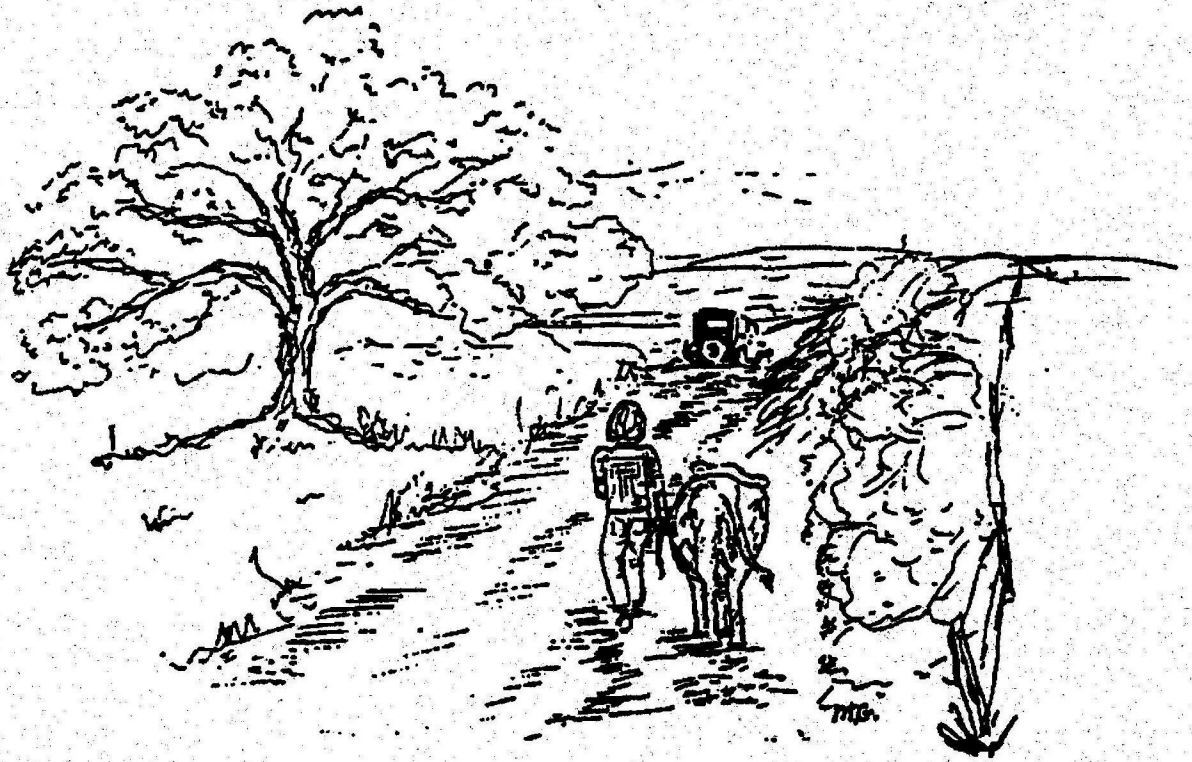


UP SUNSET AVENUE
THE EARLY YEARS OF FAIR OAKS



by Sarah Ann Goller

Second Edition - 2020

Introduction to the Second Edition, 2020

"What is human life? The first third is a good time, and the rest is remembering it."

-Mark Twain

"Fair Oaks" – Inhabited for thousands of years by the native Maidu Indians, then the Spaniards. Later the Mexican government claimed California followed by the race of the French, Russian and American explorers to claim California for themselves. In 1849 gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in Coloma and the 49er gold rush brought more migration to the West. The land speculators and promoters came in 1895 and for profit advertised for Easterner's consumption the new Colony of Fair Oaks in newspapers and magazines such as **Farm, Field and Fireside**, **The Cosmopolitan** and **McClure's**. The Fair Oaks Colony was sold as the "land of milk and honey," agricultural land, specifically good for citrus in spite of the great oak forests that abounded.

The Vincent and Kennedy families responded to the call to come West. My great-great grandfather Frank Wilson Vincent came to California in the late 1890's early 1900's from Kansas looking for fertile farm land. He traveled by train to Southern California, then took a stage coach up the valley; stopping along the way to look at land. He was looking for the proper climate and soil condition to plant citrus and fruit trees. California's Mediterranean climate was perfect. When he came upon Fair Oaks, he saw wild berries growing along the banks of the American River, lush rolling green hills and large oak. He found what he was looking for – the perfect climate, soil, and wind currents. He bought two tracts of land on Sunset Avenue near Chicago Avenue and Miller Park and another parcel on Kenneth Avenue across from the Earl Legette Elementary School.

Frank and his sons, Walter (my grandfather), Frank, Earl and John planted acres of citrus, fruit and nut trees, many which still stand today. My grandfather lived on the twenty-acre tract on Sunset Avenue very near Miller Park and raised a family of four girls, Wanda, Laura, Katherine, and my mother, Sarah-Ann.

Many years later, Walter and my grandmother, Wanda (Kennedy) Vincent sold the home and acreage on Sunset Avenue and moved to the twenty-four-acre ranch on Kenneth Avenue. The ranch had acres of fruit, nuts and flowers. On the eastern backside of the property were the remnants of a Maidu sweat lodge where several grinding stones were found along with many arrow heads scattered about the property.

The Vincent's sold their fruit to local fruit/olive exchanges and packing plants, including nuts to Blue Diamond. They were part owners of the Farmers Market building in Sacramento on Alhambra Boulevard. I have many fond memories of going to the Farmers Market on Saturdays with my cousins, aunts and uncles to help my grandparents sell fruit, flowers and nuts.

The market was in a large building with a big parking lot. Many farmers and ranchers came from all over the Sacramento County area and beyond to sell their produce. I was too young to help

much so I had fun going up and down the market's wide aisle to the various vendors selling their goods. The bakery was across the way from the Vincent produce stand. The bakery had such delicious treats, as well as the biggest donuts I ever saw. And, on to the Italian butcher selling sausages and bologna from which we made our lunch. There were many stands of beautiful produce, flowers and other goods. The Vincent's sold oranges, peaches, plums, nectarines, cherries, almonds, walnuts and beautiful flowers. My grandmother, Wanda, in her later years sold her share in the old Farmers Market to the State of California on which now stands the Department of Transportation, Caltrans "Farmers Market" buildings.

My great-great grandfather, Dr. William Nellis Kennedy came to Fair Oaks in the early 1930's from Wisconsin by way of Mendocino, Stanislaus, Berkeley and Oakland. Dr. William Kennedy and his sons, my great grandfather, William Whitney Kennedy and great uncle, Glen Marion Kennedy lived in Berkeley at the time of the Great 1906 Earthquake. Dr Kennedy and son's went to Oakland to stay in the tent camps to help with the sick and injured after the earthquake and fire. This is where my young great-grandfather, William Whitney Kennedy met and later married Laura Wanda Hewitt, daughter of a minister who also came to the tent camps to help people in their need.

Dr. Kennedy was one of the first doctors and surgeons in Fair Oaks. His son, Glen Kennedy was also a doctor and surgeon serving in World War II and later practicing medicine in Fair Oaks Village. His office was upstairs in the building located on the southeast corner of Fair Oaks Boulevard and California Avenue, across from the Plaza Park. Glen was a man well liked in the community with a gleam in his eye, great sense of humor, and a mischievous spirit – he was involved in many a prank.

Sarah-Ann Vincent, my mother, was born in February of 1937 and grew up in the early days of Fair Oaks. She was born at a time when the country was coming out of a great Depression. She grew up during World War II when there was great patriotic sacrifice and into the postwar era of economic expansion, and affluence. Growing up on Sunset Avenue, living the farm life along with dogs, cats, cows and chickens was a simpler time in some ways, but also hard work. Living on the bounty of the farm, cooking, canning, preserving fruits and vegetables, as well as sewing one's own clothes were a way of life. There were Victory gardens, and rationing of sugar. One had to learn to be resourceful. This is the backdrop of this book, "Up Sunset Avenue."

My mother, Sarah, passed away in November of 2019 at the age of 82. She loved sharing her stories with others and in this humble book is the telling of her growing up in Fair Oaks in the early days - a simpler, sweeter time for most who remember. This book, a "pen to paper" written oral history is worth preserving for future generations. So, it is with pleasure and in memory of my mother that these delightful stories are shared with you. I hope you enjoy their simple telling.

Michelle Ann (Goller) Hancock

*UP SUNSET AVENUE
THE EARLY YEARS OF FAIR OAKS*

BY SARAH-ANN GOLLER

COMPILED BY MICHELLE GOLLER

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Sarah-Ann Goller

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*With thanks to my mother, Wanda Vincent
and my sisters, Wanda Fox, Laura Morey and Katherine Odom
for helping with the memories.*

*These stories are dedicated
to all those wonderful people
named in these stories and those
whose names have escaped with the passing
of time. Our roots, unseen and yet the life force that
sustained the beautiful Fair Oaks we see today.*

FORWARD

*"When memory keeps me company and moves to smiles or tears,"
- James Whitcomb Riley*

One of the most pleasant memories of my childhood here in Fair Oaks is the telling of stories -- every family gathering, visit with neighbors, trip downtown usually produced some good story of life in the early days of Fair Oaks.

My parents were farmers, part of a large clan of relatives who made their living from the land. Our social gatherings were usually occupied with good home cooking and a round of story telling. Most wonderful has been the embellishing with the ongoing years and the retelling. We never seem to tire of hearing them told over and over again. When my dad got old he would very often lean forward in his old red leather rocking chair and pound his pipe on the ashtray. You could tell by the smile on his face that there was a good story coming on.

My sister loves to take our little white haired mother for a ride down Winding Way just to hear her tell again the story of how my dad and her would drive down and park on the hill by Cozy Glen to kiss. My dad would stop the old Model A Ford on the hill and leave it in neutral so that if a car came along all he had to do was take his foot off the brake and the car would roll down the hill as if they were just driving along. Remembering this makes her dark eyes glisten -- the maiden hair fern droops from the banks again, the Spanish Moss floats from the oak trees gently in the drafts from the nearby river, Johnny Jump-ups and Blue Bells bloom again. Somewhere a dove coos for its mate. She remembers her days of youth and love in Fair Oaks.

It is with joy I share these stories with you my friends.



