

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FEB 13 1991

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rodgers, Patrick Farm
other names/site number Rodgers Ranch

2. Location

street & number 315 Cortsen Road N/A not for publication
city, town Pleasant Hill N/A vicinity
state California code _____ county Contra Costa code 013 zip code 94523

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	_____ objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Kathryn Thullen 2-6-91
Signature of certifying officer _____ Date _____
State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)
Entered in the National Register
Alvina Byrne 3/22/91
Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - Single Dwelling

Agricultural/Subsistence - Barn

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant - not in use

Vacant - not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Wood

walls Clapboard

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Patrick Rodgers Farm includes the 1868 farm house which was enlarged in the early 1900s and the barn dating to around 1868. The farm house was built as a rectangular two-story, horizontal wood sided building with gable roof. In the early 1900s a single story, L-shaped addition was added to the house, along with a covered porch which wraps around the east and south elevations. The barn has a central gable around which is wrapped on three elevations a shed roof above 12 inch vertical boards. The barn does not appear greatly altered. The two buildings sit on a 1.7 acres parcel with mature trees.

In 1868, the Patrick Rodgers Farm consisted of 149-1/9 acres of land listed in the Welch Grant within the Pleasant Hill School District. In the 1870s, the property was listed in the Pacheco area within Township 3 and Road District Number 1. The original two-story, wood-framed, Greek Revival house, built between 1866 and 1868, remains with its original doors and windows. Today the first story is divided into three small rooms and the second story is one large room with three skylights in an asphalt roof.

The barn, built between 1866 and 1868, is unaltered with a central storage room and earth floor. This white wood building with asphalt roof is simple in structure and complements the house.

The house, barn, and rock retaining wall between them are situated in their original locations on 1.7 acres at the end of a cul-de-sac on Cortsen Road in Pleasant Hill, California.

The original setting within the present property boundaries includes an oak tree, now over 250 years old, that still protects the house from the afternoon sun. Two very large eucalyptus trees grow near the barn. A sloping hill protects the house and barn from the wind and, from its peak, provides a sweeping view of Mt. Diablo and Carquinez Strait. A 70-year old almond orchard grows on the upper slope of the hill. The area creates a feeling of spaciousness and quietude, an atmosphere of days gone by, even though it is surrounded by single family residences. Approximately 0.4 acre of land adjoins the historically significant 1.7 acres. This provides additional open space. The total 2.1 acreage is the property of the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture
Literature

Period of Significance

1868-1900
1937-1939

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Hobart, Alice Tisdale

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Patrick Rodgers Farm is significant in the agricultural history of Contra Costa County under Criterion A for the association with the wheat industry. Wheat was the dominant crop in Contra Costa County in the second half of the nineteenth century and the Rodgers Farm is a rare survivor of a wheat farm from this era. The ranch is also significant under Criterion B in the area of literature for the association with authoress Alice Tisdale Hobart who lived in the house from 1937 to 1939. During these years Hobart wrote Their Own Country and worked on The Cup and the Sword. Hobart established herself as a successful novelist in 1933 with the publication of Oil for the Lamps of China and consistently made the best seller lists with subsequent books.

1867 to 1900 was the County's wonderful era in the production of the golden grains.

For decades in the second half of the 19th century wheat was the dominant crop in Contra Costa County, and the highest wheat production was recorded in the 1880s when wheat was king. Farm machinery had become more efficient, and the condition of the County roads gradually improved, providing the farmers with easier access to the warehouses and flour mills.

Carquinez Strait was deep, and ocean vessels could dock at its ports. Markets for the wheat were available, and it was exported from the County to all parts of the world. With the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad to the ports of Contra Costa County (especially Port Costa), the exporting of wheat flourished. The warehouses and ships were available to store and transport vast amounts of wheat including the crops from other counties in California. The exporting of wheat was a major industry in Contra Costa County reaching its peak in the decade of the 1890s.

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In the early 1900s, a single-story, L-shaped addition was built onto the house and was used for a living room, kitchen, pantry, and small, outdoor, covered porch. A shed roof porch was also added to the east and south elevations of the house. Through the years, the interior was adapted to the needs of the dwellers, but still reflects the basic elements of the farmhouse. Eventually, water, electricity, and an indoor bathroom connected to a septic tank were provided. An improved cement retaining wall and trench on the west side of the house were built in 1937. All of these improvements were made more than 50 years ago.

The orchard, the landscaping, and most of all, the buildings have deteriorated due to the lack of maintenance and the major cost of restoration according to proper historical guidelines.

House

The original house is a two-story detached residence. According to tax records, the house was apparently built between 1866 and 1868. Early machine-cut nails found in the house and barn framing were commonly used in construction between the 1840s and 1860s.

Although there are no ornamental embellishments on the exterior, the windows and doors exhibit the attractive proportions and detailing of the Greek Revival. These windows have a small piece of horizontal strip which protrudes from the overwindow.

The house is a gabled, redwood framed building with approximately 780 square feet of space. The roof material on the original house is unknown. There is four-inch bevel siding and the house is on a wood sill foundation. A stairwell connects the first and second floors. The interior walls are plaster and the floors are wood. Windows (approximately 2'-10" by 4'-0") on the earliest portion of the building are double-hung, six-over-six, divided by fine muntins.

House Addition

The presence of wire nails and the later window design indicate that the first story addition to the house occurred in the early 1900s. This increased the living space to 1900 square feet. The wood siding varies in width and profile on each elevation. The addition consisted of three rooms: the kitchen, the pantry, and a large living room with a fireplace and chimney. There was a small covered porch at the north entrance. When the bathroom plumbing was installed in the 1920s, the corner section of this porch was enclosed and used for that purpose. A wood porch was also added which has a shed roof that wraps around the east and south elevations of the structure. The windows are one-over-one, the interior walls are plaster, and the floors are wood.

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Barn

The wood barn, located on the north section of the parcel and painted white like the house, is unaltered. Tax records as well as the nails in the barn indicate that it is contemporaneous with the house, built between 1866 and 1868. The barn consisted of a central gabled room around which is wrapped a three-sided shed sheathed in 12-inch vertical boards. Two pair of four foot doors allow entry on the north and south ends of the barn. The floor is earth. There is a hay loft in the central room approximately six feet above the ground, accessible with a built-in ladder. Two work benches are attached to the north and south exterior walls of this room. There is 1,060 square feet of floor space in the barn.

Setting

The property has a considerable upward slope from north to southwest. An orchard exists on the upper part of the slope, containing approximately 25 almond trees. These trees are approximately seventy years old. At the highest elevation in the orchard, one can see Mt. Diablo to the east as well as Carquinez Strait to the northeast. The slope is more extensive at the north end of the property.

A stone retaining wall, approximately 18 inches high, extends from the house to the barn. The placement of the wall suggests that it is contemporaneous with the house and barn (1860s) and was used against the sloping hill to provide a level roadway. The windmill and water tank were dismantled in the 1940s.

There are two very large oak trees on the slope above the house, one on the farm to the west and the other two feet into the adjoining property. These have been listed by the City of Pleasant Hill and honored with plaques designating them as Heritage Oaks. Close to the cement retaining wall on the southwest side of the house is an old pepper tree that has been topped from a lightning strike. The two eucalyptus trees near the barn also are very large and commanding.

Current Physical Condition

House: The large addition to the house is sympathetic with the original Greek Revival design and, along with the porch, lends a unified appearance. It looks similar to the white wood-framed houses built in that area through the early 1900s. No major structural changes have been made to the house since then.

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A septic tank was installed in the 1920s when the bathroom was built into the house. This tank was replaced with another in 1956. Electricity was run into the house in 1935. An improved cement retaining wall, trench, and drainage system were built on the west side of the house between 1937 and 1940. Also between 1937 and 1940, water from East Bay Municipal Utility District was run into the house. The wood-sill foundation was upgraded in 1946 with concrete blocks under the east elevation. The present asphalt roof was installed in the 1950s. Three skylights were cut into the east elevation of the roof between 1980 and 1985.

The building is unstable and there are water leaks in the roof and water lines which give cause for concern about damage, dry rot, and insect infestation. The porch is in an advanced state of deterioration. The siding and trim are in fair condition, but have suffered from lack of maintenance and fresh paint. The original doors and hardware are in tact as well as most of the windows.

Currently, the original house consists of three small rooms on the first level and one large bedroom on the second level. The condition of the interior is not readily assessed due to the presence of modern finishes that recently have been applied. It is presumed that most of this work is reversible and many of the original finishes can be restored. The fireplace has been covered with flagstone material and the mantelpiece has been removed (although it remains on the premises). A wood burning stove was substituted and placed at the hearth. Wood floors are covered with carpet in the living room and the upper bedroom. Redwood strips have been attached to the inner wall of the living room.

Barn: No structural changes have been made to the barn. A few concrete blocks have been laid under the central room. The building is very unstable and leaning. An asphalt roof was added in the 1950s. Also during the 1950s, the roadway to the house and barn was paved with asphalt.

Setting: The setting of the neighborhood has changed from rural to residential. The historic property (1.7 acres) has been a part of the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District since 1987 when the surrounding 18-acre housing development was built. Extra land (.4 acre) was acquired adjoining the designated farm after grading was completed. This area provides open space but no longer retains historical integrity due to the grading.

The almond trees planted approximately in 1920 have been trimmed but are no longer producing a vigorous crop. The large oaks and eucalyptus trees are in good condition, while the pepper tree is in fair to weak condition. The rock retaining wall needs to be reinforced and stabilized.

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The chicken coop, built northeast of the barn in 1943, was unstable and removed in March 1990. The electric pole west of the house was also removed in March. In April 1990, a galvanized chain-linked fence was installed between the property and the neighboring residences. Once again water has been brought in to the property, and four living history days are planned for children at the site in August 1990.

Although the acreage is small, the setting is rural and the atmosphere quiet. In contrast to the surrounding homes that are fenced and built in close proximity to one another, the Rodgers Farm acreage gives a feeling of spaciousness.

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Wheat Production in Contra Costa County
(United States Census of Agriculture)

Year	Bushels
1858	286,790
1869	925,054
1879	1,267,016
1889	894,672
1899	918,937
1909	258,860

Wheat production declined considerably from 1899 to 1909.

Several factors led to the decline of wheat farming in the County:

Many farmers did not rotate their wheat crops. Gradually, the quality and wheat production declined.

Fires in the fields and warehouses as well as on ships loaded with wheat were disastrous financially.

In the 1890s the midwestern United States, Canada, and Russian were producing large amounts of wheat. An overabundance on the market and the Panic of 1893 (The Depression) brought wheat prices down. Therefore, it was no longer a productive crop to cultivate.

By 1900 many farmers were planting vines and orchards...especially in the central part of the County. In 1899, the United States Census lists Contra Costa County as first in California planted to almond trees and fourth in pound production.

At the same time in the foothills of Mt. Diablo the dairy industry and cattle ranching were developing.

In 1914, the first irrigation system in the County provided the farmers in the eastern part of the County with a wide variety of options in crop cultivation.

The decline of wheat farming in the County began in the 1890s. Most authorities list 1900 as the end of the Wheat Era of Contra Costa County. When nitrates and fertilizers were introduced in the 1910 decade, there was a revival of wheat and grain production, but it never regained its earlier importance.

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Some larger farms and those with no irrigation often did continue to grow wheat into the 1920s, but the Crash of 1929 brought on the Great Depression, and many farmers lost their lands. The farms were then usually sold in smaller parcels, not conducive to growing wheat in the 1930s.

Patrick Rodgers and family moved to his 149-1/9 acre farm in Contra Costa County in 1868. He died in 1891, and the property was rented after 1895. The farm was divided among four heirs in 1907. That area where the buildings are located, produced grain crops until the property was sold in 1915.

Currently, the farm consists of 2.1 acres of which 1.7 acres retains its historic integrity. The original barn and house exist today in their original setting. The farm followed the agricultural trends of the area by gradually converting from wheat to vineyards and fruit and nut orchards. In the 1920s the farm consisted of 18.44 acres. It remained agriculturally productive until 1978 when it was sold for development.

Records show that Patrick Rodgers was involved in all of these activities. The primary crop on his farm was wheat, and he was a member of the Grange, storing his crop in the Grangers' Warehouse in Martinez. The farm was in a good location, situated near Martinez and Pacheco. He used his horses and wagons to transport the crops and did his share to improve and maintain the roads in his district.

Patrick and his family were active in the development of the immediate community. His brother, Edward, followed his lead by establishing his home in the Pleasant Hill area. The two families were actively involved in building the Pleasant Hill School and faithfully supported their church. A folk tale credits the two brothers for perpetuating the name of the area that eventually became the name of the city, Pleasant Hill. The Rodgers-Smith Park on the original Patrick Rodgers Farm has been named in honor of Patrick and Edward Rodgers.

Today agriculture in Contra Costa County is threatened. In the central area of the County it is rapidly disappearing. Patrick Rodgers Farm is situated in the heart of the most populated region of the central county area. Located in the residential section of Pleasant Hill, it is a rare visible reminder of an era in the 19th century when Contra Costa County was well known world wide for producing vast quantities of high quality wheat.

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Significance

The Patrick Rodgers Farm with its original 1860s barn and house is a tangible link to the era when Contra Costa County was recognized worldwide for its high quality wheat and the vast quantities of its production. It provides visible evidence of the early agricultural heritage of the Pleasant Hill area. The farm is strategically located in the central region of the County where continual development has occurred since World War II.

The Patrick Rodgers Farm is located in Lot 24 of Rancho Las Juntas, the original land granted to William Welch by the Mexican government in 1844. Dr. Hiram Smith bought the 149-1/9 acres from the heirs of William Welch in 1866 and produced grain crops. The farm was purchased by Patrick Rodgers in 1868. Patrick was born in Ireland and came to California in 1849 to work in the gold mines of Tuolumne County. The Patrick Rodgers family was one of nine families living in the Pleasant Hill area in 1868.

In the 1870s, Patrick's brother Edward, bought the farm adjacent to his brother's property. Both families contributed to the community. They were ardent supporters of their church and the Pleasant Hill School District. In the 1880s, the Rodgers families were actively involved in building the local schoolhouse on land donated by Patrick's brother, Edward.

Patrick died in 1891, and by 1895 the 149-acre farm was rented. Wheat and grains were still produced, but portions of the farm were gradually planted to grapevines and pear trees. In 1907, the property was divided among the four immediate heirs after the death of Patrick's wife, Mary Ann. After 1907, deeds refer to the farm as 'ranch', and throughout the 1900s the farm has been called Patrick Rodgers Ranch. Daughter Sadie and her husband, Thomas Duane, farmed her section of the property (Parcel C) until the 1930s. The house and barn were located on Parcel D, consisting of 38.53 acres.

In 1915, the Luther Burbank Company purchased Parcel D to develop an experimental/demonstration farm. This section was again divided in 1926, and the 18.44 acres remained intact as a functional farm until it was sold to be developed into a residential neighborhood in 1978.

The Rodgers Farm is significant under Agriculture, Criteria A, of the National Register. Wheat was grown on the farm as the major crop during the era when Contra Costa County was an outstanding wheat producing region. Tax records show that wheat crops were grown on the farm from 1868 until 1915.

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The rolling hills of Contra Costa County were particularly suited to growing wheat. The birth of the wheat industry is credited to Elam Brown who was successful with wheat experimentations on his farm near Lafayette before 1850. In 1853, the first wheat crop was sown.

In dealing with the long, dry summers of Contra Costa County, the farmers developed a planting timetable that provided unusually high quality wheat. The berry was hard, dry, white, and strong with gluten. It could be stored in bulk in large quantities for long periods enduring extreme temperatures and humidity. These features were especially advantageous for marketing the wheat in the industrialized regions of Europe.

Wagons, pulled by teams of four to eight horses, carried the wheat to the mills and markets. In the early years, the County was divided into Road Districts, and the pioneers were obligated to work on the roads within their districts. They also paid a road tax. Until the early 1870s, the town of Pacheco was the primary center for marketing wheat in the County. Gradually the wheat trade moved to larger ports. Several huge warehouses were built along the Carquinez Strait from Antioch to Crockett. These warehouses stored the wheat to be shipped to all parts of the world. The depth of the water in the strait provided easy access for the sea-going ships to reach the warehouses. Wheat ships were built especially designed to carry the grains.

Patrick Rodger's tax assessments consistently show that he was a part of this entire scene. He owned wagons and horses to work his land and transport his wheat crops. His farm was strategically located near both Pacheco and Martinez, and according to the County records, he was involved in the development of Road District Number 1. Patrick Rodgers supported the National Grange Movement when the County granges were organized. In the 1880s, he stored his wheat crops in the Grangers' Warehouses in Martinez.

It is rare to find an original barn-house combination with the two buildings in their original settings dating back to 1868. The atmosphere surrounding the house and barn is quiet and rural, reminding one of days gone by. It is significant that 122 years ago this property produced wheat and contributed to the wheat bonanza of Contra Costa County for several decades in the 19th century.

Context

In the 1850s the time and condition were ripe for agricultural development in Contra Costa County. The soil, climate, and access to markets contributed to the growth of the wheat industry in the County.

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Miners had flocked to the gold country of California after gold was discovered in 1849. During the 1850s and following, miners moved from the gold country areas into all parts of California, including Contra Costa County. As the State grew in population, there was a need for food. The Mexican land grants were partitioned and sold, and agriculture became a profitable enterprise.

Two years of drought, from 1862 to 1864, were disastrous for the cattle industry, the second largest industry in the State at that time. Soon agriculture surpassed cattle, and the era of wheat as the dominant crop in Contra Costa County was established. Two-thirds of its farm land was planted to wheat. By the 1880s Contra Costa County had become the State's largest exporter of wheat.

Agriculture in Contra Costa County was a prominent business in the early days of statehood. Wheat was its dominant crop for several decades during these years. The Patrick Rodgers Farm is a rare existing link with these early decades when wheat production of the county was world renowned.

The location of his land for growing wheat compared favorably with other farms. The soil was good and the climate was less severe than in other regions of the County. His farm was near the Lafayette area where Elam Brown was the first to farm wheat with practical results.

The Rodgers Farm was centrally located between Pacheco and Martinez, which was an asset for transporting his wheat crops. Pacheco was the wheat marketing center in the region through the early 1870s, followed by Martinez in the later years. Records show that Patrick and his neighbors worked on projects in Road District Number 1. They were also active in supporting the Grangers' Warehouse and Business Association. Several of the local farmers served as the first leaders of the Pacheco and Alhambra Granges.

Tax records list farm after farm with wheat and grains as their primary crops. All of the farms in the community of the Pleasant Hill area grew wheat. In 1880, the United States Census of Agriculture listed the county's wheat production as 38,360 tons. According to the 1987 Census, 2,555 acres were planted to wheat, producing 1,972 tons. In 1880, 885 farms were listed with 620 farms between 100 and 500 acres in size. In 1987, 840 farms existed with 561 of these under 49 acres in size. In 1990, according to the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture, only 15 farms (all in the eastern area of the County) grew wheat.

The Rodgers Farm was smaller than the average, but it was a respectable size considering the farm techniques in the 1860s. The farm produced 60 tons of wheat in 1877.

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The original unaltered barn on the Rodgers Farm was built with a central room to provide for storage of crops. The barn and farmhouse are the only known combination associated with the wheat era of Contra Costa County that dates back as early as 1868.

A photograph featuring the Patrick Rodgers barn can be found in East of These Golden Shores, Architecture of the Earlier Days in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties, published in 1971. This book was the result of a Historic Preservation Survey project by the Junior League of Oakland and the East Bay. More than 1,000 pre-1917 architecturally and historically significant buildings were located, and 125 of these were chosen by the consultants to be photographed. The Rodgers barn was the only barn chosen from Contra Costa County to be photographed for this book.

When the original house was enlarged in the early 1900s, this too provided for the needs of the farm, especially when the property was used as an experimental/demonstration farm by the Luther Burbank Company.

As the farm crops in the area diversified, so did the crops on the Rodgers Farm. In time many of the original farms were divided into smaller sections or were developed. Through the years Rodgers Ranch was known as that section of the property on which the house and barn are located. In the 1920s, the 18.44-acre farm produced grapes, pears, almonds, and walnuts. In the 1970s, its primary crop was almonds.

Currently, 2.1 acres of the ranch is under the jurisdiction of the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District. One point seven (1.7) acres of this property possesses historical integrity. Future plans include restoring the historically significant buildings and developing a living history park. Friends of Rodgers Ranch, a non-profit organization, has been organized to support these goals.

The heritage of the Pleasant Hill area is closely associated with its agricultural past. Before World War II, the region was identified only by the Pleasant Hill School District. The City of Pleasant Hill was incorporated in 1961, and today over 95% of its land is developed.

It is rare to find evidence of the wonderful wheat era that so dominated life in Contra Costa County in the 19th century. Only one warehouse still stands in Port Costa, and the last grain milling structure in the County was demolished in 1989 in Concord.

Listing the Patrick Rodgers Farm on the National Register will emphasize the significance of the wheat era in the County and will develop an appreciation in the community of its cultural heritage.

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Significant Person: Alice Tisdale Hobart

Summary

Alice Nourse Tisdale Hobart was born in Lockport, New York, on January 28, 1882 and died in Oakland, California, on March 14, 1967, at the age of 85. The novel, Oil For the Lamps of China, had established Alice as a successful author before she moved to California. Throughout her life she gained strength and inspiration from the earth. She and her husband, Earle, selected the 18-acre Rodgers Farm as their home where they lived from May 1937 to October 1942. The Hobarts first resided in the farmhouse and later moved nearby to the second house which they had built on the property.

While living on the farm, she wrote two novels. The first, Their Own Country (published in 1940), deals with the big business using its power and influence to prevent the development of an alternate fuel. The second, The Cup and the Sword (published in 1942), depicts life and conflict among different cultures and generations in the wine country of California during the Prohibition Era. This story reflects Hobart's life on the farm that was her home. In 1959, 17 years after publication, this novel was made into a \$7,000,000 movie.

Although Hobart's writing style reflects her Victorian, puritanical background, the themes of her novels deal with social issues and conflicts relevant to life today. Her experiences fueled her keen sense of social consciousness, as did her heritage. During the witch hunts in 17th century Salem, Massachusetts, an ancestor was hanged for defending two women neighbors accused of being witches.

Thoroughly researched, Hobart's novels reflect her high standards of honesty and quality of writing. In chronic pain, she wrote her novels by hand while lying on her back. She also was a mentor to Ruth Moore, her secretary, who worked and lived on the farm for five years. Moore later became a successful author, publishing novels about the state of Maine and its people.

In 1949, Hobart received an honoray degree from Mills College in Oakland, California. The citation reads:

"Alice Tisdale Hobart.....Doctor of Laws

Interpreter to each other of East and West, and of ourselves to ourselves, careful recorder and imaginative creator, whose art serves art and life as well."

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Significance

Alice Hobart wrote two significant novels while living on the Rodgers Farm. The first, Their Own Country (published in 1940), was the fourth of a planned series about China. The first three books took place in China. The location of Their Own Country was in Kansas during the Depression Era. The complete series reflects the Hobart's experiences while living in China for 16 years and then adapting to life in the United States upon their return.

The theme of Their Own Country is concerned with big business and its use of power. The novel challenges big business and its questionable tactics. Accurate documentation was vital because of the possibility of lawsuits. The theme of this story is relevant today.

The second book, The Cup and the Sword (published in 1942), is significant because it was the first novel, according to Dr. Stokdyk, to be written about the wine country of California. Dr. Stokdyk was President of the Berkeley Bank of Cooperatives in the 1930s. Hobart did research and writing on this novel while living in the Rodgers farmhouse. It is a story about conflicts between materialism and spiritualism, human values and commercialism, various cultures, three generations, and political differences complicated by Prohibition. The setting of this novel is in the San Joaquin and Napa Valleys.

As with her first novel, Alice based her second novel on her experiences. The Hobart farm produced a variety of grapes, some from vines planted by the Luther Burbank Company in 1915. Essentially, she found her roots in California while writing The Cup and the Sword at her farm. Seventeen years after publication, the novel was made into the movie classic, This Earth Is Mine, starring Jean Simmons, Dorothy McGuire, Rock Hudson, and Claude Rains. Most of the movie was filmed in and around the Napa Valley, using as backgrounds actual wineries and 14 vineyards. Dual premieres were held in Oakland and San Francisco on June 24, 1959.

While living in the Rodgers farmhouse, the Hobarts began to construct nearby a new dwelling on their property. The Hobarts gradually moved into the new house in 1939. Ruth Moore, Alice's secretary, continued to live in the farmhouse, assisting with the research and typing of the manuscript as well as caring for the needs of the farm.

Currently, the second house is occupied and privately owned. On the outside of its chimney the symbol of Yang-Yin can be seen from the orchard of the present farm property. Alice popularized this Chinese phrase when she wrote the novel entitled Yang and Yin, published when the Hobarts moved to California. She also used this symbol on the jacket of her autobiography, Gusty's Child.

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In researching and writing The Cup and the Sword, Alice became interested in those who first came to California from Mexico. When the United States entered World War II, Alice's husband, Earle, was accepted to serve in the war effort. The separation presented Alice with the opportunity to live in Mexico and learn about its history, culture, and conflicts. The material she gathered provided the substance for her novel about Mexico, The Peacock Sheds His Tail (published in 1945).

Alice was adaptable for her husband's work relocated them every two to five years. She wrote books wherever she lived, usually developing her themes from her surroundings. She was a good homemaker and enjoyed cooking and gardening. It pleased her husband that she maintained a quiet and private lifestyle, avoiding publicity. She did not attend the premieres of the movies based on her novels. Due to chronic pain, she wrote her novels by hand lying on her back with a board over head.

Alice Hobart's books were translated into several languages. In 1949, she received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Mills College, Oakland, California. In 1951, she was listed in the first edition of Who's Who of American Women and continued to be listed through 1969.

The Hobart archives and Chinese artifacts are in the library of the University of Oregon, Eugene. Additional Hobart collections are in the Lilly Library, Indiana, and the Columbia University Library, New York.

Context

Due to Earle Hobart's work, the Hobarts never lived very long in one place. Alice gained strength and inspiration from the earth. When the Hobarts were in their fifties, they purchased the farm (which, by then, was commonly referred to as a ranch) for their permanent, retirement home. It compared favorably with the seven-acre property where she lived in her youth as well as the summer place on the Potomac she so enjoyed before moving to California. She writes in Gusty's Child:

When spring came I longed for Virginia. I had not dreamed that place had taken such hold upon me. To settle in one of the valleys beyond the Coastal Range began to seem my solution. Earle, who wanted above all else for me to be happy, agreed although he was essentially a city man and had no such need of contact with the earth.

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After much searching we found what we planned to make our permanent abiding place: a small ranch, its eighteen acres planted to grapes, pears, and almonds. A private lane led to an old ranch house reminiscent of New England. A pepper tree leaned over it. We came upon the place when the almond trees were in blossom. Amidst the flowering trees we walked up the slope behind the house through an undergrowth of mustard. Below the crest of the hill Earle stopped. 'We could build our house here where we'd be sheltered from the winds.' With our backs to the hill we looked off through the blossoming branches to Mount Diablo in the distance.

'The old house could be used as an overflow after our own house is finished,' I said.

'You mean you'd like to live here now, not wait until the house is built?'

'Yes,' I said.

Alice moved to the ranch at age 55 and lived there six years. In 1942, the Hobarts sold their ranch. At that time, Earle joined the armed forces, serving during World War II, and Alice traveled to Mexico. After the sale, the ranch continued to function productively for 36 years, yielding fruits and nuts.

When the Hobarts returned to California after World War II, they decided to live in Oakland. Central Contra Costa County was developing rapidly, and country living was disappearing. The Hobarts were in their sixties and living in the city seemed easier. The couple lived at 6017 Margarido Drive in the Oakland hills. It was to be their home for 19 years.

After 1933, when Oil For the Lamps of China established Alice Hobart as a successful novelist, her books consistently made the best seller lists. Their Own Country, written by Alice while living in the Rodgers farmhouse, and published in 1940, completed her four-book series about working in China and returning to life in the United States. Set during the Great Depression in a small town amid the corn fields of Kansas, the story depicts the weaknesses and struggles of humanity during that time and remains applicable today.

The story and how it evolved as well as much of the research for The Cup and the Sword was developed while living in the farmhouse. The actual writing of the novel was begun in the farmhouse and completed after the Hobarts moved into their new home. Set in the wine country of California during the Prohibition Era, the story depicts conflicts among the European wine-makers

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inhabiting the area. During the writing of the novel, war among these European countries was threatening. In 1942, when the book was published, World War II was in progress. Comparisons could be made between the real conflicts among the nations at war and the conflicts among the European wine-makers in the novel.

Today the wine industry of California is well established and internationally recognized. The Cup and the Sword helped popularize California's wine country and the movie classic, This Earth is Mine (based on the novel), helped perpetuate the popularity.

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Boundary Justification

The northern boundary of the historic site (1.7 acres) is adjacent to a .4 acre area (See map) that is the property of the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District and is designated for park use. This .4 acre area no longer maintains historical integrity but does provide open space for the historic site.

The house on the property adjacent to the southwest boundary of the park site was built for Alice and Earle Hobart, owners of Rodgers Ranch from 1937 to 1942.

Within the boundaries the original house and barn are located in their original settings, and an orchard of 70-year-old almond trees is situated on the western area of the site.

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NOTE: Items 1-5 are the same for all photographs.

1/7

- 1) Rodgers Ranch
- 2) Pleasant Hill, California
- 3) Nancy Whaley
- 4) December 4, 1988
- 5) Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District, 147 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
- 6) Front of house, camera facing south-east
- 7) 1/7 HOUSE

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PHOTOGRAPH
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6) Side of house, camera facing north

7) 2/7 HOUSE

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Section number _____ PHOTOGRAPH Page 3/7

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6) side of house, camera facing south

7) 3/7 HOUSE

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- 6) Back of house, camera facing east
- 7) 4/7 HOUSE

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6) Orchard, camera facing south-west

7) 5/7 ORCHARD

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6) Chicken Coop, camera facing south-west

7) 6/7 CHICKENS

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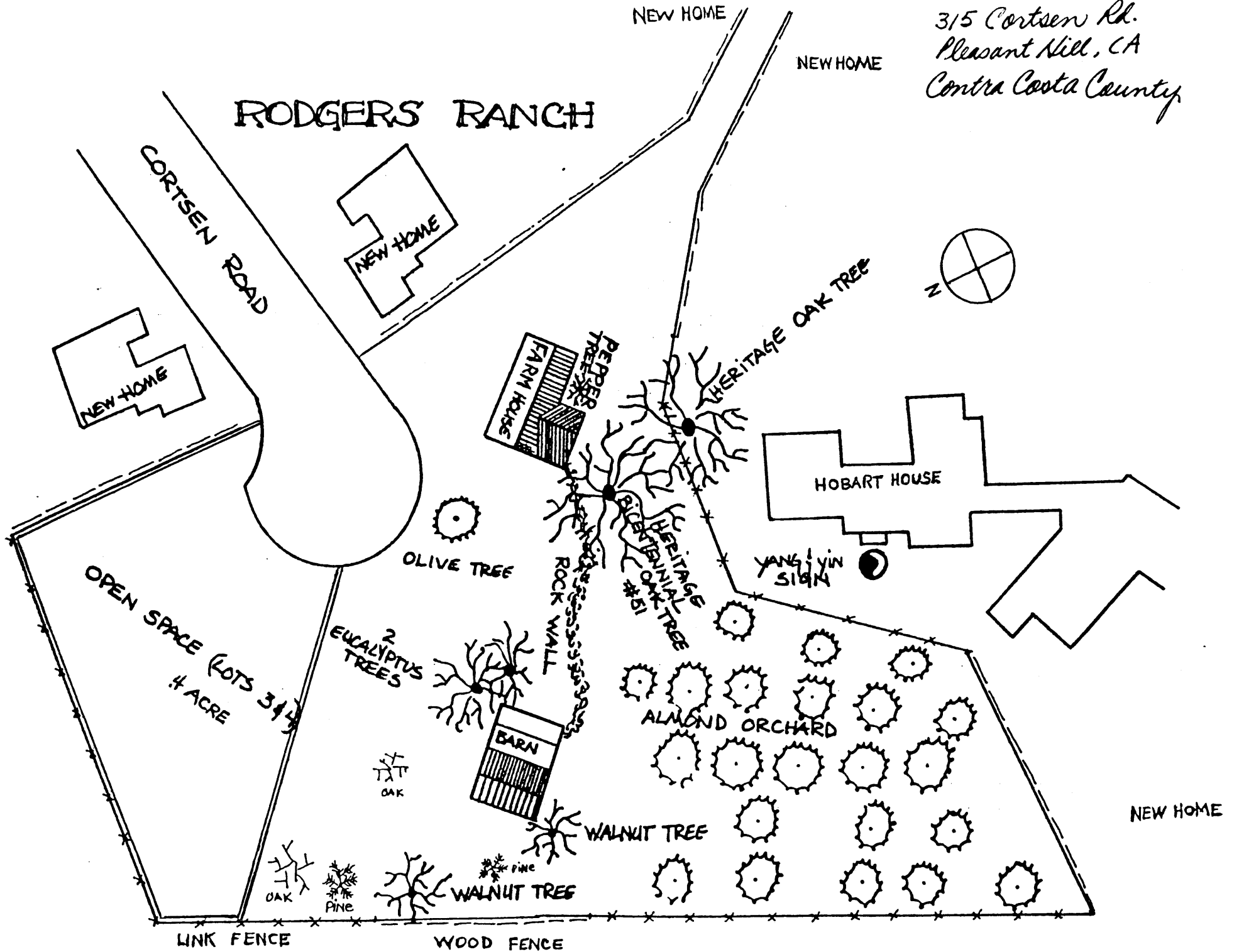
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Section number _____ ^{PHOTOGRAPH} Page 7/7

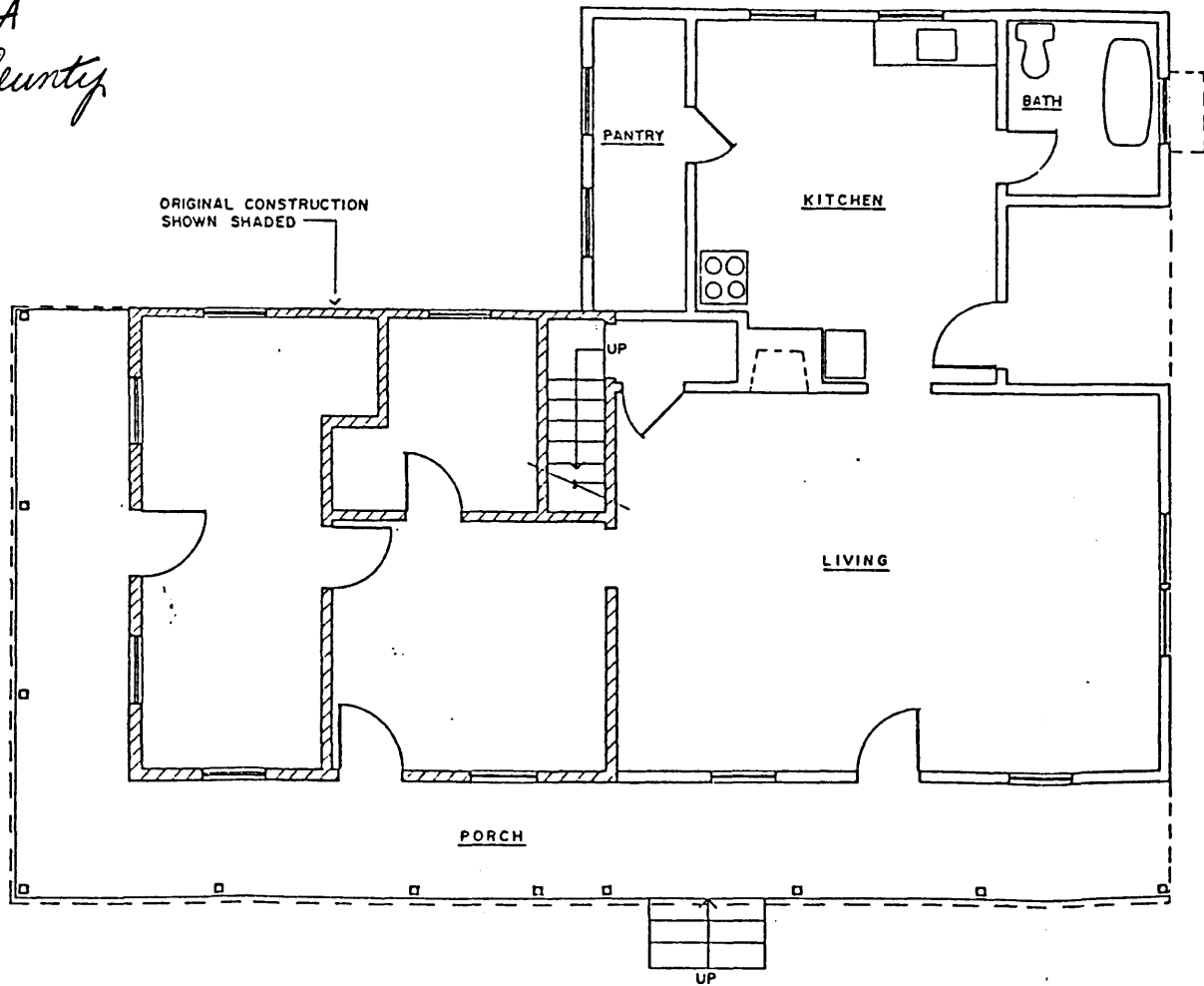
7/7

- 6) Barn, camera facing north-west
- 7) 7/7 BARN

315 Cortsen Rd.
Pleasant Hill, CA
Contra Costa County

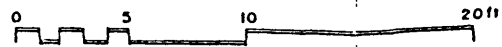


Rodgers Ranch
315 Cortsen Rd.
Pleasant Hill, CA
Contra Costa County

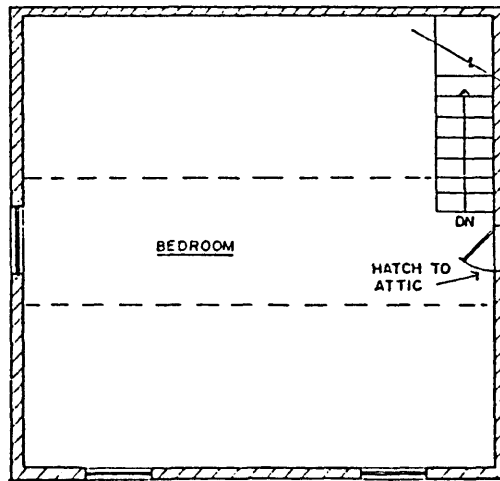


LOWER LEVEL

1,155 SF plus 365 SF PORCH



Lodgers Ranch
315 Cortsen Rd.
Pleasant Hill, CA
Contra Costa County



UPPER LEVEL

380 SF

6/7

CHICKENS

BARN

7/7

5/7

ORCHARD

3/7

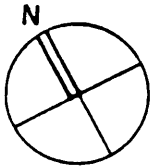
1/7

HOUSE

4/7

2/7

PARK 1.70 AC



0 5 25 50ft.

PARCEL D

PARCEL B

SITE PLAN

*Rodgers Ranch
315 Cortsen Rd
Pleasant Hill, CA
Contra Costa County*

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