

Carter Heights

By Ernest D. Wichels

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Carter Heights was the earlier name for the present Vallejo Heights. Likewise, how many of our readers remember Fremont Street? Many of Vallejo's prominent residents, half a century or so ago, lived on Fremont.

Subdivisions were few and far between in early Vallejo. In the first fifty years there were only two or three. One of these involved Vallejo Heights. The 186 acres of wheat fields belonged to William Carter, listed as a farmer as far back as the 1872 directory of Vallejo.

About 1898 a J. W. Hartzell, brother of a leading San Francisco banker, came to Vallejo and organized the Carter Land and Development Company. He cleared the property, set engineers at work and had the entire tract surveyed and laid off into lots, blocks and streets. The property was placed on the market about 1900.

Hartzell, known as "Colonel," became a general realtor with offices at 201 Georgia St.; later at 426 Georgia. While promoting the Vallejo Heights property he lived at 1727 Sacramento St.

Farmer Carter built his home, today some 90 years old, at 1801 Sacramento St. The old-time structure still stands, and although the stately two-story home has been shorn of its original "gingerbread" it is still a prominent landmark on the Heights. Upon Carter's demise in 1914 his widow continued to live there until about 1919, when the house was purchased by Ray J. Welcome, well known Mare Island congressman. The Welcomes occupied the premises until about 1934. It has had several owners since then, and we believe the present owner is Staff Sergeant Jack Garrett USAF, stationed at Travis. The home was converted into double occupancy many years ago and it is now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Harris and Mr. and Mrs. Davis Gladden.

"FINEST BUILDING LOCATION"

Ten or twelve apartment buildings have been erected on the Heights in the past two years, as well as several new homes, and undoubtedly the excellent view has influenced this activity. Similarly, this advantage must have influenced the United States government when they selected the site for Bay Terrace in 1918. But let's see what the Vallejo Evening Chronicle had to say about Vallejo Heights on May 12, 1905:

“J.W. Hartzell, now one of our best known citizens, arrived here almost a stranger. He was personally acquainted with the prospects of many cities, but here in Vallejo he saw what appeared to him to be a great future and here he located. He determined to develop Vallejo Heights. It is really one of the finest building locations in our city. On the lots facing east the home builders have not only a view of the city on the south, and rolling farmland to the east, but also a splendid view of the north, especially on a clear day when in the distance can be seen Mt. St. Helena in all its majesty. On the west and south home builders are offered a view equal to that, if not superior, to the view on the east. Here the lots overlook Mare Island and San Pablo Bay, with Mt. Tamalpais in the distance. The tract will soon be sold out.”

But sales didn't mount too fast until after 1910. One reason, perhaps, was that four of the first homes built (on Farragut street) burned one night because of insufficient water pressure.

VALLEJO HEIGHTS PIONEERS

One cannot, in a single column, list the hundreds of well-known Vallejo citizens who at one time or another have lived on the Heights. On Fremont street, for example, there were the homes of Forbes H. Brown (Mare Island chief clerk), Al Hodges, the Nachbours, the Gauls, the Wessels, the Dennys, the Jack Leonards.

Scores of present day Vallejoans spent their childhood _days on the Heights, including Al Rose (father was musician August Rose) ; Charlotte Sproule and Helen Beach (the Frank Ripsoms on Fremont street) ; Ruth Setterquist (the Adkins on Carter street); the descendants of the Mallet family; Vandre, Graff, Don Scofield (Bob's father), Kregelos, Bradfords, and Buss. Well-known families likewise included the Stoddards, McCarthy's, Buchinau, Hickethier, Boysens, Gollnasts and Robinsons.

Where was Fremont street? This name existed until 1932, and represented the continuation of Santa Clara beyond Indiana. In 1932 it was changed to its present name of Santa Clara. Harrier street was named for the prominent Vallejo jurist; presumably, we believe, because in the early days “Colonel” Hartzell shared office space with the judge at 201 Georgia.

THE RAILROAD CUT

The south side of Vallejo Heights is marked by the deep cut of the Mare Island rail line. This was dug about 1914. It was not, as so many of today's residents believe, constructed for the Napa Valley electric line which ran from the foot of Georgia street to Calistoga (out Sonoma street). It was built by the Sacramento Northern Railway, whose tracks now come as far as Suisun Valley, and undoubtedly intended to be the Western

Pacific (allied with the Sacramento Northern) goal for a north bay terminal. This project did not develop and some 10 or 15 years later the Napa Valley electric line did, indeed, shift their rails to the deep cut. In the early days there was a wooden vehicular bridge over the cut at Santa Clara street. Finally declared unsafe, it was torn down.

We, too, subscribe to the statement made by the Chronicle 60 years ago that Vallejo Heights offers the most beautiful view in the city.

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