

Houses, History

Aging House Cradles Memories Of Santa Cruz Area Family

By Margaret Koch

If you blinked—or turned your head for a moment, you could drive right by Ivy lane.

It's a private sort of little street that invites you to visit the past—if you drive down it far enough.

The first few houses are neither very old nor very new. Then there's a cluster of brand-new, self-conscious pastel stuccos. Past them, at the very end of the lane, huge cypress trees shelter an old frame house. It stands aloof—a little lonely looking, like a faded grande dame of another age.

It's the old Kinsley home—built in 1881. And still living there are Miss Anna Letitia Kinsley who is 90 years old, and her brother, John, who is 86.

"We had to have a fair-sized house—there were nine of us growing up here, five boys and four girls," Miss Kinsley explained.

She and her brother, both born on the family's Live Oak ranch where they now live, are the last ones left. They knew Live Oak before it was Live Oak. They have seen streets of homes sprout in fields where the family grew wheat, oats and barley. They live there alone, with memories tucked away in every corner.

Today the old house is holding its own on three and one-half acres—all that's left of the original family ranch which included about 150 acres.

Years ago, back in 1872, one of those Kinsley acres was given so that Live Oak school could come into existence. It was a one-room, one-teacher schoolhouse. Both Kinsleys remember going there as children.

Miss May Cooper was teacher when the school opened in 1873, according to records at the school office. The old original building with its hand-hewn beams is still in use as part of the clubhouse.

Teachers sometimes took board and room with the Kinsley family in the old days.

"A teacher got about \$50 per month then. Room and board cost about \$15 per month—sure different today," John reminisced.

"The first live Oak school started with seven children and today it has more than 700," added his sister.

The name of Live Oak just sort of came about because of all the live oak tree growing in the gulches thereabouts, according to John.

"Some growing right now—down in the pasture," he offered.

Busiest time of the year for the Kinsleys was threshing season when the acres of honey-colored grain were harvested. Crews of 20 or more men moved in from the Watsonville area with threshing machines. All day long the men were busy in the fields and the women were busy in the kitchen.

Girls, too.

"We all worked then," noted Miss Kinsley.

A fragile-looking little woman, she fell not long ago in the same kitchen and broke a hip. Today she gets around with a metal "walking frame" and favors her "hip the doctors pinned together again."

As a girl Miss Kinsley graduated from Live Oak grammar school and with one of her sisters went in to Santa Cruz to board at Holy Cross for secondary education. Sisters of Charity operated the parochial school for about 80 years—part of that time in a large wooden building which stood where the new Holy Cross elementary now is located.

One-Way Street End Discussed By Toastmasters

The defeat of the one-way street program in downtown Santa Cruz was discussed at the meeting of the Downtown Toastmasters club Wednesday in Hilda's restaurant by Norman Bedell, president of the group. He said: "Our cities were laid out before the advent of heavy automobile traffic and are narrow in comparison with the requirements. To have traffic going two

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"The school was widely known and highly regarded," Miss Kinsley said. "Young ladies used to come from as far as the San Joaquin valley to attend school here."

Among the early family names in the Live Oak area were the James Morrisseys, John Baileys, Uriah Thompsons, James Corcorans and Pat Morans.

The Kinsleys' parents, Martin and Catherine, came to the Live Oak area in 1864 after a cattle ranching disaster.

"My folks were raising cattle on the old Meder place—up be-

hind the Wilder ranch. A drought year came along and wiped out herds all over the county. All they could do was get 75 cents for each beef hide," John noted.

The family first lived in a smaller house that stood near the present home site. John had his own saddle horse from the time he can remember. He doesn't ride today but he still enjoys attending meetings of Santa Cruz County Horsemen and in the past has received two blue ribbons for the "best stock horse."

"Father always said it didn't cost any more to feed a good

horse than to feed a poor one," he quoted.

Miss Kinsley nodded. "And mother always said Johnny would never marry because he thought too much of horses," she said with a smile.

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Live Oak Home Is Isle Of History



Secluded in a little "island" of past history of its own stands one of the oldest homes in Live Oak — the Martin Kinsley home, built in 1881. Still living there are a daughter, Miss Anna Letitia, and son, John,

who were both born on the family's Live Oak ranch. The late Kinsley Senior was instrumental in founding Live Oak school, served on its first board of trustees and donated the land for the first school.

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