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## Historical Homes of Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



The oldest home in Lafayette, Effie Herrick's place at 3306 Moraga Blvd Photo Cathy Tyson

And the winner of the 'oldest house still standing' in Lafayette goes to the charming red home that's been sitting comfortably on the banks of the Lafayette Creek for about 149 years. The "Daley House," at 3306 Moraga Boulevard near Carol Lane, looks amazingly well-preserved, although there is some controversy about its actual age. The County Assessors office has 1850 as its origin as a barn, the current owner agrees with that date and notes that in 1860 it was converted into a home - which is also noted on the Assessors records. There is some indication it burned in 1914 and Leroy Stark helped to re-build it, but that couldn't be verified.

Obviously in the intervening 149 years, plumbing, wiring and modern conveniences were installed. Although it's hard to pin down an exact date, the beautiful redwood paneling in the living room has been there for many, many years. Somewhere along the line, more than a few years ago, a homeowner installed a brick patio and small retaining wall in the backyard that is still functioning today, although the earth has shifted under it.

☐ Fifteen years ago Effie Herrick was leaving her former home just a few blocks away with her realtor to go house-hunting in Danville, when she spotted this place with a for sale sign out front. "Stop!" she said, she just knew this was exactly what she was looking for, a perfect home for her expansive collection of country antiques.

☐ Three unrelated people have come forward to tell her there is one, possibly two friendly ghosts living in the house. This comes as no surprise, as she's heard very loud scratching in the second story area. "I'm not scared, just curious," she said. She would pound right back thinking it might have been an animal, but the noise continues. Rumor has it there were two deaths on the property.

☐ To put this home in context, the year the original barn was built, 1850, California officially became the country's 31st state. When the barn was converted to a home in 1860, President Lincoln was elected and Pony Express riders stopped in Lafayette for fresh horses.

☐ Perhaps the original owner was on Elam Brown's fourteen family wagon train in 1847, that made it through Donner Pass just days before the party of the same name got stuck. So far no one's talking.

☐ If you ask Ray and Barbara Peters, they believe the Moraga Boulevard place burned, giving them 'oldest house in Lafayette' status. The weathered original plaque on the front of 1324 Martino Road says "1876 Fred Easton." An immigrant from Italy, Fred Easton built the house, grew and sold fruits and vegetables. The following owner, Nat Martino bought the farmhouse from Easton along with 90 acres in 1919. The original working farm had at one point apples, grapes and pears and more growing on the property.

☐ In addition to the charming house, there is a two story garage with an office on the second floor and a separate shop where Ray keeps all of his tools and some of the original signs from the property. In 1978 when the Peters moved in, the upstairs toilet broke and made quite a mess on the floor below. Barbara, who was "perfectly happy" with their prior home in Pleasant Hill, had some second thoughts at the time. Maybe it was the peeling paint or the pink trim, even their pals at the time commented, "It isn't as bad as it looks."

☐ Fast forward to 2009, there's a large bountiful garden that Barbara tends to, a fully modernized kitchen, and bright, fresh yellow paint. The bathrooms were updated a few years ago by Acalanes woodshop teachers during their summer school hiatus, but still retain farmhouse details.

☐ Marechal Duncan, Vice President of the Lafayette Historical Society, has been an invaluable help in tracking down information on these very special historical homes. "What got me started on this was a water color painting of the Merryman house," (811 Topper Lane), donated to Marechal by one of Joan Merryman's sons. Although the colors used compliment the palate of his living room, he and wife Doris plan to donate it to the Friends of the Library, to be on display in the new library.

☐ Additional information on either of these homes is appreciated; please contact Cathy Tyson at [cathy\\_tyson@yahoo.com](mailto:cathy_tyson@yahoo.com) or (925) 286-9295.

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Barbara and Ray Peters in front of their home on Martino Road Photo Cathy Tyson  
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