

PART ONE

THE EARLY YEARS

A Man With a Dream

Fair Oaks in the early 1890's was a wild country. Sunset Avenue, not much more than an ox trail, was the only road meandering through the country. There were groves of huge oaks covering most of the countryside. The thickets of scrub oak, grape vines and poison oak were so thick a person could get lost going in most any direction.

My Grandfather first saw Fair Oaks in about 1890. He then went back to Kansas, worked out a homestead agreement and sold his land before coming back to Fair Oaks in 1906.

Sometime before Valentine's Day in 1895 my Grandfather, Frank Vincent, saw Fair Oaks. He lived with a dream for nearly ten years. Frank came to Fair Oaks from Kansas in the late 1880's or early 1890's. He came by train as far as Bakersfield and then on up the Great Valley by stage coach. All along the way he stopped and looked at the land, took soil samples and observed wind patterns. He carried with him maps which he marked and studied.

The trip from Kansas moved across the flat wheatland, through the Rockies, and days of desert into southern California. Traveling up the rich green valley I can only imagine how the young man in his early twenties must have felt as he approached the American River and saw the bluffs of Fair Oaks.

While he was here he took soil samples. He was quite an educated man and knew much of farming. He was able to obtain government geological maps that indicated somewhat where the rich veins of soil were. He was also interested in wind currants that were an important part of protection of the crop from frost. He chose several separate areas he was interested in. He then returned to Kansas where he had a homestead which had to be worked for ten more years.

His property in Kansas was a good piece of land, but an alkaline soil that only grew wheat. The water was brackish from the wells. Even a vegetable garden was impossible. The only fresh water to be had was water caught in a cistern or barrels. At the time they came to Kansas there were no trees for hundreds of miles. The Indians had burned them off chasing their enemies, making it so the enemy had no place to hide, or sometimes just to drive game in one direction so they could hunt. He did have a valuable wheat growing piece of land in one of the areas that produces the most wheat in the United States. The next homestead to the west was his brother's.

During that ten years he married and had two little boys. He farmed his homestead. They raised grain which in those days was sold to the cattle drives going north. Wheat is a crop you plant and hope for rain and wait for the harvest, so he also taught school. In 1906 Frank sold his land to his brother

and brought his wife Elizabeth and his sons, Earnest and Walter to California. At first they stayed in a hotel across from the Old Governor's Mansion in Sacramento. My father always liked to tell how he looked across the street at the Governor's coachman and said that was what he wanted to be when he grew up!

Frank Vincent's first farming endeavor was raising wheat; something he knew how to do. He rented eighty acres in the area where Sacramento State University is now. He raised wheat for a short time. Soon he began to buy land in Fair Oaks. He bought three separate parcels, a total of thirty six acres. Some of the land was already planted. The original planting was about ten acres of almonds. The rest of the land was planted to orchards of mixed fruit with the help of John Holst and Walter Cunningham.

John Holst was one of the earliest settlers in the area and was always ready to encourage and help newcomers. He was a wonderful neighbor and friend. There was a time when my grandfather was short of money with a crop ready to harvest. He went to John and asked him if he could take out a loan. Holst didn't ask him to sign a paper or even shake hands. He simply walked over to a safe, opened it and handed him the money. Fifteen hundred dollars! That was a lot of money in those days. Just a little kindness, working alongside, and encouragement of a friend.

Frank Vincent had realized his dream. He had come to Fair Oaks, raised his sons here in this lovely town. He planted orchards that supported our family until 1974.

Whether coming home after several years, or just a few weeks, or coming back from running an errand, a part of him that lives in me is still awed by the beauty of the little town set up on the cliffs.

Dreams come true in Fair Oaks.

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## Movin', Movin', Movin'

When Frank Vincent and his family came to Fair Oaks from Jamestown, Kansas they came by train bringing with them just a steamer trunk filled with their most cherished possessions. They brought with them the items of culture: the violin, a complete works of Shakespeare, other books and sheet music. There was the family Bible with the names and a small handful of pictures of beloved family members. The item they brought that has been the subject of the most stories here in Fair Oaks was the old shotgun. And, they brought enough money to buy anything else they wanted when they got here.

Elizabeth's cousin came with everything they owned. They rented a whole boxcar on a train coming from Concordia, Kansas. Into the boxcar they piled all of their farm equipment, household goods, the cow, horses, crates of chickens, and the family pets. The neighbor boy wanted to come, so they brought him too.

The DeWolfe family always headed west with every move the Grandfather made. All of his grown children and their families were working for the Cudahy Meat Packing Company in Colorado when Grandpa decided they should all move to California. All of the families' possessions, equipment and livestock were packed into a boxcar consigned to Placerville with the ultimate destination of Happy Valley to the east. Coming through Denver they spotted a son who had run away from home years before so they brought him too.

The DeWolfe's had a herd of pigs they shipped as far as the train yard in Placerville. The old man left the rugged canyon valley of Happy Valley with a horse and buggy to get them. Grandpa herded those 40 pigs up and down the hills, this way and that over narrow dirt roads and trails through meadow, woods and down into the canyon. He arrived at Happy Valley nearly deranged and cursing. It is no wonder he never wanted to hear the word "Pig" again as long as he lived.

When the Kennedy clan came to Fair Oaks, California they brought the old piano made in 1871, some lovely antique furniture, including a table covered with shells they had collected while they were medical missionaries in the South Sea Islands. There was a fine beaver top hat in a leather case. The most protected and carefully transported were the fine medical equipment and remedies of a physician and surgeon of the early 1900's.

In April of 1853 Grandfather Duvall McKenny came to California from Manchester, Missouri. A boy of 17, he was part of a cattle drive to bring food and livestock to the people of the Gold Rush Era. Duvall and twenty other men drove 721 head of cattle thousands of miles to Knights Landing. Besides the cattle, they brought 12 wagons, each drawn by six pair of oxen. The wagons



were loaded with meat, flour, groceries, tents, clothes and camp equipment. They managed to get here with all of this even though a thunderstorm spooked the cattle and they all ran off down the Platte River, losing them over a fifteen mile area and mixing in with other driver's cattle.

When the McKennys came to Fair Oaks with their four children they bought the old Vincent ranch out on the Bald Spot. They had seen an ad in the paper for a 50 acre working dairy farm and 650 acres of leased land. The John Vincent ranch looked like a hollow in the Kentucky hills.

The family came cross county 50 miles from Wheatland by horse and wagon. They brought with them ten tons of hay, four horses, six cows, and all of their household goods and furniture. In this entourage came the 1917 Studebaker car that the Billy goat had eaten the top off of and hadn't quite finished the upholstery. Billy goat came too, destructive as he was they couldn't get rid of him. Along with this troop came a race horse who was retired, nearly thirty years old. He had trouble with his legs so going fast or slowing down, or going down a hill were quite difficult for him. His teeth had grown so long with age that he needed special care in getting him to eat. What a sight it must have been to have seen all of this coming down over the hills headed for Fair Oaks.

The Smallwoods were sharecroppers in Texas. They worked their way up through Texas and Oklahoma traveling by horse and wagon. Finally, they took a train to southern California. They then worked their way up the Great Valley picking fruit crops. Hardly having more than the clothes on their back they eventually arrived in Fair Oaks where they had other family. W.C. Smallwood went to work on the gold dredge.

These folks and my own grandparents arrived in Fair Oaks about the same time, when my mother was just a child of about eight. Her family like many others we know had suffered terribly during World War I. They were very poor and had very little work. Grandfather Kennedy arrived in Fair Oaks with pride and ambition. He worked for the WPA started by President Franklin Roosevelt. He worked at paving Sunset Avenue. He took over an abandoned farm and made it produce.

They all sleep together now, down at the old Fair Oaks Cemetery. They came and they stayed.



## **MABEL HOLST BAILEY**

1890 - 1992

*Five year old Mabel Holst Bailey arrived in Fair Oaks with the first family of settlers to the new colony of Fair Oaks. Mabel was the daughter of John and Rosa Holst who arrived in Fair Oaks by stagecoach on November 1, 1895, twenty days before the first train arrived with excursionists from the East.*

As John Holst told it, his family had lived on a farm in Redwing, Minnesota. They had long been avid readers of the weekly paper called *Farm, Field and Fireside*, published by the Howard and Wilson Company of Chicago. The paper gave glowing accounts of the colonies being started in the West and of a new colony called Fair Oaks.

The Holst's had longed dreamed of a more suitable climate and of many opportunities on the West coast. Fair Oaks seemed the most ideal. In May of 1895 John Holst came West by train and traveled the Pacific Coast looking at land. He arrived in the Sacramento area the last week of May. He hitched a ride with a farmer who lived near Fair Oaks named Jake Heintz who invited John to stay as a house guest for several days. He took John around and showed him the neighboring communities and Fair Oaks, which he said was hardly more than a cow pasture.

After this wonderful time in Fair Oaks, Mr. Holst returned by way of Los Angeles to his home in Redwing. He disposed of the rest of his possessions and left Minnesota in October 26, 1895. On the train to California with him was five year old Mabel, his wife and two other children. Also his sister-in-law, Sara Stumpf.

They arrived in Sacramento three days later and went on to Fair Oaks by stage. Accommodations were not yet complete so they brought with them a tent to use. They raked leaves and grass together to make mattresses and were quite comfortable.

I have often thought that if God had sent John Holst to the garden first, things would have turned out differently.

When the Holst family arrived, work had not yet begun on the hotel that was promised for the train load of people that was to arrive from Chicago in just 20 days. John pitched right in helping and his wife and sister-in-law helped the cook. In the meanwhile he went back to Sacramento and purchased a horse and a spring wagon. He arranged for a carpenter to start construction of a house for his family. Harry Dewey hauled the lumber from Roseville for him. The day the train arrived from Chicago his house was finished enough to move in. I remember his first home. It was called four palms.

During his long life John Holst was always there to help and to contribute to the needs of the community. He was one who helped start the first schooling and was on the school board almost his entire life. I can still remember the days when we had to fill our inkwells, clean our desks, and draw new pictures for the bulletin boards. The smart kids drew math problems on the board. What a wonderful man to remember with his white hair and face carved out of kindness.

Mabel grew up in Fair Oaks. She went on to high school in Sacramento since there was not a high school here at that time. She attended Heald's Business College and was for a period of time the bookkeeper at the Fair Oaks Fruit Company.

It is a time to stop and pay tribute to a little girl who came with the first family. A child who knew the fields of wildflowers and the oak forest. Who must have seen each of the buildings go up. Who played in the first lumberyard and saw the little town grow into a commercial center. To think that she lived all this and then almost into our centennial year is a story to be told.



## The Old Cherry Orchard

When our son was a teenager he came home one day and wanted me to see a place he had found along the river. I will always remember that walk with my son showing me all the plants, the biggest oak tree I have ever seen and curiously, an old cherry orchard.

John Holst in his account, "Fair Oaks in Retrospect" described a picnic down at The Old Cherry Orchard. John Holst came to California to look for land. He came to Fair Oaks and stayed at the home of rancher, Jake Heintz.

On Decoration Day all of the farmers from the area gathered at the old cherry orchard for a picnic. Mr. Holst described cherry trees 30 to 40 feet high with scaffolds built in them for people to walk on while they reached up to pick the cherries. The cherries were called Oxhearts. Some of them were shipped as far away as England. Fruit was not plentiful in those days so they provided good money. At that time, 1895, they produced as much as \$125 per tree.

When I read Mr. Holst's story of the cherry trees I did not have any trouble picturing what he had seen. I was reminded of the cherry trees that grew on our ranch, some of them reached easily twice the height of an 18 foot fruit picking ladder. My Uncle, Earl Vincent told of a cherry tree on our ranch that produced 1200 pounds of cherries in one year. He said every day he would drive a big truckload of these huge cherries down to the packing house. Finally, someone said to him, "Where are you getting these from?" He is still proud to say they all came from one tree.

I well remember that old tree on a piece of land we owned on Kenneth Avenue. Shirley Pritchard and I sat in it one afternoon, on a limb that had to have been at least a foot across, swinging our little bare legs and feet. We ate all the cherries we could hold and blew the seeds out on to the soft plowed earth.

I continued to be curious about the old cherry orchard and how it came to be planted on Sacramento Bar at the end of Bannister Avenue. John Holst thought it had been planted by someone who had come to the Gold Rush in 1849.

In an article written by the early settler, Edwin Muldrow, he wrote that the cherry orchard had been set out in 1852 by two men, White and Hollister. It was originally known as the White-Hollister Orchard, and later became known by the more familiar name, The Old Cherry Orchard. The men had settled in Fair Oaks and were a part of squatters and renters who farmed and grazed cattle in this area. They built a home on the banks of the American River. Their home was still standing when the Chicago Company bought the land in 1895 and was one of the last of the original homes to be torn down.

The mystery of The Old Cherry Orchard was solved at last.

*The following is an article in the Fair Oaks' Citizen progress, dated November 2, 1911. We can certainly be proud of history in Fair Oaks.*

### **Fair Oaks Today**

Time, perseverance and hard work have wrought many changes for the better in the Colony since the first settlers glimpsed the wilderness that was Fair Oaks in November 1895. In the comparatively brief period that has elapsed since that date, Fair Oaks has steadily grown until today there is to be found here:

- Two large packing houses (fruit).
- An olive oil mill and two olive pickling plants.
- Post office, with two rural free delivery routes.
- Two churches (Methodist and Presbyterian).
- Two grammar schools.
- Three grocery stores.
- Two meat markets.
- A bank (commercial).
- A lumber yard.
- A telegraph and express office.
- Depot and freight shed.
- A plumbing and sheet metal shop.
- Two blacksmith shops.
- A hotel and livery stable.
- A boarding house.
- A barber shop.
- An automobile stage line (two machines).
- A telephone system with 91 subscribers.
- A newspaper.
- The largest rock crushing plant in the United States.
- Three thousand acres planted to citrus and deciduous fruits.
- About 200 residences.
- Population estimated at 1000.
- Mountain water piped to every home.



## Early Elections

Politics have always been a great subject for debate in our family. Lengthy and loud discussions go on for months and then we all go and vote our own opinions. Most often just canceling out each other's vote!

John Holst remembered some of the first elections in Fair Oaks in his memories of life in Fair Oaks as our first citizen. John Holst arrived in Fair Oaks on Monday, November 1, 1895, just about 20 days before the first trainload of excursionists arrived to take up residence in Fair Oaks.

In that first election of 1896, Holst was the only one allowed to vote. The other settlers were just about three weeks short of the one year residence requirement.

The Board of Supervisors had established Fair Oaks as a precinct. There were two townships with Pennsylvania Avenue as the dividing line. There were ranchers who lived on the north side of Fair Oaks, maybe half a dozen men who voted with Fair Oaks. John Holst could not remember how many voted in that first election, but two years later, in 1898 there were 89 who voted in Fair Oaks.

The political party affiliation was not listed until the election of 1910. In that election 198 votes were cast. The 1910 register showed 36 Democrats, 10 Socialists, and 143 Republicans in the Fair Oaks precinct. This was the last year that the ages of the voters were listed. Mr. Holst surmised that the women did not want their ages known.

The women started voting in 1912. It was in that year that the State of California granted the voting privilege to women. There were 363 voters in the election of 1912 of these 117 were women.

The women were very conscientious about this new privilege. There were meetings at the San Juan Hall and at the Women's Thursday Club. The women studied the candidates and the issues. They encouraged all the Fair Oaks women to vote. In 1912 the contest for president was between William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, and Theodore Roosevelt. Woodrow Wilson became president that year.

Early elections in Fair Oaks have been of great community wide interest. Elections were covered in those days by the San Juan Record, Greensheet, and the Suburban News papers. Some of the most interesting contests were for Fair Oaks Irrigation Water District posts, school board members, or Sheriff. Some were unforgettable, but that is another story.

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## The Shivaree

*The story of my parents, Walter and Wanda Vincent's wedding night. They were married July 17, 1926 at 8260 Sunset Avenue.*

My parents met when they were just teenagers living across the street from each other on Sunset Avenue. They fell in love and wanted to get married when my mother was just sixteen. When the young couple went to my grandparents to ask permission to be married they were told NO! and that was that. Final.

So the young couple putting marriage out of their minds went on about their lives. My mother finished up her high school at San Juan High School and my dad went off to college at Berkeley. My dad pursued his civil engineering degree and was nominated for the West Point Military Academy.

In the summer of 1926 my mother turned eighteen years old. One day a wedding invitation came in the mail for a neighbor where my mother was visiting. The invitation was to her wedding which my mother knew nothing about. Her parents had decided to plan their eldest child's wedding on their own wedding anniversary, July 17. That was the first my folks knew there was to be a wedding. I guess they rallied around the thought and went along with it. They had a lovely wedding in my grandparent's home at 8260 Sunset Avenue and as evening came they were to set out on their honeymoon trip.

There was just one obstacle to overcome and that was the family tradition of the Shivaree. They thought they had the problem of the family taking their car motor apart or stuffing the exhaust pipe with a potato, or even the opening of luggage, filling the clothes full of rice and strange things. Several days ahead they had packed their car and hid it at Mr. Heim's house way down Sunset almost to San Juan Avenue.

The idea was that they would endure the chasing with the pounding of pots and pans, escape across the draw, and through the orchards to the Heims. So as darkness fell they made their get-a-way, hoards of people chasing them making all sorts of noise. My mother in an apricot crepe flapper dress that wouldn't cover my cat ran this way and that. They could not evade the hoard. Finally, they came up from the draw and hid under a large hydrangea bush next to Julia Forrest's house. Julia soon realized they were out there, put out the lights, and pretended to have gone to bed. As the clammering crowd moved on she opened the window and hoisted the newlyweds into her house.

My grandfather thought they were there so he came and knocked on the door of the darkened house. Julia threw her gown and housecoat over her good dress and went to the door feigning a yawn. She got really mad at my grandfather for having woke her up. He still thought they were in her house



and wanted to come in and look for them. She then got all her German authority up and let him know in no uncertain terms that he was not going to come into her house with his dirty muddy shoes. So then he went around and hid under the big bush. Finally realizing that there was no hope of getting them away, the old maid neighbor and her elderly widowed mother put my parents up in one of their bedrooms for their wedding night.

The story does not end there. As if that was not enough, when my dad woke up and got dressed he slid his foot into his shoe and there was a dead mouse in the toe of it.

There have been many other shivarees, but never one taken to quite this extent.



My parents took a honeymoon in a new Ford car. They camped at Riverton on Route 50. They went up through Hope, Faith and Charity Valley, down to Yosemite, over to Santa Cruz and through San Jose. They were gone three weeks and spent \$35.00.

Going over Kit Carson pass they had to jack the car up and push it sideways to get it around the corners of the road. When asked at one point to look and see if the tire was flat, my mother kept saying, "No." She was only looking at the top of the tire!

## **A Visit from Mrs. Ruggles**

*"When memory moves to smiles...."*

*-James Whitcomb Riley*

When my parents were first married they lived with my Grandfather Vincent. Just a little over a year later they had their first child, the first grandchild, Wanda. The elderly Frank Vincent loved the tiny child so much he would hold her, coo and rock her all day. Then she would cry all night when she was put down.

The young couple in desperation moved across the street into the garage of a burned out house that had belonged to my Kennedy Grandparents. Not having set up housekeeping when they lived with my grandfather they had very little to start a home with. My mother took orange crates and stacked them. She sewed pretty curtains of printed chicken feed bags to cover them. It was a one room sort of affair but home to the young couple.

One day they looked out and up the driveway they saw Mrs. Ruggles coming in her fine horse drawn carriage. This was the first visit in their new home and it was a real mess. As fast as they could they shoved the dirty dishes in the crates and pulled the curtains. My dad kicked all the stuff on the floor under the bed.

Walter and Wanda Vincent met their first guest at the door a little breathless, but ready. In bustled the gracious lady. She was delighted with their little home. She lived in a stately home on Chicago Avenue. (Where Henry and Katherine Kroeger live now.) The first thing she did was admire the lovely little curtains my mother had sewn and when she lifted them, there were all the dirty dishes. She then walked directly to the bed and looked under it. She stood up straight and looked at my mother.

"Wanda, shame on you!"

She shook her finger at the young couple.

Several days later up the drive came Mrs. Ruggles in her horse drawn carriage. She had it filled with pots and pans, dishes, blankets and household items she had gathered from her home, even an elegant vase for the young couple.

Such a kind and generous woman must be remembered as a part of Fair Oaks history.



## Applesauce Cake

*This is a nice fall recipe for a coffee break or special Sunday Dinner.*

- 1 quart applesauce
- 4 teaspoons soda dissolved in a tiny bit of water
- 3 cups of sugar
- 1 cup of cooking oil
- 2 cups chopped walnuts
- 2 cups seedless raisins
- 5 cups all purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cloves
- 2 teaspoon vanilla

Stir together all ingredients well. Last add nuts and raisins. Bake 2 1/2 to 3 hours at 275°. This completely fills a large bunt or angel food cake pan. Dust with powdered sugar when serving.

This cake depending on what type of oil is used can be considered completely cholesterol free since it does not contain eggs. It should be noticed that it contains quite a bit of soda which counts as salt.



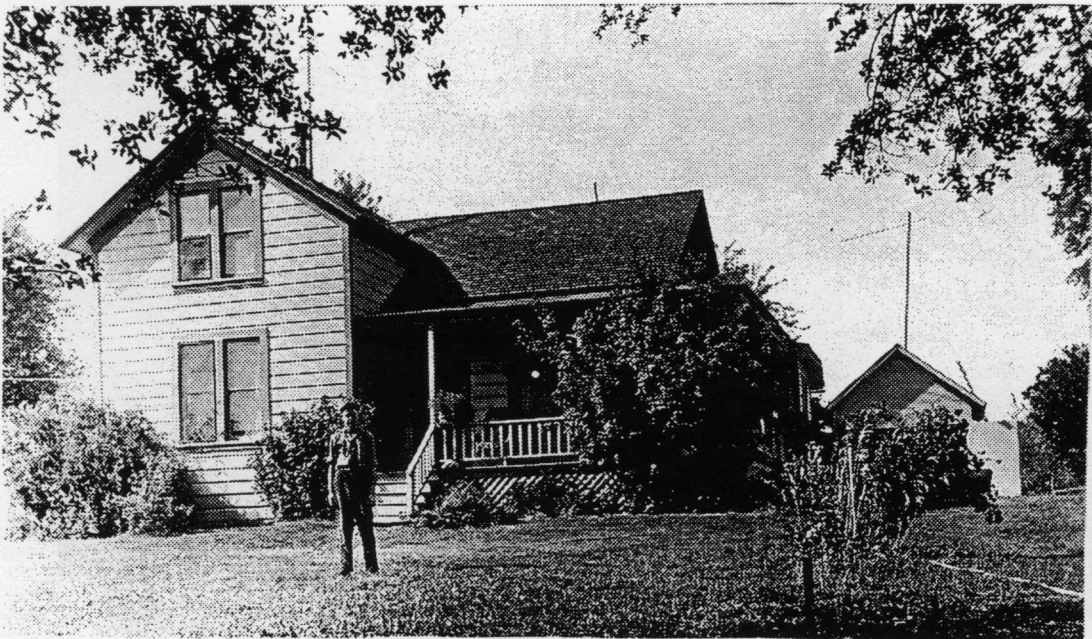


Frank Wilson Vincent and his wife Mary Elizabeth Carpenter on their wedding day, February 14, 1895.





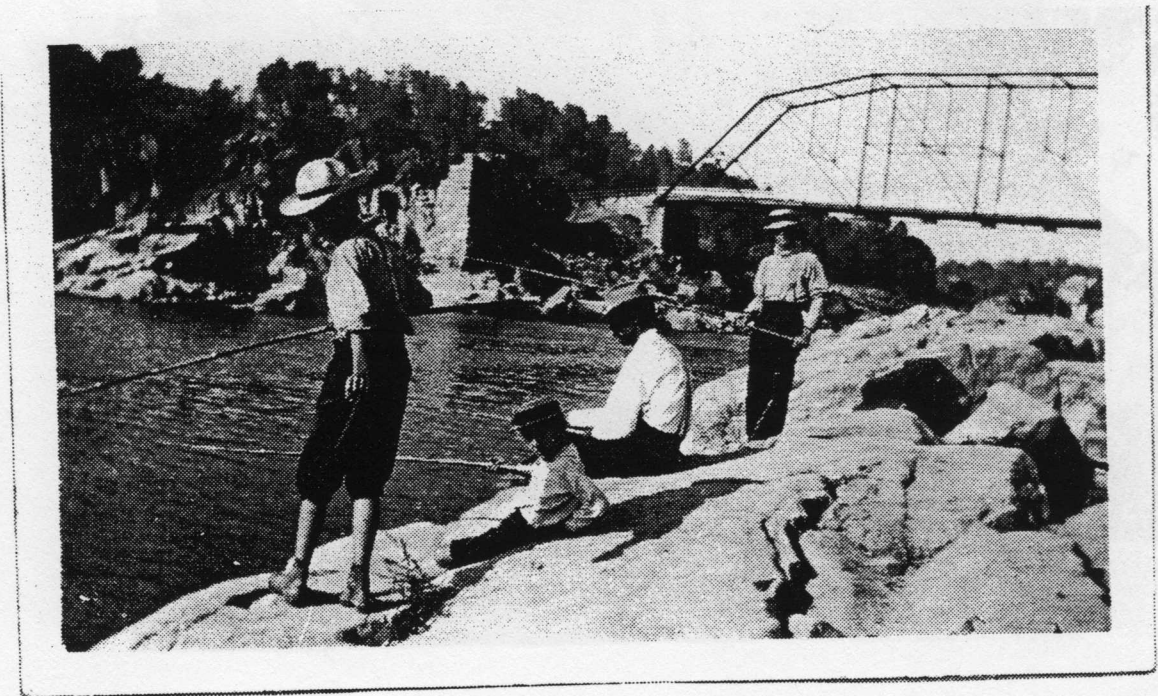
The Vincent packing sheds. Frank Vincent and his sons, Walter, John and Earl.



Frank Vincent's home on Sunset Avenue. Son, Walter Vincent standing in the front yard.



Walter and Bertha Carpenter and daughter. Elizabeth Vincent carrying Earl, 1908. Earnest Vincent in the background.



Earnest and Walter with their father, Frank Vincent and Uncle Walter Carpenter fishing on the American River near Folsom, 1908.





Wanda and Monie Kennedy at their home on Sunset Avenue, about 1920.





Wanda and some of her Fair Oaks friends



Snow in Fair Oaks

Kennedy children, Wanda, Mona, Becky, Bill and Whitney with their mother, Wanda, early 1920's