

There Has Been A Baldwin In The House For 89 Years

Editor's Note: This series is being written in conjunction with efforts by SCOPE and the Santa Cruz Historical Society to arouse interest in local history and the preservation of Santa Cruz' heritage.

By Margaret Koch
Sentinel Staff Writer

For more than 89 years a member of the Baldwin family has lived at 425 Locust street.

The little pioneer frame house has sheltered a passing parade of funerals, weddings, family parties, meetings of 'THE Club', and just plain everyday living.

A member of the family still lives there today — Miss Ruth Baldwin.

The early-day Baldwin family was a friendly tangle of "kissing cousins." Levi K. Baldwin was first to come West from Massachusetts. There he had been a prosperous farmer until business reverses wiped out his fortune. Levi was a generous man; he endorsed mortgages for several desperate friends, the mortgages fell due and Levi found himself forced to mortgage his own home in order to meet the notes.

In 1858 he and his wife came to California via the Isthmus of Panama. They settled first in Marin County to operate a dairy. In 1872 he moved to Santa Cruz to start another dairy which became famed for its butter. Levi developed the business from his original purchase of 157 acres and 23 cows to 1700 acres and 400 cows.

Levi, who had learned a bitter lesson in finance, also became president of Santa Cruz City Bank in the 1890s. Before that he served as county supervisor. Here in Santa Cruz he gained the prestige and wealth he had lost in the East.

In 1898 Levi bought his house on Locust street from Harrison Terry who had built it a few years before. When Levi died, the little house went to his daughter, May. In later years she became a benefactor of the First Congregational Church, giving the parsonage in the memory of her parents.

In 1906 May deeded the Locust street house and property to Carrie Baldwin. Carrie was the wife of Amos Baldwin, who was a cousin of Levi. When Carrie died in 1953, the house came to her daughter, Ruth, who lives there yet.

Ruth's memories are many and colorful of the passing parade of Baldwins and their friends. Her sister, Elizabeth Amy Baldwin, was married in the house in 1904 to Leslie J. Wright. The family was living there, renting at the time.

"The parlor was hung with

smilax and roses. The dining room was decorated with geraniums. I was just a small girl but I greeted guests and took the men's hats," she recalled.

Ruth also remembers THE Club to which her mother belonged. Widows of all the best families were members. At intervals the stately and well-fed widows would get their black silks out of mothballs, meet at each other's homes, have dinner (luncheon today) and a social afternoon.

Favorite meat loaf recipes were cooked up, pickles were un-jarred, apple pies perfumed the air. And then the parade of ladies in long black silk gowns and bonnets would begin. Ruth was official "greeter."

"My how that girl has grown! Carrie why don't you put a brick on that child's head?" — They always said it.

After dinner, if Mrs. Faye left early, the other ladies would play Dutch whist. Mrs. Faye believed that whist was a contrivance of the devil himself. If she stayed, the ladies chatted, looked through the stereopticon or enjoyed a bit of music.

Ruth also remembers playing with the little girl next door—daughter of Mayor Drullard. Marjorie Drullard grew up and married Sam Leask II.

Other neighbors included Baldwin cousins up the street at 445 Locust, and several houses away, H. E. Irish. Ruth's father, Amos, was associated in business with Mr. Irish, running the piano department in Irish's store.

Ruth's father, mother and grandmother all died in the family home.

Ruth worked as a secretary in San Francisco for a number of years but came home to Santa Cruz in 1947 to care for her mother. Today she walks wonderingly through the garden, pointing out trees.

"She that huge pine; my mother planted it. That palm tree? She started it from a date pit. I lost one of her trees out by the front walk. I hated to see it go," she added sadly.

Baldwin roots go deep.

Originated Ranger Units

The British originated military ranger units during the French and Indian War by using expert woodsmen and marksmen on missions in the forests, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

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