

February 26, 1981

Dear Miss McStay,

Recently a couple of articles describing life in Castro Valley was it was many years ago set me to wondering how much I could recall of the part of the Valley I knew best, the roads along which I walked or bicycled to and from grammar school. As I began jotting down names, the project grew considerably to the enclosed pages, much to my surprise. Then it occurred to me that a historical society might like to have the information. One never knows when it might help someone in trying to recall a name, or to verify the fact of someone's having lived in the Valley at that time.

The years when I knew the Valley the best were from 1923 to 1928 when I attended Castro Valley Grammar School, and until 1932 when I went to Berkeley to live while attending college. From 1932 to 1945 I still came home to Lake Chabot Road at frequent intervals, but in 1945 my parents moved closer to Hayward, and after my father's death in 1948 we left the area entirely. It was sometime after that that the really great influx and changes began. Certainly the Castro Valley we first knew, of widely scattered homes and small chicken ranches, belongs to a "temps perdu", and that is why this list of people and map of sorts might possibly be of some interest. I don't know whether there is a Castro Valley Historical Society but I have read of the one in Hayward, and in those early years Castro Valley was in many ways considered part of Hayward. Anyway, I am sure you will know where this material might best be placed-- if anyone does want it. (If no one does, it doesn't matter; I've had a lot of fun with it!)

I sometimes see mention of you in a newspaper, as John Chaney, by way of his sister Bernice who still lives in Hayward, keeps me in touch to some extent with Hayward events, but I haven't been back there for years. My mother passed away a little over a year ago. She had just reached the age of 90, and as her strength diminished in her later years we didn't travel much. I retired in 1977 and was very glad to be able to take care of her to the last. Then I spent last summer with cousins in New England, a needed change. Now I am planning a visit back to England and Scotland in May and June, to see other cousins and revisit the area where I lived and want to school as a child.

Aren't you proud of Evelyn Shaw? I am enjoying all her books as they come out. We have had an interesting correspondence ever since high school days. Incidentally, in a little over a year our high school class will be due for a 50-year reunion, and I hope someone does get plans started for one.

I trust this perhaps formidable communication won't be a nuisance to you! Thank you very much for disposing of it in whatever way you think best.

I hope you are well and enjoying life -
My best to you,
Katherine

SOMETHING OF CASTRO VALLEY IN THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES

A for-fun effort to recall the names of people living in the part of Castro Valley that I knew in the twenties and thirties developed into this attempt to name and map them, and to add some recollections of what Castro Valley was like in those years. Then it occurred to me that this information might be of interest or even of assistance to someone else trying to remember names or perhaps wishing to verify someone's residence in the Valley during that time. A Historical Society seemed the appropriate place for the list and map that I came up with. The map is fairly accurate as far as what's on it, but there were of course other families whom I didn't know or have forgotten, and other roads with which I was not so familiar. The roads I knew really well were those I walked or bicycled along on the way to and from school. Certainly in general the roads were few compared to what they are today. The whole valley consisted of widely scattered homes, small chicken ranches, and many open areas.

In 1923 when we moved to Castro Valley, the "business district" at the intersection of Lake Chabot Road and Castro Valley Boulevard consisted of Fred Puls' gas station, Kuhn's fruit-and-vegetable stand, a garage, and I think Orrin Crowe's feed store. The fire house, Selmezki's hardware store, Perry's hatchery, and others all came later on. Castro Valley Boulevard was a two-lane concrete road (though white lines to indicate lanes were far in the future, and some drivers took their half out of the middle). Redwood Road and Lake Chabot Road were black-topped, but the topping seemed to be chiefly an application of tar, which in hot summer weather oozed down toward the sides of the road and which some youngsters would squeeze off in little gobs to use as chewing gum. Lake Chabot Road was tarred only as far as the bend where Seven Hills Road came in; beyond that it was just a dirt road, as were all the other roads. In summer the county water wagon toured around, spraying to lay the dust. There was often a following of children getting into the cool spray in spite of the threats of the rather formidable roadmaster. There were standing pipes at intervals (such as at #49 on the map) where the wagon would pull over under the tall pipe and tank up. It wasn't too much later that the blacktopping was extended farther on Lake Chabot Road, but the lesser roads were still gravelled throughout my school years.

Changes I notice in road names include Somerset Ave. which used to be Williams St., Wisteria St. which used to be Whelton Ave., and Carlington Ave. which was Carlton Way. On Lake Chabot Road from our driveway (at #48 on the map) to Christensen Lane, there were tall poplar trees on both sides of the road, fairly close together, making a beautiful avenue of stately trees. They were cut down in 1933. Beyond Lake Chabot Road and Seven Hills Road there were very

few houses, just open hills, and we often heard the barking of coyotes roaming there.

There was only one school in the whole of Castro Valley-- the grammar school at the corner of San Miguel and Castro Valley Boulevard. It was still fairly new; the previous school, which burned down, had been up Redwood Road at Madison Avenue (which has been renamed James Avenue). For high school, everyone went to Hayward, to the beautiful "old" Hayward High School. And of course there were no school buses; we found a ride or we walked.

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ON THE MAP:



(Children named in the various families were all more or less contemporaries, attending Castro Valley Grammar School in the twenties. There were in many cases other children, whom I didn't happen to know. And there were other families in some of the spaces, whom I don't remember.)

1. APPLEBY: an older couple, who had a nursery and I believe raised orchids.
2. CANNING: with a daughter Doris.
3. ROHBER: with a daughter Carol.

I seldom went to "upper" Stanton Ave. and am not sure of the location of the above three homes.

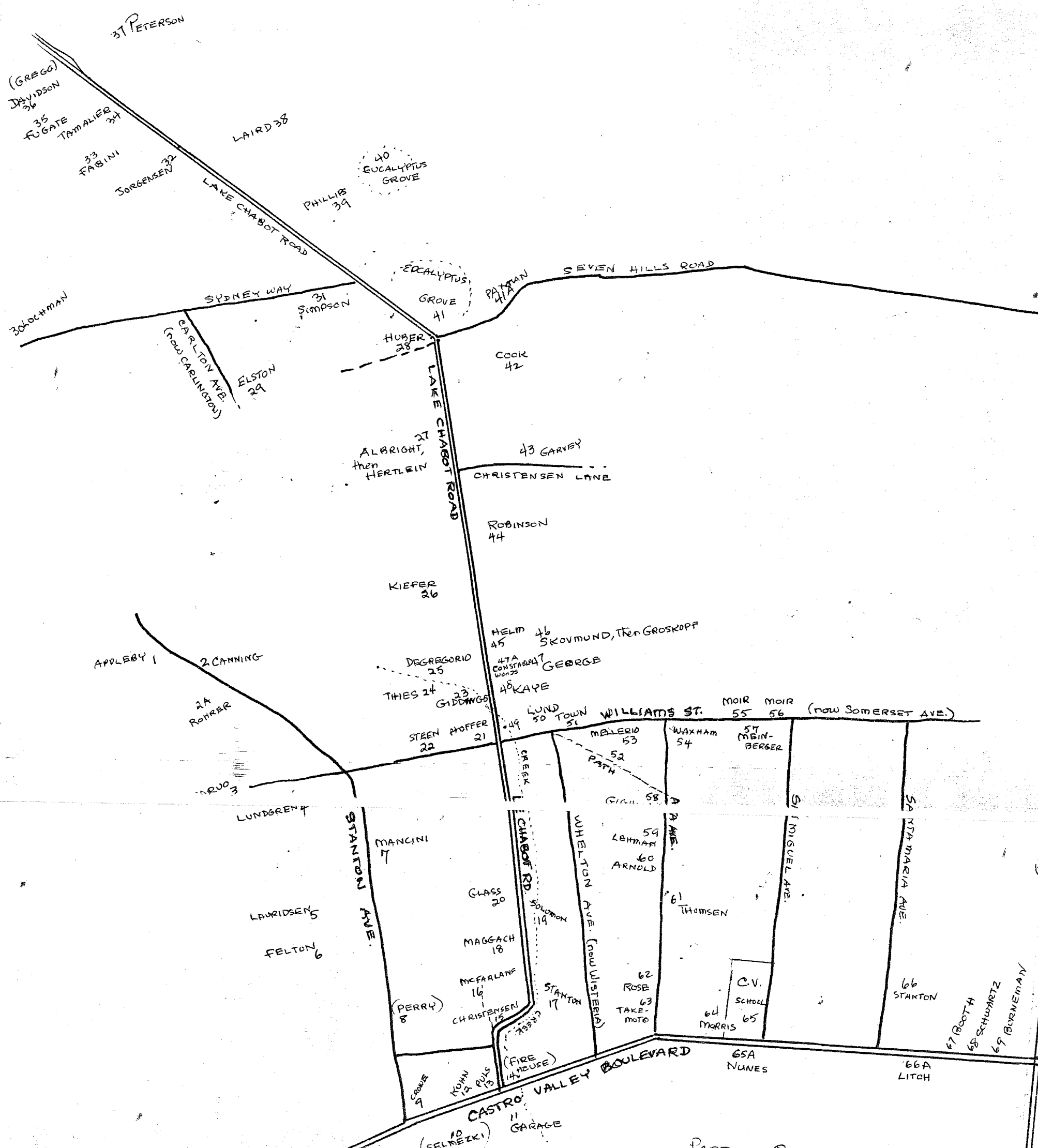
4. LUNDGREN: children were twins Oscar and George, both now deceased, and Arthur.
5. LAURIDSEN: with a daughter Laura.
6. FELTON: with a granddaughter Esther. While living with her grandparents she went by their name, but I learned that later she lived elsewhere and went back to her earlier name of Pat Hagerty.
7. MANCINI: daughter Gilda. There were older sons, and a younger one, Bob.
8. PERRY: the family home and the hatchery were both on Stanton Ave. and their children John and Anna were in high school with us; daughter Betty was younger.
9. ORRIN CROWE's feed store was one of the early businesses. Most people in Castro Valley then had at least a few chickens, and many raised them on a larger scale.
10. PETE SELMEZKI's hardware store was built somewhat later. There were sons Frank and Ernest.
11. GARAGE: one of the earliest businesses. In the excitement over oil-wells in the mid-twenties, oil was "discovered" in an adjoining field but was eventually found to have seeped from the garage. During that period a drill operated for a while on "Parsons Hill" above Seven Hills Road, but without result.
12. KUHN: with a daughter Florence. In 1923 their store was a small fruit-and-vegetable shop with an open front, but before long they built a real store building, later expanded and improved again.
13. PULS' Gas Station, run by Fred Puls and Alex McFarlane. Inside there was an old-fashioned glass-covered counter of penny candy, lovingly lingered over by the grammar school children.
14. FIRE HOUSE: built much later.
15. CHRISTENSENS.
16. MCFARLANE: children Bruce and Agnes.
17. STANTON HOUSE: one of the very early homes in the Valley. In 1923 and for a number of years the Stantons were living further down Castro Valley Boulevard (see #66) and the big house was occupied by the Manuel Peters. The house was then surrounded by a high, thick hedge. Later the Stanton family returned, removed the hedge, and improved the house. Daughter Anita Marie Phillips lived in the house until moving to Auburn. Finally the house, as a historical landmark, was moved to another location not far away.

18. MAGGACH: pronounced McGaw
19. SOLOMON: with two daughters. In rainy seasons the low land where this house stood was flooded by the overflowing creek and the family was sometimes marooned.
20. GLASS: with a son Wally. They had pigeon lofts, probably where Eden hospital is now.
21. HOFFER: An elderly couple with chicken houses, and a parrot known to all the passing children. Imitating Mrs. Hoffer calling her husband, it would shout loudly and clearly, "Fred! Oh, Fre-ed? Fred! Polly want a cracker? Fred!..."
22. STEEN: with a daughter Edna.
23. GIDDINGS: an elderly couple with a house on top of the rise and an almond orchard down to the road. Captain Giddings was a Civil War veteran. He used to drive a horse and buggy to town.
24. THIES: with children Al(?) and Doris.
25. DE GREGORIO: with children Angela, John, and Barbara.
26. KIEFER: and older couple.
27. ALBRIGHT: one of the big houses, in a stand of huge trees. They had apricot orchards up and over the hill behind the house, and in summer they ran an apricot drying outfit that occupied the land as far as the Huber property and that included a track of rails on which a sort of flat car went around to haul the drying trays.
28. HUBER: with several children, I believe, but quite a bit older and I did not know them. Between the Huber and Albright properties there was a rough lane going up the hill, possibly where the present Keith Ave. is.
29. ELSTON: with a daughter Marion. They lived at what was then the end of Carlton Way (now Carlington).
30. There was a small house somewhere up on the crest of the ridge, not far from the long line of ridge-top eucalyptus trees that could be seen also on the other side from Foothill Blvd. and East 14th St. The house was occupied by two ladies, one of them Mrs. Herminia Lochman, our 5th grade teacher. She used to drive down to school in a little Model T two-seater (the original "compact" car?).
31. SIMPSON: with children Gordon, Maxwell, Helen, and Robert.
32. JORGENSEN: with daughters Marguerite, Ann, and twins Violette and Juliette.
33. FABINI: with children Richard and Eleanor.
34. TAMALIER: moved away at about the same time we came to Castro Valley, but the name lingered on and it was known as the Tamalier (Tamma-leer) house.
35. FUGATE: with a daughter Laurace (I believe a foster-daughter or other relationship).
36. DAVIDSON: with a son Laurie. I believe the house was built by people named Gregg or Grieg but they did not stay very long.
37. PETERSON: this house was far back from the road and was the "last outpost" before the wild hills. From here the road went on around Lake Chabot and down to San Leandro. There were no more homes, and there was no public access to the lake.

38. LAIRD: another big Victorian-style house, with chicken houses and orchards.
39. PHILLIPS: Dr. George Phillips of the Tenth Avenue Baptist Church of Oakland. Children Mildred, George, Wendell, Ethel Ann. George became a lawyer and eventually a judge in the Alameda County courts; Ethel Ann is married to Arnold Anderson and I believe still in Castro Valley. Both Wendell and George have died. Between the Phillips and the Laird houses there was nothing but orchard. Somewhere in the middle was an old well; it had a wooden cover, but we had orders to stay away from it. However it was overgrown with grapevines that bore sweet, sun-ripened Muscat grapes, and we did not let them go to waste...
40. A eucalyptus grove at the top of the Phillips' hill. Dr. Phillips used to walk up and down in the grove preparing his sermons. He also raised bees in hives on the slope below the grove. From here the smoke from the big Berkeley fire of September 1923 was visible.
41. This eucalyptus grove occupied the whole of the bend where Seven Hills Rd. came in and Lake Chabot Road curved to the left.
- 41A. PAXMAN: He was a doctor, with several children, two sons who also became doctors I believe.
42. COOK: an older couple. Mr. Cook also used a horse and buggy to go to town. They kept sheep in their large corner field, where there is now a Castro Valley Community Park.
43. GARVEY: with two boys, Robert and Harold. I think this small road did not go through at that time.
44. ROBINSON: with a son, Bill Luckenbill. Theirs was not the corner house but I don't recall who was at the corner.
45. HELM: with a daughter Eleanor. For a time they lived in a house which was on the Skovmund property.
46. SKOVMUND: later this house was occupied by the GROSSKOPFS, with a daughter Claire and I think a son also.
47. GEORGE: Dr. George was a chiropractor. At one time Mrs. George's brother, a Mr. Blake, lived with them while recovering from a stroke. He walked a lot for his health, and as we children met him on the road he was friendly to us although at the time practically all he was able to say was "You bet your life!".
48. KAYE: I was an only child. We lived here until 1945, when we moved closer to Hayward. People named BLADE had owned the house before us.
49. Location of one of the tall water pipes  for filling the water wagons that sprinkled the dirt roads in summer.
50. LUND: a taciturn family so I did not know much about them although they were neighbors. Two sons, I think, and they had chickens, and a cow or two in the corner pasture.
51. TOWN: with three daughters, Florence, Beatrice, and Edith.
52. Path. In the early years, most of the land here between Whelton and Anita Avenues was a big open field of grass. The dotted line indicates the path we used as a shortcut on the way to school, coming out probably about where the  map now shows Anita Court.

Chamber of Commerce

53. MELLERIO: with a daughter Delores.
54. WAXHAM: three children, Evelyn, Florence, and Charles. Mr. Waxham was a Prudential Life Insurance Co. salesman.
55. and 56: MOIR: two brothers. Al was later Fire Chief. Two children, Catherine ("Catty") and "Buddy" (Al Jr.?)
57. MEINBERGER: with a foster daughter, Betty Ashcomb. Mr. Meinberger was also an insurance agent, possibly State Farm.
58. GIGHLIONE: with a daughter Evelyn.
59. LEHMAN: with a daughter Ione, and I believe a couple of younger children.
60. ARNOLD: with a daughter
61. THOMSEN: with two daughters, Thore and Helen(?)
62. ROSE: with children Rose, Joe, Mary, and I think others.
63. TAKEMOTO: a daughter Fumie, and other children.
64. MORRIS: A.B. Morris was principal of the grammar school. They had six children, younger than we were.
65. CASTRO VALLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL. In 1923 the enrollment was so small that some of the rooms were not yet in use, and in several there were two grades in the same room. Before I left, however, there were no empty rooms, no combined grades, and an addition had been built for "Manual Training". At the edge of the grounds (in the direction of the Morris house) was an open-fronted barn for bicycles and cars. Next to it on one side was a pergola with benches where we had shelter for eating our lunches, and on the other side was the water tank on its tower. Further back on the same side was built (much later, well after 1928) the "adobe" which is now used as an art center.
- 65A. NUNES: At this house across from the school Mrs. Nunes sold candy to the school children until traffic on the Boulevard was deemed too "thick" and we were no longer allowed to cross. Then a candy wagon visited the school-ground on Friday afternoons.
66. STANTON: The family lived here in what had been the farm house of the original Stanton ranch. One daughter, Anita Marie. Years later they moved back to the big house (#17).
- 66A. LITCH: daughter Virginia and son Bill.
67. BOOTH: with a son Lester. Mrs. Booth had a branch of the Alameda County Library in their home. (Another of these small branches was run by Mrs. DUE - son John was in school with us - in a made-over chicken house at their place off upper Redwood Road. Years later when I was attending the University of California School of Librarianship, the "chicken house library" in Castro Valley was still being described to the class in County Library Administration as an example of ingenuity in providing library service in a rural area.)
68. SCHWARTZ: a daughter, Thais. They had a chicken farm.
69. BORNEMAN: three children, Marion, Helen, and Robert.
70. KRAUSE: with a daughter Fradelle.
71. WINSLOW: one of the big Victorian houses. Mrs. Winslow was active in community affairs, and a daughter Frances (older than we) taught for a time at Hayward High School.



PART OF CASTRO VALLEY
 APPROXIMATELY AS IT WAS IN
 THE 1920'S AND 1930'S