs. Andresen

Did Mill Valley develop rather slowly?

Mr. Pimlott

It did until World War II. Let's put it this way: The people in Mill Valley didn't want it developed. If you look at some of the tracts around here today, and some of the people! When we lived on Millside Terrace -- think of the land we had. My dad said we had four lots. I don't know what size those lots were, but it looked like about five acres of land to me. And everybody else had that much land. They weren't letting go of it, either. Of course nowadays you couldn't afford the taxes on it.

One time when my dad and I were walking through Old Mill Park we came across Mr. Freitas, then Superintendent of Streets, tearing all the old shakes off the roof of the old mill and putting new ones on. My dad just blew! Those were the original shakes he was tearing off this historical building.

Another point: There wasn't a more beautiful spot

^{1/} Ernest E. Wood, Tamalpais High School principal

than the Three Wells. That used to be a beautiful place. What have you got there now? You've got homes! You used to go across the street and then go up to the falls. That's where the oxen came down, I think. Why didn't the town get hold of the Three Wells and make a park out of it?

Mrs. Andresen

It is open space.

Mr. Pimlott

But there are lots of homes there.

Mrs. Andresen

Can you tell me why so many early homes used electricity for cooking and heating?

Mr. Pimlott

For years, San Rafael was the only place that had gas. They manufactured their own. Down here you either had electricity or you used wood, kerosene or coal. That's about all we had. So naturally we had more than our share of electric ranges.

Mrs. Andresen

So that's why!

Mr. Pimlott

Even during the depression, the PG&E would pay more than half the fee if you would install an electric range rather than use a wood range. The homeowner would pay me about \$30, and PG&E would pay me as a contractor \$70 more. They were underwriting this expense to compete against coal and other fuels.

Mrs. Andresen

Tell us about Mr. Camille Solon.

Mr. Pimlott

I don't know how my dad met him, but when Camille Solon

first came to Mill Valley my dad told me he'd like me to take Mr. Solon around the country so he could sketch scenes. I took him all over Strawberry -- probably for months. Later on he made a lot of pastel murals for my dad. In the house on Millside Terrace they were put above the plate rail, all the way around the room.

Later on, Camille Solon married and built his place at the end of Buena Vista Avenue. Incidentally, he was the main artist at San Simeon.^{1/} I didn't know that until quite a few years later.

Anyway, when he first came over from England I used to take him around, and that's how we got all those beautiful paintings.

^{1/} Camille Solon, a native of England, was a well-known artist who executed a number of the paintings in Hearst Castle at San Simeon. As the artist's driver for a time, Mr. Pimlott drove him to scenic sites in Marin County for sketching.