

## Movers on the Road to Filoli

Submitted by the Moraga Movers



George & Julie Fisher

Photo submitted

On Thursday, April 17th, a van full of Moraga Movers spent the day at Filoli in Woodside, thanks to the arrangements and excellent driving skills of Kim Burrowes from the Moraga Parks and Recreation Department. Filoli is an estate set in the eastern Santa Cruz Mountains just off I-280. It includes a beautiful 36,000 square foot residence and 16 acres of English Renaissance style gardens that are open to the public. There is even a small café for purchasing lunch.

The house was built in two years, 1915-1917, for William and Agnes Bourn, whose wealth came primarily from the Empire Mine in Grass Valley. The site for the estate is at the southern end of Crystal Springs Lake, which was a part of the Spring Valley Water Company, also belonging to the Bourns at that time. The name Filoli came from Mr. Bourn's credo, "Fight for a just cause; Love your fellow man; Live a good life."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Bourn died in 1936, and the estate was sold in 1937 to Mr. and Mrs. William Roth, the owners of the Matson Navigation Company. The Roth family had the property until 1975. It was at that time that Mrs. Roth donated the house and gardens, to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The two-story residence is considered modified Georgian in style, built in a U-shape. Only the first floor is open to the public. Mrs. Roth donated many of her furnishings when she transferred the property, and there have been donations appropriate to the style and period made by others. Family portraits and photographs are in evidence throughout the first floor. The result is that the residence feels that a family really lived there. We didn't have the sense that we were walking in a museum.

The kitchen was modernized in the 60s and is still quite functional. Much of the china and silver used by the family is in the cabinets. There is still a functioning dumbwaiter that leads to a kitchen on the second floor, and the names of the family members remain on the servants' call board.

There were 14 rooms open on the first floor. Each one had

notable features, but one of the most remarkable was the large ballroom. The walls are the original paint and gold leaf, decorated with large murals depicting Muckcross House and Abbey and the Lakes of Killarney in Ireland. Muckcross House was purchased as a wedding gift for the Bourn's daughter, Maud, who married an Irishman. After her death in 1929 the estate was deeded to the Irish nation and is open in much the same fashion as Filoli.

We were fortunate to have perfect weather to accompany our self-guided tour. The sun was shining, and the breeze was just right for noticing the scents of the flowers surrounding the house and all through the gardens. At this time in April there were tulips in every color on display throughout the residence and gardens, and every so often we could smell lilacs in the air. In addition to the swimming pool and tennis court, there were several gardens to enjoy, including a sunken garden, a walled garden, a Dutch garden, meadows, terraces, pools, and orchards. We had a great day and are looking forward to returning soon to see the different flowers as the seasons change.

The Moraga Movers is open to all active Lamorinda residents age 55+. For more information please call (925) 376-6622.