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Margaret Wood Bancroft

RECOLLECTIONS OF HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT
AND THE BANCROFT FAMILY

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library



MARGARET WOOD BANCROFT

*Photograph 1976 by
William Webber Johnson*

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Margaret Wood Bancroft

RECOLLECTIONS OF HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT
AND THE BANCROFT FAMILY

With an Introduction by
James D. Hart

An Interview Conducted by
Willa K. Baum
in 1977 and 1978

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Margaret Bancroft, 93, dies; social leader, Baja explorer

Margaret Wood Bancroft, 93, a San Diego social leader and Baja California explorer, died yesterday at the Cloisters of La Jolla after an extended illness.

Mrs. Bancroft was the widow of naturalist and author Griffing Bancroft and daughter-in-law of the famed California historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, for whom the UC-Berkeley Bancroft Library is named. An oral memoir about her life is placed in the library.

Mrs. Bancroft came to San Diego in 1900 from Glasgow, Ky., as a teenager with her parents, Cora and Clarence Wood. Her family first lived on Fifth Avenue between Nutmeg and Maple streets and then at a ranch at Witch Creek. She attended school at the Sacred Heart Convent in San Diego and then at Immaculate Heart Convent in Los Angeles.

She had a brief career as a silent movie actress, playing in many western films for a National City film company and then in Los Angeles for D.W. Griffith Productions. She had the opportunity to work with Charlie Chaplin, Dorothy and Lillian Gish, Dustin Farnum, and Mack Sennett.

She stopped acting at age 24 in 1917 when she married Griffing Bancroft, an ornithologist (an expert on birdlife).

With her husband, Mrs. Bancroft made a career of exploring the Baja California peninsula. After one epic journey in which they sailed aboard the yacht *Least Petrel*, studying birds and sea life of Baja, Mr. Bancroft wrote and dedicated to her a book, "The Flight of the Least Petrel." Together, the Bancrofts acquired a reputation as accomplished naturalists. Her husband died in 1955.

She was an avid camper who used to go on pack trips into the high timber country from the Meling Ranch in Baja. In her mid-60s, one of her expeditions covered 300 miles in the Baja interior, looking for the *Lost Mission of Santa Isabel*. The search actually began in 1935 when she and Mrs. Salve Meling of Baja explored the Sierra de San Pedro Martir for traces of the legendary mission.

Known to many as a jack of all trades, Mrs. Bancroft's interests included horseback riding, bird-egg collecting, tennis, archeology, gardening, and swimming. Active in pol-

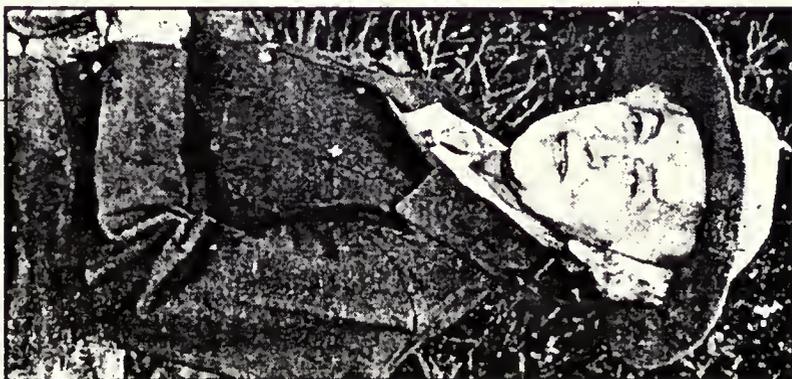
itics for some time, she joined the losing 1938 senatorial campaign of her brother-in-law, Philip Bancroft, a Northern California orchard owner. During that campaign, she met a young law student named Richard Nixon, whose campaigns she eventually worked on.

She was an original member of the Junior League of San Diego and chairwoman of the Charity Ball in 1925.

During World War II, she worked as a women's counselor for Convair division of General Dynamics and was appointed county towns division chairwoman for the 1942 Red Cross emergency war relief roll-call campaign.

She was also active with the Natural History Museum, the Museum of Man, and the San Diego Museum of Art. She was also a long-time member of the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club.

There will be no services for Mrs. Bancroft, who is survived by her stepson, Griffing Bancroft Jr. of Florida, and a cousin, Mrs. Bennett W. Wright of San Diego.



1961 File Photo
Margaret Wood Bancroft

July 25, 1985

Howe Bancroft

Private memorial services for **Howe Bancroft**, 75, of Alexandria, Va., a member of a prominent San Diego family, will be at noon Monday in Everly Wheatley Funeral Home. Burial will be in Alexandria National Cemetery, Va. He died Tuesday in a hospital in Alexandria.

Mr. Bancroft, a newspaperman and writer, was born in San Diego, lived in the county 23 years, graduated from Francis Parker School and attended Stanford University. After working for newspapers, he was employed by the Voice of America for 28 years and retired in 1969.

Bancroft was a grandson of the late San Diego historian Hubert Howe Bancroft and a son of the late bird-egg expert Griffing Bancroft and the late Ethel Works Bancroft. She was a daughter of a California state senator.

Howe Bancroft's survivors include his wife, Mary; two daughters, Beverly Burger of France and Nancy Knapp of Pennsylvania; his stepmother, Margaret, of La Jolla; a brother, Griffing, of Captiva, Fla.; and three grandsons. The family suggested donations to the American Cancer Society.

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INTRODUCTION

In her oral history one gets a vivid sense of what Margaret Wood Bancroft is: a dynamic person possessed of firm views and great charm. She speaks her mind frankly and also freely; she knows what she thinks and she has no hesitation in expressing herself. In the course of these interviews the flavor of her personality and the quality of her character come through very clearly.

Margaret Bancroft's pert, lively and attractive manner shines through this memoir so that one is not surprised to discover that years ago she was a starlet in the early days of Hollywood, acquainted with Charlie Chaplin, the Gish sisters, Cecil B. De Mille, and D.W. Griffith. One can readily see too why she was appealing to men and how Griffing Bancroft fell in love with her very quickly. As she says in her wonderfully forthright fashion: "There was my romance. I gave up movies and everything else. But, every time I got mad at him, which I often did, and we fought, I would say, 'Well, I'm going back to the movies.'"

Instead of going back to the movies, Margaret Wood Bancroft went on to rear Griffing Bancroft's two sons by his previous marriage and to help take care of his aging father, Hubert Howe Bancroft, the famous bibliophile and historian.

This volume thus gives us two portraits of consequence. One is that of a charming woman in her own words, the other a fresh view of Hubert Howe Bancroft seen from a special vantage point. Here is Hubert Howe Bancroft the avid book collector and assiduous worker but much more than that, here is Hubert Howe Bancroft the head of his family. Granted he was an old man in his eighties when Margaret became not only his daughter-in-law but a resident in his home, yet she caught the essential nature of the man. She possesses a remarkable power of recollection and great vivacity in summoning up revelatory situations now more than sixty years in the past. In keeping with the mores of the times, Hubert Howe Bancroft feared that his son's bride might have been "tarnished" by her work in the movies but he was quickly disabused of such a view and came to admire her spunky independence and to recognize that nothing was going to harm her own strong character.

Hubert Howe Bancroft is now a legendary figure amalgamated into the remarkable library in Berkeley that bears his name and in whose entryway one is first greeted by his impressive marble effigy. Even in his own day he was a notable figure so that, as Margaret Bancroft tells us, the post office delivered a letter to him though it was addressed simply "Mr. Bancroft, California." But his daughter-in-law makes him a real person, possessed of fine qualities and equally well of curious crotchets and quaint characteristics. Yet all of his traits of personality, sometimes seemingly

contradictory, are obviously but different facets of a whole individual, as Margaret Bancroft makes us realize. The person who could oversee the creation of thirty-nine volumes of history - 12,000,000 words worth - is obviously an organization man. How obviously we learn through a delightful anecdote presented in this memoir: "When his wife, Matilda, was going away for two weeks, she made him promise to write her every day. Disliking to have this hanging over his head, he saw her off, returned to his office, dictated fourteen letters, and instructed his secretary to mail one each day."

Other little recollections of the great man by Margaret Bancroft are equally illuminating. On the one hand she recalled how he so disliked tipping waiters that, as she remarked, she had "to fill my pockets full of quarters, half-dollars, and dollars; all in silver, in those days. So I always forgot my coat or handbag, then went back to the table to leave a tip." But if Mr. Bancroft was tight in such little ways, he was large and generous in others, such as the impulsive warmth that he showed to his children and to Margaret, the daughter by marriage. When by chance he discovered she had never seen Yosemite, he quickly declared, "'All right, we'll take you there'" and within moments arranged to set off with a great picnic basket hastily prepared.

Here, then, is a man important to California's culture brought richly to life because he is perceptively remembered by a very vital woman. Margaret Wood Bancroft not only has a consequential life of her own to record but she also had the experience and the insight to create a lively profile of a significant man, Hubert Howe Bancroft.

James D. Hart
Director
The Bancroft Library

March 5, 1980
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Time and Place of the Interviews: March 9 and 10, and July 2 and 3, 1977, and September 28, 29, 30, 1978, at the seaside apartment of Margaret Bancroft in La Jolla.

Persons Present: Mrs. Bancroft and the interviewer, Willa Baum.

Editor: Catherine Scholten, editorial staff of the Regional Oral History Office.

Margaret Wood Bancroft was interviewed in order to preserve her recollections of her father-in-law, historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, and his family. Margaret Wood was a lively young horsewoman from San Diego County and an aspiring starlet in the new movie industry when she married Griffing Bancroft in 1917 and took over the raising of his two sons. They lived with the Bancroft family in Walnut Creek during the first year of their marriage, a time when Margaret got to know her aging father-in-law well; they then returned to San Diego where Griffing managed the Bancroft properties. Mrs. Bancroft in her oral history recounts the early history of the Bancrofts as she heard it from her husband and other family members, her own experiences with Hubert Howe Bancroft, and the unfolding of the lives of his descendants. The story of her family's move from Kentucky to California in 1900 and their subsequent participation in the cultural life of Southern California documents a later migration than that of the Bancrofts.

Margaret Wood Bancroft was recommended for interview by two of The Bancroft Library's directors. Professor George P. Hammond, Director Emeritus, and his wife had called on Mrs. Bancroft in the course of a trip to San Diego and they came away insistent that her perceptions of her father-in-law must be preserved through oral history. Professor James D. Hart, the present director, thereafter met Mrs. Bancroft at a historical society meeting in San Diego and immediately approved the proposed oral history memoir.

The interviewer had enjoyed working with Philip Bancroft, Sr., Hubert Howe Bancroft's youngest son, on his oral history in 1961 and 1962, and through this contact had met Philip's wife Nina, Philip, Jr., and assorted grandchildren. The opportunity to work with the widow of Hubert Howe Bancroft's second son was a welcome one, and it proved as rewarding in creating a lasting friendship as the earlier assignment to interview Philip had been.

For all three interview sessions, the interviewer flew down to San Diego and was met by Mrs. Bancroft and her chauffeur-cum-housekeeper Lilly Carter and taken to the Bancroft apartment in La Jolla. From then until they returned her to the plane a day or two later, she enjoyed an exhilarating

round of recording, looking over Bancroft family papers, visiting the historical sites of San Diego County, meeting Margaret's friends and family, and walking the beach or swimming far out in the warm Pacific with Margaret as the guide. A cocktail party in the apartment and a dinner party in the La Jolla Sea Lodge across the street brought together history-minded people and Bancroft-Wood family and friends. All these events and people, though not planned so, illustrated the kind of active community involvement that had made Griffing Bancroft and, later, his lovely young wife so much a part of San Diego life since the days when Hubert Howe Bancroft had purchased property there and left the handling of it to his son.

The interviews took place in the living room of the comfortable, two-bedroom apartment of Margaret Bancroft. A card table and tape recorder were set up for the duration of the visits to facilitate on-going talking and looking at papers. Outside, the beach stretched northward to Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Birds, varieties of which Griffing and Margaret and later Griffing, Jr., had made a lifetime study, nested in the palm tree outside the picture window. On the opposite wall a large Charles Reiffel painting of Witch Creek Mountain warmed the room and picked up the colors of the oriental rugs that covered the thick carpeting. Bancroft family heirlooms furnished the apartment and books written by friends and family and inscribed with affection to Griffing and Margaret filled the living-room bookcase. In the guest room the interviewer slept in the carved wooden bed in which Griffing Bancroft had been born and had died. (In the interim, Margaret had had it converted to twin beds at Griffing's request.)

Margaret could still pass for a movie starlet. Small and trim, tan with dark eyes set off by a luxuriant halo of white wavy hair, she bounced about the apartment barefooted, ever ready to dash out to the beach. There was a time scheduled for an afternoon nap, a concession to Margaret's eighty-four years, but the rest time gained there was more than nullified by the past-midnight chatterings of interviewee and interviewer, who exchanged life philosophies, experiences, and secrets that never reached the tape recorder.

During the interview process, Margaret and the interviewer adhered to an outline that focused on the Bancroft family; another story highlighting the history of San Diego County and Margaret Bancroft herself yet remains to be told. At this writing, Margaret Bancroft and Virginia McKenzie Smith are working on a history of the Witch Creek-Julian area for the San Diego Historical Society.

Editing was done by Catherine Scholten, who worked closely by mail and telephone with Margaret Bancroft in checking details. In La Jolla, Mrs. Bancroft's good friend Dr. Kenneth Little spent several full days with her helping review and correct the transcript. Completed, it remains fairly close to the tape recordings with some minor changes for clarity and style.

During the editing period, Mrs. Bancroft visited The Bancroft Library, viewed the many Bancroft papers and photographs already there, and donated to the Library an extensive file of correspondence between Hubert Howe Bancroft and Griffing dating from 1887 to 1904.

Willa Baum
Department Head

March 1980
Regional Oral History Office
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University of California at Berkeley

I INTRODUCTION TO THE WOOD FAMILY

[Interview 1: March 9, 1977]##

The Wood Family

- Baum: This is Margaret Wood Bancroft, daughter-in-law of Hubert Howe Bancroft. Should we start in with what you were doing here in San Diego and how you met Griffing Bancroft? Where would you feel comfortable starting this story?
- MWB: Let's start it when we landed in San Diego on October 10, 1900. You see, Griff was mixed up with our family from the very beginning.
- Baum: All right. Then start there. But I want to go back, later, and get a lot about your family in Kentucky.
- MWB: The Wood family came from Glasgow, Kentucky and moved to San Diego. October 10, 1900, we arrived there. One brother had come ahead of us; had a house rented because it was a matter of eight of us at that time. There were actually eight children, but there were two of them not there. We took seven days to come out by train from Glasgow, Kentucky. Glasgow, Kentucky is near the Tennessee border. We spent the first night in Louisville and then went to St. Louis and then out to Los Angeles and spent the night there. We came to California because of our family's health. My oldest brother had died of tuberculosis and a doctor, Dr. Winn, who had come here thought it was so gorgeous and it would help to keep us from

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 178.

MWB: getting tuberculosis. It was rampant in those days all through the Mississippi Valley. When we landed here, we went directly to the home. There we stayed for nearly a year and a half. None of the family improved in health, mainly because of the amount of fog.

Baum: This is the home your brother had rented?

MWB: Yes. But we immediately bought a home right after that.

A year and a half later we moved to the mountains; we moved up to Descanso. In six months, it had made such a real change in the health of us younger children that my mother said, "At all costs, we are going to live in the mountains." So she and my father took a team of horses and a buggy and began driving from Descanso over to Cuyamaca down to Julian. Someone said this hotel at Witch Creek was for sale. It was owned by an English couple, the Fishers, who wanted to go to Australia to join their grown sons. Overnight, my family bought this place. It was small acreage, about fifteen acres and just enough to have some horses and a garden.

We lived there for thirteen years. We were immediately put in school there. But, before that, we had been with this Dr. D.C. Meyers at Descanso. All of us children had ridden since we could be thrown in front of my father's saddle and ride that way until we were old enough to ride by ourselves. So we took to the western life of riding very easily. When we got to Witch Creek, there was a buggy and two or three horses, and a man hauling our possessions, the few things that we had up in the mountains. George Sawday, who owned half of San Diego at one time or another--it was his brother who had driven this four-horse team to bring over the furniture and whatnot--George got off his horse and came in to visit and talk with my father and mother, and he turned to me and said, "Young lady, what are you going to be?" At that time, I was ten. I said, "I am a cowboy." He said, "Would you like to work for me?" and I said, "Yes, I would." So he said, "All right, you come tomorrow morning and start to ride with me." His place was a half a mile up the road. From that day to the day he died, I was his little girl Friday. He was one of the most popular men and one of the greatest landowners of anyone in San Diego County.

Baum: Let me backtrack a little. What was your father's name and your mother's?

MWB: My father's name was Clarence Wood and my mother's name was Cora Bybee.

Baum: How many children were there when you came out to San Diego in 1900?

MWB: There were seven living.

Baum: Seven children. Could you mention who they were?

MWB: My oldest brother, Ashton, had died when he was seventeen. That was a few years before this. Ashton, and then Joseph, and then came a sister, Elizabeth; another sister, Susie May; another sister, Mickle; and Cora and Johnson and myself, Margaret.

Baum: And did others of the children besides Ashton have TB or suspected TB?

MWB: Suspected. My father did not have, but he had serious bronchial trouble. That had improved fifty percent.

There were people staying there in the hotel at Witch Creek. The Fishers were ready to go and they moved out as we moved in.

Baum: Do you know their first names?

MWB: The English couple. No, I can't remember. As a matter of fact, there were a number of English families there, around Witch Creek, as there were all over Southern California and down to Ensenada. That goes way back.

But, anyway, we immediately were put in a school there, a one-story schoolhouse, which now has been made into an historical monument and public library at Julian, owned by the government.

Baum: Landmark.

MWB: Yes, the school is still there. But we accommodated ourselves to it very quickly.

Baum: You must have filled up the school.

MWB: Well, no, there were only Johnson, Cora, and myself. My sister Mickle was in a convent in Los Angeles and Elizabeth was studying dramatic art in New York. Susie May was a young lady of sixteen. She was beautiful. She had gold-red hair, green eyes, and one of those peaches-and-cream complexions. She really was a lovely looking person. Three were dark and two were blond, very decided. Isn't that funny? But Elizabeth came back, I guess at the end of the semester. It was a year later she came.

So we worked, made our living. Mother usually had Japanese cooks. The Chinese never got along well there, because there were no friendships. The Japanese were wild to learn the English

MWB: language. My mother taught this man cooking. Then we had Indian girls work and usually an Indian man, who worked on the place. We had our own fruit trees, vineyards, vegetable gardens and a beautiful, beautiful garden around the house.

Baum: What had your father's occupation been back in Kentucky?

MWB: Wholesale hardware and farm equipment, like mowing machines and all types of vehicles.

Baum: And he'd made enough money that he could sell out and buy the ranch here in San Diego?

MWB: Yes. The Wood family always had money. They had big farms and tobacco and there was some money there. Of course, in those days, you didn't need much money.

There was a fire in the store. After we were grown, we asked our mother whether she set the fire, because she was the one who was determined to come to California. We always kidded her that she must have set it because the whole side of the square burned down.

Baum: Was that where your father's store was?

MWB: Yes. It was well-equipped, you see. He had all sorts of fancy buggies and traps, they called them, then, of every kind. They were just beginning to carry bicycles. That was in the late '90s.

Baum: There was insurance, I suppose.

MWB: Oh, yes. Good insurance. Absolutely. We had a home which my father bought after my brother Ashton died. (Mother would never go back to our old home.) Quite a big place. We had that under contract to buy it when the owner's estate was settled. The people died and it was in escrow with us, so we got out of that, fortunately, and had that money, too, after the fire. We had plenty of money. We lived very well. There was lots of help. There was always a half-grown black, if you want to call it, and the boy or girl just watching over us.

But when my father got out here, he was a very good tourist. He first bought an orange grove and found they couldn't get water. Then he went from that and got interested in some mining. That's really why we went up to Descanso, because of Dr. Meyers, who lived in Descanso. We lived on his place.

MWB: So we grew up there and then, as we went through that school, they would teach the ninth grade at Witch Creek, if you paid extra or got a teacher. My father was on the school board and immediately got a teacher that could do it. I didn't go back to school after the ninth grade because, by this time, two of the sisters were married and Elizabeth was very frail, and we were needed at home. So there were three years that I didn't go back to school.

Baum: When you say; "needed at home," was that to do work?

MWB: Work. Work. I mean work.

Baum: To help on the ranch.

MWB: Help run the ranch and help run the guests. I guided people from the time I was ten years old. By the time I was fourteen, I used to drive a team of horses clear down to Foster to get people--that was the end of the train line--and get there early so the horses could rest and then drive them back.

Baum: Where did these people come from?

MWB: Everybody in San Diego went. Through my two sisters we knew many people in San Diego. When we came to San Diego, we began to meet people immediately. Then my brother had been there and he was a most presentable young man, so he was introduced. My father, the first thing he did was to go down to the First National Bank. There was a very prominent family, a man by the name of D.F. Garrettson, who was president. His son-in-law was Frank Belcher, which is an extremely well-known name here in San Diego. Father put his money in the bank. That afternoon Mrs. Garrettson and the daughter, Virginia, the age of my sister Susie May, came to call. It was that important. Isn't that interesting? They were quite close and they had immediately fallen in. My sister was taken into the Decem Club, which was a group of girls, who started out with ten, just a little social club. But it was the core of the best families and the best-looking girls.

Baum: Excuse me. Your brother Joseph is the one who was here first, is that right? Was he working?

MWB: Joe B. Wood, we all called him. He was working in a hardware store with a well-known family who owned it, George Hawley. San Diego was only 17,000 people at that time. That was the census of San Diego.

Baum: How old was Joe when he got here?

MWB: I'm trying to think. Wait a minute. I was seven. He must have been about twenty.

Baum: So he was a very young man.

MWB: Yes, a very young man. That was all in 1900. We were Catholics; Mother was a convert. She immediately, that year that we were there, went to the Catholic academy, and we moved down to 3rd and Cedar, which was very close to a big Catholic church. It was big then, bigger than the town was; it was built for eternity. You know, it's the cathedral now. We enjoyed it.

The first thing my father did was pile us in sort of a tally-ho and drive out to La Jolla. It was the first time we'd ever seen the ocean, any of us. It was the most exciting day and it's vivid in my mind, all of us coming back, just dripping with shells and everything we could collect. And he started us swimming. It was a salt pool, and I've been swimming ever since. I'm still swimming to this day.

Baum: They told me you went swimming almost every day of the year.

MWB: No, in the summertime. I don't go in the wintertime. Too cold.

But from that, from there, I think it was just about a year and a half when we moved to Descanso. We were there eight months and then moved to Witch Creek. Then we kept our place there until 1913. By that time, the whole family had scattered.

My mother died, not long after she went to Kentucky. She had a wonderful trip, she and my sister Cora. Mother had a chance to talk to her sisters, just as southern as it could possibly be.

My father was dead. My father died in 1910. He had a brother living in Danville. At that time, I was to live with my sister Mickle, who was having her third child, Sarah.

Baum: This was after your mother died?

MWB: No. After my father died. Mother had gone to Kentucky. And I was going to live with this sister, you see. Witch Creek was closed.

Baum: After your father died, you closed Witch Creek.

MWB: No. We kept it open for three years. Then we closed it finally and sold it. Just before it was closed, when my mother and my sister went to Kentucky, four men came up to Witch Creek, great friends, and they were starting a motion picture studio. Everyone

MWB: in those days thought you just had to get together some actors and a little bit of equipment and a camera, and that was it. They thought that I'd be a wonderful person for it because of my ability to drive four-horse teams and my ability to ride bareback and to do stunts.

Baum: You were going to do cowboy movies, too?

MWB: Oh, yes. That's what they were making. That was the thing. It was very popular in those days. I went down and lived with this sister and went into the movies. It was a company called Ammex, which meant American Mexico, and I was there for about three months, and with the help of the training that I had from this sister, it all came very easily to me.

Baum: You said Mickle was the sister who had been in the convent in Los Angeles?

MWB: Just school. A convent school.

Baum: And then had she taken actress training, too?

MWB: No. Elizabeth was the only one who took the training.

Baum: Where was this company?

MWB: It was in National City. In an old storehouse. I remember so well, they had a number of very good actors. Enid Markey was quite a well-known actress and she was the star, but she knew nothing about riding or western stunts. She was always the girl that was in the stagecoach, you see. And I was outside driving the stagecoach.

After, maybe two or three months, we were having lunch one day and I was sitting on my horse. They had just brought us some boxes of lunch. A young fellow came up and slapped my horse from behind. The horse slipped on the pavement and I was thrown free of him, but I broke my ankle. So that ended my movie career for the time being. I had a gun on. All the equipment of western attire. As they were taking me to the hospital, I said, "I want to go to San Diego." They said, "You can't because it's too far." And I said, "I don't want anyone to touch me unless it's Dr. Homer Oatman," who was the surgeon at San Diego. They didn't know whether the gun was loaded or not, so they quickly called Dr. Oatman, and he came tearing out there in an automobile and he said, "What's up, Margaret?" With that, he began examining me, and he taped my ankle, and took me back to my sister's. That ended my career. Before I was well, the studio had gone bankrupt.

Baum: Tell me what you looked like then.

MWB: I was very dark. I'll show you some pictures. I was very dark haired, dark eyes, and an athletic figure. But I had then been bitten by the actor's bug. I couldn't go back for nearly a year because then my sister Elizabeth died. I had to stay and help with the family. We had sold Witch Creek, but we hadn't taken our things out of it.

Baum: How did your sister die?

MWB: TB. Arrested TB.

Baum: So it really was rampant.

MWB: It was rampant, yes.

Baum: What did your mother die of?

MWB: Cancer.

Baum: And your father?

MWB: He died of anemia, in St. Joseph's Hospital. It's now Mercy, but it used to be St. Joseph's Hospital. And then another sister died later. I can tell you that later.

I went up to Los Angeles and lived with my brother Joe and his wife and went to dramatic school, Egan Dramatic School on Pico Street in Los Angeles.

Margaret Wood, Movie Actress

Baum: In what year was that?

MWB: It was 1914.

Fortunately I had some good friends. One of them was this Frances Marion, who wrote most of the stories for Marion Davies and was a great friend of Marion Davies during all that period when she was living with Hearst. And she phoned and said this Bosworth Company had a place for me in a story. I think it was a Jack London story. It was not Alaska. So I quit school immediately and went there. Frances was doing publicity for this company. Mostly they were two-reelers in those days, but

- MWB: this story was a four-reeler. I can't even remember the name of the story, except it was by Jack London. Alfred Allen, one of my teachers in the drama school, was an older man, a much older man. He was very interested in my career. He thought I should go on the stage because he thought I had the qualities for the stage, but I was more interested in making money at any cost--don't say any cost, because it sounds worse than it is, doesn't it?
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- MWB: This Jack London story was a four-reeler and then there was another one with Dustin Farnum.
- Baum: Can you tell me a little bit about how they filmed those?
- MWB: Well, in the first place, everyone was enchanted by this time by using the closeups. I think they first used the closeups in Birth of a Nation. They filmed nearly everything outside. Those studios, half of it, was just canvas. The sets were put up and then kind of all put together and canvas put over them at night. They were going so fast that they didn't have either the time or the money to build the studios. It was when D.W. Griffith dominated the period.
- Baum: This was after you left Bosworth and went with D.W. Griffith.
- MWB: Yes, I was in only one play that Griffith actually directed and that was Intolerance.
- Baum: Intolerance!
- MWB: Yes. I was a Roman princess being carried through the streets of Jerusalem and Christ was pushed aside for me to be carried through. If you remember the story of Intolerance, it started with Babylon and then the Renaissance...what would come up next? I guess, the Civil War, I believe, but I'd have to look that up, and then the Modern. Mae Marsh was in that. There were just any number of actors in that. I was nearly six months on call because they could put you into anything. They'd put you into a scene that was running. Any director who needed more people could use you as background. That's the way they handled it.
- Baum: Did you play several parts in that movie, then?
- MWB: Just that one, for D.W. I mean I did play other parts.
- Baum: They didn't move you around so you'd be different people in different times?
- MWB: Oh no, no.

Baum: You were just one person.

MWB: One person in that part. What I meant is, say, that Director A over here has a set and is short so many women; why, you were given a costume hurriedly and put on camera at a dinner table.

Baum: Sort of like the extras--

MWB: Well, it was. We weren't extras because we were salaried.

Baum: Do you remember what your salary was?

MWB: Twenty-five dollars a week, I think it was, and then when you played in something, you got more than, I don't know, three times that, according to how big the part was, but you had to report every day. And if they didn't want you, they turned you loose or they'd say, well, you don't have to report for maybe a couple of days. It worked differently. After I was there for a length of time, this Alfred Allen, who had been at the Egan School, said I must have comedy. Through him, he got me a job at Keystone Studio. A great comedienne, Mabel Normand, worked for him, always.

Baum: Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin?

MWB: No, no. The director. Isn't that awful? I can't think of that man's name.

Baum: Not Sennett.

MWB: Yes. Mack Sennett. That was uproarious and fun. Lots of times, I stood in for Mabel Normand because she and I were almost the same coloring and same size. And she was the star. She did what she pleased.

Baum: Now we know what you looked like.

MWB: I sent a picture of her, done up in furs, and took the name off, to my sister Cora and she had it on her mirror. Never knew that it wasn't me until I got there to tell her I had done it purely as a joke. You got to know people awfully well in the studios. There was a young blonde woman who worked there, Joy Lewis; she never married. We worked together and we would be just two, maybe three women, in the whole of this two-reeler. We did anything we were told to do.

I can remember going up to Mt. Baldy and we were snowed in there. I think it was the first time anyone had ever done a picture of skiing. One of the ski instructors said, "I could teach you to ski very easily, because you're so active." The

MWB: director, Avery, said, "Don't you dare! I don't want Margaret to do that because I want them to be as awkward as it is possible to be." And so, we were just stumbling all over. Get on these skis and fall in every direction, you see.

Baum: This was for comedy.

MWB: The comedy, sure. The comedy of it.

Charlie Chaplin wasn't working and he came up and spent--he was snowed in there for a couple of days--and I was enchanted with really seeing and talking with him. A group of us would sit around a big fire at night because we didn't have to work on account of the weather. He'd tell us these fabulous stories of his early life in England, he and his brother. In England, they had to put across their act in about five minutes, where here they had from ten to fifteen minutes; it was on the vaudeville stage. They were a tough bunch, I can tell you, but I survived.

Baum: These movie actors?

MWB: I mean the comedy people, as a group, were a tough bunch.

Baum: What do you mean, tough?

MWB: Foul-mouthed.

Baum: Not proper for a young lady of that time?

MWB: No, but that was our education. And, as I say, I survived. I don't think there was ever such a really, almost grossly tough person as Sid Chaplin's wife. Just Cockney English, but with very little education, very little training. Just unbelievable.

Baum: I've heard Charlie Chaplin was very shy. But that doesn't sound like what you're saying.

MWB: Well, he was there with his own brother and his wife, and with this very small cast. He could do some terribly funny things. We were working on one picture at one time, and we were four. There was a potentate of some type and we had to bow down to the floor, not look at him at all. Charlie Chaplin stepped up behind the director, who got awfully excited. He would run his hands through his hair like this [gestures] and gesticulate and everything, and Chaplin just stepped right behind him and followed him perfectly. We came up roaring with laughter, instead of with this look of admiration that we should have for this potentate. Did we get scolded! Because, of course, they had to take the whole thing all over again. And the director turned around, because

MWB: our eyes were focused beyond him. He said, "Oh, Charlie, I didn't know you were here." Charlie had pushed his hair back, straightened his necktie, and stood there. [laughter]

Baum: And let you take the blame.

MWB: Sure.

Baum: Where did you girls in the movie stay? Were there dormitories or did you sleep in a hotel?

MWB: In the best hotels there were. More than once, I put the piece of furniture across the door for fear that they'd bribe a bellhop to open the door. This girl and I were the same vintage and were not playing funny with all the men. We had to protect ourselves. Generally speaking, no one wants to have to be slapped down. I think men can tell pretty quickly who the girls are who'd want to have fun and who don't. We set a standard. I remember, Courtney Foote one day said, "The only woman in this studio who is a lady is Margaret Wood, and now you're trying to ruin her." One of these men was making some kind of advance or something and Foote was protecting me on it. Because I was so young. Of course, I wasn't. I was twenty years old. Pretty old.

But just at that time when I was with the Mack Sennett Company, there came an awful flood all over Southern California. There were trains washed out. My sister Susie May was ill, so I took a steamer to come down to San Diego. It wasn't a steamer; it was one of those boats that ran from San Francisco to San Diego. A couple of beaux of mine had taken me down to the dock at San Pedro, and I saw this man looking down from the boat deck.

I got on the boat and went over to wave goodbye to these beaux of mine. He came over and said, "How's your sister Susie May?" I looked at him and I thought, "Yes, I think that's Griff Bancroft," because I'd known him way back, you see, in Witch Creek days. I think I called him Mr. Bancroft. He said he knew I was one of these sisters, but he couldn't figure out which one. So he knew Susie May was his age. I said to him, "You were just wondering which Wood sister I am." And I said, "Margaret." That's when he and I really became interested in each other.

We had to stay out overnight because of the fog and quite a few of us San Diegans got together and danced and had fun. My brother-in-law met me and he took Griff up to the Cuyamaca Club. And as soon as Griff got out, he said, "Griff Bancroft is a married man." I said, "I know he's married and has three children. What's that?" And he said, "He said he was coming out to see you."



Griffing Bancroft, 1913

Margaret Wood Bancroft and her
stepsons, Griffing, Jr. (right)
and Hubert Howe Bancroft, III
(Howe), 1918



Mrs. Hubert Howe Bancroft
(Matilda Cooley), with her son,
Griffing and her granddaughter, Barbara,
1903



II MARGARET WOOD AND GRIFFING BANCROFT

Meeting with Griff Bancroft

MWB: I said that he is getting a divorce, or something like that. And the next day Griff appeared unannounced--my sister and her husband were living in quite a big place out near East San Diego then.

Baum: Which sister was this?

MWB: Susie May.

Baum: Oh, that's the one he knew.

MWB: Yes. He came up to see how Susie May was. And there he was. We were married a year and a half later. And that is the meeting, really.

Actually, when we first came to San Diego, he came in a buggy and took my mother and Susie May and myself down to look at the Bancroft House, which is at Fourth and Fir, and it was for us to rent or buy. They wanted us to buy, because by that time, Mrs. Hubert Howe Bancroft was ill, I guess, or was disinterested. I think maybe it was rent.

Baum: What was Griff doing in San Diego?

MWB: He was managing the Bancroft property. They had a great deal of property and a big farm at Spring Valley.

Baum: I knew the Bancrofts had property there, but I didn't know how substantial it was.

MWB: At one time, I think we paid the highest taxes in San Diego, because he had so much property here. They had a big house at 4th and Fir, and that's where these letters are going to come in, because I think there's a great deal about it.* Then nearly a thousand acres out at Spring Valley, with a house that has now been made into an historical landmark. The street was named Bancroft. It's out there in Spring Valley. And Griff was managing all the San Diego property. They had a couple of small theatres. Hubert Howe Bancroft bought property everywhere.

Later, Griff used to come out to Witch Creek. I don't remember Hubert Howe Bancroft on that trip to Witch Creek. I do remember Griff because he asked about a telephone. There was no telephone nearer than Ramona, except in this Sawday house. And it was almost dark. He said, "I don't want to start my car again." My father spoke up and said, "Margaret can drive you up in her little two-wheel cart." So he went out to the barn with me and saw me sling this harness on and put this horse onto the cart, and I drove him up there, and he telephoned. That was soon after his first daughter was born. Hubert Howe Bancroft and Mrs. Bancroft, Matilda Griffing, with Griff, were touring the country, and according to this letter Mr. Bancroft wrote to me later, he said they stayed a week there. I don't remember. The only thing I remember is Mrs. Bancroft told my mother that we children shouldn't be allowed to ride horseback to much because it had wrecked her daughter's health. There were things that we won't write down in public.

Baum: Her daughter Lucy's health?

MWB: Yes. Our mother thought a great deal of the Bancrofts because of his historical writing--Mother was a schoolteacher. She'd say, "Now, Mrs. Bancroft says that you girls shouldn't be riding the way you are riding." Because I was just a wild Indian, you see, riding bareback. I never had a saddle until I was seventeen years old, never had the money to have a saddle. And so, we hated Mrs. Bancroft. We wished she'd never come. But I have no recollection of Mr. Bancroft. The only recollection, the first recollection, was when I went to San Francisco. So that ends the Woods, unless you want to go on further. That's when I met Griff and there we are.

*Mrs. Bancroft has donated to The Bancroft Library a substantial collection of letters written by Hubert Howe Bancroft to his son Griffing Bancroft.

Courtship in San Diego

- Baum: Was that about 1914?
- MWB: No, 1916. That flood was in February and the studios closed down for at least a month. And Susie May wanted my help with the baby she had just had, the second baby. So I went down there to San Diego to be with her and was delighted to have something to do.
- Baum: Hadn't Griff's divorce proceedings begun some years before?
- MWB: Yes. Griff and Ethel were separated. I think it was 1912.
- Baum: So that was already four years that they'd been separated when you met him.
- MWB: Yes, I think the trouble came up before that. Then they tried to live together again, two or three times, on account of the children.
- Baum: I'm just curious why your brother-in-law objected to Griff calling on you when obviously he had been separated some time.
- MWB: You see, we were a Catholic family. If my mother had been living, I doubt if I would have married him, because my mother was a matriarch of the first water.
- Baum: I don't think we need to discuss the divorce in any detail, except how your family felt about it, which I think is social history, and how Hubert Howe felt about it.
- MWB: He was simply delighted, but my family did everything in the world to keep me from marrying a divorced man. And also a man who was fourteen-and-a-half years older and with three very fractious children. They thought that it was taking a great risk, which it was, maybe. You see, at this time, both my father and mother were dead, and one brother and one sister dead. There were two brothers and four sisters and me left. After all, I was at that time twenty-two years old and had been independent for quite a while. Whenever I got mad at Griff, I would say I was going back to the movies. I was standing off, to go back a couple of paces.

Problems of Divorce and Child Custody

- MWB: When Ethel Works Bancroft, Griff's wife, realized that he was going to marry me, she started filing a countersuit for divorce, because Griff was determined to get the custody of the three

MWB: children, and to have a better financial arrangement. I think she hoped, like so many wives do, that she was going to get him back. So he was filing suit and she was filing suit at the same time. Griff tried to make it, in the beginning, a quiet divorce, and then the fireworks started when she realized definitely that he was going to be married. Not that she had anything against me, because she barely knew me and I never knew her at all.

That's why, when you speak about the wedding, we had planned to be married in July, and then this lawsuit came; so we were not married until the second of September, 1917.

The Friday before, Griff was supposed to deliver the children to the courthouse. Instead of that, my brother Johnson drove his car, with his Aunt Josie Griffing, and the English governess, and they took the children through the back roads that passed Witch Creek and Warner's Hot Springs and clear over the back roads to Los Angeles. They stayed overnight after they got out of the county. I was in Los Angeles at my brother's house; I wasn't down here when this thing happened. We had made up our minds. The lawyers said to marry immediately before they could slap a stay of execution, that he did not have a divorce. They had given him the divorce and given her the children. Griff wouldn't accept that.

So, we met at my brother's house and were married that Sunday. My brother Joe and sister both, by this time, had become very fond of Griff; all the family had, except they just thought it wasn't the wise thing, on account of the age and the divorce. I had tried to get a dispensation and was unable to at that time, so we were married at their house. Afterwards, Aunt Josie went to Santa Barbara and the English governess went back to close Griff's house. We started for San Francisco by car. We phoned the lawyer from Santa Barbara and he said to get up to San Francisco immediately because they had filed suit against Griff for bigamy. The children and I stayed with the Paul Bancrofts and Griff stayed at a hotel. After a great deal of discussion--because Griff was a lawyer, too, you see, though he never practiced law, on account of his hearing--they came to the conclusion that we'd just go ahead and stay out of the county until it was settled. In the meantime, she had also filed a suit for kidnapping the children.

Baum: So he was filed against for bigamy and kidnapping. You really did marry a criminal, didn't you? [laughter]

MWB: He always bragged about how important a person he was because they had him out on bail of \$25,000. It would be like \$75,000 today. He always said they valued him very highly.

First Meeting with Hubert Howe Bancroft

Baum: Where did the Paul Bancrofts live?

MWB: In San Francisco. All the Bancrofts were really terribly good to us, all. Everybody was. The first thing we did, after spending the night with them, we went to see Hubert Howe Bancroft. At that time, he was living on Jackson Street. I think it's 2998, but I will have to check that for you. We walked up the steps to the house built by H.E. Huntington. The Bancrofts had bought it after the fire because they had wanted a place for a coming out party for his two oldest granddaughters. One of them, Ruth Richards, had her coming out party there, years back. It looks very much like, except it isn't as big as, the Huntington home in Pasadena. We went up these steps and into an entrance hall. This old nurse, Ella, opened the door, and the boys just grabbed her. They had been with her at different times and loved her. Griff and I started up the steps, got up to the landing--

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Baum: You said Hubert Howe Bancroft was standing at the top of the stairs in a bathrobe.

MWB: I came to the landing and I looked up. He looked down with piercing eyes, and he said, "Do you lie?" His opening words. I was out of breath. Just then, these two boys shot by me, raced up the steps. He looked down at them, and one grabbed one leg and one the other, and he had to hold onto the bannister to keep from their throwing him. And I never answered the question. I never had to answer the question. How would you have answered the question?

Baum: Curious question! He had an idea. I mean, he meant something. He meant the other wife?

MWB: He realized she had sort of lied, and in his mind, she had betrayed them all.

We went up. That's the only unpleasant word that man ever said to me in his life. Not in his life, in the time I knew him, I mean. So we sat and talked. The next day was going to be young Philip's sixth birthday and Nina [Mrs. Philip Bancroft] had asked us to come out, to go out there to Walnut Creek. Hubert Howe Bancroft was going out that afternoon. Griff and I took the train out to Walnut Creek and he met us at Bancroft Station. At that time, they were shipping so much fruit to New York that they had the station there named for them. We got off the train with just overnight bags. He greeted us. He was so excited over the children. We got into his two-seated buckboard with two very good horses. Nina and her

MWB: three children had also come to greet us. Mr. Bancroft sat with me on one side and Howe on the other, and started driving right down the middle of the dirt road. About that time, a car came by and he yelled, "Road hog!" He was in the very center of the road. They had to go off on the edge.

Baum: Hubert Howe Bancroft did that?

MWB: Yes. That's what he always did. He drove right smack in the center of the road. He was doing the driving, you see, all these years.

The Newlyweds Live with the Bancroft Family

MWB: We had luncheon. It was a birthday party. The children all started playing around. He knew. Griff had kept him informed of what had happened about his divorce and everything and Nina had offered us her house in San Francisco for the winter. He looked up at me and said, "Margaret, wouldn't you rather live in the country? Why don't you come here? I'll give you half of my house." Nina was surprised. Phil was surprised. I said I'd have to put that up to Griff. "I don't know, Mr. Bancroft. I do love the country and I would love it myself." So we talked it all over and decided to go there and put the children in school and live in Walnut Creek. The house was an old ranch house, built in an L. It was very easy to divide. He lived very, very simply, always with this nurse, Ella, in attendance, because his mind was fine, but his legs were bad. She would soak them in hot water and cold water and massage. He needed a good deal of waiting on.

Baum: Was Matilda Bancroft dead by this time?

MWB: Oh, yes. Matilda died in 1908. I'm almost positive it was that. And he had lived in these two houses. He was not doing much traveling at the time. It suited me and Griff fine. I thought it was wonderful, because to live in San Francisco in another person's townhouse wasn't my idea of the way to start with the children. Very shortly, we packed up and moved over to Walnut Creek.

They improvised a kitchen for him [Hubert Howe Bancroft] and the two women that took care of him. We had a common screen porch that came on around to our porch, so we had that connection. We had a very big living-dining room, big pantry, and a huge kitchen. Two bedrooms and a bath. The children were charmed with the idea, you see, because they had been with these cousins a couple of years before that, and they thought it would be just wonderful to be there. We put them in school.

The Bancroft Children

Baum: You said Griff had three children.

MWB: Barbara was always with her mother. Barbara, you see, was the oldest child and she was, when this divorce came, twelve and a half, I think. She had been with her mother East for two years, living in New York City. She, naturally, took sides with her mother. The boys were with Griff at the time. You see, they had been in Santa Barbara for one year with their Aunt Josie. Then another year with the English governess. Before that, they had lived in Coronado, after Ethel left. It was a period of a year before that.

Baum: You mentioned what devils they were. Had they not been properly disciplined during this time when the family was split?

MWB: They were the most strenuous youngsters you could ever imagine. They were climbers. You'd look out and there would be one of them, looking in the window, from a tree. No, I got control of them very quickly because I had known them, you see. I'd been going with Griff for a year and a half and they had been with us a great deal wherever we went, picnicking or whatever we did. Griff took the children because he loved them so and he was at loose ends what they were going to do.

Actually, my sister Mickle had two boys who were just a year younger than each of Griff's boys. I had been with her for some time, on and off, and had known a great deal about raising them, and so I just fell into it naturally. Plus, the fact that we had children visitors at Witch Creek. It was a great haven for the children in the summertime. I was always guiding them or horse-back riding with them and all things. It just came easily and naturally to me. It didn't bother me at all. When they needed discipline, I disciplined them. The boys and I are still friends. Great friends.

Baum: Going back to your courting days, what did people do for courting in those years? 1916, I suppose it was.

MWB: Yes. '16 and '17.

Baum: And you were staying with your sister, Mickle?

MWB: I was staying with my sister Mickle and part of the time with Susie May.

Baum: Mickle lived in San Diego---

MWB: They both lived in San Diego. Their husbands were there in business.

Well, if you didn't go to the Coronado Hotel on Saturday night, there was something wrong with you. That was one of the great pleasures. That summer of '16, Griff rented a house here in La Jolla and my sister Mickle had a house in Imperial Valley where she lived. We were together a great deal at that time. Lots of dancing and then went to every show that came along. Plays, operas. We welcomed opera here in those days, and whatever there was, because he owned two small theaters. He had passes and we always sat there, right in the middle, front, because of his hearing. Everything had to go around that. There, again, you see, I was used to being with grown people, older people. I always liked them better. I liked older men better. In the days at Witch Creek, you had to know how to get along with people. Like anything else, you pleased the public. There were just lots of things to do that summer we were out here, within a few blocks of each other. My sister Mickle just took it in stride because she was used to it. She had, altogether, five children. But she had only three at that time.

Baum: So your family didn't try to prevent you from--

MWB: No. They gently tried to and then--Susie May and Cora were talking one time, lying on Susie May's bed in her house. I went in and threw this diamond ring right into the middle of them. Mickle was there, too. They said, "Well, here we are. All right, we'll accept him as a brother-in-law." And from that time on, they made no fuss. When the argument went on over the children, Mickle testified as to his care of the children and as to my ability to be able to care for them because I'd cared for her children.

Baum: So part of the question of custody was whether you would be a satisfactory mother--

MWB: They tried to make it a question, but it was thrown right out of court.

Baum: Was one of the criticisms that you had been a movie star or a movie actress?

MWB: Yes. And I grew from what you might call a starlet to a famous star in the Los Angeles Times.

Baum: Was part of the notoriety of the case based on Ethel Works Bancroft's family? Wasn't she from a prominent family?

MWB: Oh, yes. Her father, at that time, was Senator John D. Works. John D. Works was one of the seven or eight men--I've forgotten which it was--President Wilson called them "those nasty old men" who prevented us from going into war in 1916. One of the reasons that Griff didn't get his divorce was because they felt that divorce was so disapproved of in that time and if Senator Works had a daughter who was getting a divorce, it would affect the voting. Now, just think how far we've gone with accepting divorce from those years. He really didn't, because he was still on fairly friendly terms with John D. Works and a son, who was also a judge in Los Angeles. Then when he did file, because by that time it was known and we wanted to be married, why, that was all right.

Then they counterfiled, later on, keeping us from getting married--we were going to be married on my birthday, the tenth of July. We won it because they slapped this counter-divorce on him, you see. That's one reason why all the family got so bitter about it. I was the least bitter, probably, of any of them. I wasn't bitter. I never once spoke to the children for or against anything. I never mentioned their mother. That was one policy that I held to. Of course, they had to know what happened and they did go and stay with her a little while, the second summer. She found them too much to handle. They were too strenuous. So, she just gave them up. And then she went on living in New York. Barbara would come and visit us. She was with us the summer after we were married, right there in Walnut Creek. See, we stayed on until the following September. Then she came out and stayed with us.

Baum: So her mother lived in New York.

MWB: She lived in New York until she died.

Baum: It seems such a long way.

MWB: For a child. She came out with John D. Works to Los Angeles and then they put her on the train for San Francisco. Griff met her there.

Baum: There seemed to be a lot of travel between New York and this area, although it's so distant that it startles me how people traveled rather rapidly from one place to another.

MWB: They did it all the time. For instance, when Hubert Howe Bancroft and Matilda Griffing were married in '76, they came out on the train, and they just barely had through trains at that time. I've forgotten that date, but we can look it up. Paul was born in San Francisco and then, when Griff was coming along, the grandmother

MWB: in New Haven, Connecticut wrote and said, "I think you should come back here. I think that's too wild a country to have your child born. In case of accidents, you must not have good doctors out there." So, Matilda, taking this less than two-year-old Paul Bancroft and she, seven months pregnant, went back by train to New York and then to New Haven, Connecticut. Griff was born in that bed you were sleeping in, except it was a big four-poster double bed. We had it made into twin beds.

Baum: So that's an old Griffing family heirloom.

MWB: Griff died in that bed. We wanted twin beds. Someone said, "Margaret, you're ruining a gorgeous antique." I said, "So what? That's what Griff wants." And that's what he got. We had a very fine cabinetmaker make it into two beds by just using the poster on the top.

You read Hubert Howe Bancroft's history of the amount he ran back and forth to New York when he had to cross the Panama isthmus.

Baum: I know! I couldn't believe it. How often he was traveling. It was dangerous travel in those days. Was it hard for you to give up your movie career and marry and suddenly be given a family?

MWB: No. I had always lived with a big family. You see, being the baby of eight, I never had a room to myself until Elizabeth died. I was used to a lot of people and I just took those boys in my stride with the rest of them. We were awfully busy, honey. We stayed on there at the farm until it was settled and the kidnapping case was withdrawn and the divorce given to Griff. The original agreement was that the children were to spend time, the school year, with her. That's when she tried to do it then and it didn't work out.

Baum: I see. It awarded custody to her during the school year.

MWB: Yes. And so, she gave up on them.

Baum: They were supposed to go back to New York to live with her?

MWB: No, she was at that time living in Los Angeles. She had come out to live in Los Angeles during this case.

Baum: They sounded like two rambunctious kids, to live in the city.

MWB: That was the trouble, even in Los Angeles. She found that she was unable to cope. Griff, Jr. was a very determined young child. A spade was a spade and he'd stand up to anyone. I would ask him,

- MWB: when he had done something wrong, if he had done it. He would say, "Yes, I did." "Well, you knew you'd be punished." "Yes, I knew I'd be punished." "Why did you do it?" "Because I wanted to. It was something fun to do." He would always tell you the truth, but he was a very determined child. Howe was far less determined. You'd tell him to do something. He'd say yes, turn the corner, and do something else. They were exactly opposite. I'd always had to take care of other people and that's very different from doing your own thing, as everyone says today.
- Baum: Nowadays, a woman would be rather concerned about giving up an actress' career, which sounds pretty glamorous.
- MWB: Yes, but I was very much in love and Griff's life determined my life. I think that's the answer, because we were very much in love and very interested in doing things together. We had a social life. I had my own friends here in San Diego, which threw him in with a younger group, and then his friends, which threw me into his group. We were very active in social and civic work. We immediately went into all sorts of civic things. I was director of the Red Cross for years; I don't know how many years. Then I was one of the original members of the Junior League.
- Baum: This is all when you were in San Diego. After you lived in Walnut Creek?
- MWB: Oh, yes.
- Baum: I wondered what Griff did while he was in Walnut Creek.
- MWB: He was writing a book, which was never a success. It was published. It was The Interlopers and it's a story about the Japanese infiltration into the United States, and it became a very unpopular book. An unpopular theme, you know. At that time, so many people were prejudiced about allowing any of the orientals to come into the United States.

Yet, we had wonderful Japanese friends. We always liked the Japanese people, but it was a case of too many Japanese taking up too much farmland. It was a question, also, Hubert Howe Bancroft was interested in and talked about with Griff. He started writing The Interlopers before we were married. He finished it that year.

Also, that was the year that we started collecting birds' eggs to teach the boys. I was rather shocked how little they knew of outdoor life, because they had been with governesses for several years. They always had governesses. I said I'd take up trees, plants, and flowers with them and Griff would take up animals and birds. Griff got started because he had always loved birds, but

MWB: he'd never really studied birds. He began buying books. You can't study birds unless you also collect eggs. Going to a museum and seeing them is one thing, but finding them and knowing the habits and all is something else. The Flight of the Least Petrel is an example of his intense interest in the birds.* I think we had collected maybe--I remember we had a case that carried about fifty sets of these birds' eggs. When we moved south, we had to carry that in our automobile, tied on top. The eggs were wrapped and rewrapped. From that, we ended up with one of the big collections in the country. It's now up at UCLA because our natural history museum couldn't take care of it properly. The eggs are so delicate and need to have the right moisture, temperature, and all that.

Baum: You had all those to carry down on top of your car?

MWB: You see, I became interested in collecting and I didn't get very far. Both of us studied a good deal of the flora of the country in describing where we were going, and the type of country, and all that.

*Bancroft, Griffing. Lower California: a cruise; the flight of the Least Petrel, written on board by Griffing Bancroft; with 46 illustrations and a map. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1932.

III THE LAST YEAR OF HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT'S LIFE

Walnut Creek Days##

Baum: I was hoping you'd read this letter you received from Hubert Howe Bancroft. That was when you were still an engaged young lady, is that right?

MWB: Yes. It's on May the fifth, 1917. "My Dear Mistress Margaret, Your very nice letter, after a journey to New York, came upon me here." (This was in Chicago.) "It strikes me you are in for it, though I think you will win out. Griff's mother and I spent a nice week or two at your house, though I don't suppose you remember it, as it was sixty-four years ago." (Actually, it was thirteen years.) "Griff's boys are bright, as you say, and hope will come to something, sometime, if they escape the many death traps they are constantly setting for themselves. When Griff said to somebody, 'I suppose you don't approve of the way I have brought up my boys,' somebody said to Griff, 'Your boys were never brought up at all.' Sometimes, most always, can't tell, many boys never brought up turn out to be great men, like Lloyd George, the foremost man in the world today. HHB"

And that was in answer to a letter I wrote him, thanking him for a beautiful string of gold beads. He had given his first wife, his second wife, his two daughters, and his daughter-in-law, always the same beads and he picked out the gold himself at Shreve's and then had it made into a certain color of gold. I cried because that was the last thing in the world I wanted. I wanted a diamond pin that people were wearing. They weren't wearing gold. I put them away and didn't wear them for years. Now I wear them. I had them on yesterday, or today, this morning.

Baum: When you received these gold beads, it seems like that would represent entering into the family.

- MWB: Oh, yes. And this was the letter back. Evidently, he enjoyed Witch Creek. You could tell that from the way he wrote; he otherwise would have expressed his disapproval.
- Baum: He also must have been terribly fond of those little boys.
- MWB: He was. He adored his grandchildren. It was the one thing in life that he was terribly determined that their future should be taken care of. Shall I start from this--?
- Baum: All right. Let's go to your Walnut Creek life. We've spoken briefly this morning about the fact that he invited you over to Walnut Creek and divided his house. I don't think you mentioned who else was on the property besides yourself and Griff and the two boys. Mr. Bancroft was there with Ella. What kind of buildings did you live in?
- MWB: This ranch house was an old, wood one. Half of it was built, and another time, another half, so they were able to divide it off very easily. He lived so simply. He had two bedrooms, a bath, and living room; then a big porch, partly closed in, where he spent a great deal of his time, because much of the time he couldn't walk very much. But he could watch what was going on in the farm. Our part of the house had a really big living room and dining room and a big pantry and a huge kitchen. Did I tell you about his hiring the cook for me?
- Baum: Yes, yes, you mentioned it.
- MWB: It was a compound. A house that Nina and Phil lived in was called "The Chalet" because he loved the houses in Switzerland, which he'd seen at one time. It was a rough copy of a house like that. Then he built another house that was sort of wild and on the Japanese idea. These were surrounded by shrubbery. The office was separate.
- Baum: "The Chalet" was the one Nina and Philip lived in? You mentioned one that was called "The Bamboo"?
- MWB: That was the Japanese one.
- Baum: Who lived there?
- MWB: They didn't live there. They used them for weekend houses until the war came along, and then Nina moved over there because Phil had gone to Florida in training to go into the war in Europe. At that time, there was a great deal of drying of fruit. There were big packing sheds and drying ground, cutting ground, where they prepared the fruit to dry. A great deal of that fruit was sent to Europe, particularly the Scandinavian countries.

Baum: What kind of fruit?

MWB: Pears, peaches, apricots, and an enormous amount of walnuts. As time went on, they settled down to really nothing but pears and walnuts. Phil was really running that, along with his law business, until he went to war. Paul was doing most of it. He was also in war work. Grandfather Bancroft was not strong enough to walk around and really supervise very much of it.

Baum: So Paul also participated in supervising the ranch?

MWB: Yes. Later, the ranch went to Paul and Phil. We had the San Diego property and the two boys had the San Francisco--the farm at Walnut Creek and then the property in San Francisco was divided, and then some of the San Diego property.

Baum: Did you say Mr. Bancroft wasn't able to walk around? What was his problem?

MWB: Lack of circulation in his legs and in his feet.

Baum: He always suffered from asthma.

MWB: Asthma. He's the one who said that the pity of asthma was it never kills, it just made you miserable.

Baum: Did all the children go to school?

MWB: Yes. They were enrolled in a school that was about a mile from there. The children sometimes rode bicycles; some of them, horse-back. On rainy days, we took them to school.

Baum: These were just your children and Phil and Nina's. Is that right?

MWB: Yes. And then Lilly--

Baum: Four children.

MWB: That would be five. Phil had three: Anne, Lucy, and Philip, Jr. We had Griff, Jr. and Hubert Howe III. That was his official name. He was always called Howe. Just across the road was the A.L. [Bancroft] place. HHB and A.L. had a fight, which was never mended. It was over testimony that was given by A.L. after they had completely decided the accident was caused one way, and then when he got on the stand, he testified that it was caused by another mistake. I guess Hubert Howe didn't receive the insurance he thought he should have. And won.

Baum: That was an elevator accident, wasn't it?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: Was that in the Bancroft building?

MWB: Hubert Howe Bancroft was very embittered, so he planted a row of eucalyptus trees to divide them. He had two rows coming in the L road in the back. But to retaliate, A.L. put a big pig pen just on his side of the eucalyptus. The A.L. grandchildren were told not to play with Hubert Howe's grandchildren. So, while he was there, or around, they didn't. But they were constantly sneaking through the fence and enjoying each other's company. They were the very attractive three children of Frank Bancroft and Dr. Eleanor Bancroft. He was Dr. Frank Bancroft. He was a scientist.

Baum: Dr. Frank and Eleanor?

MWB: Dr. Eleanor.

Baum: She was a doctor?

MWB: She was a medical doctor at Mills College for many years. She was there for seventeen years.

Baum: Was that Frank's wife?

MWB: Wife. Yes. He was the first person chosen by the Rockefeller Foundation as one of the best scientists that they could get. They had been in New York and then they came home just before we got there. He fell and broke his hip and was never able to go back to work again. But he stayed there and ran their ranch. We were all excellent friends.

Baum: That's what I was going to ask.

MWB: We were all excellent friends and we just shied around because it was all another century and another way of life, of course.

Baum: Was A.L. still living at that time?

MWB: No, not when we got there.

Baum: So you just had to stay separate when Hubert Howe was around?

MWB: Oh, yes. They had three children, a daughter and two sons. It was awfully funny; we stayed friends always.

Baum: What were Phil and Nina like? Were they compatible with you and Griff?

MWB: Oh, yes. We were the greatest of friends. I stayed friends till the day--marvelous friends because Nina had such a respect and love for Mr. Bancroft, Hubert Howe, and Griff had at one time, way back, had an argument with his father, but he had gotten over that, and so we were all the best of friends. Nina had a marvelous mind. I think she was one of the best-read women I ever knew in my life. And she had a great sense of humor. You knew her only when--

Baum: Yes, she was ailing when I met her.

MWB: --she was very sick. We had an awful lot of fun together, all of us. At Thanksgiving time, mainly because I had the big house, the big room, and also because it was neutral ground, we had both Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner at our house. We did that; I did it. Lou and Ella never saw eye to eye, so they were sort of hands-off. Lou was Paul's wife, Louise Hazzard Bancroft.

Baum: Who came to your Thanksgiving dinner?

MWB: There was Grandfather Bancroft. Ella came to dinner too. No, I guess Ella didn't. She and her daughter sat on the side and helped. The Paul Bancrofts and Paul, Jr.; and Nina and her three children; Aunt Josie, Josephine Griffing, who lived in Santa Barbara, was with us; and Griff, the two boys, and myself. The same thing at Christmas time.

Baum: Was Aunt Josie Matilda's sister?

MWB: She was. Younger sister. She was the only one left at that time of the Griffing family. She lived in Santa Barbara. A remarkable New England woman, with all the dignity, charm, and decision. Plenty of decision.

I'm trying to think who else was in that group, but I think that was it. It was war time. Everything was in a state of stagnation, in a way, except the war effort. Mr. Bancroft was lonely. He was used to having Phil come in so much when he was in San Francisco, and Paul, too. They were both so busy with the war that he enjoyed staying out at the farm, most of the time. But he'd go in. After Griff got there, he would drive him. Otherwise, sometimes he'd go in by train, or Nina would take him in. Then he would stay for a few days.

Baum: How long a trip was that in terms of hours?

MWB: If we went by train, and then picked up a streetcar, it would be a couple of hours. Most of the time, we went by automobile.

Baum: You took the ferry over, then.

- MWB: Always.
- Baum: Was Mr. Bancroft still paying attention to his business, or was he completely out of that?
- MWB: No, he went down to the office when he was in San Francisco, maybe one day, for a very short time. They had a manager there. Paul was there, able to take care of it. The farm was very busy because they wanted as much fruit raised as possible. They had a Japanese manager and mostly Japanese help. In the summer, there were some Japanese, some Mexicans, and different types of people who worked there and who would come back year after year. The migratory workers.
- Baum: Can you remember what Hubert Howe Bancroft did with his time when he was out there at Walnut Creek?
- MWB: He was one of the greatest readers that I've ever known in my life, and he used to have shipped to him, from an agent in New York, books by the box, as they came from the printing press. He averaged a book a day, of any and every kind, on any kind of subject you ever knew of. He also read the papers. He was writing to people, almost anything that he thought. He always had a pad, envelopes, stamps, in his jacket. He had a desk there, too. If he had a thought, particularly, say, writing to Phil, or even when he was in Walnut Creek, he'd write to Paul over in San Francisco. Dash it off in a hurry and sign it HHB, seal it, and that was it; it was ready for the mail. The same thing when he was getting letters constantly from editors all over the country and from various and sundry people. He answered them, immediately. He always cut the envelope open and stretched it out so he could use that for scratch paper. The letter was either torn up or filed away. One of the women there helped him a little bit with that. He had a terrific interest, as he spoke about it, in the greatest men in the world. He had that all through the people that he followed; he was interested. If they did something very worthwhile, he wrote them a letter and nearly always got one back. I don't know where those thousands and thousands of letters--
- Baum: I was going to ask you. I wonder if he kept carbons. He wouldn't have because he was writing on his pad, wasn't he?
- MWB: Just writing on a pad. No, they're gone with the wind, absolutely.
- Baum: Were there any special subjects he kept track of, like maybe agriculture?
- MWB: He did a lot of reading of that because he was deeply interested in buying different types of trees, anything that had to do with the growing of the pears or the walnuts, which by this time he had

MWB: settled down to. Also fruit, not fruit trees; flowering trees. He was very interested in his own garden and constantly had Japanese people working around his garden. Of course, he had an office right there on the place and had a man who did some secretarial work for him, but most of that type of work went to the San Francisco office.

Baum: How much part did he play in the running of the farm?

MWB: He had done, of course, an enormous amount, but little by little, he had to cut down on it until the two brothers ran it, and he was trying to help make some decisions.

He could be so funny sometimes. I remember sitting one Sunday afternoon with him on this wide porch. They had a special detective watching, going around the entire orchards to keep people from stealing fruit. There were no fences. They'd pick up a lug and just go off with half a box of walnuts or pears or anything. The man came in one day with a car coming behind him. He'd arrested this man for stealing a half a lug of walnuts. The man came up to him and stuck out his hand and he said, "Mr. Bancroft, I'm Jim Jones."

HHB put his hands behind his body, like that [wouldn't shake hands], and he said, "Mr. Jones, what is your business?" He said, "I'm in the grocery business," on a certain street in San Francisco. HHB said, "What would you think of it if I walked in, picked up a basket, your basket, and put a half a dozen cans of vegetables or fruit, or anything, in it?" "Well," he said, "that's a different thing. These walnuts are just lying on the ground." Mr. Bancroft said, "Do you realize that I have dozens and dozens of men that are picking that fruit up, six days out of the week?" And he turned to the police officer and said, "Arrest him," and turned around and walked away. The man stood and swore, and got in the car, after the policeman had given him a citation, and that was it. Things like that, you see. And, of course, he was absolutely right, because it was marked all the way around that it was private property and people were not allowed on it.

He was always watching things like that. He watched the pennies, in every way. He gave Ella so much money to run the house, as to buying the food. Of course, he wouldn't acknowledge that the prices had gone up. We had a basement; we had one side of it and they had the other side. So Ella would take just a few of our potatoes, onions, anything. In those days, you had a lot of winter fruit and vegetables down there. She'd say, "It all comes out of the same pocket. It doesn't make any difference." This Japanese cook I had would come in and be utterly bewildered by this, you see.

- MWB: He'd say, "But you must think I steal. I steal. All gone. The fruit or the vegetables that were down there." I'd say, "No, don't pay any attention to that. Mr. Bancroft's paying the whole bill." "I know, but you don't know what that woman takes." This was a constant battle. But Mr. Bancroft had an idea that she should run that house on two dollars a day per person. We bought the food we were eating, but we weren't paying for anything else, so a few potatoes meant nothing to me. It was just typical of him that he had settled on two dollars a day for each person there.
- Baum: And during that wartime inflation.
- MWB: Oh, yes.
- Baum: Had Ella been with the family a long time?
- MWB: Yes. She came to nurse Mrs. Bancroft, Matilda Bancroft, who died in 1908. I guess it was a couple of years before. Then she stayed on as part housekeeper and, as he became more ill, had more trouble with his legs and everything, then she stayed there.
- Baum: Was she of any ethnic derivation?
- MWB: Irish Catholic. I think I spoke about that in that book, and he [HHB] used to tease us so about her. She was always defending her church. He'd tell her something that was derogatory to the church, and she'd get perfectly infuriated at him. There was a lot of jawing between the two of them. She'd been there so long that it didn't make much difference.
- Baum: I have read that, for a while, Hubert Howe was very religious and that he'd become an agnostic in his last years.
- MWB: Yes. That was true. His first wife was a very religious woman. She converted him by writing to him all the time.
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- Baum: Getting back to the religious point, there was something that Philip Bancroft said. That it worried Hubert Howe that his fine mind was not going to last, that there was not going to be an afterlife. That he had believed in an afterlife, but he no longer did. Did he ever express that?
- MWB: Yes, he did. Now, I have no faith at all. I think when I'm dead, I'm gone completely. There's nothing. As quickly as possible, I'm going to start raising daisies. My body will go back to earth, and that's that. I can't see that there's a possible hereafter.

- MWB: I don't think his mind had gone that far. It was too prevalent, the hereafter. His mind came from giving up the church when they wouldn't give us a dispensation [for marriage]. The reason they didn't give us a dispensation, because it went up to the bishop, was the fact that the Bancrofts and the Works were very prominent people at that time and it would be a very bad thing to acknowledge that I had gotten a dispensation to marry a divorced man. Actually, by the canon of the church, I should have been given a dispensation because Mrs. Ethel Bancroft was never baptized. They were Unitarians. I don't think she used any church later on, but at that time, and according to the church, they didn't accept it as marriage if you were not baptized, you see. You go into limbo. In the early days, when we were children, that's the belief we had. It made me mad that they wouldn't give it just because they happened to be prominent people, so I started studying a lot of religions and ended up with nothing. What are you?
- Baum: I was brought up a Unitarian.
- MWB: Well, there you are. That was about as good as anything. That was the Works family, you see. Now, my cousins, over a period of years, belonged to a Unitarian church.
- Baum: It probably made it easier for you to fit into that Bancroft family than if you had been a devout Catholic.
- MWB: Yes. Though for a year I did go to church without going to communion. Of course, that's a vital part of it. Confession and communion. Griff never once ever said, well, it's nonsense, or anything. He simply said he was raised that way and that's what he was. He was an agnostic. I don't think he believed anything. I think he thought that we lived and when we died, that was it.
- Baum: Did you ever have any conversations about religion with Hubert Howe?
- MWB: No, except his joking, generally. Or teasing Ella. Then he'd say to her, "You know, Margaret's a Catholic. You ask her." And she'd try so hard to get me to defend her, you see. Of course, at that time, I was very much up on my religion and I would just do the best I could and tell her not to pay any attention to Mr. Bancroft because he's an agnostic. Then she didn't know what the word "agnostic" was. It went on from one thing to another.
- Baum: Did Mr. Bancroft--I guess I have to call you all by your first names because you were all Bancrofts there.
- MWB: HH, I call him.

Baum: You call him HH. We always call him HHB at The Bancroft Library. He is so commonly discussed as HHB. Well, did HHB take much time with colleagues? Were there visitors from the University?

MWB: Very little. By this time, his mind had narrowed down to his children and grandchildren. He really didn't want to be worried, I'd say. He was interested in the times that the children were playing together. Now, he did do one thing and we can talk that over for a minute. Then we can go on to it. He was so interested in everything that the children were doing, and he was more interested in their getting inherited money. He had his will so that no one could break it. If they tried to break it, they had to break wills that ran back, practically the same type of will, but had quite a change, so they'd have to break it. His daughter, at one time, he thought, might break the will because they only left annuities. So, he'd be talking [about] that with Griff.

He believed not to give anyone money--I mean, give it outright--until they were at least thirty-five years old. If any one of his boys had died before thirty-five, the other boys took over, until that one was past thirty-five. He very strongly believed in that for the grandchildren as well. But he wanted to be sure that his property went to his grandsons. The daughters were supposed to have been married and taken care of, but then he took care of Lucy. To this day, she's been taken care of. She never married, so that was different.

At one time, Lucy tried to run the ranch, and she was something of a misfit in the family, but a sweet, dear, kind person. She went to New York and worked with the adoption of children, of children that were rejected. She'd have things done for them, for their eyes, teeth, or this and that and the other. Maybe children that were three or four or six years old. She took one boy and adopted him. He was German, an utterly unprepossessing child, but he grew up, and his children were particularly nice looking. He married a French girl, but Hubert Howe resented very much their using the name of Bancroft. He was very mad at Lucy for doing that. He thought, especially because of the inheritance and all that, that they should have used another name.

Baum: You mean, HHB objected to Lucy giving the adopted children the name of Bancroft?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: So he felt strongly about the family line, the bloodline.

- MWB: Oh, yes. Terribly strongly. Lucy I don't think had seen him for several years before he died, and I don't think Kate had seen him, because Kate went to Europe. Kate was his daughter by his first wife and she thought everything in Europe was better than in the United States. She was bringing up her children, half the time in Europe. But he wanted to be the grandfather of those girls. They were very handsome and very attractive, and they did have this coming-out party for Ruth Richards at that house. I guess it was the last party they had before Grandmother Bancroft died. That was after the fire and after they were settled. He sent for them to come home. They were in Dresden.
- Baum: These are Kate's children?
- MWB: Kate's children. Two daughters. Now her granddaughter is living right here. Her name is Dickie Swisher, and it's Mrs. Ruth Swisher.
- Baum: Kate was married then.
- MWB: Yes. She married Charles O. Richards.
- Baum: So she was Kate Bancroft Richards.
- MWB: Yes. These two daughters were very handsome and very gifted women. Ruth Richards that I speak of, Dickie Swisher's mother, married a very wealthy man in Philadelphia, by the name of Charles Lineaweaver. A much older man, but a very charming person. Of course, he never knew Hubert Howe. The younger girl was Catherine Richards. She married Edgar Allan Poe II; he's over one and down from Edgar Allan Poe, the author. They have children, grandchildren.
- Baum: HHB was very close to Kate in the early years.
- MWB: Very, very close to her, until after she married, and he was very fond of Dick, they called him, C.O. Richards. Kate did not divorce him, but she was separated from him for years. They lived here in San Diego. Mr. Bancroft built a house for them on Third Street, on his property. It was just a block from where their own house was. Kate used to teach music. She had a magnificent voice, just as HHB had. She could have gone, really, into opera, with her voice and her carriage and her looks. She was a very aristocratic looking woman. Kate took her children, two daughters, to Europe. I think it was about in 1904 and they were over there for two years in French schools. Then HHB sent for them to come home immediately after the San Francisco earthquake. They came back and lived in the San Francisco house, which had been rented. There was no rapport between HHB and Kate after that. He was, I think, thoroughly disgusted that she quit her husband. As I say, they never were divorced. Kate and her husband had Sunday lunch

MWB: together when they lived in the same city. The girls stayed with him part of the time. He was a great friend of ours, of Griff's. I think I knew him better than his own daughters knew him.

The Poes lived in Baltimore. They both lived very social lives. They're both dead.

Baum: According to my figuring, Kate must have been about fifty years old at the time.

MWB: She was born in 1860.

Baum: She would have been in her fifties at the time you entered the family, then.

MWB: Yes. She couldn't have been a more wonderful person and she stood by Griff. Griff was always her favorite of the boys because he had such a keen sense of humor and did stand up to his father. Philip was HHB's favorite because Philip never argued with him. He tweedled his way, sort of influenced his father to do things, which was the right way to handle him. Paul was a little austere and was more aloof, and Griff was more outspoken. But in his last years, after Griff's wife left, from that time on, HHB was right down there fighting with Griff to keep those sons. That was the main object of the whole thing.

Baum: I remember Philip said that of the three boys, it was Griff who was always in a scrape. When they were little boys, it was always Griff who was in some kind of trouble.

MWB: Oh, yes. Paul just stopped this side of the fence and Phil behind him, and Griff went over the fence and got into trouble. Absolutely. He had his keen humor that could be very sarcastic. Never was to me, but to other people. It was saying or telling a joke or something, always at the right second, and something that was hard to repeat, but was terribly funny. He just had people always laughing. Let's see where we go from here.

Baum: I wondered about other people on the ranch, such as the workmen. Did HHB deal with any of them?

MWB: Very little at the time I was there.

Baum: Yes. I realize that you only knew him in the last year of his life, wasn't it?

MWB: Yes. I think he did, yes. He was very active. You know, he had this bad asthma. When it would come on him, he would have his horse saddled, ride it down to the ferry, go across, and ride all the way

MWB: to Walnut Creek, which took him part of the day. Then Matilda would follow in the buckboard with a driver, or tutor, or governess, whichever they had, and the children. They'd stay over there for maybe five or six days. Then he'd get another attack of asthma and then'd he'd go back, reverse it. They would make long trips in the buggy, and then later on with automobile. They would drive all the way, I remember, from San Francisco to Santa Barbara, one time. Just a retinue. At that time, they had two buggies and horses, and two of the children riding.

Baum: This was when the children were really young.

MWB: When they were growing up. He was a very restless person. He blamed it on his asthma.

Baum: I know he had to change climate when he would get an asthma attack.

MWB: Yes. And that was the thing that bothered him so.

Baum: It must have been a hard life for Matilda.

MWB: It was a hard life for her. And she was very small. They always had to put a box under her feet because her feet couldn't get down to the ground. Yet, you read that book that I found there at the farm one day about their visit to Mexico. I thought that was a charming book. You can see the energy that she put into those things, but it wore her out. I think she was in her early sixties when she died. She kept up with him.

Those letters. Shall we look into a little bit of it now?

Trip to Yosemite

Baum: All right.

MWB: Ready? [reading from her notes] "One day Mr. Bancroft and I were sitting on the porch, possibly three weeks after we had moved in. He was talking about the beauties of Yosemite and asked if I didn't enjoy it. I answered, 'I have never been to Yosemite.' 'All right, we'll take you there. To see it in the fall colors was so wonderful.' With that, he yelled for Griff and for Nina. They came on the run, thinking something awful had occurred. Before they arrived, I said firmly, 'We have to be with the boys.' With that he turned to Nina, 'Will you take care of Margaret's boys a while? Griff and I will take her to Yosemite. She has never been there.' Nina was

MWB: wonderful. She not only took care of the boys; she packed a huge lunch basket so we could picnic every day. That night, Nina told me exactly how to handle the trip.

Ella was a grand old Irish woman, very Catholic, and always defending the church against Mr. Bancroft's playful jokes. She had been with the family before HH's wife died, nursing her through a long illness. Then she stayed on until he died. Of course, she had her peculiarities. One of them was we were bound to encounter bandits. HHB's response was, 'Ella, you tuck this thousand dollars into your hat. And then Griff and I will carry some change in our pockets and empty them in a hurry to the bandits.' So Ella put the hundred-dollar bills under the wide band of her hat. First, the wind blew her hat off, so I gave her a scarf to secure it onto her head. Next time I looked, I saw the bills halfway out of the scarf. So I said, 'Ella, the money is showing.' She screamed so loud that Griff stopped the car. After that, she tucked them in her ample bosom. According to the service rendered." I read this to you, but I don't think--

Baum: Yes.

MWB: The regular way of life was when Mr. Bancroft tipped.

Baum: But that's not quite clear there. You were talking about Mr. Bancroft's habit of non-tipping, weren't you?

MWB: Yes, it went with this trip. So Nina told me to fill my pockets full of quarters, half dollars, and dollars; all in silver, in those days. So I always forgot my coat or handbag, then went back to the table to leave a tip.

The greatest joy was our roadside picnics. Mr. Bancroft had to sit on the running board, after walking around to limber up his legs. After lunch, Griff stretched out for a nap. Driving a big car over those winding roads was no easy job. Ella snoozed in the back seat, and I sprawled on the ground while HH told me stories of California, of the early '50s. So often he would use his big black Stetson as a map. With a piece of white chalk, he drew a map of California, sketched in the mountains and rivers, always marking the old gold mines with a wee house, always explaining carefully. I still have the picture of this in my mind.

Baum: He did that on his hat?

MWB: Yes. Flattened out this big soft Stetson hat. At the end of an hour, he would say, "School's out." Then he would burst into some song while we repacked the lunch basket. Remind me to tell you something about that later. We stayed at the Sentinel Hotel for a

MWB: week, driving all over the valley. October is usually a gorgeous time there. We were lucky to hit the vivid coloring. One morning, Griff came to the table with a San Francisco paper, the day before. A front-page story and picture of HHB, telling of his last book, the last book he had written, These Latter Days. HH said, "Don't spoil our breakfast. Sure to have a lot of criticism and mistakes." When he walked out of the dining room, several people rose to greet him, but he stalked on, oblivious to the stir.

Our trip back was made very leisurely, going through the gold-mining country, stopping off to see the old towns. We spent two nights en route. We picnicked the entire time. Nina had put in exactly the food and we replenished it. His singing was always a joy to me because he seemed to know an unlimited amount of songs from opera, light opera, church songs, hymns, and bawdy stories from the days of the Gold Rush, stories, you know, told in songs. The whole time, he was reliving those early days.

Baum: I don't think I can recall anything about him singing in the other books.

MWB: He had a very good voice and he sang in the choir in San Francisco, when they belonged to a church. I'll have to run that down as to what church it was.

Baum: When he was married to Emily.

MWB: Yes. But he had a great love for music.

We got home in due time and the children were all right. Everything was fine. Then he kept on, after that, almost every day. While the children were in school, I would go after luncheon and spend at least an hour with him. It was usually recalling the early days, and what he hoped and expected, that the children would follow through and get a good education. He was, subconsciously, I guess, instructing me as to what he'd like to see those children do, thinking that maybe I'd have the influential drift to have them do what he wanted.

But he was constantly telling the children that they had to work for a living, regardless if they had money. Now, he one time told the children he had fifty of the greatest events in history, that changed history. If they would learn these events and a little bit about them, he would pay them fifty dollars. I think, if I remember correctly, Griffing and Anne were the two that got it. And he gave the others some money, besides. But then he took them to the bank and said, "Now, you deposit this money for your future use. You cannot buy chewing gum with it."

- MWB: I have some letters here from Paul and Griffing and Howe that I thought you would like to read. We'll go into those. Now, if you want to ask some more questions--
- Baum: How long was this Yosemite trip?
- MWB: About ten days. We stayed there one whole week, and every day we drove a different direction and picnicked. Of course, he and Griff would discuss, we'd all discuss, a lot of different things. He just enjoyed and loved the out-of-doors and the coloring at that time--reds, and all the mountain coloring is perfectly beautiful there.
- Baum: Did he and Griff talk about business matters, or did they talk about his philosophy and things like that?
- MWB: One day it would be business, and the next day it would be his philosophy or his writing the books or his trouble with different people, what was expected of him. Sometimes he discussed the workmen as Griff knew them, or the different writers.
- Baum: The writers that had worked on the histories.
- MWB: Yes.
- Baum: So he was really giving you and Griff some of his past history of how his work had gone.

IV EARLIER MEMORIES OF THE HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT FAMILY

[Interview 2: March 10, 1977]##

Baum: Today we were going to talk about things that people told you about HHB before you knew him, anecdotes and things that you picked up from your husband and others. Maybe the best way would be if we read this letter from Griffing, Jr. to start with, although I hope you'll let me take it and Xerox it.

MWB: Oh, yes, you can take it and keep it.

Baum: But you want me to read it to you?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: So you can remember what it says?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: All right. This is from Griffing Bancroft, Captiva Island, Florida: "Dear Margaret, As I told you on the phone, my memories of HHB are so mixed up with what was actual reality and what was family legend, that I cannot for certain guarantee all of this to be verbatim truth." (Well, that's honest of him.) "I can recall his giving each of us grandchildren fifty dollars for memorizing what he listed as the fifty most important, of his, dates in history. Today I do not remember any of his dates. It seems to me that he also had us learn the capitals and principal products of each state, with a rhyme, starting in the far Northeast with Augusta, Maine, tar, pitch, and turpentine. That is all I can remember of that, if it, indeed, came from him. I know we grandchildren were told that our cousin, Martin Bancroft, had to sneak on to our farm if we played together there, because if HHB caught him, he would whip him back through the barrier trees between his farm and ours. This, of course, because he was alleged to have carried on his feud with his younger brother, A.L., even unto the

Baum: third generation. I remember Dad being very proud of the fact that his father, HHB, had a letter delivered to him that was addressed simply, Mr. Bancroft, California. Then there were, of course, all those stories about his desire for male offspring solely, e.g. that he stopped sleeping with his wife, who had given him three sons, after she produced a daughter, Lucy. But he credited Phil's first two daughters to Nina, but when a grandson was produced, proudly said, 'Philip had a son.' Much of this, it seems to me, is belied by the fact that he spoke warmly of his daughter, Kate, and used her as a secretary in interviewing many of the pioneers. Of his resentment of the automobile, he is said to have kept his horse and buggy in the middle of country roads, and when a motorist had to plough through a ditch to get by, he would shout at him, 'Road hog!'"

MWB: Literally true.

Baum: You saw that yourself, didn't you?

[continues reading letter] "A story that Dad used to tell. When his wife, Matilda, was going away for two weeks, she made him promise to write her every day. Disliking to have this hanging over his head, he saw her off, returned to his office, dictated fourteen letters, and instructed his secretary to mail one each day. I don't know if any of this is helpful, but I'll send it along. Love, Griff."

I think that's a charming letter. I'd like to make a copy of this.

MWB: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

Baum: I can see Griffing, Jr. is a writer, too.

MWB: Both of them are.

Baum: These other letters I'm not going to take, because I think they have other material in them that we wouldn't want to include.

MWB: No.

Baum: But I hope I can get Griffing, Jr., when he's here, to tell some stories himself. He must have some good recollections.

MWB: Yes, you see, he was old enough. He was ten. Well, he was eleven years old when Grandfather was living.

Baum: Today we're going to talk about things that you learned from your husband and others about HHB before you knew him yourself. I was wondering if Griff had told you about his childhood, as related to his father.

MWB: Yes, Griffing talked a great deal about his childhood. They really had a wonderful life because they had always a home in San Francisco. They never went to school. They had governesses first and then tutors, because Mr. Bancroft didn't want to be confined in his life by his children being in school. He traveled, and I think I told you of his going horseback from the house in San Francisco to Walnut Creek because of his asthma. Then Mrs. Bancroft would follow. Did we go through that?

Baum: You did. But I'm not sure for the tape.

MWB: He'd wake up with this very bad attack of asthma, would have his horse saddled--they had a stable--and would take the first ferry to Oakland and then ride a distance which was about twenty miles. It may have been less because he was probably riding trails part of the time. And they had the house at Walnut Creek always staffed. He'd stay there, go on with his writing just the same, because he had material every place, wherever he went. Then Mrs. Bancroft would pack the children into the buckboard. She was so tiny that she had to have a box underneath, so she could put her feet down on the floor. Maybe one or two of the boys on horses, riding. Go to the ferry and get over there. Maybe they'd stay a week or two weeks, as long as he felt well, and then one morning he'd be gone. Sometimes Mrs. Bancroft wouldn't even hear him. [He would] get up and sneak out, get on his horse, and ride back to San Francisco. They also traveled a great deal. They'd just pack the children and take them East or take them to see their relatives--once they went into the Mississippi--or into Yosemite. Another time they'd go clear to Santa Barbara.

Baum: This was with horse and wagon.

MWB: Horse and wagon. They always had at least two of the children on horseback. They would stay in Santa Barbara maybe a month because Miss Josephine Griffing was there at that time; there was the grandmother Griffing living and her sister, Mary. Matilda would visit with them.

Baum: So Mary and Josephine were Matilda's sisters, and her mother would be out visiting them in Santa Barbara?

MWB: They all moved to Santa Barbara. They built a home there and they thought Santa Barbara was about half way from San Francisco to San Diego. Now, HHB built this large home in San Diego, at Fourth and Fir. They would come down, often, for the whole winter, and live in San Diego.

Baum: The HHB family?

- MWB: Yes. Then he bought the farm at Spring Valley, which, again, was fifteen miles out from San Diego. It was all bought, I think, from '86 to '88 or '89. I remember he stopped. They had a bad fire in '86.
- Baum: That must be in San Francisco.
- MWB: He was very frightened about what was happening, about his property and all, and so he stopped construction for a little while on his house.
- Baum: On which house?
- MWB: On the house here in San Diego.
- Baum: Do you recall how he got interested in property in San Diego?
- MWB: Yes. I think it was 1886 that he and Alanzo Horton came down from San Francisco to San Diego, which was maybe at that time a two-day run--
- Baum: On ship.
- MWB: Ship. The old Orizaba. Father Horton was planning New Town. He bought a lot of property and started it because he thought it was close--it was right beside the waterfront. Old Town was some distance from the water. He persuaded Mr. Bancroft, or Mr. Bancroft persuaded him, I'm not sure which, to sell Mr. Bancroft a lot directly back of the Grant Hotel, which was at Fourth; I guess it was Fourth and B. It was directly back of what is now the Grant Hotel. He, in turn, was to start a library for Mr. Horton. He sent him two thousand books for this library.
- Baum: So this was sort of an exchange. Land for books.
- MWB: It was an exchange. I'm not certain, but I think that one or two of those books still are in the library.
- Baum: Was this for Mr. Horton's private library?
- MWB: No. This was a community library. Horton built a hotel called Horton House. He wanted to make this the very center of town. They were starting shops and stores. People were buying these lots and they were auctioning them off. One of those letters that I have, you know, is to Mrs. Horton. He had never seen San Diego until then.
- Baum: Do you think that was 1886 or earlier? 1886 was the year of the big fire in San Francisco.

- MWB: Then it might have been a year or two earlier. I'm quite sure we could find that right here in Literary Industries. Yes. But it was very close to that fire. He was in San Diego; it was '86, I'm sure, because he was in San Diego when he got word, a telegram telling him that the whole building was burned. Kate was married at that time. She was married to Charles Olcott Richards and they were living here in San Diego. I heard from Mr. Richards that he was so upset and so disturbed about it, and he immediately got on the train and went back to San Francisco.
- Baum: He was so upset about the fire?
- MWB: Yes. And he stopped any operation that he had here until he found out where he stood. There was always a question of whether they would pay insurance, and what was burned.
- Baum: I think he did lose a lot financially, that it set them back, didn't it?
- MWB: Yes, it did. I'm not sure how much damage was done, because it was at that time that I think he moved his library, or had just moved it to Valencia Street. That we'll have to look up and find out.
- Baum: No. I think that's right. He didn't lose the library, but he lost commercial operations.
- MWB: It was a bad fire.
- Baum: So later he did continue the building in San Diego. He built the house.
- MWB: Oh, yes. He built a very pleasant, a very handsome home with a big entrance way and a lovely stairway that went up. That was one that they wanted to rent to us in 1900, my family. That was really the first time I ever saw Griff. At that time, I was seven years old.

HHB liked San Diego and he was very interested in developing this farm. At that time, olives were easy to grow and didn't have to be watered. They had a good spring there, but they didn't want to have anything which he had to water. It turned out to be several hundred acres of olives. He was extremely interested in developing that because he, at that time, felt that the climate of San Diego agreed with him very much better than it did at San Francisco. But he really made it his second home. It was never his first home. Then he built a home across the street from him for his daughter, Kate Richards, and his son, and that's where the two daughters were raised as young children.

Baum: Kate and her daughters.

MWB: Yes. He wanted his family as close around him as it could possibly be, and at that time he was very fond of, and always was, of Mr. Richards. He resented very much when she went off to Europe and left him. Just took up a separate life. But she was very interested, Kate was, in music, and had this beautiful voice. If it had been now, I think she would have been in grand opera because she had the looks and the voice, but really gentlewomen did not go into opera, you know. They were always a little suspect. Yet, he loved the music himself and they had musicals. You asked me about what people used to do. I think you will find in that box, maybe, the clippings about giving musicals in their home. It was big enough so they had dancing. On Griff's twenty-first birthday, I remember the clippings of his celebration.

Baum: Was that here in San Diego? So the Bancroft family came down here fairly often?

MWB: The whole family would come when he came. They might be a few days late, but they all came, and then they all went back. There was always, besides the tutor, usually at least one helper. Sometimes there'd be a tutor and a governess. The governess would be for Lucy--a combination governess and nurse. They just traveled en masse. They had horses there in San Diego and horses out in Spring Valley. They had horses in San Francisco, buggies. They had everything, horses and buggies, at Walnut Creek.

Baum: Did they have a large house out at Spring Valley?'

MWB: No. I would love for you to go out there to see exactly what's there.

Baum: That's the one that's becoming an historic landmark now.

MWB: It is. They did that years ago. They wanted me to take the presentation-making, and I said definitely no, not as long as there was a relative there. Ruth Lineaweaver wasn't well enough, so I asked Dickie to do it, the daughter.

Baum: Who's Dickie?

MWB: Dickie is now Dickie Swisher, but she was Dickie Lineaweaver. Her name was Ruth, for her mother, but they always called her Dickie because they expected her to be a boy.

Baum: Oh, she's Kate's daughter.

MWB: Kate's granddaughter. Lineaweaver is the daughter and Swisher is the granddaughter. There was just the one granddaughter.

Baum: You talked about that before. I just got a little mixed up here. I'm going to have to draw some sort of chart. Anyway, the HHB family had a rather smallish house out at Spring Valley, is that right?

MWB: Yes. It was a house built by a Mr. Porter, way back, with some lumber that came off of a wrecked ship. It is a very small place. Then he built another house, not so far away, that later was used by Nina Bancroft and Phil, at times, in the summertime. They were still moving en masse.

Baum: Did Hubert Howe Bancroft then supervise the farm at Spring Valley, or did he put that in charge of someone else?

MWB: He would supervise it, but he always had a manager. Then, when Griff came here to live after he finished Harvard, he lived in this big house. Half the time the family were there, half not. This was Griff's job, to take care of the San Diego and Spring Valley properties. And that caused all the fights, because he wasn't doing it the way his father thought he should.

Baum: So Griff came down here and lived in the Fourth and Fir house. That was when you had the letter to Mrs. Horton from Matilda Bancroft, introducing her son, Griff.

MWB: Yes. You see, Griff was married when he was twenty-two, I think it was, and his wife was twenty.

Baum: That was Ethel Works.

MWB: Works. Daughter of--that time he was a lawyer--John D. Works. Afterwards, he became senator from California.

Baum: Where did they come from, the Works? From San Francisco?

MWB: No. From the Middle West somewhere. I don't know.

Baum: No, I mean when Griff met--

MWB: Oh, they were living here in San Diego.

Hubert Howe Bancroft built a complex, two houses with a common entrance. I think they called them complexes in those days. That was done, I think, almost immediately. That's where their three children were born. That's Barbara, Griffing, and Howe.

Baum: Was that HHB's gift to them as a wedding gift?

MWB: I don't know. I would imagine so. But there again, you see, he's always wanted to keep them all together. At that time, across the street was a residence hotel, Robinson Hotel, and HHB was there. I know he was there when he got this message because they had to send a messenger up, many a mile, from the center of town, from Western Union. I remember Hubert Howe telling of this disaster, one of the disasters he talked about in his life, a great crisis. The children all, I guess, stayed in San Diego for a while, but then they went back up to San Francisco. These houses were all kept ready for use. Usually there was a paid caretaker in them. When they came, there was no way of notifying them--at Spring Valley, at least. Walnut Creek, I doubt, had a telephone at that time. I'm sure they didn't. I don't think any of them had telephones, come to think of it.

Baum: I'm trying to think. I guess there were telephones before 1900, but not very common, or not out in the country.

MWB: Yes there were. I mean, telephones. Of course, when my dog bit me and nearly blinded me, I was three years old, almost four. We had a phone and were able to phone for a doctor a mile up the road, the main part of Glasgow. Mother said, "Now, I have told you, it would be a good thing to have a phone." She said that to my father. Instead of saddling a horse and sending it with somebody else, why, they telephoned and the doctor came there, that soon. They thought I was going to bleed to death.

Baum: So that was before 1900.

MWB: That would have been about '96.

Baum: My! The Wood family was a forward-looking family also, I see.

MWB: Sure, they were.

Baum: With the newest equipment. Well, what did Griff tell you about his boyhood?

MWB: They had a lot of liberty. As I say, they nearly always had a tutor. If they were planning to go to Europe, they'd pick out a tutor who spoke either French, Italian, German--they were very fond of Germany--or Spanish. So, the children had a good education, as children, and they were disciplined in a lot of things that way. For instance, at the table (their own; they didn't eat with the family very much), they were forced to use the language that that particular tutor spoke, and then they were penalized by some tiny little something if they used the English. HHB was very

MWB: determined that his children should particularly speak French. They'd spent a lot of time in France, and, of course, a lot of time in London. He talked a lot about buying books, all over the world, all over the Americas and Europe. They never went to the Far East; they never went into that part of the world. He had established agents and then would buy these books. I remember particularly his telling me about the books that came from President--the one who was murdered.

Baum: Garfield?

MWB: No, not American. Maximilian! His library was sneaked out on muleback and brought from Vera Cruz to London. His agent cabled him that he'd have to have \$10,000 to buy the books that he thought Mr. Bancroft should own. Mr. Bancroft was away and the man bought them, as the way he told me the story, and shipped them. Mr. Bancroft was furious because he thought he had all the books he needed and he couldn't imagine needing them. But his curiosity got the better of him, and so he opened them. After the first box he opened and the first volume that he took out, he sat down and wrote the check out for \$10,000 and sent it to the man, his agent.

Baum: So his agents bought them without instructions.

MWB: In that case he did because Mr. Bancroft was traveling--

Baum: I know how long it took to get messages--

MWB: --and he just took a chance.

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Baum: You were talking about the Maximilian Library and this agent who purchased the books and sent them to Mr. Bancroft, and you said that he was pleased when he opened the box.

MWB: That's right.

Baum: But not before.

MWB: No. He was going to send it right back.

Baum: Did he tell you that?

MWB: Yes. Not only that, but he was talking about buying books, particularly in Europe. He said he would go days without spending a dollar, buying a book or anything, and then he'd see something that he was determined to have, and he might pay anything up to a hundred dollars or more, whatever it was--he bought the book. I

MWB: said to him, "How did you know? How could you be so quick about it, Mr. Bancroft?" and he said, "Well, you knew, more or less, what your subject was and you could take one glance at a book and realize that was along the lines that you were writing."

Gradually, so many people who traveled bought books and then came back and sold them or put them in the hands of somebody to sell. He said it was a very fascinating thing. He might buy a pamphlet that was absolutely necessary to his writing and would pay anything they asked for it. He had to have it. He enjoyed that, and I think you'll find that in Literary Industries where it goes from one place to another. He'd have this man in London always, the man who kept more track of it. Lots of times, they would write from Spain, up to the London man, because there the correspondence was so much faster. Correspondence was a slow deal in those days. He enjoyed collecting more than anything else. He enjoyed rummaging in bookshops. I was asking about his going to cathedrals and this and that and the other. He said, "Oh, I left that for Matilda to take the children to do that. The real joy I had was buying these books."

Baum: I wondered about that. I read in Literary Industries about his book collecting and I wondered if poor Matilda Bancroft had to drag along through all those bookstores, too, or if she and the children could go elsewhere.

MWB: As I remember it, they went to Europe on their honeymoon. I know he didn't with his first wife. No, it was his first wife that he took the trip with. Yes, he did with Matilda because he put Kate Bancroft into a girls' school in the United States at that time. The name has gone out of my mind, but I'll get it later. Kate was sixteen when he remarried. I think he was almost twenty years older than Matilda.

Baum: I guess I read the journal of his trip to Mexico with Kate. Now, that was 1883. I don't think he'd married Matilda Bancroft yet.

MWB: Yes. He married Matilda in 1876.

Baum: And in 1866, he went to Europe with Emily, whom he calls, "The lady friend whom I had married several years previously."

MWB: Yes. He married her in 1858, I think it was. Then she died in '69 and he remarried.

Baum: I do have all those dates.

MWB: He remarried in '76 because I know he and Matilda were married almost the same month as my father and mother.

- Baum: I know he did travel quite a bit with Kate. They seemed to have had quite a nice relationship in the early years, at least, when she was a young lady.
- MWB: Yes, they did.
- Baum: I'm sure he was trying to educate her, too.
- MWB: He took her to Mexico. This was after his wife's death but before he married Matilda. They had a marvelous time. Kate Richards used to tell me about that. Must have been a year before, or two years, because she was a young lady. They lived in great style and were invited by the president to different things. She loved it.
- Baum: Did Kate talk to you about those trips?
- MWB: Some. She was always critical.
- Baum: Of what?
- MWB: Her father. But those trips, she really enjoyed. She was critical, more or less, later on.
- Baum: Maybe she felt that her family had been superseded by the new family.
- MWB: I don't think it was that as much as it was she wanted to live in Europe in a style to which she wanted to become accustomed, and he wanted her to live out West and do something quite different from what she wanted to do. She had that European complex that so many people in those Victorian days had. But she got away most of the time, because she lived there with her children. You see, there was all this feeling. She went twice to Europe and lived for a couple of school years.
- Baum: Did HHB tell you any more about his book collecting?
- MWB: I remember he spoke more about interviewing people, that time that he interviewed Brigham Young. Then he spoke about the fight, the final fight with Frémont. He had written some about Frémont. As he told the story to me--I'm not sure which was right or accurate or anything; I'm not passing judgment--but when Frémont was living in Washington, after all the work that he had done, he went to see him. I think he was incapacitated. I don't know how long before his death, but he wanted--
- Baum: Who was incapacitated? Frémont?

MWB: Frémont. Mr. Bancroft went to see him in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Frémont let him in and was very cordial. Then Frémont said, "We'll have to make a settlement first about how much you're going to pay me for this interview." Mr. Bancroft said to him it was quite enough for him to receive the recognition and the story and all of that without pay because he had never paid for interviews. He said never, and I'm not sure that was literal, but anyway, he said that. With that, they got into an argument and he told Frémont that he could write his histories without an interview, and walked out on him. So that was one of the reasons that he always had a feeling, but he had been critical of Frémont, and Frémont had asked him to come and interview him. That's as I remember his story. .

Now, if we look back into the history, he may have told a little different story at the time, but that's what he told me. He said he never admired Frémont. He thought that it could have been handled in a very different way and not caused the United States taking it and making California a state. And he had a good deal of criticism of Frémont. They didn't see eye to eye in what he had done. He was going to write it as he thought these things had actually taken place and not explain and cover up the mistakes that he thought Frémont had made.

Baum: I think later on, when there was a period when people were criticizing Mr. Bancroft a lot, that was one of the causes of criticism, because they were trying to make a hero of Frémont and HHB wouldn't do it.

MWB: Oh, yes! It was, definitely. It was from that time on, but I think it started at that time. Up to that time, he hadn't been as critical of Frémont. Then he began to pick out things that maybe had not been reviewed or had not been written about before.

Baum: He told you about this abortive interview with Frémont that didn't come off?

MWB: Yes. He told me about that. One of the people that he did like very much was Vallejo. He liked the Mexican people. He'd always been well-treated when he went to Mexico, royally treated. They wanted him to see the best of Mexico, and he always had a lot of Mexican help. He never had particularly educated people, but he had great sympathy with Mexico. He read Spanish. I don't remember his ever using Spanish words. I don't remember his ever talking about it, but I certainly know that he read Spanish. And, of course, these books, all of his books were in Spanish.

MWB: When I was in Spain, we went to see a couple. The young man was our guide. We went there for tea one afternoon and the minute we came in, the man said, "I have something to show you." He took us into this little library and they overwhelmed the library. He had all Bancroft's Works, from Madrid, in Spanish. I didn't count them. They possibly could have been just Mexico and California, but they were so proud of those books. That's why they asked us to tea, this young chap who had been to the United States and spoke Spanish. He'd been taken care of by Lucy Bancroft, Mrs. Redfield, when he came over here and was placed in some home. He was very proud to take us around and do a great deal for us. He presented this invitation. It was written in Spanish and in English, too. The father wrote it out and then the son wrote it out in English, to come to tea. When we went to tea, there were at least a dozen of the whole family that had gathered to see these two American women, to talk to them.

Baum: This is when you and Cora went--your sister, Cora.

MWB: Yes. And a very elaborate tea. We said to the father that we wanted to go to Jaijai. He said, "We never go, but I'll give my son permission to go. He's never gambled, but if you ladies need someone to accompany you..." And the boy was simply thrilled, you see.

Baum: The boy got to go to the Jaijai games.

MWB: It was so cute, one of the things. While we were getting ready to leave that afternoon, we were on our way back then to Rotterdam to catch the ship. A knock came on the door and it was this lad. He said, "My mother has sent you a present. She said, 'I think, Son, it would be nice if you would help those kind, kind ladies to the airport.'" And he said it was going to be his gift to us, after the things that we had done.

We couldn't get the suitcases packed. By this time, we'd bought presents for everybody and we were in an awful whirl. We kept running out and buying baskets to carry things. He stayed with us. I kept corresponding with him for years afterwards. I've lost it now.

Baum: Did Mr. Bancroft talk about any of his other collecting activities with you? Did he like to bargain? Did he ever talk to you about that?

MWB: Take it more from what the boys said. They said he would drive a hard bargain, but if he really wanted something, he was perfectly willing to pay for it, and he did pay for it. He had a colossal

- MWB: memory of what he had in all these different places. I couldn't figure how he could be traveling as much as he did, but he went right on writing, whether he was on a train or if he went to Santa Barbara; he immediately set up one room for his writing and went right on writing. I don't ever remember a time of talking to him, anywhere, that he didn't have a pad, envelopes, and stamps. He had a big pocket and he stuck it in there or he picked it up off the desk. Of course, by that time, he was like all old people and was fighting his memory. He'd forget things. It seemed to me that he had such a vast memory that I wondered he had time and place to store everything in his brain.
- Baum: Now, you remember him in 1917, with pads to write letters. I think Philip told me that in his youth, when Philip was a boy, he always had galley proofs in his hands, so he was always correcting them. I guess that's when the Works were coming out.
- MWB: Yes. Oh, absolutely. At this time, you see, his last book was published in his latter days, and he had been writing it over a period of years, I think. So he was writing mostly to his family. He wrote to Lucy, and Kate was still living, and to his sons, and to his grandsons. He was always receiving letters from people that had to be answered. It may be only a few lines. I remember one time he wrote, and this is typical, "Dear Griff, for very small favor, I offer you very small thanks. HHB"
- Baum: Very brief.
- MWB: And a two-cent stamp, you see. Now, I'm sure he wouldn't have done it. He'd have thought twice about writing all those letters [with higher postage.] That's why you see in the Bancrofts'--I don't know how many letters they had that were in boxes, Phil Bancroft's, up in storage. A great many of those were burned.
- Baum: In the letter that your son, Griff, wrote you about his grandfather, he mentions that he seemed to be looking for grandsons, not grand-daughters.
- MWB: That was true.
- Baum: And that all the way, he seemed not to think as highly of the abilities of women.
- MWB: And yet, I think, of all the grandchildren, in one way he got more pleasure out of young Lucy Bancroft, the one who was Mrs. Redfield. She died about five years ago, Mrs. John Redfield. He got more pleasure out of her because she was cuddly. She was Phil and Nina's youngest daughter. There was Anne, then Lucy,

MWB: and then Philip. Lucy was a chubby little gal of eight when I first saw her. She just sort of knocked down his defenses and climbed all over him and sat in his lap. Anne was more reserved. Of course, she was a little bit older, but she was of a reserved character. Lucy was very outgoing. I suppose he was that way with Kate. She was his first child.

Baum: Could you see any difference in his expectations for the little granddaughters and the grandsons?

MWB: You mean in his talking about it?

Baum: Yes. And how he either treated them or talked about them.

MWB: In making out his will and everything, it was always to the sons, and then, in case they died, it was to the grandsons. I don't think he ever left any money to any of the granddaughters, that I know of. That was for their father to do it. He left everything to his three sons and left an annuity to Kate and an annuity to Lucy which has been faithfully carried out. Then Phil and the boys, I'm sure, raised the annuity for Lucy, because she was never married, and as time went on they raised it and that's what she has now.

I never discussed the details much of things like that with him. I knew these things from my own husband and from Phil, because I did everything with Griff. I knew every move that he made when it came to financial plans, and because Griff was not particularly interested, except to spend the money, little by little I began to take it over. Paul and Phil appreciated that so much that I would always, when I would go to San Francisco, go down and spend half of a morning going over the books and all that, with Paul. Sometimes Phil would be there, but Paul was in the office, and we'd go to the Palace Hotel for lunch. We'd sometimes meet Lou there or Griff, who was doing something else. Or Paul and I would go. But that was always the treat.

Well, in talking about finances and of the tragedy of being in debt, HHB said himself, he was never comfortable if he didn't have at least a hundred dollars in his pocket and a good many thousands of dollars in the bank that he could draw out at any time. As I remember the figure, and I may be wrong about that, it was \$50,000 in the bank.

Baum: That's quite a lot of liquid money.

MWB: Yes, but he said if he hadn't had it, beginning with the fire of '86 and again with the earthquake and fire in 1906, that he would not have been able to have gotten along without borrowing money.

MWB: Most of the time, he never had to borrow money. He nearly always had the money. When it came to the rebuilding, I'm sure they did. But of course, there they had the insurance money. He may have started before that insurance money; the details of that, I don't remember.

Baum: We were talking about the Society of California Pioneers. Did he ever talk to you about being included in the membership there and then being kicked off of the membership?

MWB: Yes. Because he said that the Donner Party happened about the time Hubert Howe Bancroft came to California, or maybe before he came to California. He did know that the people who did survive were great heroes in Sacramento and then in to San Francisco. As time went on, and he interviewed maybe the children of some of those people, it leaked out that they had resorted to cannibalism, which I'm sure I would resort to, in the same case. Naturally, there were questions as to whether the people were taken care of without respect to their age or anything else and some people were allowed to die and some weren't. Then the subject came up that the only way they survived was by eating this frozen flesh. He said himself that it wasn't a criticism, but it was true. Whether it's in his books or not, I've never read it, but there were two or three people that belonged to the Pioneer Society that bitterly resented what he said.

Of course, in those days, people, I think, were more fastidious about that than they would be today. I think we're more realistic about it. We know of this case that just happened in Chile. Those people wrecked in that airplane and they survived that way. HHB said that was it and he could get along without the Pioneer Society, but I'm not awfully sure that's smart to say right now. Maybe we'd better let him get back in the Pioneer Society, if that is bothering these people. Maybe I'd say the wrong things.

Baum: No, I wondered. He did tell you that he thought it was the Donner Party story that got him kicked out of the Pioneer Society?

MWB: Oh, yes! But they weren't willing to say that, so they used this--

Baum: They called it the Frémont story.

MWB: Yes.

Baum: Well, that might well be true.

MWB: Yes. That's exactly what he told.

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Baum: We missed on the tape where you said the Donner Party story brought you to think about--

- MWB: Yes, that was the first time that I'd ever really thought, "What would you do if you were in those exact circumstances?" The more I thought about it, the more I thought, "Well, if you were hungry enough and the person was frozen--"
- Baum: And your life depended--
- MWB: And your life depended on it, I would do it, too.
- Baum: That was Mr. Bancroft's point of view.
- MWB: That's what he said, yes.
- Baum: You must have had quite a bit of eye-opening ideas presented to you.
- MWB: Absolutely! Because every single day almost, when he was there-- he was in San Francisco at other times--he was always presenting something to me like that in his talk. I just hadn't sat and thought of so many things like that. Most of my life, I was too busy making a living or trying to read books that I should be reading on acting and other things. So, I just never had time to really sit and consider things like that, and he enjoyed talking about them. Very seldom we ever talked more than once or twice, except about the children and the grandchildren, of course. We'd go back to that anytime.
- Baum: What was your day like in Walnut Creek when he was out there and Griff was supposed to be writing, or his father wanted him to be writing?
- MWB: He was writing. He did the book, and it was published.
- Baum: And you were a housewife with two rambunctious little boys to keep track of.
- MWB: Sure. And we had to do all sorts of shopping. Many a time, I'd go over and talk with Nina when maybe Griff had gone to bed and I didn't want to go to bed. I'd just run across the road there, right in the compound. We'd discuss, so often, things that he had told me, and Nina would discuss it because when they were first married they lived at St. Dunston Hotel apartment house. Phil and Nina had an apartment, and Paul and Louise, Lou, had an apartment.
- Baum: Did Mr. Bancroft and Matilda Bancroft live at St. Dunston's or in their own house?

MWB: They were at St. Dunston's. They had quite an elaborate apartment. They lost a great many beautiful paintings and a great deal of furniture. It was bombed in 1906 to stop the fire.

Baum: Then he built a fine house.

MWB: He didn't build it. He bought the H.E. Huntington house in 1906. He did it particularly because Kate Richards wanted her two daughters to make their debut in San Francisco. In this house, there was a ballroom in the basement. There were big steps that went down from the carriage way down to the ballroom. There were three storeys above that, the main floor, and then where the living quarters were, and then the third floor was where the help stayed. He bought quite a bit of furniture that had belonged to H.E. Huntington. I remember there was a beautifully paneled dining room. I'm not sure, but I think it was mahogany. And a big table, and there must have been twenty-four chairs. Maybe not that many, but it was very elaborate. There was quite a lot of furniture. That didn't burn, you see. Their fine stuff had been moved to this big apartment at St. Dunston's.

Where they lived before that, I've forgotten, but it wasn't as big a place as they wanted. Not only did Kate want it, but Matilda thought it would be a wonderful thing to have this coming-out party. I think it was the last party that she ever had. In those days, they were largely dancing parties and, I suppose, champagne and all that went with it. Right after that, Mrs. Bancroft died. By the time Catherine Richards came along, she wasn't interested in having a debut, or it wasn't possible for Mr. Bancroft to do it without a hostess. They lost interest in it, so she didn't have a coming-out party. The house was sold immediately after he died, because there was no one who wanted it.

Phil Bancroft decided to run the ranch and build a home there, and so they tore down this old ranch house and built--

Baum: The one you had lived in with Mr. Bancroft was torn down?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: I guess it's the new one they built.

MWB: Yes. It's a big, two-storey one, with a big basement and attic. They built that right after Phil came home from war. That was when HHB died, in 1918. Phil came back right after the war was over, and they started work on building that house. In the meantime, they kept on living in "The Chalet".

V THE DEATH OF HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT

The Fatal Accident

MWB: I know what we were thinking about, though, which we hadn't touched. It's HHB's death. That's what we wanted to go through because so many people--and I've gotten letters and people asking. They never knew that he had been hit by a streetcar. I think that date is March the 2nd, and when he died on March the 3rd, 1918, he was at his own home. He had gone downtown.

Baum: The big, fine home in San Francisco.

MWB: Yes. He had gone down to the office on a streetcar, which he used, either the streetcar or the cable car. I think it was the streetcar at that time. There were four cars paralleling, two going up and two down Market Street. He'd been at the office and was going home for luncheon. The streetcar nearest him went by and he stepped out without looking and was hit by the next car that was coming up. He was knocked against stone benches that were there all along Market Street, and he hit his head. He was banged up. I'm not sure whether he went in an ambulance or whether he went home on his own power. I think he went in an ambulance.

Griff and I had gone over to spend the night with him. Griff was having some of his teeth pulled and he was in bed, under sedation, when they brought Mr. Bancroft in. They put him in his own bed and called for Dr. Gray. He came and examined him. HHB was coherent and was terribly upset and mad over his own stupidity. We wakened Griff. I think Paul had come. Paul was doing civilian work for the war at another place. He wasn't at the office. He came immediately. HHB was sitting up in bed and Dr. Gray was greatly concerned over his head. It was badly bruised. I don't

- MWB: remember whether it was bleeding or not. That part I don't remember, but anyway, he was very uncertain but said that he must stay in bed. Griff said to him, "Dad, are you going to sue the railway company?" They loved lawsuits, you know.
- Baum: There were a lot of lawyers in the family.
- MWB: Yes. They loved lawsuits. He said, "Goodness! Tell everybody that I am so old and dumb that I let that streetcar hit me? Certainly I'm not going to do it." He didn't swear much. It seems to me he said something like, "I'll be damned if I will!" or something like that. And that was the end of that. Then I think they put a nurse on the case. He went through the night and developed aphasia, and died the next morning. He had had some condition in his head. I think the doctor left it whether it was the hitting that caused the final death, but the family always had an idea that they did that to ease it off for some reason or another. The papers at the time--I think we should get back and do some reading on that.
- Baum: I think I read that all the newspaper reports were incorrect in almost every aspect.*
- MWB: Yes. I'm quite sure they were, because there was no question about it, that this caused his death. Of course, immediately, there were a flood of people, and things to be done. In those days, they kept the body there. The morticians came and he was laid out in the big double parlor downstairs. Ella was absolutely hysterical. Reporters were coming and going. Lists were to be made out of the pallbearers. All these things that had to be done. Nina Bancroft was over taking care of the children, but she thought Lou would be there doing it, and Lou thought Nina would be there doing it, and so neither one of them came until they came to the funeral. Now, I think Lou did come in, after thinking about that for a moment; she did, because I know I had a discussion with her about clothes that we had to get for him to be laid out.

*On Sunday, March 3, 1918, both the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Francisco Examiner reported Hubert Howe Bancroft's death on page one. John Caughey, Bancroft's biographer, describes their divergent accounts of Bancroft's death, remarking that the conflicting news stories "illustrate the difficulty of attaining historical accuracy." John Caughey, Hubert Howe Bancroft, Historian of the West, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), p. 383.

FORCES BATTLE JESSIA ACCEPTS GE

H. H. BANCROFT DIES; NOTED HISTORIAN



SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER
March 3, 1918

Man Famous for Research Work
on Pacific Coast Passes Away
at Home Here at Age of 86

Bookseller in San Francisco in
Early Years; Was Handicapped
by Small Technical Knowledge

Hubert Howe Bancroft, noted Pacific Coast historian, the one man who preserved the history and materials of all of old California, died suddenly of acute peritonitis at 8:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon at his home at 2898 Jackson street. The end came quietly after an illness of only 26 hours.

At the bedside were his sons, Paul Bancroft, former Supervisor, and Griffing Bancroft of San Diego. Another son, Lieutenant Phillip B. Bancroft, is, with a motor truck company at Camp Johnston, Jacksonville, Fla. Miss Lucy Bancroft and Mrs. Charles O. Richards (Kate Bancroft), daughters, reside in New York City.

Regarding the man who left as his monuments thirty-nine authoritative volumes of western history and the 60,000-volume Bancroft collection of materials concerning Pacific coast history, now housed in the University of California library, Professor Henry Morse Stephens, head of the university's history department, said last night:

Bancroft was the greatest of a half dozen great American historians, and the only one who had an adequate understanding of the historical West.

His greatest value was as a collector of writings concerning the Pacific Coast, for the Bancroft collection is the chief historical glory of the University, which owns it.

His histories constitute a museum of information of Mexico, California, Nevada, Oregon and all the West, based on his study and knowledge of the country.

No one seeking to know anything about the West can do anything without consulting the Bancroft histories and the Bancroft collection.

PROLIFIC WRITER.

Although one of the most prolific writers of history which America ever has produced, at the age of forty Bancroft had never written a book, nor, by his own statement, made many years later, did he know how to write even the simplest manuscript. From early manhood he had been a book-seller and business man in San Francisco, and previous to that, clerk in a bookstore at Buffalo, N. Y. Earlier still, he was a farm hand and tannery boy near Grandville, Ohio, where he was born May 6, 1832. It was in the bookstores that he obtained his education, his attendance at public schools being very limited.

Following his opening of a book shop at San Francisco in 1856, Bancroft conceived the idea of writing a comprehensive history of California, and to that end began collecting books, manuscripts and newspapers. So absorbed did he become in this search for material that ten or twelve years later he had collected thousands of volumes of books and stacks of manuscripts and newspaper files. Still he had written nothing and could not, for he did not know what was in the books and manuscripts.

IMPORTANT WORKS.

His published works include: West American historical series, published 1876-87, in thirty-nine volumes, comprising:

Native Races of the Pacific States, five volumes; History of Central America, three volumes; History of Mexico, six volumes; North Mexican States and Texas, two volumes; California, seven volumes; Arizona and New Mexico, Colorado and Wyoming, Utah and Nevada, Northwest Coast, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana, British Columbia, Alaska, California Pastoral, California Inter-Pocula, Popular Tribunals, Essays and Miscellany and Literary Industries.

San Francisco Chronicle

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 1918

RELATIONS WITH GEN. CRUSE

H. H. BANCROFT, HISTORIAN, DIES AT AGE OF 86

Prolific American Writer
Passes Away at His Home
in Walnut Creek

BORN IN OHIO IN 1832

Library of 60,000 Volumes
Collected by Him Now Pos-
sessed by U. of C.

Hubert Howe Bancroft, one of the most prolific writers of history America has produced, died shortly before 5 o'clock last evening at his country home in Walnut Creek. Bancroft was 86 years old and was the father of Paul Bancroft of San Francisco.

The California historian was born near Granville, O., May 6, 1832, and came to San Francisco, where he opened a bookshop in 1856. It was in the bookstores that he obtained his education, his attendance at public schools being limited. Although the author of scores of books, Bancroft, by his own statement, at the age of 40, had never written a book. Following his opening of a bookstore here, Bancroft began collecting books, manuscripts and newspapers with the idea of writing a comprehensive history of California.

COLLECTED HIS LIBRARY

He collected a library of 60,000 volumes, which is now in possession of the University of California. The passion to write so consumed Bancroft that he gave the conduct of his business over to others, and set himself in earnest to the task. Long since the plan to write only of California enlarged until it included the Pacific Coast regions of the whole North and South American continents.

Soon despair seized upon Bancroft, for he discovered by tests that the mere work of reading, digesting and notating his material unaided would require at least four hundred years. He perfected a system of card-indexing, and thereafter trained and employed hundreds of assistants, the services of some of whom amounted to that of collaborators.

ORGANIZES PUBLISHING COMPANY

He delved into the myths and legends of the peoples of the American continent, running back into the Middle Ages, marshaling therefrom the facts and theories of his "Native Races of the Pacific States." This work, in five volumes, was issued in 1874, it being necessary, at the last, for the author to organize a publishing company to insure its printing. Bancroft estimated that the work of writing and research expended upon "Native Races" represented the work of one man, toiling every day, Sundays excepted, for fifty years.

Following this work—Bancroft, who became widely recognized as an authority on history, plunged into other work, continuing incessantly at his desk until he had produced thirty-nine volumes, comprising the history of the Pacific Coast states and countries from Alaska to Argentina. His life ambition realized, he devoted himself to occasional writing, producing "Retrospection" after passing his eightieth birthday. In 1883, accompanied by assistants, he visited Mexico and spent months in searching the ancient archives of that country for historical data. The result was a new history of Mexico.

In October of last year Bancroft published "In These Latter Days," which caused widespread comment. This work covered politics, business and legislation, and the venerable historian spared neither capital, labor nor political leaders, writing with almost unmitigated pessimism. The ~~opinion of this work contained a note~~ in which the author said that it was in the press before the declaration of war by the United States upon Germany.

During the evening of his life Bancroft divided his time between his country home in Walnut Creek and the family residence at 2394 Jackson street. Funeral arrangements have not been completed.

The Funeral

MWB: There was an enormous funeral. All the dignitaries from the universities and various and sundry. There's a good list of that in the papers, I know. I've seen that. Well, somebody said you could get it in Literary Industries. The minister didn't read far enough to know that he'd been married the second time. That actually happened. We sat there, squirming over this thing, when he said, "His dear wife," and went on about his works and everything, but there sat the children of his second wife, you see.

Baum: He spoke of Emily, and not Matilda.

MWB: Yes. I'm sure I don't think that was in the papers, but it actually happened.

Baum: What church did you call on for a minister?

MWB: That I don't remember.

Baum: Since he was not a church member.

MWB: It may have been the church you said you belonged to.

Baum: Unitarians?

MWB: Unitarians. It was some prominent man that he knew. Paul had more to do with that, because as I said, I had a sick husband at the same time.

The flowers began to come. Ella was in hysterics the whole time. She was completely unavailable for work.

Baum: She could have been so useful to you.

MWB: But her niece was there and there was a cook in the kitchen. There were other people helping, servants and that sort of thing.

I walked the ballroom floor. That's where the services were. Now, wait a minute. They put the flowers down there. The service was in the double parlor. They were all big rooms. We went down to see that those flowers were going to last the next day and then we moved them upstairs. Ella and I went from the top floor to the bottom floor, from the bottom floor to the top floor, at least six times that night, or two nights. She could not settle down. Finally, I'd go into her room and tell her if she'd lie down, I would talk to her. So I talked to her about our trip to Yosemite, or this or that or the other, and she'd fall off to sleep. Sleep

MWB: for a few hours. Then I'd hear her upstairs, gasping. She'd go off. The doctor gave her some medicine to put her to sleep for a while, but she'd wake up and go at it again. She was very Catholic, you know, and she thought of all the good things he'd done and some of the bad things he'd done, maybe. And maybe he wasn't going to heaven, where she thought he should go because she thought he was a wonderful man, but still he has to go to purgatory.

Baum: His soul wasn't saved.

MWB: It wasn't saved completely, but he'd go to purgatory. "Purgatory" was a much-used word at that time. He wasn't in hell, burning. She was positive of that. It was all very realistic to her. But he'd get to heaven because that's where his wife, Matilda, had gone. I think she went there without ever going to purgatory. She was worried about their not being together. It was a pitiful thing to see. Just as emotional as a person could be; of course, she'd been in the family--I don't know--it must have been easily twenty years. Almost that much.

We all went, with a huge convoy with police and everything, down to Daly City or wherever it was the big cemetery is, and he was buried there, between his two wives. His first wife on the right; the second wife on the left. And then the third wife would sometimes be at the top or the bottom, but there was no third wife this time.

Baum: Is that a family burial plot there?

MWB: Yes. They had it, I guess, since the time that Emily died.

We went back and stayed that night to be with Ella. I stayed with them. I think Griff went back to the farm with the boys. There was a discussion with Nina and a difference of opinion completely, because Griff said he wanted the boys to be there at the funeral and she did not want her children to be there. No, she disapproved and thought it would give them nightmares and different things, and she didn't want that. It was her way of handling it, and Griff's way was the realistic way. So she got the two boys dressed and brought them over with her without her own children. By that time, Griffing, Jr. was eleven and Howe was eight and a half years old. I think Griffing would remember it distinctly and, of course, Paul, Jr. would. He came. But Kate was in New York and Ruth was overseas and Catherine was in New York. She was captain in the motor corps. It was right in the middle of the war.

Baum: I know Phil was away.

MWB: Yes. Phil was in Florida. Of course, there was no such thing as flying. He was just about ready to go overseas. He was overseas until 1919. While he went in as a regular, in the regular service, he was very quickly picked out of that and made a judge to handle American servicemen's cases, because he spoke French. He had to stay on quite a long time after the war was over--several months--to clear up all those cases and finish up the business we had at hand there. As soon as he came back, he said he had been very ill during part of the time he was over there with--I don't know if it was malaria or something like that he had. He said he was never going to stay indoors again. So he closed his law office and took active charge of the farm. From that time until the time that he died, he ran that farm.

Baum: He became as prominent in farming as in other works before that, and he had been on the railroad commission.

MWB: Yes. And he was also in politics. When Ex-President Roosevelt went back to run for the presidency again, he said, "I'll throw my hat in the ring," and he threw it right at Nina Bancroft, with this bright red hair of hers. She picked it up, and he motioned to her that it was for her. I think that hat's in The Bancroft Library.

Baum: Maybe so.

MWB: I think it is. It should be.

Baum: I know Nina and Phil were at that convention in 1912.

His Estate

Baum: Was there a disruption to the business and all when Mr. Bancroft died?

MWB: No, because Paul and Phil had taken it over completely.

Baum: But Phil was gone.

MWB: Yes. Then Paul took it over while Phil was away. Phil had been away in training here on the west coast and then final training in Florida. We were only actually in that war a year and a half. So part of that time he was in San Francisco. When he was in training, he still could work. Paul was always the one that took care of the books. He used to, as I told you, take me over there and go over those books to be sure that I thought that Griff was getting his full share. I was the one that had to do the economy of the family.

Baum: Then the family sold the Huntington-Bancroft house?

MWB: Yes. I'm not just sure just what. I know that after we'd settled Griff's matrimonial troubles, we went back to San Diego, in September, I think it was, of 1918. We were in San Diego when war was declared over. We were able to rent a very small cottage. Fortunately, some military people had just vacated the day before. San Diego had such an enormous influx of military during that time. We lived at that house for about a year.

Our boys sold the papers of the false armistice. Westbrook Pegler, I guess it was, made the great mistake; I'm not sure of that. Then two or three days later was the real armistice. Griffing, Jr. was always ready to make a few dollars. Howe would follow him, whatever he did. I can still see them yelling, and we'd have to keep buying extras. "Extra! Extra!" they'd scream at the top of their voices. We were living just half a mile from the center of town, and people just went wild, of course. Well, everybody did.

Baum: I've read about those celebrations. That must have been quite something.

MWB: We were there right after that when that terrible flu struck-- before we had gone into our house. We bought a house almost immediately after that. Then we settled down there in San Diego and lived twenty-five years in that house. We sold that and came to La Jolla.

Baum: Your husband managed the various Bancroft properties.

MWB: Yes. Or mismanaged it, according to HHB.

Baum: He didn't have to worry about HHB any more and all those letters of instruction.

MWB: No, and we never had any, any rupture or discussion, or anything, about the settlement. It was all done with the greatest of friendship. He was so afraid that someone, particularly Kate, might contest the will.

Baum: She only got an annuity.

MWB: She had some little something to stand on because her own mother had some property that had been involved, but legally it wasn't, because they took that and settled for the annuity, you see. In the end, she was better off, because we went through that very bad period of the Depression from '29 on. She was still alive. They were having to borrow money to pay taxes, and the annuities went on, so in the end she was better off than if she had changed it. She probably would have spent it all anyway.

MWB: Anyway, that's the way we settled down there, and Kate came back to live in San Diego. Her two daughters married after a certain length of time, and Ruth finally came back to live in San Diego. She married a Philadelphia man and lived in Philadelphia for at least ten years. Then he came out here to California and ended up here with a big house with Dickie here in La Jolla. And Babe married Edgar Allan Poe, as I say, one over and down. As you remember, Edgar Allan Poe didn't have any children, he died so early in life. That settles us, I think, for the time being. Just let it go.

VI THE BANCROFT FAMILY IN CALIFORNIA POLITICS

Philip Bancroft's Campaign for U.S. Senator, 1938

- Baum: I know I've discussed politics with Phil, and he was so prominent in Republican politics. I believe you and Griff participated in his campaign.
- MWB: We gave six months of undivided attention. I never fought as hard in my life. Never worked as hard and never enjoyed anything more and I really learned politics in those six months. But I had been in politics for years. My husband was very politically minded. Phil announced about the first of April that he was going to run.
- Baum: Let's see. I can't remember if that was '34 or '36 that he first ran.
- MWB: 1938.
- Baum: Was it '38?
- MWB: Yes, it was '38. Just before the war started. We immediately set up offices downtown, and I took over the county, as chairman of it, and Griff took over the city. We had a very strong group of Republican people here at that time. We have still, I think. This county nearly always votes Republican. I got a great kick out of it because I went to every single--
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- Baum: We are discussing the Republican campaign of 1938 for which Margaret took over the county and Griff took over the city.
- MWB: That was within the Republican party.

Baum: First you had to fight for the nomination, I believe, quite strongly.

MWB: Yes. This was the fight, for the nomination. Then for the office itself. We just went to work immediately. Phil came down here and talked to a large group of our friends, personal friends, more or less. We gave a great party for him at our house. He told them exactly what he believed in and all of that, and then from that we went out into a bigger field. In covering the county, which is what I was doing, I was covering a great many people and places that I knew. I always remember, after the final election, or, it was the nomination, George Sawday, who was taking care of a certain district around Witch Creek, said--

Baum: The Sawdays were Republicans.

MWB: Oh, strong. Most of the county people. It was a fairly easy job. He said, "You know, there was one man that voted against Phil. When I find out about it, I'm going to get him out of this section of this country." Just one man! That was the best record of the whole thing. That was it for the nomination. We often laughed about it. He was very serious. He felt he'd been let down because he was the big man of that whole section of the country. Then, when we won the nomination, Griff and I went with Phil. There was talk there was going to be a recount, at one time, it was so close.

Baum: Here in San Diego County?

MWB: No.

Baum: In the state.

MWB: We found that there was a--Griff did this. I think it was Griff and Phil; the two of them were rechecking. Both of them were mathematicians. Then, they didn't have any little gadgets to do it for them, but they had terribly quick eyes. Actually, there was one place where there were marked 4,000 when it should have been 1,000. Whether that was done intentionally or not, we'll never know. It was the deciding vote.

Baum: Was that for the opponent?

MWB: Yes, for the opponent.

Baum: So Phil really had three thousand more votes.

MWB: It was more than that in the final count, but this was just for one county. They were running it up county by county over the state. There was some one county where someone had made the

- MWB: mistake. We had been told he'd lost up in Sacramento. Everybody just sort of left us alone, after everybody coming up and talking to you. We were at the capitol and all. It was a lowly feeling.
- Baum: You mean when you'd lost.
- MWB: Yes. They avoided us afterwards. Talking to other people, they said it was the normal thing to do. People don't want to walk up and say, "I'm sorry you lost." So, they just avoided us. I was there with Anne Bancroft. Nina was not well. She had had a heart attack some little time before that and was really not doing very much during the campaign, except at home, writing letters and things like that, doing things for Phil. Then they suddenly announced that a mistake had been found and he had won the nomination. With that, everybody came back, just like that.
- Baum: Your friends returned.
- MWB: Just like that! Every friend returned. I don't think it was ever published because it was seesawing, you see, back and forth--
- Baum: This was all taking place in Sacramento?
- MWB: In Sacramento.
- Baum: With the final count.
- MWB: Yes. Final count. You know, they'd bring in the bags. In those days, they counted them by hand. Right here, I've done it; I used to do it for years. Go down to the courthouse and go down to the basement, and they'd say, "Here comes Julian!" A rickety old car or anything might come in, bringing the bags that were sealed. "Here comes Ramona," and all the places of the county, of course. That was the county count. Then they add up county by county.
- Baum: Do you recall who participated in that campaign with you, who any of the funders were, or the loyal workers?
- MWB: In San Diego?
- Baum: Yes. In San Diego.
- MWB: Oh, yes, by the hundreds.
- Baum: The Sawdays were.
- MWB: Yes, that was just one instance.
- Baum: That would be the Witch Creek area.

- MWB: The Republican party stood magnificently behind Phil Bancroft.
- Baum: That was a hard year because you were fighting the Ham and Eggs, I think.
- MWB: Fighting not only Ham and Eggs, we were fighting Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, I'm positive, had people who checked very carefully. Phil was an utterly independent person, an utterly honest person, and a wealthy person. There was nothing in the way that he could get at him. It was one of the things, of course, Phil was fighting against the unionizing of farm labor, which he felt at that time--. Of course, now that's popular, but at that time, it was Harry Bridges--
- Baum: Was that an issue here in San Diego County?
- MWB: Oh, no, I'm talking about the rest of the state.
- Baum: I wouldn't think it would be a red-hot issue here in San Diego County.
- MWB: It's a big waterfront. Fortunately, we knew a great many of the waterfront people, because we had owned The Least Petrel and had spent a great deal of time on the waterfront. We made that six-month trip and that whole thing, and we just knew people all over the county. Griff had been here and I'd been here so long, so it was very easy. That was the first time that I ever saw Nixon. He was, I think, in law school. He came down with a man representing Orange County. I think that was Orange County. We had a little meeting. I was the only one in the family who could go out to it, and I went out with a lawyer from here who was an ardent supporter. We ate at the greasy spoon, as it were, and had this little meeting. He was doing some work for the Republican party.
- Baum: Nixon was.
- MWB: Yes. Connected with his studying law. I was always a supporter of Nixon. I died hard.
- Baum: Was Nixon then supporting Phil Bancroft? I know Phil Bancroft became a big supporter of Nixon later on.
- MWB: Oh, yes. That was an utterly independent thing. He just happened to come. He didn't know Phil at that time at all.
- Baum: He must have been a very young man at that time.

MWB: He was. He was still in school. He was in law school.

Baum: And you were favorably impressed with him at that point? Or do you remember it, even?

MWB: I remembered the name. It came to me because there were maybe just a half a dozen of us sitting there, eating at this greasy spoon. He and this lawyer from, I think it was Orange County, because that's where--

Baum: That's where Whittier is, and that's where he came from.

MWB: Yes, from Whittier. That's right, of course.

But Phil couldn't defeat Franklin Delano Roosevelt. They did some things at the last minute. I don't know whether Phil told you this or not, but those last few days when you couldn't defend yourself beyond that, they scattered this leaflet of Phil driving a mule hitched to a plow, a man and a mule pulling this plow. Phil, with a cowboy hat on and boots, and a whip. There were thousands, I guess, maybe a million of them, scattered over the state.

Baum: I haven't seen that leaflet.

MWB: I think I have it. I'm not sure. But I know that Phil has it. Then, that same week, it came out in every post office in California that the organization that was handling, was giving help to people--

Baum: WPA?

MWB: Yes. WPA. They could fill out pamphlets right there in the post office and fill out a questionnaire that was there and could get jobs. It was reassuring the people that they would be taken care of. There it was. They were put up in every post office.

Baum: So this was coming to you from the Democrats.

MWB: Always from the Democrats, yes, and all over California. Now, that might have been coincidental; I'm not positive of that. I remember seeing it. I remember it was up here at Encinitas and it suddenly caught my eye. I went over and looked at it. But this other thing was these pamphlets that came in and were just scattered. They probably wouldn't have put one of them in La Jolla with the plow and everything, but in all the working districts. Naturally a president wouldn't want to put a person of that calibre

MWB: into office if he could possibly save himself from it, because Phil was a good speaker and he had a strong way of convincing people. He was a good lawyer. It was at the time that Roosevelt was in power. Let's see, he was elected in '32 and again in '36.

Baum: This was a mid-election, I guess.

MWB: This was a mid-election--'38.

Baum: But it really was a hard time, in the Depression. I think you could have beat him.

MWB: No, it was a hard time.

Baum: I'm sure the county was pushing Ham and Eggs.

MWB: Yes, and then Ham and Eggs came, but the whole thing--no, we couldn't. It was a combination of those things. But it was a great experience. As I say, Griff and I didn't think of anything else. Phil came here and talked at least twice, talked at the Roosevelt High School, at a big meeting. I made a terrible mistake that night. I'll never forget it. I got a whole group of girls to usher, and it was a cold, cold night in early fall. and a lot of these girls had on fur coats. One of the men--I think it was Congressman Swing, but I'm not sure; somebody like that--came up to me and said, "Margaret, you pulled a boo-boo. You should not have had those girls in fur coats."

Baum: Cloth coats.

MWB: There were several things like that. That night, I remember, we gathered together some old oldtimers, like Cave Coutts, who's one of the famous people of the very early days. Goes back to the Spanish days, the Count Bandini family. We had this Cave Coutts there. He hadn't gotten out in years. We sent a car for him. There was nothing we wouldn't do to get a vote, honestly. It gave me a great insight into politics.

Baum: Was this your first political excursion?

MWB: No. Griff had been interested in it and so had Phil. I had worked in political campaigns. I'd worked in any number of them. We carried our county here, something like three to one. We really had a big vote out. It was largely Republican. There were not the amount of people, not the amount of working people that were here. We carried it beautifully. It was the model of the whole thing. We just had an inside run on it. Phil had a hard time carrying his own county because Contra Costa County has

- MWB: such a type of labor there. I can't remember now; I think he lost. He may have carried his own county, but he lost Alameda, I think it was. I'm not sure of that.
- Baum: He couldn't win Alameda, I don't think. That's such an industrial area.
- MWB: I think he won Contra Costa.
- Baum: He couldn't carry the farming communities, I should think.
- MWB: That was true, with a lot of them. Yet he carried his own districts around him.

Bancroft Farm Labor

- MWB: They always said Phil was so hard on farm labor, and yet it was a strange thing. There were lots of them that came up from Mexico with a card, green cards, they used to have. Or they just went all over the state, these people that did that kind of work. When they left him, he'd give them a self-addressed card, a penny post card, that he would receive back. He'd save them a place. That was for the picking of the pears.
- Baum: They were to send the card back if they wanted a position?
- MWB: Yes. And it was a great tribute to Phil, the great amount of these people who did that. Just exactly that. Phil never had any trouble on his own farm. Never, never.

Japanese-American Relocation, World War II

- MWB: When the war came, he took care of his Japanese help because he told them not to leave that farm and he'd take care of them. Then, of course, the time did come and some of the people were taken out. He said, "Just stay around the farm. Don't ever cross the road. Don't ever leave the farm until we find out exactly what has to be done to you." He did their shopping and Nina took care of their plants. Then, when they had to go to the camps--
- Baum: Relocation centers.

- MWB: Yes, relocation centers. He stored just two or three barnloads of stuff in some empty buildings that he had and took care of it during the whole war. I went with Nina time and again to see these people and to take them things when they were first there at, I think, Bay Meadows.
- Baum: Yes.
- MWB: And then further down; I forgot the name of the place there, and they made a real job of following through on it until they came.
- Baum: Tanforan.
- MWB: You're right. Tanforan. Not Bay Meadows.
- Baum: Do you know if Phil favored the relocation? Did he think that was necessary at that time, or did he tell you? He might not have been concerned.
- MWB: Yes, he talked about it. We all talked about it a lot. He felt that any American-born Japanese was an American citizen and that they could not handle them en masse. So did Nina. She felt that way very strongly. In the end, the government felt that way, because they had this big troop of them over in Italy. Phil went to bat on that, time and again, in Sacramento. The ones that were Japanese citizens, or had been born in Japan, that was a different story.
- Baum: Most of those were just old people, I think. The Japanese citizens, at this point, weren't they mostly old people?
- MWB: Oh, yes. Sakimoto was one of them that had been farm manager for the A.L. Bancrofts for many years. He was there a long, long time with them. I think, finally, when they sold the farm, he came over to Phil. There were any number of Japanese around there. They were older. And they went with great dignity. It was remarkable. I will never forget going there. You just felt you could hardly stand it. We'd carry all sorts of goodies and things that they might need--blankets, or whatever they wrote for--and we'd take them. One thing they wanted more than anything else was some of their plants, the tiny ones.
- Baum: Bonsais?
- MWB: Bonsais. Nina had a whole table full of those that she took better care of than anything else.
- Baum: They had probably nourished those for fifty or more years.
- MWB: She did so many things like that.

Participation in Richard Nixon's Campaigns

Baum: Did you go on in politics?

MWB: I was always active in it. I'd go and work wherever they asked me to work after that for, I would imagine, up to maybe 1950, or around in there. I gradually quit because we were going so much into Baja California and had other interests. But for at least ten or fifteen years I would help. I know after we'd moved to La Jolla, I remember taking charge of the buses that went from here to--I guess it was the second time Nixon was elected. I laugh when I think about it all.

Baum: We have just a little bit to finish. You had just, when we left, started to mention Nixon's campaigns and that you and Griff had participated in the first one. I believe that would have been 1952, the vice-presidential campaign. What part did you both play in that?

MWB: We first began to know Richard Nixon when he was in Sacramento, which I hadn't thought about until right now. Griffing was there covering the Capitol news, state news, for the Hearst papers from Los Angeles. We followed his career from that time on. Then, when Griffing, our son--

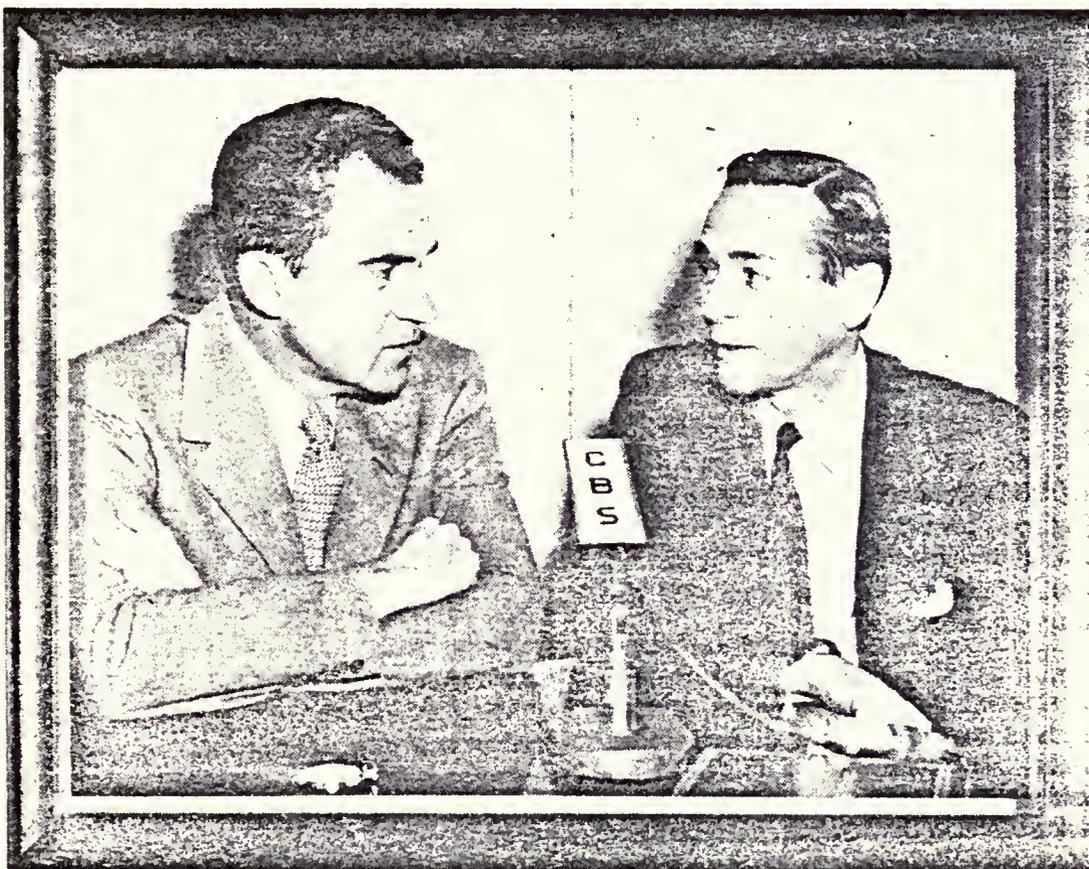
Baum: I don't think we mentioned Griffing's job.

MWB: I'll just simply say that Griffing, at this time, was with CBS, covering the first all-air trip that any president or vice-president had ever done. This was all air, from Washington, D.C., up through the Northwest, and down to Los Angeles. Griff, Sr. and I met him there and saw quite a bit of him because we went to a number of rallies and a number of dinners. Then we drove in cavalcades from Los Angeles to San Diego. If I remember correctly, Nixon gave the same speech about ten times en route, much to the amusement of the newspapermen. By this time, those newspapermen were very tired of the whole thing.

Baum: The speech?

MWB: Oh, yes, and everything else. The baby-kissing and everything else. He wasn't much of a baby-kisser. But we worked in the Republican party, for Nixon, very vigorously at that time.

Baum: This would have been '52, when Nixon was running for vice-president with Eisenhower.



Griffing Bancroft with then vice-president Richard Nixon during his career as a radio newsman.

MWB: Yes. Eisenhower and Nixon. We stayed in Los Angeles, you see, and went to all these things, and then they came to San Diego. Unfortunately, there was a call for Griffing to go back to Washington, and he never reached our home. We had to take him directly to the airport, which happened all the time.

Baum: It's what you can expect in the broadcast business, I think.

MWB: Yes. One of the people had fallen out in Washington. He had to go back and replace him.

Then we followed Nixon from that time on, doing whatever we could. When I was back there in--I think it must have been '58 or '59--I went back to Washington and we had our pictures taken. I had my picture taken with him and his wife for the San Diego papers. It was all very exciting. Then, when he ran for governor, we worked on that campaign, were disappointed, and then he ran for president, of course. He came here to meet the President of Mexico; I cannot think of the man's name.

Baum: He came to San Diego?

MWB: Yes. That was, I think, in 1970. They gave a huge state dinner, Nixon did, for the president. I think it was the first real state dinner that had been given west of the Rockies, anyway. Six hundred were invited and, of course, there were probably six thousand who were furious that they weren't invited, but I happened to be one of the lucky ones. It was very exciting. They did it so fast that they sent telegrams out, asking you to call the White House. I happened to have a cold at the moment and hadn't opened the front door for twenty-four hours until a neighbor came and said that there was a notice on the door. It was this telegram, asking me to this dinner, so I immediately called the White House. They were most cheerful and told exactly what it was. As a woman, what do you think I did next? I immediately called--

Baum: For a dress. [laughter]

MWB: --Sanderson's. I was too sick to do any shopping. Mr. and Mrs. Sanderson, who owned the store, said they would buy me one, if they had to buy it from Magnin's or Hogan's, the two big opposing companies. I stood up while Barbara pinned it up and did what she thought had to be done. It took the whole community to get me ready to go to this. I went with Mr. and Mrs. Copley, James Copley, and also Representative Wilson's wife.

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Baum: It was at the Coronado Hotel?

MWB: The Coronado Hotel, in a vast ballroom. We got in line to shake hands with President and Mrs. Nixon, and the President of Mexico and his daughter. His wife was not there; she was ill. When I reached Nixon, he said very informally, "Hello." Then he turned to the president and had it said in Spanish that I was the daughter-in-law of Hubert Howe Bancroft, the historian. The president said yes, that he knew about the histories of Mexico, which held up the line, I'm sure, not more than two minutes. But when I got out of line, broke line, everyone said, "What did you say to him, or he say to you, that made him hold up that great line of people?" Everybody had to put their drinks down, you see. There was a great table there, and they had to put their drinks down and were champagne at the bit to get to the tables in the dining room. It was an awfully funny occasion. We had wonderful seats, sitting almost directly below President and Mrs. Nixon and Ex-President and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson.

Baum: Oh, the Johnsons were there.

MWB: Yes, the Johnsons were there, and very nonchalant---just whisked it off--and the President of Mexico and his daughter, and there was somebody else up at that table. I never saw Nixon as relaxed and really having a good time as I did at that ball. In the first place, it was a relaxed atmosphere. The President of Mexico had ordered these wonderful dancers as his part of the party and brought the complete entertainment with him. After the dinner, the dancing was marvelous. Then President and Mrs. Nixon and the President of Mexico and the daughter went down right past us to the platform, to where the dancing was, and they gave each one of the men a Mexican hat. They all came back wearing these Mexican hats and looking pretty silly.

Baum: Nixon had a hat?

MWB: Oh, yes. The men had the hats; all the men went down.

Baum: You mean the men at the head table, or all the men?

MWB: I mean the men at the head table. They were sitting at the platform above, so we had a very good look because there was just the backside of it, with the eight people who were there. Then we were whisked off again to go through all the protection of the police and everything else. You felt awfully important, you know, wondering whether there was going to be a shot from some building. That was great fun. So I was a Nixon person until things got very, very bad and I admit that I died hard with him. I gave in the end. I felt I gave him more than a normal break.

Baum: It must have been hard on the people that had supported him here in San Diego.

MWB: Terribly hard. It was terribly hard on people everywhere, all over the United States.

Baum: I know some of his chief supporters in Orange County, and you can imagine how they felt.

MWB: Oh, yes. Well, he always loved La Jolla and he came here many times. He came here to receptions and parties from San Clemente. You know, it's not too far, San Clemente. I don't know. What is it--seventy-five miles or something? But I know he came here a couple of times to church and he had some very intimate friends. He came to their houses, so we felt that we really knew him. I'd heard a great deal more about him with Griffing, Jr., who had been following him for a long time. He didn't tell much about his own politics, but actually, he was a Democrat. So, he saw him in a little different light than we saw.

Baum: Was Griffing hostile to Nixon all along, or had he felt he was a favorable sort of person, if not in the right party?

MWB: He lost faith a great deal sooner than we did, I'd say. In the position he had with CBS and covering the Capitol (he was on the morning, eight o'clock news service news), he naturally knew a lot more than any of us knew, plus the fact that he had gradually turned Democratic anyway, and broke the long line of Bancrofts that mostly were Republicans.

VII MORE BANCROFT FAMILY BACKGROUND

[Interview 3: July 2, 1977]##

Hubert Howe Bancroft in His Older Years

- Baum: You had been telling me about the trip to Yosemite with Mr. Bancroft, and I think we had gotten about halfway through. You told me about Ella with the money in her hatband and about your California history lessons on Mr. Bancroft's hat.
- MWB: Did I tell you about one morning when he came to the table with a San Francisco paper? Griff had a San Francisco paper.
- Baum: This is up at Yosemite, is that right?
- MWB: In the Yosemite. He had a San Francisco paper of the day before with a front-page story and picture of Hubert Howe Bancroft talking about the last book he had written. It was just then published, These Latter Days. Hubert Howe said, "Don't spoil our breakfast. It's sure to have a lot of criticism and mistakes in it." [the paper] When he walked out of the dining room, several people rose to greet him, but he stalked on, oblivious to the stir. Our trip back was made very leisurely, going through the gold mining country, stopping off to see the old towns. We spent two nights in a group. All the children rushed out to greet us on our return, full of wonderful stories about picnics on Mt. Diablo with Nina over the weekends. Mr. Bancroft said to me, "See, you can always get someone to do your job." So often, he said those things to get a laugh from the children. They understood and loved him. Now, that was the end of that.
- Baum: That was the end of the Yosemite trip. Do you remember how many days you were gone on that trip?

- MWB: I would say at least ten days, because we stayed a whole week in Yosemite and took drives on these picnics where he talked so much about history, every day.
- Baum: So that was your Yosemite trip and California history lesson. Of course, he was pretty old then. Wasn't it hard for him to make a trip like that?
- MWB: No. I don't remember him ever saying, "I can't remember," as so many old people do. It was his legs that were bad. He had lack of circulation. Ella used to put his legs in hot water and then cold water, then rub them. She gave him a great deal of attention to try to keep his legs going. Often he did have to sit down. That embarrassed him and he was very impatient of it, because, if you remember, he used to ride horseback for many, many years. He thought nothing of getting on a horse in San Francisco and going to Walnut Creek--on the ferry, of course--but the actual riding was at least twenty-five miles. From the house, it may have been nearer thirty because they lived up on the hill. I don't think he took old age very calmly.
- Baum: He resented his physical infirmities?
- MWB: Yes. As I remember telling you, he had gone down on a streetcar and he went back on a streetcar when he was injured. Then they found, immediately, that he had passed out. They called the doctors and then he died the next day.
- Baum: So he was in the habit, even in those years, of going on the streetcar to his office?
- MWB: Yes.
- Baum: I think you mentioned that he was coming home for lunch, so he must have come home at the lunch hour.
- MWB: It just happened that we were staying there with him that time because Griff was having dental work done. He had a lot of teeth pulled out and he was under sedation.
- Baum: When you were at Yosemite, where did you stay?
- MWB: The old Sentinel Hotel. It was a lovely old hotel and a beautiful, beautiful time of year, you see. It was in middle October, I guess.
- Baum: Were many people up there at that time?

MWB: No, it was very quiet. All eating in one dining room. Most of the camps had been closed and there was very little activity. That was a very hard dirt road to get in and out of. If it rained, you were in trouble.

It was just after that when HHB came into the kitchen and found Griff weighing my sugar. Griff was weighing the sugar to put into the jam that I was making for the soldiers. He asked Griff why he wasn't working on his book, and he said, "Well, I thought I'd help Margaret here for a while." Actually, he was enjoying my company and I was enjoying his. About five or ten minutes later, a knock came at the door and this Japanese said, "I your cook." I said, "No, I think you're mistaken because we don't want a cook." "Oh, yes, Mr. Bancroft, he say he pay and I your cook. You have more time then." I told Griff, and Griff said, "Dad did say something about getting us a cook, but I told him you liked to cook and I liked your food better than most things people cooked." But the cook was established. He had lived down in the quarters where all the Japanese people did. He was there every day and did the cooking, cleaning, and did everything. That continued until after Mr. Bancroft died. Right after that, they were getting so short of manpower because of the war still being on, we released him. He went back to farming. He didn't like it half as well, I'm sure.

Baum: Was he a good cook?

MWB: He could take orders. It was a running battle all the time between him and Ella. We had a common basement and we would buy things. Mr. Bancroft would tell her that she must live on just exactly so much money. I think it was two dollars a day per person. So she would steal from us. We had separate bins that were placed in the basement. The cook couldn't find the things and would get very upset and come to me saying, "I not steal. I not steal. That woman, she steal." I'd say, "Just remember, you mustn't ever say anything to her. Let her do whatever she wants to do." We were living there absolutely free, not even paying for electricity. The least we could do was let Ella steal a few potatoes or carrots, or whatever she was stealing. [laughter] She was always dipping into our bins.

Oh dear, she was a funny character. Superstitious. Just as Irish as she could be. The family were a little bit worried that HHB would resent that I was a Catholic. I hadn't gotten a dispensation, so I was not as good a Catholic as I should have been. He'd start teasing her. Then she'd come to me and say, "Now, you tell me what to tell him because he says this or that and the other thing."

Baum: This would be on religion, is that right?

MWB: On religion, yes. At the very beginning, I didn't know that he knew I was a Catholic. The first time he did that to Ella, he said, "Mrs. Bancroft's a Catholic. You ask her." He'd known all along that I was a Catholic, but none of them knew that he knew. They said, "Let him get to know you first before." He had been a very religious person, but he lost it all. He thought I was going to be full of Catholic superstition, whatever you want to call it. He laughed and said, "Your face looked a little surprised. Didn't you know that I'd known that you're a Catholic?" I said, "I don't know what my husband told you. I have no idea." I was just partly saying the truth because they said just let it ride.

The Bancroft Fruit Ranch, Walnut Creek

MWB: From that time on, we had the Thanksgiving in our big living room, which was the biggest one. It was mainly because Lou Bancroft, the wife of Paul, and Nina, the wife of Philip, did not get along. So mine was neutral ground. We loved Aunt Josie Griffing, who was a maiden aunt; she was a sister of Matilda, HHB's wife. She was so enchanted that I would take the time to do the decoration and to do the food, because she had awfully good food but didn't know how to prepare anything. She was just one of those people who always had servants all her life.

Baum: Was that Josie, the aunt who lived in Santa Barbara?

MWB: Yes. Josephine Carter Griffing. We repeated it, then, for Christmas.

Baum: So you had the big Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners that last year of Hubert Howe Bancroft's life.

MWB: He sat at the end of the table--at one end--and Griff sat at the other end. Then all the children up and down. There was Nina and her three children, Griff and myself and the two boys, Mr. Bancroft, and Ella ate with us, and her niece, and Aunt Josie. Paul and Lou Bancroft and Paul, Jr. were also at the dinners. I guess that was about it.

Then the A.L. Bancrofts all came in--not when HHB was there, but when his back was turned--with nuts and things. It was the first time I'd ever done spiced nuts; they have been a great treat which I've done for years and years. They were walnuts, because you could walk any way and pick up as many walnuts as you could possibly want. They were all so cheap.

- MWB: And marvelous fruit always. In the wintertime, we had all this wonderful dried fruit. They had huge drying pens, and HHB used to love to go down and talk to the people. The men would be picking the fruit, and the women would be bringing in great boxes of fruit that was too ripe to ship, but perfectly good fruit. Wives, daughters, anyone who could handle a knife, would do the cutting. Then they sulphured them and sent them at that time to a tremendous market in Scandinavian lands and England. Of course, it was war time and fruit was a premium almost. They could work just two or three hours a day. The women would come after they had done their own cooking. Any woman who knew how to wield a good kitchen knife--some people could do a huge tray in just minutes. There were people who didn't. There was always a supervisor there to take out any blemishes.
- Baum: Did you call those drying bins or pens?
- MWB: Drying bins. Well, no. Trays. They were awkward. They were maybe three feet by six feet. Then they had to be put onto shelves where they were sulphured. They were dried with sulphur, then bagged. We used to call prunes the poor man's fruit because only poor people really ate prunes. When you think what the price is now. That was one of the big jobs that went on all the time they were picking pears, peaches, and apricots. They had more of a general farm and then they brought it down, finally, to nothing but walnuts.
- Baum: And pears.
- MWB: Pears. Because they were the two that shipped the best. The pears, you see, you pick green, anyway. You don't ever, ever let a pear ripen on a tree. So many people don't realize that.
- Baum: I know Phil Bancroft gave me a box of those premium Bancroft pears. Those were something special.
- MWB: Marvelous. Well, he won year after year at the state fair. They were wrapped and you were supposed to put them under the bed, in the dark, or wherever you wanted to put it, until they ripened. Of course, the walnuts were all washed. Then they were sacked into fifty-pound sacks. In those days, they didn't sell any, hardly, that were cracked. I think the cracking came in later, but not when we were there. They'd pick up some nuts that were cracked and take them home. They wouldn't save them.

HHB knew every single detail of that farm regarding the growing of the fruit and types of pears. Of course, it was Bartlett pears; we didn't have anything but Bartlett pears. And a big vineyard. We sold them as most of them were good eating grapes. They were not wine grapes. We never had wine grapes there. Then, marvelous

MWB: peaches and nectarines. Of course, they had persimmons and things like that, but that was just around the house. They didn't sell those. And beautiful figs. They were never sold. Everybody just ate those.

Baum: Was the market an eastern market or was it San Francisco?

MWB: Entirely East for the pears. Mostly Chicago and New York, but really New York. They didn't raise Bartlett pears; at least they didn't at that time. There was another pear. The Bartlett pears were very special. They used to pack them by the carload to the station, just a mile from the house, called Bancroft Station. That went through to Sacramento. Then that was put on the main line and sent to Chicago and New York.

Baum: I think you said that Phil was the one who managed the farm pretty much, until he went away to the war.

MWB: No, it was the other way. Mr. Bancroft did it, but Phil helped, and they each had a house there. But HHB was the one who was really the business head. As Mr. Bancroft let go, Phil took over. Paul did the financial end of it, the bookkeeping and all of that. I think most of the decisions were made by Phil. Griff lived here in San Diego from the time he got out of Harvard, which was in '99. He graduated at twenty.

Baum: So the business arrangements were: Griff handled the San Diego area, and Phil handled the farm and all of the problems except financial, is that right?

MWB: And Paul kept the books, in San Francisco at 731 Market Street.

Baum: They also still had the publishing business, didn't they? Or was that being reduced?

MWB: That was out of his hands, mostly. I think that was sold. HHB would always visit it when he was in town. He'd go in maybe once a week and stay overnight. He'd go in on the train sometimes, and ferry and streetcar. After we had moved there and Phil had gone to war, Griff used to drive him a good deal of the time. He'd take him in and often spend the night in San Francisco with him. Then he'd get tired. He was lonely. That was a huge house.

Baum: That was the big Huntington house.

MWB: Yes, and it was a lonely, lonely house.

Baum: When Mr. Bancroft went into San Francisco, did Ella go with him usually, too?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: So she traveled with him to handle his cooking wherever he went.

MWB: Well, the cooking, but more the nursing. He had to have his legs in and out of this hot water, and he needed help. Some days it was hard on him. Some days he walked. He walked if he possibly could, but so much of the time he'd just sit there in the chair. He and Griff would talk for hours. They would go back into history, but more than anything else--and you will see that in those letters--he was tutoring Griff on the subject of the written word. Now, Griff was a terrific reader, but he was a little bit too wordy for Mr. Bancroft. Now, he was pretty wordy himself. [laughter] But he could see it more in Griff's writing than he could see it in his own writing. Especially, Griff was writing this novel, The Interlopers.

Baum: So Mr. Bancroft thought that Griff was a little too flowery?

MWB: In his writing.

Baum: Would Mr. Bancroft go over the manuscript with him?

MWB: You'll see in those letters that he went over page by page. Maybe Mr. Bancroft would take it over to San Francisco. He was forever sending mail. If he wanted to tell you something, he'd just dash it off like that--write it as fast as he could and sign it HHB. No heading. "Dear Griff, I give you very small thanks for the very small job you did for me. HHB." [laughter] It was just typical of him, everything he wrote like that. That's why his children were just flooded with letters, good, bad, and indifferent, about anything he thought a person was doing wrong.

Baum: It was like talking back and forth with him all the time.

MWB: Entirely, but by letters. And from Walnut Creek. He never thought of using the phone. In fact, there was only one telephone there and that was in the office. We didn't have a telephone in our room. We had to go to the office. He didn't like the telephone, anyway. I don't remember ever speaking to him over a telephone. He would, on occasion, if something was terribly important. He thought with writing, there it was. You could say, "Well, I said so and so." "No, you didn't--so and so." But if a person has written it, there you are. It's down in black and white. That didn't keep him from saying very caustic things at different times.

Baum: Oh, yes, I saw some of those letters.

MWB: Really very, very critical.

The Family - Relatives and Relationships

- Baum: This year that you were in Walnut Creek--was it a whole year that you were there?
- MWB: Yes, we went there the first part of September, and we left there the last part of September the following year. We were there, I think it was, thirteen months.
- Baum: 1917/1918.
- MWB: 1918.
- Baum: It was right in the midst of the war.
- MWB: Yes. We got back to San Diego. I remember that we rented a very small house there, because the big house had burned down that the Bancrofts had. Griff had been living in Coronada; then after that, in the Cuyamaca Club. Part of the year, he had the children there and had a house, a rented house.
- Baum: So the reason you were staying in Walnut Creek was because of this contested divorce, wasn't that it? Griff didn't want to be in San Diego County.
- MWB: Yes. It was contested divorce, plus it was contested--
- Baum: It was kidnapping, wasn't it?
- MWB: Yes. Kidnapping. [laughter] It was who would have control of the children. Actually, the children settled it for themselves. By the time it got up to the Supreme Court, the children were old enough to make up their minds what they wanted to do. So the boys stayed with us, and the girl, Barbara, stayed with her mother, who was in Los Angeles for a while. Then she went back to New York, and from that time on, she lived entirely in New York.
- Baum: I see.
- MWB: She'd [Ethel Works Bancroft] come out once in a while to visit her father, who was Senator John Works, and her mother. I can't remember the years that they died.
- Baum: When you returned to San Diego the following September, was the divorce completed then or did it drag on?
- MWB: The decision, yes.

- Baum: I see. So that's what permitted you to come back.
- MWB: Yes.
- Baum: Of course, Hubert Howe Bancroft had died by then.
- MWB: Oh, yes. He was so sorry for Griff at the very thought of losing those boys. Anything he could do--money or advice or hiring lawyers--anything, he would do it. The thought that these two boys would be taken away from Griff united the family more than anything else had ever done. Griff wasn't under too good terms, at one time, with Paul and Lou and his father. But they just closed ranks like that at the idea of somebody taking those children away. And it was true with Nina. But Phil was always the peacemaker, always, of the family.
- Baum: Did Paul and Lou live in San Francisco?
- MWB: They lived right in San Francisco, always.
- Baum: Was that at the Dunston Apartments?
- MWB: They were at the Dunston at the time of the earthquake. Hubert Howe and Matilda were there in apartments. So were Phil and Nina. Nina's first child was born in 1907; that was the year after the earthquake. Anne was born in '07, Lucy in '09, and Philip in '11.
- Baum: You've got a marvelous memory. I thought Paul and Lou, at one time, lived in San Diego. Is that not true?
- MWB: She lived in San Diego. Lou Bancroft's family lived on 6th Street. She was a very, very pretty woman, but she was a little older than Paul. She was very active. Played tennis. Was a good bridge player. They owned a home--I'm not sure where that home was--right in San Francisco. Nina and Lou were just different--maybe I would say almost a different culture and different way of life. They just never did get along. There was always friction.
- Baum: Sounds like Lou was more social, and I know Nina worked in politics sometimes.
- MWB: No. Lou wasn't social. Nina had a recognized position and Lou never quite made it. But, there again, I hate to say that. Now Paul, Jr. is definitely recognized.
- Baum: Oh, yes, he's--
- MWB: Jet set [laughter], but he's with us.

Baum: He appears on the society page of the San Francisco Chronicle, I know.

MWB: Oh, everywhere. Lou was a strange character. She'd often say things that she thought were funny that weren't funny. She was a different character entirely from Nina. Of course, Nina had a very brilliant mind and a brilliant education; she came from very aristocratic Philadelphia people.

VIII HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT ASKS ABOUT THE MOVIES

The Life of a Movie Starlet##

- Baum: We were talking about life in Walnut Creek. You had told me about some of the things H.H. Bancroft did. I wondered what you and he might have talked about in the time when you could converse together.
- MWB: Shall I tell you about the October when we got back and it rained? The day that he talked about the movies?
- Baum: All right, do.
- MWB: The children--that would be Griffing, Jr., Howe, Lucy, and Philip, Jr.--came home from school very disgruntled because it was raining. Griff had gone up to get them and they had nothing to do. They had to stay inside. [interruption due to some domestic noises--a buzzer]
- Baum: You were telling me about this rainy October afternoon when the children had nothing to do. [laughter]
- MWB: Nothing to do. They came trooping into this big living room. Mr. Bancroft was sitting there, talking to Griff about the book he was writing--very seriously. But Griff was tired and I think Mr. Bancroft was. Anne said, "Aunt Margaret, would you tell us about being in the movies?" I was the first and only person they had heard of being in the movies. I said, "Yes, I will. Will you excuse me, Mr. Bancroft?" (I always called him Mr. Bancroft.) He said, "Yes, but I'd just like to sit here beside the fire. Maybe I'll go to sleep and maybe I'll listen to you." So I went on, utterly ignoring him. They wanted to know about Charlie Chaplin and all sorts of beautiful people that they had seen in the movies. Now, mind you, this was 1917.

Baum: And the children had seen some movies.

MWB: Oh, a lot of movies. So I talked along these lines about the movies. I'll tell you about that some other time. All of a sudden, it stopped raining and the sun came out. I said, "The lecture is over on movies. You all go out to play."

Mr. Bancroft waited until they went out. Then he said, "Would you mind telling me about the movies?" I said, "What do you want to know, Mr. Bancroft, about the movies?" "I want to know," he said, "what kind of people they were. What were the directors like? Did you know D.W. Griffith? Did you know Cecil De Mille? Did you know Charlie Chaplin? You've told these stories, but I want to really know."

So I explained to him why I went into the movies and how I came to know the top people. It was through the Cecil De Milles, originally, and also through Lillian Gish, who was a very good friend of mine--my family's friend.

He asked me about their morals. Was it tough? I said it was as tough as you allowed it to be.

He said, "Well, where did you live?" I told him I lived with my oldest brother and his wife, who had no children, and that she made my clothes and I managed to have beautiful clothes. Through these friends, I managed to get around socially, as well as in the movies, but I held my own. You would have called me, then, a starlet. I went in in '13, September. In '14, I broke my ankle.

By the way, what I was to do in these movies--we were doing westerns, and I knew how to drive a four-horse stagecoach and how to do stunts on horseback, all those things of the Wild West. They had a very good actress, Enid Markey was her name, very pretty, very attractive girl. But she knew nothing about the West. She came from somewhere, the East, I think. I was the one who did that part of the movies. She was always the little girl that rode inside the stagecoach.

About that time, I broke my ankle. A little boy hit my horse and the horse slipped on the pavement. I threw myself free of him but broke my ankle bone, and I was out for at least six months. I went back to San Diego and then up into the mountains where we lived. We had closed this little inn because my mother and sister were visiting that winter in Kentucky. We let some people stay there as caretakers. I went back up there and opened it up. The family came back, and then my oldest sister came home from what she was doing, and with TB, advanced stage, died there. That was in '14.

Baum: Which sister was that?

MWB: Elizabeth. She's the one who had studied dramatic art in New York. She had great talent, which I didn't have. I had looks and a certain ability to learn and all of that, but I didn't have the talent or the voice that she did. She was to go on the stage, not in the movies.

I had the bug, though. This time, I really wanted to go into the movies, so I went to Los Angeles and lived with my brother and sister-in-law and went to the Egan Dramatic School in Los Angeles, which was at that time the best there was. But it was more for the stage. They looked down their noses at movies, but they were also delighted when one of their pupils went in. I was there, I guess, maybe two months. Through a friend--again--I got a job. That friend was Frances Marion, who was a great writer afterwards, for the movies. She tried acting and she couldn't, but she got this job for me with the Bosworth Studio, which was doing stories of Jack London's. Then we went into different stories. One of the things we did was Captain Courtesy, a story of the West. It was done by Douglas Fairbanks. I was the duenna for the lead--

Baum: What's that word?

MWB: D-u-e-n-n-a. It's like a companion, not a nurse, a companion for a young woman. There was a funny thing connected with that, too. [laughter] It was a written story first. After we did the story, and Douglas Fairbanks was rushing to get back to New York, they discovered a great deal of the background was of eucalyptus. The eucalyptus were not brought from Australia to California till 1849 and this story was in 1847. They had to redo the entire outdoor part of the story. We worked day and night, which was marvelous. It was a small cast we had. They paid so much, except for the stars. When we worked, if we didn't have a part, we were paid a certain amount. If you had any kind of a part, they trebled, or more than that, your salary. It was a living wage, you see. Like the old-fashioned--I'm trying to think of the word--where there was a group of people, a company--

Baum: A repertory company?

MWB: Yes, though that isn't quite the word I was trying to think of.

Then this friend who had taught me and was very interested in my career, a very, very much older man by the name of Alfred Allen, thought I should be shifted to another studio. I had a chance to go and play a part at the D.W. Griffith studio. So I went over and played. They had a famous English actor who was playing this part.



Margaret Wood in *Remorse of an Outlaw*, 1913

Broadway Theatre

WED., THURS., FRI., SAT.

DUSTIN FARNUM

— IN —

“Captain Courtesy”

A Bosworth Production of Great Strength.

The many friends of Margaret Wood, a former San Diego girl, will be glad to see her in this picture.

ALSO, PATHE SEMI-WEEKLY

Movie advertisement, about 1914

(at right)
The San Diego Sun
 Saturday May 15, 1915

THE SAN DIEGO SUN

CLUBS

*Former Social Favorite Here
 Winning Fame in the Movies*

MISS MARGARET WOOD.

Miss Margaret Wood, the pretty and attractive daughter of Mrs. Cora C. Wood, of Witch Creek, who was formerly a social favorite here, is one of the few San Diego girls who are ascending the ladder of fame in the movie world.

While in San Diego, Miss Wood attended the convent, "Our Lady of Peace," and here she attended the "Immaculate Heart" convent in Hollywood. Her entrance into the movies was purely accidental and it came about with the Amuse Company, at National City. The leading woman for the Amuse at the time Miss Wood became identified with the company was unable to handle horses, and Miss Wood, who had a reputation for being a fearless rider, was asked if she would not undertake the lead for one play in which she would have to drive a stage with six horses.

Undaunted, she accepted. Her success was immediate, but not satisfied with her preparation for stage life, the San Diego girl went to Los Angeles, where for a short time she attended a dramatic school.

From here she joined the Paramount Co. and played with Dustin Farnum in several pictures and also with Bide Jaels and Machyna Arbuckle.

Miss Wood has been in the movie world less than a year, and many predict a brilliant future for her.

MWB: There again, I played a second lead, not a lead. We were on that for a long time. It wasn't particularly successful. It was when the English first were trying to break into movies. It was a technique that a lot of the old actors didn't manage very well. But this older man did. After about six months there, I went to the Charlie Chaplin studio. It was not Charlie Chaplin; it was--

Baum: Mack Sennett?

Mack Sennett Studio; Charlie and Sidney Chaplin

MWB: Mack Sennett, yes. I worked most of the time with a director. They were all under Mack Sennett. He had maybe four stories going at one time and he was a sort of super director for these stories. I was with Charlie Chaplin's brother, Sidney Chaplin, who was a good director and a poor actor. Charlie Chaplin wasn't working at the time. He used to come over, day after day, and fool around with us. He was a clown if you ever met one. He truly was a clown.

I'll never forget this one director we had who would get awfully excited and would run his hands through his hair, kind of pull his tie, and just get terribly excited. In this story, the man was an Asian potentate of some Asian country. We went down when he came in and bowed right down to the floor. Charlie Chaplin was standing directly behind this director. Just with a twist of his hands, he threw his hair up like this [gestures] and twisted his hat and went through the same directions the director did, and we came up roaring with laughter. The director went into a blind rage. He said, "How many times do I have to tell you women that you're to look up with adoration?! They don't want grins from you and laughter." Of course, the noise made no difference. He looked around and saw our eyes focused, and there was Charlie Chaplin, hair pushed back, talking with someone as though he hadn't heard the whole commotion at all. And that was Charlie Chaplin. [laughter]

Then it snowed. We went up Mt. Baldy to do a picture. I think it was the first picture they ever did on skis. There was another girl, very, very blonde, and I was dark-haired. We were the only two girls. Sidney always had his wife with him.

Charlie came up there. We couldn't go out one whole afternoon and evening. He and Sidney sat and told us about their training in London, in England. They were working out--never very much in London, but out--and they had to put on a skit that lasted just four minutes, when our skits lasted at least ten minutes for vaudeville. How terribly fast they had to do it. Every movement counted to put across the thing in four minutes.

MWB: He told about one time, being in a small English town. They were staying in kind of a boarding house, the whole group. They told him at the table that there was a ghost that had been there, year after year, always within a week. It would walk across--and you could see where it had walked across--the ceiling. So Charlie Chaplin, who wasn't a very generous man, gave tickets to every person who worked there. Then they were to go back there to supper. His act was the first. Then he didn't have to go on again until the last. So the minute he got through the first act, he and his brother slipped back to this place. He blackened his feet. The brother, with a table and a couple of chairs, put him up, and he walked across, diagonally, from one window to another window, and went out the window, and then went back to the theater. They cleaned themselves up, then did his last act. Then they came back with the group to dinner. All of a sudden, someone looked up and saw on the ceiling the footprints, and it threw them into such commotion. He said everybody rushed out, just terrified. They didn't even eat their supper. So they had a lot to eat that night. [laughter] Never told it--never told it. Oh, he was fun! He was a fun person.

Baum: Charlie Chaplin, then. Was Sidney fun?

MWB: Yes, Sidney was. They were gross; they were common. And she [Sidney's wife] was impossible, one of the commonest people I think I ever knew in my life. Sidney had a lot of brains; he just didn't have the finesse that Charlie had, that almost light touch of putting a thing across. He was heavier, a little bit the clumsy type. Charlie Chaplin was almost dainty in the things he did.

Baum: Oh, yes. He was a ballet dancer almost, in the way he moved.

MWB: We were down at Christopher's once with our full makeup in Los Angeles. It was a big ice cream parlor and I think they had sandwiches or something. We were working on the street right beside it. In those days, people let you do anything. They thought it was good advertising.

We were sitting there talking about characteristics. I said, "Well, the funniest thing. My brother-in-law just came from the East and he sat on a train, side by side, with a man at dinner. This man started by cutting his meat, buttering the bread, getting everything ready. Had on stiff cuffs. Then he'd just eat boom-boom, boom-boom-boom, like this. Then he'd slip the knife and forks down the stiff cuffs. He'd grab his corn and just go up and down, up and down, with the corn. Then put it down. At the same time, he'd grab some bread. He'd be through in about ten minutes. A dinner that would have taken somebody else about half an hour."

- MWB: All of a sudden, I felt something--a bang like that [gestures] on my leg. He'd never been familiar in any way. He, just out of the corner of his mouth, said, "Change it." I quit right in the middle of the story.
- Baum: Wait a minute. Who said--
- MWB: Charlie Chaplin to me. Just hit me.
- Baum: Charlie Chaplin was sitting next to you--
- MWB: He was sitting next to me in a tight little booth, you see. I was telling the story, and I could tell by the way he hit me that he wanted me to shut up.
- Baum: It was important, yes.
- MWB: He picked up immediately with another story. The second we got out, he said, "My God, don't do a thing like that, ever again! Don't you know we could use that story? You don't tell that outside of a cast!"
- Baum: It sounds like a script for one of his little shows.
- MWB: Within a very few weeks, he had that in one of his stories.
- Baum: Is that right?
- MWB: I think I've got the name of that story, but I'm not sure.
- Baum: So that's how he got his ideas. He just picked them up out of the air.
- MWB: He saw something like that and he did it perfectly. [interrupted by ringing telephone]
- Shall I go back now to Mr. Bancroft?
- Baum: Those are the kind of stories you told Mr. Bancroft.
- MWB: He was very anxious and I told him what type of people they were. Some of them, like the De Milles, had great culture. Back and forward, I talked about the different people. No one could have been a sweeter person, say, than--
- Baum: Griffith?
- MWB: Not Griffith, but he was a tough, hard-boiled person. But the girl--

Baum: Lillian Gish.

MWB: Lillian Gish. Very sweet.

Baum: She was America's sweetheart, wasn't she?

MWB: No, but she was dainty, a nice and a cultured person. Mr. Bancroft, I think, was finding out how much I had been tarnished by the movies. He knew my mother and father, knew where I came from. But I think that, back of it all, he was terribly interested in how much of this had brushed off on me. He asked me several times about where I lived and what I did. My brother was living right in Los Angeles and I would go out to Hollywood on a red streetcar to the Griffith studio, to all the different studios, in doing this work, and would come home at night. In those days, most of the pictures were taken out-of-doors or, at best, under canvas. They'd go to a real location. There was a great deal of it done on location. We'd go up to Camp Baldy, for almost two weeks. Joy Lewis was the name of the girl. She was like I was; she dropped out and married.

Baum: Was she the very blonde girl you were talking about?

MWB: Yes. She was as pretty as a picture. All we were was just background. But this time, when we were up at Camp Baldy, one of the professional skiers said he'd like to teach me how to ski. Of course, I had a lot of coordination; I had done so many athletic things. Avery said no, no way could he do it because he wanted us to fall as though we were not skiers. The whole point of the story was that we weren't skiers. We'd get up and the skis would go this way and that way and every direction. That was the comedy of it, you see.

Baum: Who was Avery?

MWB: He was the director.

Baum: Was that his last name?

MWB: Avery. Yes. I think I have those written down. We'd go there in company cars. Once we went over to Catalina. We only worked when the ferry was in. At that time, everyone went over there by ferry. We had to fall off a ship. Now, we had to be swimmers. We would just be pushed off, shoved off, anything else, and dropped right down into the water. We had professional people there, too.

Baum: For the scene.

MWB: For the scene, yes. We'd just be throwing our hands out wildly, you see.

Baum: I've seen some of those old movies where you just go this way and that.

MWB: Absolutely. Of course, I didn't because I knew a great deal about swimming. It was all right. It would be just three hours that we'd work, and then the ship would go back, and we'd have the rest of the time. Some of it could be pretty rough. It was a question of taking care of yourself.

Courtney Foote, who was an English actor, one day said to one of the directors, "Leave Margaret alone. Stop badgering her. She happens to be the only lady at this studio, and you leave her a lady." A little later, Courtney asked about what part he was going to have next, and I said, "What about me?" He said, "You don't get a part." I didn't. That ended that. It was lots of times.

Baum: Was that because you were still a lady?

MWB: Yes. I just wouldn't put up with any shenanigans. I wouldn't put up with being hugged and kissed and shenanigans. There were plenty of other girls who didn't. But I always had a home. I always had food. I can understand. And, of course, a lot of the girls would think, "Well, if I sleep with him, why, he'll give me a part." Sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't. But I was completely independent.

Baum: Were there a lot of girls on their own with no family?

MWB: Yes. They'd come out west and just do anything to make themselves be seen and heard, and make up to these men. I was terribly interested in reading about dramatics, and I always had a book. They used to kid me. They'd say, "What in the world are you studying now?" I might just be reading a novel, but I was a great reader. Mostly reading about past artists, past great actors and actresses, because I really aspired to it.

A Storm Ends Margaret's Movie Career

MWB: We had a big storm. The whole railway from San Diego to Los Angeles, the Santa Fe, was washed out. Just then, the second sister of mine, Susie May, was ill. They closed the studios. I think they must have been closed for nearly two months, and just let all of us go. They couldn't work because the whole studio was practically washed away. I think it was the first of February, in 1916. One of my beaux, who had nothing to do with the movies,

MWB: took me down to San Pedro, I guess it was. As I stepped over the ship to the side and was waving to him, this man came up and said, "I want to know how your sister, Susie May, is." And I said, "Well, she isn't well." I looked at this man and I couldn't quite think who he was. Then it came to me. He was Griffing Bancroft. I'd met him in the mountains and known him way back as my sister's friend. He was in the same age group, social group, that she was.

He began figuring around. He knew we were five sisters and he finally worked it down. All of a sudden, I said, "Do you want to know which one I am? I'm Margaret." [laughter] I asked him about his wife and his children. He said that they were getting a divorce. It blacked out--fog--that night. There were quite a few other people we knew. We got together with them and we danced away the night and weren't able to come in until early in the morning. He was very smitten. My brother-in-law met me at the dock. Griff said he'd drive up as far as the Cuyamaca Club with him. The minute he got out of the car, my brother-in-law said, "Margaret, do you know that man--"

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MWB: My brother-in-law said, "You've got a good reputation in this city and you're going to keep it."

About that time, we got home and he told my sister, Susie May, that Griff had taken him up to the Cuyamaca Club and said he wanted to come out and see Margaret. I said, "Oh, don't make a fuss. Anybody might be pleasant like that." Well, the next afternoon, a car came up the driveway. It was a big house they had, out towards east San Diego. It was Griff. He came to see Susie May. Susie May was a very charming hostess.

He told us very frankly that he was getting a divorce. He had not filed because his father-in-law was going to run for the United States Senate again. A divorce was a scandal, you see. That was Senator Works, going for his second term. He wasn't going to file, but, definitely, they had been separated. She had been east for months, which Susie May knew about. Griff said he thought it would do Susie May good to take a ride. He had a big car. Homer was not there, her husband. She said very good-naturedly she thought it would be lovely. Then he kept coming and coming and coming.

There was my romance. I gave up movies and everything else. But, every time I got mad at him, which I often did, and we fought, I would say, "Well, I'm going back to the movies." I had a very definite understanding that any time I wanted to go back, I could go back in the same position. It was a cast, really, a group of people that if you weren't given a speaking part, then you worked

MWB: like an extra would work. Anything they asked you to do. They particularly liked me because I could wear an evening dress just as well as I could wear cowboy clothes, anything else.

Baum: I've seen your picture. I expect they did like you.

MWB: I was very adaptable. A lot of the people were not. They would be cast only in one type of story. They just didn't belong in a cast. Of course, that's true on stage. They used to have these companies; we used to have it right here in San Diego, and they played all sorts of plays. When you had a speaking part, you got one salary, and when you didn't, you still got enough to live on. But this time, when they closed down the studio, except for the top people, they just had to take a vacation, all of them.

Baum: Because of the storm?

MWB: Oh, yes. It was one of the heaviest rainfalls that we ever had. At that time, you could look right across Mission Valley and it was from wall to wall, from side to side, just a great mass of water going down. It may happen again. They say it never will because they've done so much engineering on it, and control the water and all that. So, there's my story, my love story.

The Cecil De Milles

Baum: So that was your movie career. You mentioned knowing the De Milles. I wondered how you had met them.

MWB: There were always friends of friends. We never advertised at Witch Creek. They were friends of friends. A woman came up there to stay two weeks, and she stayed two years, on and off. She was a first cousin of Constance De Mille. Her name was Dixie Drummond.

Now, Constance De Mille was quite a beautiful woman, but she never got very far in pictures. I think she was on the stage a little. A very handsome woman and very much of a thoroughbred. She married De Mille and started to divorce him. It was his first affair, I guess it was. She came west to be with a cousin and came to Witch Creek. She became so interested in my sister and her dramatic career.

Baum: This was Elizabeth.

MWB: Yes, it was Elizabeth. Cora had a lot of dramatic ability, too. I was a wild little Indian at this time and didn't even think about it. Constance De Mille took this sister and took a house somewhere out of Los Angeles. I can't quite remember where it was. Then she finally went back to him, from that time on. He had his love affairs. She said one time--I remember it so distinctly--at a luncheon in her house, it came up. People, of course, didn't know her background at all, how a person would take it with a regular mistress. She said, "I don't know why people fuss about that. If a man has chosen, as my husband has, for me to be mistress of his home, bear his children, I'm not going to worry what he does away from home." And she never did from that time on. When she was with us, she always said that my mother was the one who talked her into going back to Cecil De Mille.

D.W. Griffith; Dorothy and Lillian Gish; Mae Marsh

MWB: So when I got up there to Los Angeles and became interested, they were awfully nice about giving letters of introduction. Alfred Allen was a very much older person who thought I had dramatic ability. He gave me a tiny card to William Griffith. That was an experience. When I went to see him, he was sitting at the very end of a long office, with his desk facing the door. I came in that door; I think it must have been a mile. Actually, I suppose it was fifty feet. But at that time, with this man staring at you, not saying a word--

Baum: That was Griffith staring--

MWB: D.W. Griffith. By the time you got up to him, and he just motioned for you to sit down in that chair, he had judged whether you had poise and grace. I'd been given a little tip-off by Alfred Allen. He said, "Don't let him throw you." He explained to me more or less what he did, because he'd seen him do it. He talked to me for about half an hour and said to come over to the studio and take my potluck in the thing. Then he handed me his little card and I have it to this day. He said, "Maybe you'd like to take this card. Maybe it will be a memento in after years."

Baum: The card that--

MWB: Alfred Allen--

Baum: Alfred Allen had given you that got you in the door.

MWB: That got me in the door. The main thing is to get you in the door, you know, in life, because you can't do anything beyond opening a door to a person. It's getting that door open. And he was guarded on all sides. It was like going to meet a king. He was a king in his own right. I wasn't his type. I never worked for him directly. Yes, I did. I worked in one huge--that name doesn't come back to me. It was not a great success. It was four periods. It started with Babylon, the period of Christ--

Baum: Was that Intolerance?

MWB: Intolerance. You've got it, my friend, you've got it. The third was the Renaissance and the fourth was completely modern. It was that darling little girl who was thrown over the cliff or jumped over the cliff with a black man after her in the greatest play that he ever did.

Baum: That one I don't know.

MWB: Yes, you do know it, because everybody your age saw it. I'll think of it. He made the greatest mistake in this. At that time, people were not willing to have Christ portrayed on the screen. They veiled it finally. There was very, very little of that whole story. I worked in it for months. I was a princess being carried on a palanquin by four huge, black Africans. Christ was ahead, carrying the cross, and they knocked him off to the side to let me go by. While we were rehearsing it, one of these black men had a terrible epileptic fit. I rolled off the palanquin right down into the dust and dirt at the side of the road. I had draperies and jewelry just absolutely covered with it and was lying there in great luxury. I got so wound up in these draperies at the bottom of the little ditch that I couldn't move a muscle. They had to come and unwrap me and then take me back to the studio to get me all done up again.

Baum: You were all dirty by then.

MWB: Not only dirty, but everything was torn. You couldn't imagine what confusion there was. Seeing that man, the rest of them just went wild. They didn't know what had happened. They dropped it. When he fell, I just went off one corner of it. It took hours. There were always things like that happening in the movies.

Baum: That sounds like an interesting enough scene that they'd write it into the show. But they didn't, did they?

MWB: No, because it was too serious a thing. Now they would, but in those days they wouldn't. But they cut almost everything out. I don't think there's even that scene.

- Baum: They decided not to show anything about Christ.
- MWB: There's just a little shadow of it. There was a very strong religious feeling that ran through the feeling at that time. They weren't ready for it.
- Baum: Did you have any direct dealings with D.W. Griffith, or was he too much above?
- MWB: No. I watched him direct. You had pretty much the run of the studio, walking around and all.
- Lillian Gish was a charming, sweet, gentle person. She wasn't a bit well. She was really almost an invalid. The minute she would finish anything, they always had a couch and would put her on this couch. Very often, she would ask someone to go over and get me. I'd go and sit with her and talk; sometimes have a lunch that would be brought. She was interested because of this friend who, at one time, was a dramatic teacher. It was an old friend of Lillian Gish's and of Mrs. Gish and--what was the other daughter's name?
- Baum: Dorothy.
- MWB: Dorothy. She was not the apple of his eye, at that time. I don't think he was directing the picture, but she was working in it. Mae Marsh was the little girl. Then she came next. He always had one. They were almost all rather frail, just exotic. They were not the showy type that afterwards became so popular. Different types at that time.
- Baum: The siren type became popular.
- MWB: That's it. That was the next type that came in. Lillian's sister was cuter, kind of a babbling type of person. I remember Lillian Gish did that one down on the wharves of London. Wistful--she was a wistful person.
- Baum: And that was her quality off camera as well as on.
- MWB: Yes. Oh, yes.
- Baum: You say she really was that frail.
- MWB: She was at that time. I think she always was, more or less. Mrs. Gish stayed right with those girls. Dorothy was the strong one.
- Baum: Did Lillian Gish have TB? Do you know?

MWB: No, I don't think so. She's still alive. No, she's a stronger person today than she was then. I don't know what it was. I did play in one part with her. It was a story of New Orleans where they shipped a whole group of girls from France to New Orleans.

Baum: The bride ships.

MWB: Yes. I was one. Lillian Gish was one. The story is, of course, of how she survived. I think I've got that picture. I'm half drunk up against a wall in a saloon in New Orleans. [laughter] But you see, I had such interest in them; I was interested, but I wasn't always posing to make an impression because I was too busy studying. She gave me a lot of good advice. One of them was not to burn myself out--to go slowly. Don't think that you had to reach stardom in just a short time. Mary Pickford was the ideal one, the first one. Then Lillian and Dorothy came afterwards. Then Mae Marsh, Miriam Cooper. There were many who came at that period that he liked particularly.

Baum: Were they girl friends of D.W. Griffith as well as stars?

MWB: It was always said so. I don't know. I often wondered about Lillian, whether she ever--no one knows. But he had favorites, just favorites. He went from one to another. I don't think he was ever married. Years later, when I was married and going strong, we were down at Agua Caliente at the big hotel and gambling place. I went into the five-dollar room, I guess it was, with somebody, and there was D.W. Griffith. Now, to me, when I saw him, he was seven feet high--in my mind--this powerful man.

Baum: When you were a starlet.

MWB: Yes. When he walked, it was as though God had walked in, to any studio. Everyone was electrified by him. This was after he had stopped making movies, after he had stopped being the most important director in the world.

And here was this rather insignificant person, not one soul beside him, and I came up from behind. I said, "How do you do, Mr. Griffith?" He looked up and said, "I remember you! You worked for us, didn't you? Didn't I direct you in something?" I said, "My name was a very common name, Margaret Wood." He said, "Yes, I remember." We had a pleasant talk for a few minutes. I'll never forget! I really thought he was the tallest, most important man in the world because the whole studio revolved around him. There were plenty, a half dozen or so, other directors, but they didn't mean a thing to us. You went out and did your job with them, whether it was Griffith or whoever.

MWB: I remember him talking with Mae Marsh one time. She was just like a little kitten--very small--and smart. He never worked without his head photographer. The man who did the photography was Bitzer, I think it was. He was a terrifically important person. Then there was the woman who cut for him. They had to cut the story every night and put it together again. We were always allowed to go in. You could stay as long as you wanted to and see these things done. It was comparatively small, the whole deal. Well, it still is in some ways at some of the studios. He would always sit, this man on one side; and on the other side, his cutter, a very plain woman. You'd have thought she was probably going to sell dresses to you. But they were very nearly the right and the left hands of that man. I was interested in studying the photography of it--the angles and all of that.

One of the photographers who was with Sid Chaplin was a very good man who gave me a great deal of information. I remember one time watching Mae Marsh do a scene. It was not this man, Bitzer, who was doing it. This was past the time that she was with Griffith. She kept saying, "You've got to bring that camera nearer." "You've got to do this, that, and the other. I'm so small. My face is small." She kept telling this man--he was a comparatively new photographer--what was necessary to give her the right angles. Of course, that's true. They can make or break you, a photographer can. A lot of the girls just didn't know it.

Baum: They left it to the photographer, I suppose.

MWB: Well, the photographer, in many instances, knew more than the director. The director would know the whole story, especially if he was photographing on someone like that and centering it. D.W. Griffith was the first person who used the close-up. I think that was the greatest thing he ever did--the southern story. That was our model. If we ever had any time off, we were supposed to go in and watch that. I saw it maybe a dozen times.

Baum: The one with the Ku Klux Klan in it.

MWB: Yes. It was called Klansman. Then they changed it to Birth of the Nation. As Klansman, it couldn't go in the South, so they had to change it to Birth of the Nation. We could get into the theater with a special ticket or something, as a student.

Baum: You mean that was your extra assignment when you were in dramatic school?

MWB: Dramatic school and also when we were working.

Baum: Oh, working at the studios. You still went and studied that movie.

MWB: Yes. It was the most modern, the photography was. It was the very first time that they used the close-up.

Baum: Were there any women who were interested in being photographers?

MWB: I don't ever remember a woman at all. Nearly always, the photographer had an assistant. I don't remember any women in that and I don't ever remember an assistant to the director, who was sort of a man Friday. But the girls who were smart, like the Gish girls and Mae Marsh, knew the angles. They knew that one side of her face was better than the other. The tip of the chin. The whole thing. It's a vast study, no question about it. The vogue just kept coming on in waves almost, and the vogue of the type of play.

Now, the westerns went out completely and we went into social. Great pictures of big society and all of that. They then went back. Now they're back into westerns just as a regular thing. That's, of course, more television. To this day, if I feel tired or restless and my brain is addled, I turn back to one of these old westerns. I love the sound of the horses and the cattle. That just quiets me down. Think we're through for a little while?

Baum: All right. Before we stop, I wonder if you could say something about Cecil De Mille. Did you ever see him around the De Mille house?

MWB: Yes, I did. I saw more of her. I was there a couple of times for lunch with her. I had the greatest admiration in the world for her. You see, in the period of time that we knew her best, we knew the worst about him. Naturally, we were sympathetic to her. From that time on, when she went back, I don't think there was a single time that she didn't carry through magnificently. My sister-in-law helped her in two or three causes they were interested in because of Dixie Drummond, and kept up the contact. She kept up the contact, really more than I did, because there was such a difference in age. I knew them only by second hand--I wouldn't really say there was any first hand. They used to have big Sunday night suppers. You'd talk to them a minute. "How are you doing?" and that was it. I never worked in his studio.

Baum: You said that Mr. Bancroft was exceedingly interested in your movie career. What was going on in the movies?

MWB: I think his angle was that he had heard so many stories. He was an avid newspaper reader, or magazine, or anything. He ate books. He averaged a book a day besides what he did in his writing and everything. At least when we were living there, he would get a big box

MWB: of books from New York and open it up. You could take any book you wanted. There would be anything almost. He had connections in New York. His agent there sent him these books. He knew pretty much what he'd read. He was the most avaricious reader I ever knew in my life.

I never saw him except in his own environment, except the time I was with him in Yosemite. We set that environment as near as we could to make him comfortable. He was devoted to Nina. She understood him. And he showed a devotion to me. I never heard him say anything unkind about Nina. He had great respect for her education, her point of view, and the way she was handling her children. He was terribly anxious to have a real mother for Griff's two boys. I think that's why he was boring into my life. He had spent a week--two weeks, I think he said in that letter. Do you remember? I read you that letter.

Baum: Yes. At Witch Creek.

MWB: At Witch Creek. It was very vivid in his mind.

Baum: I wondered if his interest in the movies represented a kind of continuing interest in everything that was new in the history of the West.

MWB: Yes, it did.

IX THE WOOD FAMILY OF KENTUCKY AND WITCH CREEK, CALIFORNIA

[Interview 4: July 3, 1977]##

The Wood Family in Glasgow, Kentucky.

Baum: I wonder if we could get a sketchy story of your family and background, starting with your father and mother--who they were and where they came from.

MWB: My family came from Kentucky, a town called Glasgow, almost on the Tennessee border. It was tobacco and some hillbilly country. My grandparents and my parents were all born in Glasgow, Kentucky. I was the baby of eight children, born in Glasgow, Kentucky. My father's people were pure Scotch. My mother's people were Irish, English, and a little French.

Baum: What was your father's name?

MWB: My father's name was Clarence Wood. My mother's name was Cora Bybee.

Baum: In your father's family, do you know what his father's name and mother's and maiden name were?

MWB: I'd have to look it up in the Bible. [laughter] It's all in the Bible. But I can look it up, if you'd like. The same with my mother.

Baum: What was your father's education there in Glasgow?

MWB: My father's education was going to school there and then to some southern Presbyterian college. I would say it was, at the most, the very end of our high school of today. My mother's education

- MWB: was first in Glasgow. Then her family moved to Vicksburg, Mississippi to get away from the war. By that time, the war was coming in. We were very southern. My grandparents had a horse farm in Vicksburg.
- Baum: Your maternal grandparents.
- MWB: Yes, maternal. Because there were six young children--two boys and four girls--they moved, by wagon, to Vicksburg, carrying a great deal of their equipment and horses, buggies, and wagons. They spent every night at plantations, which was a custom of that country. They got to Vicksburg and settled down on a farm. It wasn't any time until they were in the siege of Vicksburg. One of the first things that happened when the northern soldiers came in was to steal--take possession, or whatever you want to call it, you northerners--[laughter] the cattle and the horses. Among them was a beautiful pony that belonged to the children. That pony was given to Ulysses Grant and is pictured now in the White House with one of Grant's daughters on it. We felt very bitterly about that.
- Baum: So you became a Yankee despite yourself? One segment of the family--the horse--[laughter]
- MWB: The horse. We didn't give it; it was stolen. There was really great bitterness. After the war was over, my maternal grandparents moved to Cairo, Illinois with the six children, to get away from the carpetbaggers, and from the terrible unrest and trouble there was over the declaration when they freed the slaves.
- Baum: The Emancipation Proclamation.
- MWB: My mother went to a Catholic school in St. Louis and wanted to become a Catholic. Her family wouldn't let her become [a Catholic] until she was twenty-one. She went back to Cairo and taught when she was sixteen and a half years old because her father had taught her a great deal. There was no one to teach the school and my mother taught. She had children, some of them as old as she was. One of the stories she always told was about these two boys saying, "Wish the teacher'd come, wish the teacher'd come." She said, "am the teacher." This went on until she had to ask two other boys to hold them while she spanked them. [laughter] After that, she had control of the situation. But they didn't make a go of it. They went back to Glasgow, where their heart was.
- Baum: The whole family.
- MWB: The whole family went back to Glasgow and stayed there. My mother and father were married.

- MWB: My mother taught school before she was married. She got, between education here and there, to where she was teaching in what they called a college, but, really, it wasn't. It was almost like a senior high school. She didn't marry until she was twenty-four; that made her an old maid. She was the oldest of her sisters. She married my father, who was five years older. He was well beyond the period of time that most people in the South married. They used to marry very much younger. There we lived. They were married in 1876 and I was born in 1893. A year after I was born, my oldest brother died of tuberculosis.
- Baum: Before we get to the children, I wonder if we could go back and get your father here on his schooling. Had he left Glasgow or stayed there always?
- MWB: He had stayed there. There was one period that they did move to Kansas City. He was in what you'd call the heavy hardware--buggies, wagons, heavy machinery and hardware combined.
- Baum: Was this a family business, or was it his own? That is, had his father been involved in it?
- MWB: I just don't know that. But I do know he was in it and tried to make a go of it in Kansas City. They were so lonely, I think, for Kentucky, and they got into a great cyclone, and that finished them. They didn't have cyclones in Glasgow. After my brother died, my mother refused to go back to the home we had.
- Baum: Now, let's see, they were married in 1876. Then all these other children arrived before you. You were the baby.
- MWB: I was the baby. We were about two years apart, right down the line.
- Baum: Could you name the children in order of birth?
- MWB: Oh, yes. There was Ashton, Joseph, Elizabeth, Susie May, Mickle, Cora, Johnson, and myself, Margaret.
- Baum: So between 1878 about and 1893--
- MWB: 1877 my brother was born.
- Baum: You said the year you were born your brother died?
- MWB: A year after. He died in 1894. Mother had been corresponding with a doctor who had moved to San Diego, a doctor by the name of Winn. He advised her very strongly to move us to California because San

MWB: Diego was perfect. He was afraid the rest of us would die of tuberculosis. It was rampant at that time, up and down the Mississippi River, or near the Mississippi, or near the Ohio.

Baum: Is that what your brother Ashton died of? TB?

MWB: Yes, TB.

In '99, Glasgow had a tremendous fire. My father was then a director of the bank and a director of the branch railroad of the L&M that came down to Glasgow. He was a very prosperous person, but he was not strong, either. Mother was determined, when this fire came, that that was the break. We could get to California and we were well-insured. In fact, after it was all over and we came to California, we used to tease my mother and say she was the one who set it afire. [laughter]

I still remember. I was in a trundle bed in my parents' room. Behind the curtains was the trundle bed. This Negro knocked on the door just at six o'clock and said, "Mars Clarence, Mars Clarence, the whole town done burned up!" And with that, my father said, "Get my horse! Get my horse!" In a very few minutes, he was on his way. It was a full mile to ride with this black man with him. He'd take care of the horse. It was a town that had a center courthouse, typical of many of the southern towns. The whole block facing the courthouse had burned, but they had it under control. But we lost every single thing. It was complete destruction. Fortunately, when we had taken a house after my brother Ashton died, it was in litigation and we had an option to buy it and had not bought it. We were able to cancel out on that.

Baum: You were living in a house which you had an option to buy but didn't own yet.

MWB: We didn't own it.

Baum: You could cancel that. I think that your mother refused to live in your old house after your brother died, was that right?

MWB: Yes. And we had immediately to move again.

Baum: So you sold that one.

MWB: Yes, that house was sold.

Baum: I see. So you were sort of in a liquid condition then.

MWB: We happened to be, at that particular moment. Also, my father said he wouldn't leave until his own mother was gone, and she had died two years before that. That was the only thing that was really holding him back.

Baum: Did you consider yourself a farm family or a city family?

MWB: No, we were a town family, definitely. My mother's brother was a tobacco grower. Another brother--I guess they both were farmers. But growing tobacco, you had an enormous amount of black labor. Then sometimes they had fruit and vegetables and things like that. I know when we were getting ready, my sister, brother, and myself were shipped out into the country--maybe it was only five or six miles out--to stay with an uncle and aunt. I remember that so distinctly because he had a couple of boxes of plums that he would take into the general store and get credit for it. That's the way they sold so many of their vegetables. There was a lot of trade. We thought it would make it prettier if we made them shiny, so we found a bottle of vaseline and spent a couple of hours polishing the plums. [laughter] My uncle got in the car without looking. It was some form of a little truck he was driving. He got to town and they said, "There's something wrong with these." You know, that lovely bloom that's on a plum--we'd taken it all off. We were in a little trouble when he got home. [laughter] Oh dear, we were always trying to help.

We went to Louisville and stayed several days with an aunt who lived right in Louisville. Then we left there, and from there it took us seven days. We had to change trains in St. Louis, then change trains again in Los Angeles. One black man, a porter, was talking to another one and said, "There's a huge family on here, so many that one child got lost the whole morning, and no one missed her." I got locked in the toilet. [laughter] I don't think it was all morning. I think it was fifteen minutes, because I would have kicked hell out of the thing! [laughter] I was kicking and screaming at the top of my lungs. Finally I got out. But that's how big this family impressed even this black man.

The Move to Southern California

MWB: We came straight to San Diego, to my brother Joe, who had preceded us and had a job here in the hardware store. He had rented us a home, which was temporary. Then Mother bought a home that was very close to the Catholic church which is now the cathedral in San Diego. We all went to Catholic schools. There was a boys' and a girls' school. I mean the three youngest ones. The older ones were in convent schools.

Baum: It sounds like your family had become quite Catholic. Yet you said your mother had converted, is that right?

MWB: Yes, but converts are usually the strongest of all Catholics.

Baum: Oh, yes. What had your family been before they converted?

MWB: They were Baptists.

Baum: Baptists!

MWB: Yes.

Baum: That's an unusual kind of thing.

MWB: My father, of course, was Presbyterian. He was very quiet but very firm about it. But in those days, you promised to bring the children up Catholics. My three sisters went to a French convent called Nazareth, which is halfway between Louisville and Glasgow. They had to go on a train. Then my oldest sister, Elizabeth, was the one who went to New York to a dramatic school and was going to be on the stage. She was the one who had real ability, but she was very delicate.

Baum: Did she go to New York before the family left Glasgow?

MWB: Yes. She was there for nearly two years. Before the next winter, she visited us in the summer in San Diego. We were still in San Diego. She said to my mother, "I'm not going back to New York until I can get a fur coat, even if I have to sleep with a man to do it." Mother was so horrified that she nearly died. [laughter] She did it purposely to tease my mother.

She had the greatest influence of all my sisters on us. She never lost her temper and she always taught us the right thing. When she came back, she taught us as much as she had learned, as she could teach us, both dramatics and manners and the way of life. How to sit; how to stand; how to greet people. She stayed on in San Diego and they came to her house for lessons. I don't know. You'd call it--it wasn't physical education--department and physical education. There's a word. But it was really teaching people good manners or poise. My sister Susie May was a fine pianist. That happened when we were still in San Diego. We children used to help with the classes--the little children who couldn't understand what she was teaching them. So all of us worked.

Baum: Susie May started teaching piano at a very young age, then. Probably eighteen or twenty?

MWB: No, she wasn't teaching. She was playing background music. Then my sister gave recitals and she played. The two of them worked this out together.

Baum: Susie May and Elizabeth.

MWB: Yes. See, by this time, the money was getting low. My father was a very good tourist. He bought an orange grove and couldn't get possession of it. In fact, he lost money on that. Then he got interested in a gold mine. About that time, he began to think that the climate wasn't agreeing with us, so we moved from San Diego to Descanso because we knew Dr. Meyers, who had a big ranch there. We'd met him through the mine. He was also interested in the mine. He told Mother that we children would never grow strong unless we went up in the mountains because there was so much fog, and the dampness. It happened to be a particularly foggy summer and winter. We moved, first to Descanso, which was a remarkable improvement. My brother Johnson was rather delicate, and Cora and Elizabeth. I was strong always. Mother said, "We're going to live in the mountains at all costs." She and my father took a horse and buggy from Dr. Meyers and started driving. They drove up from Descanso to Cuyamaca, from Cuyamaca clear down to Julian, from Julian to Witch Creek.

Running a Guest Ranch at Witch Creek

MWB: That was the one we called an inn. Today it would have been called a guest ranch, a dude ranch. It was run by some charming English people, who had bought it from Mexicans, who had built it originally when the stagecoach that used to come from the East used to come through there. One branch came to San Diego, and the other one went to Los Angeles. The original stagecoach went to Los Angeles. There was another one that brought people to San Diego. The minute the railroad went through, many of the stagecoaches quit. San Diego began getting mail by train. These English people had built on to the inn. It was adobe, one storey. They built a second storey of wood, with a wide porch. It was covered with beautiful grape vines and wisteria. Then there was a great fig tree and quite an orchard. We had a garden and two or three milk cows, and horses for everybody to ride. These people were guests there and asked if they could stay on. My father said, "Well, why not?" They had a Chinese cook, I think it was. He said, "Mr. Wood, have you ever run a hotel?" He said, "All my married life, but it'll be the first time I was ever paid for it." [laughter] And that was true.

Baum: The cook said that?

MWB: No, no. My father said it.

Baum: But who asked?

MWB: One of the guests at the hotel.

Baum: I see.

MWB: They became great friends and they stayed right on. We moved right in.

Baum: A change in proprietorship.

MWB: George Sawday's brother, Kesson, had come over in a four-horse wagon from Witch Creek to Descanso to get all of our belongings. Part of them were there and part of them were in San Diego. We had ridden horses, buggies and things which Dr. Meyers had allowed us to take. George Sawday came down. Now, everybody knew George Sawday. He was the oldest of the brothers of the Sawday family. He came to greet us, everyone. He turned to me and he said, "Young lady, what are you going to be when you grow up?" I said, "I am a cowboy." He said, "Well, that's fine. I need help. Would you like to come up and work for me?" I said, "Where do you live?" and he said, "A half a mile up the road." I said, "All right, what time do you want me to come?" He said, "Be there at eight o'clock." I said, "I'll be there." I worked for him from that time until he died. I was his little girl Friday. [laughter] All the years, we stayed great friends, over a long period of time. That was an interesting English family.

Baum: What was the year that your family moved up to Witch Creek?

MWB: We moved to Witch Creek in October, 1902.

Baum: Do you remember when George Sawday died? That wasn't so long ago, was it?

MWB: Oh, yes. I'm trying to think. It was about '51 or '52. I had moved and done everything else, but I was still his girl Friday.

Baum: That was about fifty years of friendship.

MWB: And I am just as strong a friend of his daughter, Pat Cumming. Through all those years. I'm her mama-san now. Her mother's gone and she's had a lot of sickness and death in the family.

Baum: How did your guest ranch run? Can you give me some details of what kind of guests you had and how they got word of you?

MWB: We never advertised. It was always by word of mouth, and it was really the only place to stop. There was a little hotel in Ramona. Now, later on, a very good cook who'd been a cook in our family took that Ramona Hotel and made something of it. But at that time, there wasn't anything. There was a hotel in Julian, run by some remarkable black people.

Baum: Is that right?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: I didn't realize there were any black people around.

MWB: Yes, there were. It was a relic of the days when they had gold mining up there. George Sawday was the first white child born there, in 1875, in Julian. Then his family moved down to Witch Creek. At Witch Creek, there was a store and a post office. The store just had the essentials of life. It did have some candy. [laughter] That was it. We got our supplies from San Diego.

All of us worked. I was guide from the time I was ten years old. Nearly everybody, especially the young people, wanted to ride horseback. We had a wonderful table, always with a great deal of southern food. Mother was a famous cook. She had never done too much cooking, but she'd supervised enough. The Chinese didn't work out with us, but the Japanese did. We had Japanese cooks. Sometimes a woman cooked. The Japanese wanted to learn. One of our jobs, as children, was to have to give one night a week, or an hour's time, to this one Japanese we had for five years, to teach him.

Baum: Teach him what? English?

MWB: Teach him English and teach him how to write. He knew enough from Mother to show him how to do things, but he really learned his English. Strangely enough, he got a bride. He left us and went to some friends in San Diego. Then he went to Seattle to get a picture bride. He went into a shop there and became a very well-known merchant. My sister Mickie lived in Seattle. She knew him in Seattle. He had done so well, with his picture bride and the other Japanese.

Baum: I didn't realize there was a group of Japanese around, available to hire.

- MWB: Oh, yes, there were in San Diego more and more. In the early days, there were Chinese. Then the Japanese people began coming in, and the Japanese were far more ambitious to learn than the Chinese. For the Chinese, it was lonesome. The Japanese would ride, do things with us. They were keen to learn American ways, much more than the Chinese.
- Baum: Your mother did the cooking and supervised the housekeeping?
- MWB: No, she supervised the cooking and we did the housekeeping.
- Baum: The children did.
- MWB: By that time, there were always some of us who were old enough-- coming and going. We had two Indian girls, nearly always, and then an Indian man to work in the stables.
- Baum: There's a reservation up near there, isn't there?
- MWB: Up in the Volcan Mountains. A year or two after that, I think it was, they moved the Indians from Warner's Hot Springs down to Pala. I can still see my mother watching the procession go by and crying. We asked her why, and she said she was so sorry for the Indians. She'd done everything she could to keep from having it done. Those Indians put on, I think, the first sit-down strike that was ever done. They refused to do one thing. Now, they never resisted the soldiers. They went in there with soldiers and wagons. The Indians had to pick the squaws up and put them in the wagons. They made the men pick up their gear, which you know, because they were warriors, was very little, and the babies, and put them in the wagons. Then they drove down from there to Pala. The men followed behind with the horses and the cattle. The Indian men knew they had to do it. But the squaws, you see, it was their hallowed ground for many, many centuries. It was really like a spa to the Indians. All over the country, they would have people who'd come. Of course, at fiesta time, they had an enormous amount. They would bring their sick people there and put them in the water.
- Baum: The water is hot spring water, you mean.
- MWB: Yes. They had run it so that they could get the water temperature that they could lie in. They'd lie there all night sometimes, with their head on a rock. Sometimes when it was bitter cold, they did it to keep warm.
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- Baum: I wondered about how many guests you could accommodate at Witch Creek.

MWB: A great many people came, husband and wife and children. We had about a dozen people. In the summertime, we had two or three tents. Then we finally built a cottage that had four bedrooms, baths, and a hall. In later years, we accommodated more. In the wintertime, there were comparatively few and everybody had to live in this house. We used to sleep on the upstairs porch. Everybody thought that was great fun. Then go into their parents' room to dress, the youngsters. It got so they'd send them up there, sometimes with nurses, sometimes without. They were old enough. My brother would take over the boys and teach them to ride. I'd take over the girls. I'd always rather work with the horses than work inside. We all worked in the garden.

We were unusually well-disciplined people because my father wouldn't stand any nonsense. Back in Kentucky, there was a lovely table, a lovely big dining room and a table for twelve. My father sat at the head and Mother at the bottom of the table. If you got the least bit out of line, you would very quietly go to your room. And you went to your room and took your supper to the room, if you got out of line. I don't ever remember being spanked. I think I was maybe, with a slipper. My older sisters tell about being spanked with a little switch. But we worked together; there was no friction.

But we worked hard. We were changing help. In the wintertime, we didn't keep the Indian girls. Of course, some of them were in school. We'd get them from Mesa Grande or the Volcan Mountains. They'd stay until fiesta time. St. John's Day was the fiesta at Santa Ysabel. It was our busiest time. Then Papa would come with a saddle horse and take his daughter off to the fiesta. Regardless of how much we needed them, they all went to the fiesta, but we went, too.

We did things with people. There were always friends of friends, or our own friends. We had lived in San Diego for two years--I guess it was a year and a half when the three youngest went to Descanso. But my older sisters were there, on and off, for three or four years. My sister Susie May joined a very exclusive club called the Decem Club. She was very, very pretty. She had spun gold hair and green eyes and just a peaches-and-cream complexion. She was gay and played the piano well and sang. They all sang, including my brother who had a beautiful voice, and my sister Cora. I was the only one who didn't have any voice. I could talk, but I couldn't sing. [laughter] I knew it. I was told so very young in life. "Don't spoil that singing for other people." But we were not sensitive.

- MWB: We were peculiarly well-disciplined because we knew if we got out of line, my father would say very quietly, "I will see you in the back room," which was a little office off their bedroom, "at seven o'clock." All day long, you wondered what in the world he'd caught you at. You'd committed maybe a lot of crimes, but you wondered what you'd been caught at. That was one of the most horrifying experiences. He never touched you. We just sat there and quietly talked. My greatest punishment was when he let them take my horse away from me, or my brother would make us walk. That was a disgrace, if you had to walk, up to the post office even. It was only a quarter of a mile. You'd run for a mile around the pasture to catch your horse to ride it the quarter of a mile. It was status, you know. We were pretty careful what we did.
- Baum: I have the feeling your mother made some of the major decisions, like whether to come to California and whether to move to Witch Creek or not.
- MWB: Yes. She was a far more liberal person in every way. My father was very conservative. He would have stayed on. It wasn't his idea. She made the decisions and she made the decisions at all costs. Rather than his going into business in San Diego, which he would have had to have done--maybe into banking, into an inferior position for his age or something like that. Mother saw this was a place to gain health first and then a living.
- My father died in 1910. He was the first to die. We stayed on there until 1913. We closed it for a few months after his death; I guess it was four months. Then we went back and kept it open until the fall of 1913. By that time, Mickle had married. She had married way back in 1906, went to Seattle to live. Susie May married in 1908, and my brother had been married--[carnival passes by at this point]
- Baum: Which brother is this?
- MWB: This is Joe.
- Baum: Who was now your oldest brother.
- MWB: Yes, now the oldest--and he was bossy. But he only came for visits. He never lived at Witch Creek because he was married and living in Los Angeles.
- Baum: Oh, he was in Los Angeles! He was the one who brought you to San Diego.
- MWB: San Diego first. Then he moved to Los Angeles.

Baum: In the hardware business. Can you say something about your guests? What kind of people were they?

MWB: They were the cream of San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, because the people we knew told somebody else.

The first morning after we were in San Diego, my father went down to a bank, where he had a letter of introduction, with his money--everything completely drawn out of Kentucky--and talked to Mr. D.F. Garrettson, who was president of the bank. That afternoon, about tea time, Mrs. Garrettson, his wife, and his daughter, who was Susie May's age, came to call. We were looking for a bigger home. They spoke about the Bancroft house at that time being for sale or rent. So the next day, Griff Bancroft came with a kind of stanhope--two horses, one seat forward and one back--

Baum: A what? Stanhope?

MWB: Stanhope. It was a very high, stylish carriage. I think it belonged to his mother. It wasn't the next day--maybe a week or something. He had met Susie May; he had an eye for good-looking gals. Susie May, my mother, and myself went to see the house. Well, it was beyond us; it was too big and too expensive. Mother still was a little undecided. She wanted a house right down near the church, so we did buy property there and then sold it when we went to the mountains, a year or two afterwards.

There were people like the Klauber family, one of the very prominent families. A huge family. I told you Abraham Klauber and his wife came to stay a month at Witch Creek with their children. They took turns with the Wangenhiems. Then we traded children with some families in San Diego. My brother stayed with the family of Cosgroves, and their daughter came and stayed with us. Cora stayed with another family. In the wintertime, there were so few people, and if something was wrong with the sister or daughter, we'd trade around that way.

Then in the wintertime--I guess it was after my father died--we gave plays. Elizabeth directed them. Bernice Cosgrove had just returned from Europe. She was the one who was staying with us. She played and was almost like a professional piano player. She, Cora, and myself--the four of us--took a play and then worked it out to make it very simple. We played in the Julian Town Hall, the Ramona Town Hall, and the Lakeside Town Hall. We would go first and tack up signs all the way about the play on fence posts, make all the arrangements, and then we'd go. I remember the first few times George Sawday used to go with us. Everyone would come in before dark to eat their dinner in the hall. It was wintertime,

- MWB: you see, and there was a fire. Then all of a sudden, George would say, "Everybody out!" And he'd hit his hand like he was driving cattle. "Whup! Get out of here!" They all came out and paid the dollar and went back in. [laughter] George just adored going to these plays. Then afterward, we'd dance all night. It was a big party, you see.
- Baum: That must have been a big affair for the whole town.
- MWB: Oh, it was. In quite a few of them, we played six parts--the four of us. They would say, "Where are the other people?" They had no idea that we were making up. Cora was a very snappy little black boy--sassy. Then she was the beautiful blonde girl. She'd pull her hair back, put on a wig. Elizabeth was the man in fancy men's clothing and then she would play a girl. I took care of the curtain and I played a black boy also. It was called The Silver Slipper. We'd move in and spend the night there with all our baggage. At midnight, these black people who lived there would give us a big supper for fifty cents. It was a big turkey dinner. You would hope that some gentleman would ask you to go--some one of your beaux. But everybody went to the dinner. You danced the first dance and the supper dance, an after-supper dance, and then the last dance. The rest of the time, you'd dance with other people. This idea of just dancing with one person would have been improper. We wouldn't have considered it. The men sometimes had flasks and gathered outside, but that was taboo. [laughter]
- Baum: Did you make any money off your little plays?
- MWB: Oh, certainly we did! We wouldn't have done it otherwise. We knew, almost to the figure. Of course, they'd bring the children and put them under the benches and wrap them up. Everybody would come.
- Baum: So this was a little supplement to your guests, who tapered off in the winter.
- MWB: Oh, way down, but we knew that. It was part that and part just the training. It was Elizabeth's. We trained really hard. We had costumes, old southern costumes. Cora was in As You Like It and did a beautiful job in the San Diego High School. Then she did another play. I'm trying to think who had those beautiful costumes, but anyway, we had them. With a little help from here and there, we would get the clothes to wear. These people had never seen clothes like that. They were just fascinated and they really would ask you where these other people were.
- Baum: Did Elizabeth stay with you up at Witch Creek for several years?

- MWB: On and off. She started giving recitals. That wasn't as hard on her. That was always sponsored by people, the elect and elite of Coronado. She usually stayed with someone. Mrs. Florence Dupee was the grande dame of Coronado in those days. She used to come to Witch Creek. Then Elizabeth went to Los Angeles and had a lot of connections up there. After a while, she got tired out and couldn't give recitals.
- Baum: Were these recitals that Elizabeth gave musical recitals or dramatic recitals?
- MWB: It was reading poems or short skits. Then we always had somebody who played. Susie May did it as long as she could, until she had children. Bernice Cosgrove, who was a fine pianist, never married, and she was always available. Then another, Kate Sessions, who was one of the finest gardeners--there's a story.
- Baum: Oh, yes, I saw the biography of hers.
- MWB: She came to Witch Creek and told us to ship lilacs. Now, all the people for five miles around had great lilac bushes, the old-fashioned eastern and English lilac.
- Baum: Oh, those beautiful-smelling things.
- MWB: She showed us how to ship it. We had to ship it by stagecoach, you see. A little later on, the automobile came in and we shipped it that way, by mashing and then using the newspapers in the box. Mrs. Dupee heard about it, I think from Miss Sessions, and she said, "Oh, if I had something new--" Miss Sessions said, "Well, the Wood girls learned to ship lilacs, and I think I could get you the lilacs." Well, she was thrilled. We sent two vast boxes down to her. The stagecoach would take care of it, keep it in the shade, and all of that. She had a man meet the train when it came in, in San Diego. It became the fashionable thing to do with other people, so we could sell just as many as we wanted.
- Baum: You would use your own lilacs and those of neighbors?
- MWB: We'd go around to neighbors. Some of them said, "If you'll just train our lilac bushes," because my mother was really a professional gardener. That was her love, gardening. "If you'll get your mother, or if you know how, just train the bushes and cut them properly." They'd give them to us sometimes. We told them we were selling them and we would share them with them, and we did. A dollar meant a lot, you know. Ten dollars, or twenty dollars, or whatever it was. We did that every spring. Everybody knew then that we really were in it and became interested in raising them.

MWB: The only thing we did was we went up into the Indian reservations and bought baskets. We would buy burden baskets--big baskets that they carried with a little hat, they called it, on the head, that was also a basket. The net that the basket was in was milkweed. They would shake their heads and say no. Then we would produce some money. They were quite interested. I remember one Indian to whom I kept saying, "But I want your hat!" Then I finally hit like that. [gestures] "Oh, my hat!" I produced a little more money and she gave me the hat. We'd go clear over to Owonga, which is beyond Warner's Hot Springs, about twenty miles beyond, in horse and buggy, and we'd camp out there. That was really spring. We'd be gone maybe for nearly a week. We ran out of money one time. I was over at the people who made the finest baskets in this part of the world, Coahuila. We showed them and tried to explain. They wouldn't have anything to do with it.

Baum: They'd shake their heads.

MWB: Shake their heads. All of a sudden, after we had been arguing over half an hour, because we had just what we wanted--we had just run out of money--a good-looking Indian man stepped up and said, "Go ahead and write it. I'll endorse it and it will be all right." He was an Indian who had grown up there and then had gone clear back east to one of the Indian schools. He knew exactly, but he let us suffer for half an hour.

Baum: Who was doing that? When you say we, was it just you Wood girls?

MWB: Oh, yes, just us. We'd bring them home, wash them, clean them up, and hang them to the best advantage of the basket, maybe with a bowl with flowers in it, according to the size and all. People would say, "Is there any chance we could buy that?" We would reluctantly say, "We'd hate to part with it, but we will." Of course, we put a lot of money in, in taking the time off to go and buy them, but at that time, time didn't mean anything.

Baum: These were your guests who would also take a basket home as a souvenir.

MWB: Oh, yes, everybody did. Some of the baskets had the pattern of a rattlesnake. They had all sorts of patterns in them. Some of the very small baskets had woven in quail tufts and some of them with mountain quail tufts. Those baskets were just exquisite.

Baum: I'll bet some of your baskets wound up in the San Diego museum.

- MWB: I had a lovely collection of them and lost them. They were stolen by somebody who really knew baskets up at Helen Gildred's. I'd let her keep them. They were insured, but they couldn't be replaced. They were very well-insured. But it was somebody who knew, because there were loads of things in the house that could have been taken--gear, radios, and things that you'd think, if anybody wanted to sell it. We're still hoping that someday they'll turn up in some museum.
- Baum: So your father died in 1910. Then you carried on the guest ranch for about three more years, the family--your mother and the remaining children.
- MWB: There was no one but Johnson, Cora, and myself. During all this time, at least one or two of us were in school. I went to the Immaculate Heart Convent the year after my father died. You see, I was out of school for three years; I had to be because I was very strong and by this time I was running the show, almost. The ranch. Then Johnson went to--we always called it "Cow College"--Davis.
- Baum: Oh, he did?
- MWB: Yes, he went there. After Mother's death, he had to come home.
- Baum: So that was later. Immaculate Heart--was that the Los Angeles school, or where?
- MWB: Yes, it's in Hollywood.
- Baum: Yes, I've been to their campus.
- MWB: Franklyn and Western.
- Baum: Yes. A lovely campus.
- MWB: Beautiful. It was very new. I got a silver cup for tennis. We had a tennis court at Witch Creek, finally. We kept modernizing things all the time. But to go back to one of the guests, I'll never forget the day he phoned. It was Ed Fletcher, who owned so much property.
- Baum: Oh, yes, I know who Ed Fletcher was. Senator, wasn't he?
- MWB: Yes, state senator. He had William Griffith Henshaw with him and two sons-in-law. Ed always stopped there because he felt sure of the food and sure of everything, but he wanted to go over to Warner's to spend the night. They came in, in a great rainfall. We had a big fire in an adobe room. It was a beautiful room; Elizabeth was

MWB: the one who was the decorator. They were so excited. After lunch, it was still raining, and one of them said, "Who plays the piano?" Elizabeth played very well herself. He said, "Let's have a song or two." Two hours later, he said to Ed Fletcher, "We are not going any further tonight." Ed Fletcher reluctantly gave in. He didn't like to, but he did. They spent the night there.

From that time on, the Henshaws always stayed there. They'd go over to Warner's for the day and come back. He bought Warner's ranch, if you remember, the whole thing. Then the lake; then he built the dam, and improved it all. Finally that land was sold to, I believe, Vista. Out of that grew a great friendship. My sister Elizabeth broke her leg, along with her other problems, and she was limping. He came back one time and asked Mother about it. He said, "I think the thing to do is to take her to San Francisco." He had a wife, who never came down there. He saw to it that Elizabeth had the best treatment that was possible to try to cure this leg, which, of course, was a terrible break which never did heal. She died a couple of years after that. Today, two sons-in-law, Harry and Allen Chickering, are very prominent in San Francisco. They're on your board--I think at least one of the Chickerings--of The Bancroft Library.

Baum: There's an Allen Chickering on the board. So that's the same family. The Henshaw family.

MWB: Yes. Harry Chickering married a Henshaw. Allen was his brother, and they traveled together.

Baum: Oh, is that right? What a small world.

MWB: Small world. I thought that was one person I wanted to see when I was at the library. I haven't seen them for years. They are about the age I am, I guess. Older, a little bit older, I'm sure, and well in their eighties. People like that would never forget you, because it was unusual and they came out of wilderness, you see. Mother always sat at the head of the table as hostess after my father died. They just couldn't believe there was that much civilization that far away from civilization. It was an unusual situation. Of course, there'd always be three or four girls buzzing around. It was an unusual combination. It was fun.

Baum: I have the feeling as you talked about your later life that some of the people you met at Witch Creek, and the impression you made at Witch Creek, the whole family, opened doors for you later on in life.

MWB: Oh, yes, very definitely. You take people like the movie people, the De Milles. I was so young when she was there that she would hardly have known me. When she was there the first time, I was probably twelve or thirteen, or something like that. But then, of course, my sister and brother and brother and sister-in-law were connected with a lot of people in Los Angeles. The same way with San Francisco. We never had an unpleasant experience. We never had anyone try to tip us, except one very ignorant little young man.

Margaret Wood Joins a Movie Company, 1913##

Baum: We were going to start with how come you got involved in the movies.

MWB: Okay.

Baum: You were at Witch Creek.

MWB: Yes, in 1913. We closed Witch Creek for good. My mother and sister Cora went to Kentucky for six months. It was the first time my mother, or any of us, had been back to Kentucky.

Baum: That was with your sister Cora.

MWB: Yes. Shortly before we went, three very prominent businessmen from San Diego phoned and said they were coming up and they wanted to talk to Mother and to me. They came up and said they were forming a company. It was called Am-Mex, American-Mexican, and was going to be in National City. They had rented an old warehouse and were converting it into a studio. At that period of the movies, people thought it was very easy. Just get a director and you go ahead and become famous. They had some director in mind who they thought would be wonderful. These men were rather venturesome and were starting with western pictures. They wanted someone who could ride, do stunts, and drive a stagecoach--everything that was real western. Enid Markey was the lead and I was to be her second. We had an older woman who took older parts. I was twenty years old at the time. My mother thought it was wonderful because I could live with the sister who was having her third baby.

Baum: Which sister was that?

MWB: Mickle.

Baum: Where? In San Diego?

MWB: In San Diego. They were living right in San Diego. I'd stay there and help her and work in movies. They said sometimes you'd be working very hard and other times you wouldn't be. But I'd have plenty of time. It was all out-of-doors. We didn't work on Sunday. That's the story that was told us.

Baum: The story for your mother. Well, I guess it was a real story.

MWB: The men didn't know what happened in the movies. I had seen half a dozen movies in my life. Movies meant nothing in my life. We knew about it and all of that. We used to go to the nickelodeon if we came down to San Diego to visit, but that was a great excitement. But I had had this theatrical training from my sister and had the ability to do the stunts, so it was a very easy thing for me.

So I came down and lived with sister Mickle. I had to go out by, I guess it was streetcar, to National City at that time and get up very early in the morning. I'd have my breakfast and pack my lunch and go. It was a very primitive studio. I was to make up for this first part. It was a western. I had the western clothes. We used our own clothes at that time. There was no wardrobe. You just had to find something to wear that was halfway appropriate, and mine were. I had boots and everything that went with western clothing. I just could not get the mascara on my eyes. I was crying. The door was open; we didn't have much privacy at all. It was just sort of a little separation.

This famous old actor, whose name I cannot remember, said, "What's the matter?" I said, "This make-up--I can't get it on." I had never used mascara and at that time they were using very heavy mascara. He said, "All right. You clean your face and I'll make you up as you should be made for the part." So he did it, very carefully, and then he said, "Now, take it off and you put it on." So he sat there and every time I made a mistake, he made me take the make-up off and start all over again. I was rehearsing, as it were. He finally had taught me. Wonderful man!

Then there was one San Diego man who was an actor and had a beautiful voice; Roy Stewart was his name. His niece's family lives in Coronado today. I often talk about him with them. He is dead. One of them has been national committeewoman of the Republican party; a very famous person, she is.

We started out. It was all very simple to me because it was mostly riding or out in the country, on a stagecoach holdup. Sometimes I would be a passenger and sometimes a stagecoach driver would be killed and I'd take the reins and get away from the Indians who were chasing us. It was very exciting. Sometimes I'd be dressed as a passenger, using my own clothes. I would borrow,

MWB: beg, or steal them from other people for the occasion, because you had to have certain things. My sister had a lot of things and friends, and I was always getting something from other people. Sometimes you were a very demure little girl that was going to teach school and would end up jumping up and driving the stagecoach and getting away from the Indians. It was all very exciting! The stagecoach would turn over. It was great fun.

This went on for about two months and I was thoroughly enjoying it, and learning a great deal. The director was a well-known director and Enid Markey had been in movies and on stage. They were very kind. Also an older woman who was a real actress, and an older man who had been in stagework for years. They were kind of broken down; that's why they got them cheap. But they were very good people.

One day we were eating lunch and I had stayed on my horse. We were just having a snack, and one of these camera boys came up and slapped my horse from behind. The horse jumped and skidded on the pavement. I threw myself free from the horse. The horse went down and came up. But I broke my ankle bone.

I was packed off to the Paradise Valley Hospital in National City. I had a loaded gun on me. I guess they were blank shots. I was very vocal that no one was going to touch me until they got Dr. Oatman, who was the best surgeon in San Diego and a great friend. In fact, he and his wife spent their honeymoon at Witch Creek. So they phoned immediately. The doctor dropped everything and came out to National City and said, "Margaret, I hear you've gotten very belligerent. What's the matter with you?" And I said, "I didn't want one of these people." They were Seventh Day Adventists and I knew they knew nothing about surgery. So he examined my foot. Of course, there were no x-rays at that time. He said the ankle bone was broken and I'd have to be on crutches and stay there for twenty-four hours. One of my family came and I went back to my sister's. He said it would possibly be three or four months before I could go back to work. So that was a great disappointment. I knew enough to start reading a great deal and studying everything I could lay my hands on at this time, also helping my sister. I went out to visit the Fred Scripps at Braemar. They were a big family. I stayed there for a month.

Baum: At Braemar.

MWB: It's near Pacific Beach. F.T. was the younger brother of D.W. Scripps. I was taken care of. I had a lot of beaux. There were six Jessup boys; two of them, at different times, were beaux of mine and great riding companions. I taught them how to ride and they taught me how to swim--better swimming.

- MWB: Time passed and I went back to Witch Creek to just open it up for ourselves when my mother and my sister Cora came back from Kentucky. Elizabeth, by this time, had come back from Seattle with a very bad cough which turned into quick consumption and she died the next June. So I never went back to the movies at that time.
- Baum: Do you remember who these gentlemen were, the promoters of this movie show?
- MWB: Last night I tried my best. One of them I remember, but it will come back to me. They were well-known San Diego people.
- Baum: Yes. I think your San Diego people would want to know them.
- MWB: Yes, they would. The whole thing was a failure and they closed it. By that time, I was badly bitten by the idea of being a movie actress. I told my mother what I wanted to do. One of our older friends--I'm not sure who it was, but I'll think of that, too--lent me five hundred dollars to go to dramatic school. All my sisters thought that I should have real dramatic training. So I went up and lived with my brother and his wife, Joe and Alice Wood, and went to the school in Los Angeles. I was about halfway through it when Frances Marion, who was a famous scenario writer and was a great friend of the family--she was a great friend of Marion Davies and visited very often at the Hearst Castle--she phoned one day and said there was a chance. Bosworth Studios were opening at that time and they were going to do Jack London stories and a number of different types of stories. They thought I would fit in. They were looking for new faces always and people they thought had a chance to make good in the movies. I immediately went out and applied, and got the job.
- Baum: I know we've covered your movie career a little bit. I wondered, before we drop this subject, your sister was in dramatics--both your sisters--Susie May, I guess, was in recital work.
- MWB: That was always piano.
- Baum: As I recall, being on the stage was looked down upon then.
- MWB: Oh, yes.
- Baum: So I wonder if there was any hassle with your family before Elizabeth went into dramatics.
- MWB: No, because Mother, for one thing, trusted us and thought we were able to take care of ourselves. Elizabeth had so much talent that, of course, she went directly from Kentucky to New York.

MWB: When my mother went back to Kentucky this time, people said, "Don't you know those movie people have terrible reputations?" When Mother came back, she began to look into it and began to worry. She found out there were some terrible reputations; there were also some very good reputations. Mary Pickford was the idol of the country at that time and the Gish girls. Those girls had their mothers with them and made a point of being very correct. They weren't the glamorous girls who sat up and drank champagne with the old men and that type of thing--the midnight suppers that you've read about.

So my mother finally said she thought it was all right if I lived with this brother and his wife. My sister-in-law did designing for clothes at one time and did my clothes. I was always well-dressed despite the fact that I had to spend the money that I made most of the time in having my dental work redone, because that was the most important thing. I had some gold in my mouth. Anytime I had any money, that's where my money went. [laughter] Even with someone making your clothes, you had to have really good clothes. As time went on, they developed these big wardrobes. Even when I first came to Los Angeles, lots of times I'd be wearing my own clothes. Big wardrobes came in. The stars, of course, would have things done. The people who were supporting them, half the time had to shift for themselves. My sister-in-law could always whip up something for me. That was the way I got by. Then, with the friendships I had in Los Angeles--connections--I managed to meet the right people at the right time. That's half the way, to get the door unlocked. I think that's all about the movies.

X GRIFFING BANCROFT AND HIS FAMILY

Bird Egg Collecting

Baum: Now, we have been talking about your days at Walnut Creek. Then, after Mr. Bancroft died, I believe you returned to San Diego. But I'd like to know before that how it happened that you and Griff got so interested in bird egg collecting, or the study of birds.

MWB: We let the governess go the day we were married. She was at the wedding and took care of the children, packed them in the car, and we were on our way to San Francisco. In talking and playing with the children, I realized how little they knew of the outdoors--birds, flowers, anything. They just had been with these rather, sometimes, stupid governesses--sometimes good. The last one they had was good.

I thought we ought to really go in and get books and make a study with them, of animals, wild animals, flowers, trees. I said I'd take over that side and Griff would take over the birds. He had always been interested in birds. Never in collecting, just in the notes and watching them, the observation of birds. His first cousin, Frank Bancroft, was a famous scientist. He said, "Griff, you can't teach those children anything without collecting. You ought to collect some skins and take them into the natural history museum we started in Berkeley. Study the birds and show them the study skins," which he did, because we had lots of time.

When spring came, the spring right after his father died, Frank said, "I'm going to take you out and show you." He knew and had studied birds. It was right around Walnut Creek and up to Mount Diablo country. It was hard going. A lot of it you had to walk, but we were all strong and walked. We learned how to collect birds' eggs, and the wrapping and packing of them, and also learned the seriousness of the study of it. One of the things was that you had

MWB:

to be so very quiet and use both eyes and ears. It took great patience to find any bird's nest except where birds nested in a big colony. That's the water birds. The ordinary birds that were around Walnut Creek were different types of sparrows and different types of warblers. There was a great variety there within a very short distance.

Griffing, Jr. took to it. Howe didn't. Howe was a great reader and didn't have the patience or the interest. Griffing, Jr. and Sr. would go off with Frank, who loved to do it. They'd have picnics and we'd all go.

By the time we left there, we had quite a box of bird eggs, carefully blown. In those days, they put a hole in each end. Then we learned to use a dentist's drill and make one little hole, then bring the fine glass tube down to a very fine point and blow in, and that would blow out the matter. Then we'd wash them out and put them on blotting paper until they were dry, then put a sealing coat over the hole to keep out the moths, and then put them into little cases.

It was delicate work. You'd learn on very cheap eggs, like linnets' or blackbirds'. Sometimes you'd break one egg and then work on the other eggs to learn. It was like anything else. It was very delicate work down to the point where you could wrap them and pack them. We had to very carefully wrap and pack these eggs.

We brought a big box down to San Diego. Immediately, Griff got in touch with people. One of the first was A.M. Ingersoll. Ingersoll had a big candy and ice cream parlor, and he had a collection. He was a very sweet, interesting man. He took us out. He loved to teach. He was our first teacher in San Diego. Then there was John Burnham, who was the brother of the congressman--very well-known. People are always interested in helping you learn anything like that when they know you're seriously interested.

When we bought a house in San Diego, between Laurel and Maple, there was a very well-sealed room where the woman who sold us the house had stored her furniture when she would rent the house and go off to Germany. She'd be gone a year or two. So we turned that into our egg room and began having beautiful eucalyptus cabinets built. They were a work of art. They had great big drawers. They were three by four feet long and wide. They were different sizes, starting from very fine, very small at the top, with the humming-bird nests and eggs. For very small birds, you collected the nests as well as the eggs.

MWB: Griffing, Jr. became a great climber. He'd climb any tree and he'd go over any cliff. He'd say, "It's only the first twenty-five feet." Griff, Sr. couldn't stand heights. Griffing, Jr. would go over on a rope ladder. If you'd fall, you'd fall maybe a hundred and fifty, two hundred feet. He'd go down the rope ladder. I had no feeling of heights, so I'd lie on my stomach and look over, directing Griffing because he couldn't see where he was going, say to collect hawk eggs. I directed and Griff would be holding my feet well back, braced, and he kept saying, "Look out. Be careful. Good cooks are scarce. Don't fall over with Griffing." [laughter] He was afraid Griffing would pull me over. The ladder was staked with a big steel stake.

We spent every spring collecting from that time on. That was in 1919 up until--I guess the last trip we took was in the spring before the Second World War was declared.

Baum: 1940?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: Twenty years of egg collecting.

MWB: Yes.

Baum: Did the boys continue interested, or did Griffing, Jr.?

MWB: Griffing did. Griffing, of course, had college and everything else. He quit. When he came home in the summertime, it was too late. Howe didn't continue at all. He lost all interest. He could go out and pick up eggs in colonies and a few things like that, just to be going. His interest was in tennis, you see.

Howe had a ranking thirty-seven in the United States in tennis. We traveled for four years all summer long, following the tennis tournaments because Howe was so good.

Baum: What years were those?

MWB: I guess he started his tennis about 1921 and it went up through 1927. He was good. First he won the boys' state tournament. That was at the Claremont. We stayed at the Claremont a couple of months. He was in a special school, getting ready to go to Stanford. We'd just start out. The first time, we did California. The next time, we drove clear to Chicago. We played fourteen tournaments in sixteen weeks. We had Johnny Doeg with us as our guest. He and Howe played doubles.

MWB: They won doubles straight through from California. We went to Utah, played at Salt Lake City, and then we went to South Dakota--I can't remember the city; won there. Then we went to some place in Illinois, a big boys' tournament. The school there was a military school. Then to Chicago, and they won the doubles in Chicago. That was the junior tournament.

At that time, we met Bill Tilden. Bill Johnson was a California man and was Howe's doubles partner. They were great bridge players. By this time, Griff and I were playing a great deal of serious bridge--money bridge. Bill would come by always after you had won something. He'd say, "Get the table ready"--at the club wherever we were playing--"and I'll get my shower and be out in fifteen minutes." And he would. He'd go on playing and people would go swarming round and round this table just to see him. They wouldn't try to talk to him. He was such an exhibitionist, you know.

We had a private car with sixty-four tennis players.

Baum: Railroad car, you're talking about.

MWB: Yes. That was from New York down to Newport. We went to Boston. Just played this very top tennis until we got to Forest Hills.

Baum: As I get the picture, there was a group of persons who would travel together--

MWB: At that time, because it was all by train.

Baum: --about sixteen weeks in the summer with tennis as the major interest and bridge as the second interest. Is that right?

MWB: Yes, exactly. I played doubles.

Baum: Oh, you did?

MWB: Yes. But I wasn't good. I played against Bill Tilden once. He was calling it out. He was a great person in many, many ways and was always helping in tournaments. I said, "If I have to play on that court one, I'm going to default." He was playing with a very young girl, a cute little thing, and I was playing with Johnny Doeg. He called out, "Court number one," and I was right there. He saw me. I got up and started to leave.

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MWB: I started out from where I was. He saw me and said, "Oh, excuse me." He was talking, of course, to the great crowd that was all around. "I mean court number eleven." [laughter] So that's where we went to play. I never was going to be put on court number one. It wasn't that important. But he was, when he played, unless he asked for another court. It was always court number one. He was an actor if you ever saw one. A very poor actor on the stage. He tried it two or three times.

Baum: I'm sure everyone will be interested in anything you have to say about Bill Tilden. He's quite a famous historical figure.

MWB: We saw the very best of Bill Tilden and that went on for many years. He was a good bridge player, far better than average, and he played with very big people.

My husband wrote a book on bridge and had a big fight with one of the big players who wrote the system, Culbertson. Griff wrote another one, more or less reversing the system. It's too technical to discuss. But at the same time, he was recognized and his book was recognized. Before he sat down to play, when we were playing the system, we'd have to say, "We're playing the Bancroft System." It was published. It had to be. You can't play a system; otherwise, it would be a secret system. We had to explain to people. We always had a pamphlet in our pocket.

Baum: I don't understand enough about bridge to understand what you're telling me, but are you saying that Griff published a book about bridge? About what year was that? Before these tournaments took place?

MWB: No, it was after the tournaments, after we were playing with Bill Tilden. It was 1928. I remember it was the year that Griffing and I went abroad. Griffing, Jr. and I went abroad, and we had a very fine young chap who was Russian, who helped Griff, Sr. do this work. He was from Spain, a marvelous bridge player. They developed this system. It didn't continue, but for years Griff played it. There are certain rules of bridge. You can't develop a system and not have it published. It has to be published and for sale. He fought with Culbertson.

Baum: Culbertson. Now I can't remember his first name.

MWB: The Culbertson System it was called.

Baum: What was the name of Griff's book? The Bancroft System?

MWB: Yes. The Bancroft System.

Baum: Do you think it's still available? Can it be bought?

MWB: No, it's out of print now. I have some copies of it.

Baum: I think we ought to have a copy of it in this collection of papers, if you already have a copy in The Bancroft Library.

MWB: No, they wouldn't have. Griff played brilliant bridge and brilliant poker. He always attributed it to the fact that he was deaf and he had to watch people's faces more carefully and he wasn't distracted by the outside noises. He was a constant winner, both in bridge and in poker. He used to keep a record, playing at the Cuyamaca Club in San Diego--it's now a big men's club--a year at a time. At the end of the year, he would tell the first ten what they had won or lost.

Baum: He kept a record of everyone's winnings and earnings?

MWB: Of this little group. There was a table of four; there were really about eight men and no one ever asked to play. You were asked to play at that table. The same way with poker. Then he went out and played poker a lot at night.

Baum: So how was his record in terms of winning and losing?

MWB: He always won. [laughter]

Baum: He always came out ahead, is that right?

MWB: Maybe there might be some one, one year--ahead, but in general. Then he got to the point where he didn't have the concentration and wasn't well, so he quit playing. He didn't enjoy doing it unless he had that brilliance and concentration.

You see, his brother, Phil Bancroft, was a marvelous poker player. You'd never think that stodgy old guy would be, but he was.

Baum: He didn't tell me that. [laughter]

MWB: He didn't tell you--I'll bet he didn't. He never cashed a check from the time he went to war, and left from Florida and went into France. He was a lieutenant but was quickly put into a judiciary position of handling the great quarrels and arrests and everything over American boys. He spoke good French, so he ended up as a judge.

- Baum: Now, what are you telling me about Phil and the poker playing?
- MWB: Phil never cashed a check. He simply lived on the money that he made all the time he was abroad.
- Baum: Is that right? [laughter]
- MWB: Twice they thought that Phil was a professional and had it looked into because the men who played poker with him complained to the captain. He played always, of course, with officers. But on ship-board, when he came back, they definitely checked on him to see if he was all right because he was such a steady winner. He had that same, though he was not deaf, concentration that Griff had.
- Baum: Oh, I believe that.
- MWB: Marvelous concentration.
- Baum: Tell me how your life went in these years 1921 to 1927 that we were talking about. You spent the summer following the tennis tournaments?
- MWB: Yes.
- Baum: With Howe.
- MWB: Yes. And in the spring, especially when the boys got older and were going to school and college, we would start collecting in February and collect through to July.
- Baum: So the spring was bird egg collecting. Did you do that just around here, or did you travel to do that?
- MWB: No. We traveled all over California and Arizona, but our specialty was Baja California. The birds, most of the birds, had been identified, but the eggs had never been collected because in those days the roads were so bad. There was never anyone who had the time and the knowledge to collect birds' eggs. It was almost an open field for us. We found a great many eggs that had never been collected before. We knew what they should be like.

Sometimes they made subspecies and named them for Griff. In the last few years, they have refused the subspecies and brought it down to less species, the different species of birds. For example, we found a thrasher that was new to science, and they finally decided it wasn't enough different, though it was somewhat different. It was the same way with the skins.

MWB: We put J. Elton Green through college, working on our egg collection. He would go to summer school and take off the whole spring. It was arranged. Griff got him into college because he was short of credit. He was a Berkeley boy and Dr. Grinnell recommended him to us because, with Griff's deafness, I always liked to have someone in the house. He lived with us, on and off, for ten years. He was just like a third son. Dr. Grinnell was the head of the Ornithology Department at the University of California, Berkeley. He had been in Baja California, but he had never collected eggs. He was down there at the Meling Ranch at different times. He was a great friend of ours.

Baum: Was the interest in birds the beginning of your interest in Baja California?

MWB: Yes. Griff was always interested because it was an almost unexplored country. He went down there first to buy some horses when he had a ranch at Spring Valley, you know, where Bancroft Road is. We kept forging a little farther every time. It was such an open field to get rare birds.

I remember when we were on the boat out of Santa Rozalia. We went to the island, Isla Raza, and found the waterbird, the Elegant Tern. We found where this bird nested. Everyone knew this waterbird very, very well, but they had never found where it was nesting. It was on this little desert island. They flew in and laid one egg--no nest--the whole colony of them. Walking around, outside of them, would be the gulls. The Mexicans would rush in and grab an egg or a baby. It was a pitiful sight to see. We'd walk through them and get out as fast as we could get out so there wouldn't be so much destruction.

The Mexicans discovered it shortly after that and would go in and take every single egg on the island of maybe a thousand, two thousand birds. They would take those eggs and sell them in Guaymas, Mexico and they were as good as, if not better than, chicken eggs. Griff and some other men, ornithologists, finally got the Mexican government to declare it out of bounds and stop the Mexican people from doing it. They didn't know.

Baum: It would be the end of that species, wouldn't it?

MWB: Oh, yes, it would. Now they're very well-protected. It was due to Griff and, I think, Lou Walker was the other man. He was down in that country a great deal after we were there.

Baum: Did Griffing, Jr. continue interested in the birds during this period? Did he go with you in the springtime?

MWB: No, because he was, first, in college and then immediately went to work in the newspaper business. He graduated in 1930, and that was the bad period.

Baum: He started right at the Depression.

MWB: He went to Mexico with a man who was going to go into export-import business and did that for a year and lived in Mexico, writing and speaking Spanish extremely well. Then that blew up because of the Depression. For about two or three years, I ran a home for the unemployed, it seems. There was Griffing without a job and Tony [J. Elton Green] without a job and Howe without a job. Then they'd get jobs. I remember at that time they were changing the gas system over to natural gas. They went down and learned how to do this and became plumbers, you might say. That was Howe and Tony. By that time, Griffing, Jr. had a job on the San Diego Sun. The boys were working here and there at different places. Griffing went from the San Diego Sun to Los Angeles to the Hearst papers.

Baum: This was after 1930. Was that when they graduated?

MWB: No. Howe graduated in his third year in order to get married, but he didn't marry. He was to marry Helen Lewis, and he didn't. It would never have worked.

Baum: What year was that?

MWB: 1930. He had finished his second year at Stanford. They gradually got jobs. He went into the newspaper business, too. The editor of the Sun, Hal Bartlett, was a great friend of ours. In each case, when the boys really needed work, he put them on as police reporters--the bottom of the list. Griffing went straight up, but Howe went into other things. Then they both drifted east, Griffing still with the Hearst papers. From that time on, he lived in Washington, and he went from the Hearst papers to Marshall Field--I've forgotten the name of the paper, but it was in Chicago.

Baum: Marshall Field--oh, the Chicago Sun.

MWB: Yes. He was a political writer for that. He left that to go as special correspondent to the war. He went over on the first ship that took correspondents. He was in the war three and a half years, I guess it was. He came back from the war and went right back to that paper.

Baum: The Chicago Sun?

MWB: Yes. And it folded.

Baum: I remember that.

MWB: Then he was picked up by CBS, first for radio, then television. He was the one who created--it was interviewing congressmen, senators, all the big people. It has a name and it'll come to me.

Baum: Yes, it should come to me, too.

MWB: That was his baby. Then he gave eight o'clock news. When I would be visiting Washington, they'd say, "Oh, I always have breakfast with your son." 8:00 a.m. news. "Capitol Cloakroom" was the name of the program. I don't know whether it's still running or not. It was for a long time, on radio. Then it finally went on to television and he was on that for years. Then he did all sorts of work for CBS.

Baum: And he lived in Washington?

MWB: Yes, he lived all those years in Washington. After the war, he was divorced and then he married Jane Eads. She wrote "Washington Letter" for the Washington Post and was with them for twenty-five years. Jane Eads. She always wrote under that name. They both retired and went to Florida to live. They had lived there.

Baum: What was the first wife's name?

MWB: Mary Jackson. Today she's in "The Waltons." She's the sister. The two sisters, you know, who sell the recipe their father made. She's still with "The Waltons" and has been with them five years. She was always an actress. She's been on the stage in a number of things, and movies.

Baum: Where did he meet her?

MWB: He met Mary Jackson here when we were having our Exposition in 1935. That was our second Exposition and it was to try to drag us out of the doldrums and it did a great deal for us. They had this abbreviated Shakespeare which was done first in the Chicago Exposition in 1934 and then came here and played in '35 and '36, both summers. He met her and they were married. They went back to Nevada, Las Vegas or some place like that, and then came back and stayed with us for a while. Then they moved to Los Angeles. She'd finished up the little work and he was covering the Exposition for the Hearst papers in Los Angeles. Then they went east, and were divorced after he got home from Europe.

Baum: Since we're tracing Griffing right now, did he continue his interest in the birds?

MWB: Yes, but he didn't follow through. He didn't have the time at all. By that time, his father wasn't well enough to do it.

Griff was still trading a little and keeping track. Before the beginning of the war, we moved the collection over to the natural history museum in San Diego, because we sold our house in '41 and went east for quite a long trip. Then he worked with it up at the natural history museum. He, by that time, felt that that was the thing to do. Of course, he wasn't really strong enough to take the care, and they take a lot of care. That collection is now at UCLA.

Baum: What's the name of the collection?

MWB: Ed Harrison has it. It's open to the public with restrictions. He's a man who collected with us from the time he was seventeen years old, and had the wealth and the interest, and still has. He's one of the directors of the San Diego Natural History Museum. He has this huge collection in his own residence, close by the University.*

Baum: In Los Angeles?

MWB: Yes. Is it Los Angeles or Pasadena? I'd have to look that up.

Baum: So Ed Harrison, then, collected with Griff, is that right?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: And Griff's collection is now at UCLA?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: It's closed?

MWB: It's incorporated with Ed Harrison's collection. Eggs are so fragile that they will, unless they have the right temperature and are carefully taken care of, just shatter as they age. Particularly, you have to have the right humidity, temperature, and everything. He has the interest and will have it, I guess, all of his life because Ed must be around sixty. When Griffing was up here last year, we went up and spent a whole day with him.

*Margaret Bancroft note, November, 1979: Ed Harrison is now connected with the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Sociology.

Baum: Didn't Griffing, Jr. write a book about eggs?

MWB: He's written three books, those three that you saw there. I thought I showed them to you; maybe I didn't. But yes, he did, and I have the manuscript, a story of our whole collecting, except that there's too much about me in it. I think it's an excellent book. They say they'll publish it, and then when the powers-that-be look into it thoroughly--there is so much prejudice against egg collecting. They say we are bad people and they, then, refuse to publish it. Now it's still in manuscript form, and someday someone's going to do it when they get over this craze.

Ecology has gone overboard on things like that. There were a few collectors, but they were all around the United States. A small number of collectors always taught the people enough about the care of birds, particularly not to shoot the eagles and hawks. To collect, you have to have a federal permit and a state permit. You have to have your collection open for inspection.

Baum: For study, I suppose.

MWB: For study, yes. Anyone who wanted to come, we always opened our collection. Of course, we always enjoyed people who came, and had made friends all over the United States. You correspond and trade with them, very much like people trade stamps. They have a book that gives eggs in a cash value, but you cannot sell them. They have to have some way of giving the value to trade eggs.

Now, when we found the wonderful birds on the island, we collected a large amount of those eggs and brought them back. There was just one single egg, so it was very easy, and they were all just a little short of the size of a hen egg. We traded all over the United States. We set our own price tag on them, you might say.

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MWB: Every type of person could be a collector. There were very few women who did it. I was not popular with the wives, I tell you, because I always went.

Baum: It sounds like it was too hard for women, usually. Isn't that pretty strenuous?

MWB: Oh, yes, very strenuous. A tremendous amount of walking and camping. Nowadays, you'd have campers. Of course, we went on roads no camper could possibly have gone on. In the early days, we went on horseback. Griff had ridden a great deal in his life, but he didn't enjoy riding very much. He was very thin and long-legged. Half the time, he'd be walking and somebody would be leading his mule.

Baum: He bounced uncomfortably on the horse?

MWB: Yes. [laughter] Absolutely.

Any hobby is fascinating when you get down into the very bottom of it. I remember once we were in New York and he said he wanted to go to Atlantic City. We were there playing tennis. The boys were practicing. There was no tournament. They were doing something else. The boys, Howe and Johnny Doeg, always met other boys.

Griff said we'd go down to Atlantic City to visit a collector. I didn't know whether the man owned the hotel or whether he was a bootblack; I hadn't any idea. He wrote on this stationery I'd never known. Well, he happened to be the owner or manager and he put us up very handsomely and we went to see his collection. It was the first time I'd ever been to Atlantic City.

Once in Washington, Griff and Griffing went to see a man who had a collection and the door was slammed in his face. They left, knowing nothing about this man. They did leave a card and he called us wherever we were staying. He said, "I'm very sorry about what happened, but my wife and I have such a disagreement all the time about eggs. She has a hatred against all egg collectors, but today she's not going to be home. Would you come and see my collection?" [laughter] He divorced her and took the collection elsewhere. This really was true. We were telling it once and somebody said, "Oh, what a pity." I said, "I wouldn't put my husband up against that, because I'm sure he'd take the collection and let me go away. I'm perfectly sure that the collection would come out ahead of me." [laughter]

But it took the husbands away in the spring of the year and someone used to say, "How do you get to go on all these trips?" I said, "Because I know I'm a fine camp cook." They love good food wherever they are, so I was always one of them. Griff and I traveled as a team. It was so necessary, on account of his hearing.

Baum: Let me go back to this period right after you left Walnut Creek. It sounded as if there was about a ten-year period when you were taking care of the boys and they were getting through college. And you were interested in the bird egg collecting and the tennis, and you lived here in San Diego, is that right?

MWB: Yes. We bought a house between Laurel and Maple on First Street. It was a big two-storey house, very comfortable.

Baum: You must have been away from home quite a bit.

- MWB: Oh, surely, we were. We were away a great deal, but we always had help. I had a remarkably fine woman who came from Sweden. She and her husband had worked for my sister Susie May. Susie May died in 1918 of TB. 1917 it was, right after we were married; I had to come down, I remember, for the funeral. Now, where was I?
- Baum: You were talking about the Swedish lady who took care of your husband.
- MWB: Yes. Thelma Johnson. She didn't live in, but she worked for us steadily. She had worked for my sister where she and her husband had a little cottage nearby. Then she came to work for me. All those years she worked for us, took care of Griff when I was gone. Her husband would come and get her, or Griff would take her home. She is, I always say, one of the three great ladies I've known in my life. She never failed. There are very few great ladies.
- Baum: Was Griff handling the Bancroft properties then here in San Diego?
- MWB: Yes. After Hubert Howe Bancroft died, they kept certain properties, particularly the properties in San Francisco. They gave Griff the farm that was here at Spring Valley--it was a big olive orchard, several hundred acres in olives--and an old theater and town property. The boys, Paul and Phil, took the farm at Walnut Creek, which turned out to be very valuable, and so did this other property, except we had to sell a lot of it at a disadvantage during the Depression. Of course, Griff never had a job. He never practiced law--he was a lawyer--because of his hearing. Any mistake that would be made would always be made because of his hearing. He kept his license for many years to practice and he particularly knew law connected with evaluation of property and laws and all of that. We finally traded the place at Spring Valley for a building which was called the Bancroft Building.
- Baum: In San Diego?
- MWB: Yes. It was First and Broadway. We sold that and cleared up the big indebtedness that he had on this property and still had some property scattered here and there. Gradually we sold it until there's just one piece of property now. I don't own a house anymore. I just rent; I don't want to pay taxes all the rest of my life. [laughter] I'm through paying taxes. I've paid enough inheritance and this, that, and the other of taxes. When I moved into an apartment, they said, "A condominium," and I said, "No, I want to just rent. Just pure rent. By the year."
- Baum: Did the management of this farm and properties take a lot of Griff's time?

MWB: Yes, it did. Then, of course, we went back and forth to San Francisco for consultation for handling the property at 731 Market Street--that's a six-storey building--and a piece of property at Van Ness which the boys still own. That property, of course, all went to the boys, the property that we had in trust for them. I had the house here and other things of my own, investments. Griff was very clever about renting and leasing and handling property that way.

But it didn't tie him down. He'd come home and do it and be home a week. Then we'd go off on another camping trip.

It was a beautiful time of year. Starting on these islands out here, Catalina and those islands, we'd go over there by boat. We didn't own a boat at that time. We always went with a group of collectors. From the eagles and hawks, we would go gradually right straight along until you could collect from February till June. You'd end up in the high mountains in June. We were out at the most beautiful time of the year. Then we'd come home for summer. Very easy life. [laughter] It was strenuous.

Baum: It sounds pretty hard. It seems like Griff was doing as much as any professor or naturalist would have been doing as his career.

MWB: He was. Griff worked at it. You see, every single nest of eggs, you keep right on it. When you found it; where you found it; how many eggs; the state of incubation. Then, he wasn't strong enough to make these trips on muleback, but he always urged me to do it, and he was playing a great deal of bridge. He would have his lunch and dinner maybe at the Cuyamaca Club and play bridge when I'd be on one of these, not long trips.

Down at the Meling Ranch, I drove cattle from halfway up from Campo. The Meling Ranch was in the high country. You have to keep the cattle, when you're bringing them to sell, pretty much in the elevation that they're raised in. Otherwise, you put them down on the coast and they'd get so many ticks that by the time you got them up to Tijuana, your cattle wouldn't be fit to sell. They have no immunity against the ticks. The mountain cattle can't go to the coast; the coast cattle can't go to the mountains for that reason. Gradually, they could be shifted, but not in a fast drive. So we drove cattle through the mountains.

We were camped there one time, we had one man with us, Clyde Field, a collector, and my husband and I were both looking for mountain quail eggs. We came back at noon and I said, "Well, what did you find?" He said, "I didn't find the eggs, but I found something very valuable for you. Very interesting." I said, "What?" He said, "Down at the end of the south pasture--"

MWB: (we were in a beautiful little valley, no one in it, and a lake) "--Salve Meling has come in with nearly five hundred head of cattle and a group of men and his son. They're driving in to Campo. Salve said if you'd like to drive with these men and collect--" (we were there, you see, in an automobile) "--why, you could take his horse and his equipment--" (Salve was rather short and I could wear his chaps, his spurs, and everything) "--and you can go right through this country that we can't possibly cover by automobile."

Clyde Field was a collector, very quiet. He was one of the big collectors. He said, "Margaret, you wouldn't go with those people." He said, "I was in the camp while Griff was talking. You have no idea how tentative it is." I said, "But I do. They're all friends of mine. And I will go with them." Nothing more was said. Salve came up that night for dinner. Our camps were maybe half a mile apart. We, in a few words, said that I'd go. We went on talking.

The next morning, they were going to drive back. It was only a long day's drive from here. I started packing. Clyde again said, "I think you're making a mistake, Margaret." I said, "I've camped with the people. Nothing's going wrong. They're going to take care of me. I'll be better cared for than I would be working alone," which I did so much of the time. We were in the valley, but you'd know that you were alone. I put all the goodies, everything--we always carried a great deal of extra stuff--and I had a little snake medicine and put that in my bedroll. We were to meet them, for the cattle started out at daybreak down the road a certain ways.

Suddenly an unshaven, dirty man--Eulogo was his name--popped up right out of the brush and he said, "Ah, Senora, Senora," and I was very welcome. He lifted up my sleeping bag and a box of groceries and all sorts of exciting things for them to have--fruits--that they didn't have. I told Griff goodbye. Clyde Field kept looking around, looking around, and he said, "Griff, I wouldn't let my wife take a chance like that." [laughter] First he thought that I was going to be murdered for my necktie because he looked like that.

Well, in the meantime, they'd all gotten shaven, knowing I was going to join the group. When we finished the drive that day, they washed their clothes and got themselves looking quite respectable. We would drive the cattle, one person going ahead and leading. It goes very slowly because they graze as you drive them, usually about fifty of them, then another driver. There were nine men, I think. Salve's son was about seventeen years old, very blond, and so was Salve, because they were Norwegian. He spoke Spanish better than he spoke English, but he spoke English. The rest of them spoke Spanish.

MWB: Suddenly a call would come back, being relayed, "Un nido, un nido, a nest, Senora." I'd say, "What class?" "Pajaro azur," which meant blue bird. Well, that could have been anything that was blue. It could have been a blue jay. [laughter] It could have been blue-birds--the mountain bluebird was up in that country--but they were all interesting to me. And they had found a nest. They'd halt the whole thing, just let the cattle graze. One man would stand and guard the nest so the cattle wouldn't knock it down. It would be right in the brush. Or it would be a black-tailed gnat catcher or a hummingbird. I'd go up. I had equipment on a horse--it was a very quiet horse--and I think I had some of the equipment on a mule, too. We had boxes and, of course, Griff gave me all this equipment and packed it in alforjas. They were nearing the end of the drive. We had a week to go, but they'd been driving for two weeks before that. Then I would tell them what kind of bird it was. The boy could usually translate it into Spanish--and Spanish to English and back. And I would pack the egg. Maybe it would take half an hour. You have to take a long piece of cotton and wrap around and around one way and another. Then put it into a little box-like container. From that into a big box, and from there into the alforja.

Baum: What is that word you're saying?

MWB: It's the alforja.

Baum: Is this a box with a little compartment?

MWB: No, it's the big packing cases that go on each side of a mule. You put the pack saddle on and then lift these up and hook them over. That's where you put all your provisions. On top of that, you throw your bedrolls. Then on top of that you throw a canvas. It's a great art, packing a mule, I tell you. But I always had my own collecting bag that I carried by hand. I had that right on my horse. We were riding horses at that time, some horses and some mules.

We had maybe three hours at noon when we let the cattle graze. We would have to cook lunch, because you had to have coffee and you had to make tortillas. If you had something left over, beans, you'd heat those and put them in the tortillas and wrap them. And that was it for lunch. Then they'd take a siesta. We were following a stream bed down from high country down to lower country. Then they'd make camp. Sometimes I'd be way behind, but one of the men would always stay near or Salve's son, Felipe.

Baum: This was the Meling boy.

MWB: Yes. I remember he came to get me one afternoon and he said, "Great excitement in camp. Did you notice those sheep that were going by the other side of the valley?" and I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, we bought a lamb and they're butchering it now. We're going to eat the liver and the ribs tonight." It was quite a celebration. I broke out a bottle of tequila. They sang. Nearly always on those trips, they carried a guitar strapped right onto the pack. It was a moonlit night and we sang and sang. But when I came up--I had cleaned up a little and they had finished cooking and were waiting for me--here was this dead lamb staring at me. They left it on the side. They hadn't finished butchering it, you see. They were ready to eat the liver and the ribs that were barbecued over the fire. I took one look and turned my back as fast as I could. That was just a little more than I could take. But I was hungry enough that I ate the ribs and the liver and the tortillas. I had some extra dried fruit, things like that, for dessert. When I broke out that bottle of liquor, I said, "Now, it's just going to be half. Each man is going to have a drink tonight and a drink tomorrow night." They were so cute and so polite.

I think it was the next night we were down in rather a deep canyon and we had to put the cattle down, which was almost like in a corral. They put lariats right straight across the canyon, so it was a fence. Everybody had a lariat. Then they put saddle blankets all over to keep the cattle from going through it. The cattle weren't happy and you knew it because they kept lowing. That night, they literally sang to those cattle, all night long.

They were kidding me in Spanish and I sometimes would miss a little and I said to Philip in English--we tried to talk Spanish entirely--"Philip, is there going to be a stampede?" He said, and it was almost a stutter, "Mrs. Bancroft, I think it would be wise to sleep with your boots on tonight. You just get over beside that tree, and if you hear anyone yell, 'Watch out!', just lean as hard as you can against that tree. Hug that tree and you'll be safe." I actually put my boots on. This time, we'd gotten down in rough country with some cactus, so I slept with my boots on, but they didn't stampede. If they had, they'd have come right through camp.

Baum: Were they afraid of wild animals like bobcats?

MWB: No, no. Anything would spook them.

Baum: I see. You could just tell when they were nervous.

MWB: Well, because they were lowing; they weren't happy. There was no feed down there. There was water. But they were cold and they just were milling. The men took turns, an hour at a time or two hours; the men would go down there. They took the guitar down there

- MWB: and played and sang, and built fires. They had at least three fires going all night long. I didn't do it, because I was so tired myself and they said they had enough men to do it. I never was in a real stampede. That night, every time I woke up, I wondered what was going on. The moon was shining. That's another thing that disturbed them, and the coyotes barking.
- Baum: Did you ever think of going into the cattle business as a way of making a living?
- MWB: No.
- Baum: That was just for fun.
- MWB: Just fun. It was a way of getting out with the Melings.
- Baum: It was a way of advancing your egg collecting.
- MWB: Yes. Salve Meling said I spoiled three or four vaqueros because they were looking for birds' eggs, looking down instead of looking up here where the cattle were. They were always chasing wild cattle, or half-wild cattle. It wasn't on this trip particularly, but when I went down there at other times.
- Baum: Weren't a lot of Americans investing in ranching and farming in Baja California in the '30s?
- MWB: Yes. The Melings, the whole Meling family. That's a story in itself. They went there in '86. The Johnsons--Mrs. Meling was a Johnson. They were right on the coast; then they bought this place up the valley. The Meling ranch in San Jose is about 2,200 feet. They had a mine above that, miles from there, that was quite productive at one time, a gold mine. Mr. Johnson was more interested, but he was interested in making a living for a very big family. They gave this property to Birdie Johnson when she married Salve Meling.
- The Melings came here to work on the coast in any capacity they could. Going to see or lightering is really what they were interested in doing. From Ensenada, they carried in supplies from a bay someplace to the gold mines. People were very interested in gold mining and there was a lot of money taken out of Baja California at one time. There were Mexicans, Americans--every type of person was gold mining, just as they were in the days of '49. But this was at the end of it.
- Baum: During the Depression, how did your properties in San Diego fare?

MWB: Badly. Everything did. People didn't have the money to pay the rent, or you had to keep cutting your rents. We cut our way of life, I remember, to one-tenth of what we were spending in one month. That's when we came back on the Least Petrel. We got a letter from Phil and Paul saying that they couldn't send the sum. Most of the money came from the rentals of the San Francisco property. Griff said he didn't know how we could do it and I said, "We'll just stop spending." And we did. Actually, we had all the equipment for these trips and you didn't spend a lot of money. Going on the boat was expensive, but we had already bought the boat and made the trip.

Sons Griffing, Jr. and Howe##

Baum: You and your husband, Griff, went around the tennis circuit with Howe up to '27.

MWB: Through '27. In '28, Griff and I were on a trip to Europe for four months. Howe was in boarding school in Berkeley and Griffing was in college. Griffing was in the University of Chicago. Howe was in a coaching school. He was really in boarding school, in Berkeley. It was a small, private, coaching school. He went to Stanford in 1928. His tennis playing ended right there. Howe went around the world as a cadet on a cruise ship the summer of 1928. Griffing and I went to Europe and we met at Marseilles. The first thing Howe asked was if we had any money.

Baum: You met Howe at Marseilles.

MWB: Marseilles. He was out of money and we were practically out of money. My letter of credit had never reached me. We went to American Express and there was a check there from Griff, Sr. for the both of us.

Baum: When you were in Europe, this Griffing was Griffing, Jr.

MWB: Oh, yes. Griffing, Jr.

Baum: Not your husband.

MWB: Oh, no. He had had his day because his father and mother had dragged him all over Europe and Mexico, and he was through with it, but he wanted Griffing and me to go. His father said he had to get certain grades. They sent a man on a mule twenty-five miles up in the mountains in San Ignacio, Baja California, where we were making our headquarters. We opened the message and the only thing it said was, "Okay. Ready to go to Europe." [laughter]

MWB: His grades were okay. So we immediately packed and went down to Santa Rosalia and were given a great going-away party by the ranch and Mexican colonies. We went across on La Providencia. That was really part of the Rothschilds' holdings. They owned a fifty-year lease on land for copper. From Guaymas I left Griff and Tony was with us. They were driving up the coast. I got a train, went to Tucson, and from there to Chicago and met Griffing. My clothes met me, too. I had nothing to wear except two tennis dresses.

Then we took the Canadian Pacific because they went to London. We were in Europe, I guess it was for two and a half months, the whole summer vacation. When we came back, Griff went to Chicago and I went to New York and visited and then came home. That was that trip.

Howe had made a trip around the world on a big cruise ship, on which he was a cadet. He went into Stanford that fall. He gave up his tennis about that time because it took so much of his time, and he had to keep up his studies. Then he fell in love; I guess he'd been in college two years. He quit college to go to work so he could marry. But he didn't marry the girl he was in love with, so he went into the newspaper business. He started with the Sun, the San Diego Sun, again a Scripps paper, and stayed there for some time. Then he went to Washington and got a job. I don't remember what his job was there on the newspaper, but he landed in writing for the Agriculture Department. From that time on, he was with the Agriculture Department for a number of years.

He didn't go into World War II because of back trouble. But he went into the "Voice of America" when it was first formed. I'm not sure of that date, but it was during World War II. From that time on, he stayed with the "Voice of America," writing entirely, and doing research work for them. He was in charge of one division. He went around the world for them at one time, around India. He was in Egypt. He was all over; wherever the "Voice of America" was used, he was there. He married Mary Durand. Her father was tariff commissioner. They had two daughters, Nancy and Beverly. He and Mary were divorced; I can't remember the date of the divorce. Then he was married to a girl whose name I don't remember. There we are. [laughter] He is now retired and living in Alexandria, Virginia. Where are we going from there?

Philip Bancroft, Republican Candidate for Senator, 1938

Baum: Somewhere along the line, we did mention that in the late '30s, you and Griff worked on Philip Bancroft's campaign for the nomination for senator from California, so I think we've covered that.

MWB: Phil Bancroft got very disturbed over the situation with union labor, connected with farm labor, and began to do a good deal of talking publicly, and one thing led to another, and he made the decision in 1938, in early spring, to run for the senate. From the moment he announced that, both Griff and I devoted our time completely to his campaign. We took San Diego County. Griff took the city and I took the county and organized it. We carried it very handsomely, I think something like three to one. We were very proud of that. [laughter] We went with him, at times, to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento. When he won the nomination, I was with him in Sacramento, and Anne Bancroft. Nina had a heart attack at that time and was very much out of it.

It was about a week before election when the trouble started. The tremendous force came out against us, which was manipulated from Washington because they did not want Phil in there. He was far too honest and forthright, plus he had money and couldn't be bought. It was a Democratic year. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was president, and there was definitely no chance of a Republican winning, so we were licked. It was marvelous the way the family--every one in the family--pitched in. They gave Griffing, Jr. a leave of absence from the Hearst papers, and he traveled with Phil-- I guess it was the last two months of his campaigning--all over California.

Margaret Bancroft's Work During World War II

MWB: Speaking of war, when the war started, I was on the board of directors of the Red Cross at this time. They asked you to do quite a big job there, but I thought I could do more by taking a regular job. I took a job as counselor at Convair, Consolidated, it was at that time. I wanted to be Rosie the Riveter, but they wouldn't let me because they thought I knew so much about San Diego County and San Diego itself that I would be far more use to the war effort by helping the girls who were coming by droves in to do electrical work. Some of them were almost riveting. All kinds of work. I was there for two years. I won an E pin because I never missed a day and never was late for work for one year. And they gave out pins, like school children. [laughter] I've got it somewhere still. Then I became sick and had pneumonia and had to get out. My war work was over. I was trying to win it all by myself and found I couldn't quite do that. But it was a great experience. We were the first to put women into the airplane plants. They were untrained women. We had a lot of manicurists who turned out to be fine workers in the electrical department.

Baum: Manicurists!

- MWB: Because of their hands. Every type of woman. I remember so well, people would say to me, "Why did my cook leave and go into that hard work? Would you find out?" Someone had told them she'd seen me, or something. I said, "I know it without having to make any talk with the girl." Invariably, they said it was the thing to do at the moment.
- Baum: Sure, the patriotic thing.
- MWB: Patriotic thing. There they had so much company and so much more fun. Housework is lonely work, the loneliest work you can have. Here there was an equality of how good you were as a worker and that was it. So, it was a big social occasion. Everyone went in pool cars. It had its attraction, besides the attraction of loyalty to their country.
- Baum: And better wages, too, as I recall.
- MWB: Oh, yes, yes, they were. But when you added it up, actually, in most cases, they were better off in the job they had as a cook or as a maid or anything, but this was a different world. All of them wanted to do that. They put plenty of women in the kitchen and the washtub that didn't have to be, but they simply literally couldn't get help. I think that was one of the best things that ever happened from the woman's standpoint because the war gave them an equality they'd never had before.
- Baum: When you say we were the first to put women in the aircraft, do you mean here in San Diego?
- MWB: That's as I understood it.
- Baum: I see.
- MWB: Because they had to redo the buildings. They were made for men only. They would have to redo the restrooms, and there was a whole new deal. The foremen and the supervisors, in the beginning, resented us very much. They began handling women and realized you had to have a woman who would follow some girl into a restroom in hysterics over some mistake she had made, or some man had pinched her in the fanny while they were wiring the airplane or something--and a man couldn't go into the restroom. That was one of our jobs, keeping these girls on their jobs, more than anything. We particularly tried to get them to eat more regularly and eat decent food to keep them from being absent. We gave them talks when they first came in and then kept after them. I remember one woman came in crying one day. She was insulted. [interruption, door buzzer]
- Baum: You followed somebody into the restroom who was insulted?

MWB: She came in, rather, to my office. She said the doctor had insulted her. She said, "I'm not obscene!" I said, "Didn't he say 'obese'?" "Well, it was some word like that. And I've never been obscene in my life." I said, "Do you know what the word 'obese' means?" "Well," she said, "I don't know, but it wasn't anything connected with me." I said, "It really means that you're overweight and they can't carry insurance on you." [laughter] We had to teach them how to use the plumbing, a lot of these girls. They were fresh off of the farm.

[speaks to someone who has entered the room]

Now, where do we go on from there?

Family Life After the War

Baum: All right. We briefly touched on the war. I just wonder what other outstanding things you recall on the period from 1945 on.

MWB: We went back to collecting birds' eggs and back to living a regular life. It took a lot of doing for everybody to get back to normal. We stayed east with the boys a lot; then they came out here. We did take some more trips into Baja California, but never strenuous trips because Griff's health was failing. He had a bad hemorrhage in 1952 and wasn't really ever well again until he died in 1955.

Baum: Did he sell off some of the property, or did he have to continue managing the property?

MWB: We had sold, during the Depression, quite a bit of property. A lot of it was at a loss because you just had to have money to keep going, and people couldn't keep on paying the taxes. We went on paying the taxes. I will say that, as long as I can trace back, there was never a time, regardless of how depressed the country was, that we didn't continue to pay more taxes. I'm glad, now, not to have much property.

Baum: So the taxes went up, no matter what happened.

MWB: Regardless. [laughter] They went up. Now where do we go?

Baum: Before Griff died in 1955.

MWB: Yes. In '46, we moved out to La Jolla. That was something he enjoyed. What I had completely forgotten, he was completely bitten by raising flowers when we bought this house with a good deal of land. He got started raising orchids. At that time, there was a great deal of interest in raising cymbidiums. In the East, they had been shipped over from England and people began to be very interested in orchid culture. From that, it drifted west and became the most popular and extravagant flower you could raise. You bought the bulbs at a terrific price. We built a glass house and had that until he died. Afterwards, I sold that piece of property. He loved that.

Griff always had a hobby. He had a hobby way back of photography and he had a hobby of playing chess, postal chess. He played it with both of his sons. He was a tremendous reader because of his deafness. Griff would get up at daybreak to hear Griffing talk at eight o'clock in Washington--that was radio. Then, of course, he was always interested in politics, always did some political work because he believed in it very strongly. He felt that everybody should help politically.

We always had a very happy social life. More and more, we did things at home and didn't travel as much as he grew older. I used to, sometimes, take the trips down to Baja California, but at that period of time, I didn't. However, I did soon after Griff died. I went down there, and out of five years, I spent a whole year, a month or two at a time at the ranch, just riding the range. I got very interested in archaeology and collected for the Museum of Man. I took two winters studying that and worked in the Museum of Man, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Balboa Park here in San Diego. And I took a trip to Europe; I was gone about nine months. I took another trip with a sister all over Central America and Mexico. From the time I've been here, I've been very busy--traveling half the time, not so far, but still having good fun. Swimming. End of life to date. [laughter]

Baum: I see you have a lot of family to keep up with.

MWB: Oh, yes. I do. I've moved down a generation with most of my friends because so many of them are gone now or not interested in doing things--the things that we're doing that I'm interested in. I'm still swimming and still riding horseback. I go down to the Meling ranch at least once or twice a year. That's where I do my riding.

Baum: I know you have a birthday coming up. What birthday is that?

MWB: I was born in 1893, July the 10th, which is next Sunday. That's the end of the story. [laughter]

Baum: If you had a chance to lead your life over again, would you continue it in the movies?

MWB: No. You mean if I were given exactly the same talents and everything? I don't think so. The talent or the determination to make the sacrifice--sometimes an unnatural sacrifice--to get where you have to get in both the stage and the movies--I don't think I would have gone on in that. I would have studied more. I had the time. I should have made the time to take courses in college, not for any reason except for just the knowledge. But I got it in a different way. Griff was my teacher most of the time. [laughter] He pounded a lot of things into my head. From that time on, at this age, you're just glad you're alive. I'm having fun.

Baum: What do you think of the current women's movement?

MWB: I'll go along with most of it. I would never want to be a man, though. I am too willing to take the privileges that women have and not try to take a lot of privileges to do work that men do. I really don't think that we're fitted for it and I don't think we're physically fitted for it. A lot of things we are and a lot of things we aren't. I'm not going to sit in deep criticism of them any more than I am at a lot of things the young people are doing. I go along with them. I'm not going to fight at this time of life. I want to have fun.

Baum: I was wondering what kind of goals you had in mind for your granddaughters and now great-granddaughters.

MWB: [laughter] They've got to live their lives the way they see fit because it is such a different world. It's hard enough just to keep up with it without worrying about them. I enjoy them and I do for them; have pleasure with having them with me on and off. There are so many nephews; I'm a little partial to the men. I enjoy their company particularly. I don't like to be with too many women en masse. It makes me nervous.

XI HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT'S DESCENDENTS

[Interview 6: September 28, 1978]##

Children and Grandchildren

Baum: We have several things to pick up on from our previous interviews. I'd be particularly interested in a little more information on Hubert Howe Bancroft's will. I think we'd been talking earlier about how he felt about his grandsons and his granddaughters, and his sons and daughters, and the difference in how he treated the boys and girls. Perhaps how he settled his will might give us some illustration of his character.

MWB: Hubert Howe Bancroft, I would say, there was nothing modern about the way he felt about women. It was extremely old-fashioned. He started out with Kate, his first daughter, who was very self-opinionated. She wanted her own way. She was his only child by the first marriage. From the time she was eight until she was sixteen, she lived in his home with nursery governesses, and went to school in San Francisco. He spent a great deal of time with her and took her with him on many trips. He seemed to have a great deal of love in that way.

Then when he married Matilda Griffing, he had his first son, Paul Bancroft. He didn't believe in middle names, so Paul Bancroft it was. He said the men in the family would take care of the women. That was his point of view always when it came to the matter of money. He gave his children a great deal and also a great deal of advice.

But when it came to the three boys who were born within a few years, and then his daughter Lucy, the story goes that he said to his wife, "Now if you're going to act that way, I'm not going to have any more children!" [laughter] And they didn't.



Margaret Wood Bancroft and
Dr. John Ross, Jr., Professor
of Medicine, University of
California, San Diego, on the
occasion of the presentation
of the Library of Griffing
and Margaret Bancroft to the
Library, University of Cali-
fornia, San Diego, 1971



Margaret Wood Bancroft
Portrait by
Ruth Lineaweaver Swisher, 1976

Baum: The story was that he preferred the boys to the girls?

MWB: Very definitely. He did--though he got a great deal of pleasure, particularly out of Kate in those years.

Baum: I don't know if I should ask you this question because you probably don't know the answer, but do you know why Kate was an only child for Emily?

MWB: Emily Ketchum.

Baum: Yes. Was that because they were unable to have more children or they didn't want any more?

MWB: No, because she was unable. She became ill and died when Kate was, I think, just eight. Then he remarried when Kate was sixteen.

He had plans for his sons. They must all--the three of them--go to Harvard, which they did. In the meantime, he was doing extremely well with his publishing of his books and also the publishing company, many facets of that. He bought a lot of real estate. He was a man who never overspent himself.

If he made a dollar a day as a young man, he'd put away ten cents. That was more or less his way of living throughout his life. When the books were finished and he began to travel more, he made this will out, giving his property to his three sons. Then he remade a will every year or so, so that if anyone tried to break the will, they would have to go back to the number of years that he had made these different wills, all a little bit different.

Baum: I see. He wanted a succession of wills so that the new one--if you broke it, you'd have to go back to the previous one.

MWB: Yes. And always back of that.

One of the things in early life he decided was that he didn't think his own boys, anyone, was really capable of taking care of that business until they were thirty-five years old. So this property was left--I'm not sure of the technical name, but it was left in trust for the sons, and they were to give so much money, monthly income, to his daughters.

Now, his daughter Kate was married, I think in the late '80s, and he thought, very decidedly, that her husband should support her. But he always gave her money. That's what he thought, that she must learn to live without his support.

- MWB: His daughter Lucy never married and he was very generous with her. But when he did die, the two girls received an annuity yearly, for life. At one time, they were getting more money than either of the three sons, during the Depression years, but that had to be first paid out of all of the money that they had. That carried through over the years until his last son died. That's as far, I think, in law that you can go--one generation beyond the generation. It's different from the way that the English do it.
- Baum: What carried over, Margaret? Phil died in August, 1975. And Lucy?
- MWB: She is still living. Just a shadow, but she's still living. She's in her nineties. Kate died, and he always paid Kate this money despite the fact that she was married.
- Are there any other questions you wanted to ask me about that?
- Baum: So he left the boys the money, but they could manage it. But the girls had a set amount that was guaranteed to them ahead of everything.
- MWB: Yes. An annuity.
- He didn't graduate that according to the total of money. So, as I say, at one time during the depths of the Depression in the '30s, they were getting more money than the boys. It was never changed by them. Lucy, to this day, is getting her annuity, which is comparatively small, but she had other things given to her besides, stuff she inherited from her mother.
- Baum: Did he think that women were not able to manage their own incomes or their affairs?
- MWB: That was more or less his idea. They could manage the home, though he depended a great deal on his wife.
- Baum: I'm thinking of what Matilda did. It sounded like she must have been a tremendous manager of the household, children, and servants.
- MWB: Well, she was, but that was woman's work. That wasn't financing. He was providing the money.
- Now the boys--you see, it's down to the grandsons, and they can do as they choose.
- Baum: Do the grandsons have to wait until they're thirty-five to get their money?

MWB: No, because you can't do that by law. One generation beyond the generation that was living when he died.

Baum: It sounds like that thirty-five year age was fairly reasonable, to me. [laughter]

MWB: Well, it was. None of his grandsons ever received, of course, any money during his lifetime. In other words, they never received any money except as the parents wanted to give them money. But they never received any money legally from the grandfather.

I think that covers that point pretty well.

Baum: We started in there with Kate. Maybe we could go on and mention briefly what each of his children did--who they married and what their jobs were.

MWB: Kate Bancroft married Charles O. Richards.

Baum: What was his occupation?

MWB: He worked at one time with Mr. Bancroft and then he also owned property here in San Diego and had an ice and cold storage company. But in the early days, he did a great deal with Mr. Bancroft, working with him.

Baum: Here in San Diego.

MWB: Yes, in San Diego. I think in the early days he was in San Francisco.

They had two children. One of them, the oldest one, was Ruth, and the second daughter was Katherine. Kate Richards was a very extravagant person who believed in living as the English and the French lived. She spent a great deal of time educating her children in France, Italy, and Germany. They were there when the earthquake came, and he sent for them to come back, not knowing what was going to happen.

Ruth Richards married Charles Lineaweaver of Philadelphia. Katherine Richards married Edgar Allan Poe II, a connection of the Edgar Allan Poe. Both of the women are dead, and also their husbands.

Baum: Charles Lineaweaver--what was his occupation?

MWB: He was a Philadelphia banker.

Baum: And Edgar Allan Poe II--what was he?

MWB: A lawyer.

Baum: Were they both eastern men?

MWB: Yes. Edgar Allan Poe lived in Baltimore and Charles Lineaweaver lived in Philadelphia--Mainline people.

Baum: How did these Richards girls meet gentlemen from the East there?

MWB: Because their mother took them east a great deal of the time. They were educated in the East and also in Europe. Then they lived some of the time there.

Ruth made her debut; I guess it was a year or two years after the earthquake and fire in San Francisco. They traveled a great deal.

Baum: I think you mentioned that Kate and her husband were separated.

MWB: Pleasantly separated for a good many years. She never wanted a divorce, and neither did he. But they didn't get along well enough to live together. The girls very often spent some of their time-- a year with the father and then with the mother, after they were out of school.

Baum: Did Hubert Howe Bancroft have much contact with these granddaughters of his--Kate's daughters?

MWB: Yes. He was very fond of them, particularly Ruth, and spent a lot of time with them. He was very anxious to have this great debut party. They bought the H.E. Huntington house in San Francisco right after the earthquake because all their property, with their living quarters and everything, was destroyed.

The Huntington house had a beautiful ballroom. That's the reason he bought it, so that they could have this coming-out party. I guess Babe [Katherine] just didn't because she was doing something else. They were lovely-looking girls and he was very proud of them.

Baum: Did he spend any time on their education? I realize this is all a time before you knew him.

MWB: He was very determined. Of course, Kate wanted them to be educated, particularly in France and Italy and Germany. She put so much more thought into their learning the arts. She was a great singer herself. As a matter of fact, Kate Richards could have gone into grand opera. She was big, statuesque, a very handsome woman. But Grandfather Bancroft said, "No, nice women didn't do that," in those days, you see. So she didn't.

- MWB: Ruth was in the First World War. She went on the first ship of civilians that went to Europe after the First World War was declared and got the position. She was, in the beginning, with the Red Cross and then went into special work. She got the position because she spoke French so fluently. Katherine stayed in New York with her mother during the war and was one of the drivers. What did they call them--?
- Baum: The ambulance drivers?
- MWB: Not ambulance--it wasn't that--carrying important people around. I guess it was part of the American Red Cross. They both received commendations for their work in the war. Ruth was there past the armistice. She stayed on to drive and to interpret during the peace treaty meetings, I guess, at Versailles.
- Baum: Were there any children of these children--Ruth and Katherine?
- MWB: Yes. Ruth has one daughter, who lives right here in La Jolla, who is named for her mother, Ruth Richards Lineaweaver. She's married to Robert Swisher. They have three children--don't ask for their names [laughter]--but they're charming children.
- Baum: Do you see Dickie Swisher?
- MWB: Yes. Very often. I've kept up with all of the family. I'm the one person that has done that, and I've never had fights with any of them. [laughter] They're pretty good at fighting, too. They've been really marvelous to me and I've enjoyed all of them--every one of them.
- Baum: Did Babe have any children? Katherine?
- MWB: Yes, she has two, a daughter, Kitty, and a son, Edgar Allan Poe III. They lived always in Baltimore and they live on the eastern shore now.
- Baum: Is there anything more about Kate's family that you think we need to know? Especially if anything's illustrative of Hubert Howe Bancroft's influence.
- MWB: I think not. They've grown up, still out of jail--they're all right.
- Baum: Now comes this second family, which I guess was at least sixteen years later than Kate, is that right?
- MWB: Yes. Let's see, Kate was born in 1860, I know that. Her mother died, I think it was 1868, and Hubert Howe Bancroft remarried, to Matilda Griffing, and that was in 1876. Then they had the three sons and the one daughter.

Baum: That first boy was Paul, wasn't it?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: So Griff's older brother was Paul.

MWB: There were Paul, Griffing, and Philip--no second names.

Baum: Paul, I think you told me, was married to Louise Hazzard?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: And she was a San Diego girl?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: And they had one son? Am I correct in that?

MWB: One son--Paul, Jr.

Baum: I read his name in the social pages sometimes.

MWB: Yes. And he's married and divorced. He had one son, who's Paul Bancroft III, a charming man. As a matter of fact, he sent me that pheasant.

Baum: Oh, that smoked pheasant we had for lunch was from Paul III?

MWB: Paul, the third. He came and visited me.

Baum: Maybe it's Paul III I read about in the social pages.

MWB: No, Paul, Jr. is written up very often by Charles McCabe and Herb Caen. And his wife, Kitty. They live at Puerto Vallarta part of the year, and live right in San Francisco the other part.

Baum: Kitty is the second wife?

MWB: Yes. Paul III has four children. Don't ask me their names.

Baum: I recall that Paul, Sr. did most of the management of the property from the San Francisco base, is that correct?

MWB: Yes. And Phil, after he came back from the war, took over the big place at Walnut Creek, which is about four hundred and some odd acres--that was pears and walnuts--and also helped Paul manage the properties.

Baum: Yes, Philip was a farmer.

- MWB: Phil trained as a lawyer, but when he came back from the war, he wasn't well, and he said he was never going to stay inside, never going to practice law again.
- Baum: Getting back to Paul, who managed the property. What did Paul, Jr. do?
- MWB: Paul, Jr. had a good time [laughter]--a lovely time! He graduated from Yale and had a job in New York; I'm not sure exactly what he did. He came west. At one time, he had the advertising and selling of the Russian vodka, and he didn't stay with it; otherwise he'd have made a fortune. But, of course, he is a very rich person.
- Baum: Is this from his inheritances?
- MWB: Oh, yes.
- Baum: From his mother's family, maybe, too.
- MWB: Yes, the Hazzards have money. As he once said to Cora, "You know, I really don't like to work."
- Baum: Oh, yes? But he was a businessman primarily.
- MWB: In business, yes. He had a little bit of this and a little bit of that. He's a man in his seventies now, you see.
- Baum: From what I read about in the social pages, he's pretty active, zinging around doing things.
- MWB: Oh, yes, real jet set.
- Baum: So I gather the Bancrofts are a long-lived people.
- MWB: Yes, they are, definitely.
- Baum: Now came Griff, Griffing.
- MWB: He went to Harvard, graduated, then studied law. He handled the San Diego property over a long period of time, and had hobbies, because he was deaf. His mother took him all over the United States and all over Europe to try to cure adenoids. Now it would be the simplest thing in the world, but then it wasn't. The minute they began having electric hearing devices, he had every electrical device known.

Griff wrote The Interlopers, which was really about the invasion of California by the Japanese before World War I. That was the book he was writing when we were in Walnut Creek. It was the year we lived there.

Baum: You said that Hubert Howe Bancroft and he would talk about that book.

MWB: Yes. He was intensely interested in Griff writing and always felt that Griff had the power to do it, but he didn't have the stick-to-itiveness to do it. I always said he wrote too perfect English. He was so careful of everything--the construction and everything else. His writing never had the charm that Griff himself had. He was a very, very witty person and very, very charming.

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Baum: You were saying Griff was so meticulous as a writer that he lost some of the charm that--

MWB: The spontaneity of his talking, because he didn't talk that way at all! He wasn't didactic in anything, but he was didactic in his writing. Even in his Flight of the Least Petrel, you see some of that. He had a tremendous sense of humor which never came out in his writing. Griffing, Jr. is a little bit like him. They just, I think, iron out the English until it's perfect, but hasn't the spontaneity that people should have in their writing.

Baum: That's what we hope tape recording will help people get over, because some people can talk it into the tape recorder and then patch it up a little bit, and it will be a lot better than if they write it first.

MWB: That's right.

Now, Griff's children. The oldest one was Barbara. Barbara is dead now. And then Griffing, Jr. and Howe.

Baum: Barbara, you mentioned, lived with her mother most of her life.

MWB: Yes, she did; she chose to. When they were getting their divorce, Barbara was going into her teens and was old enough to make her own decision. She loved New York and lived in the East. It was much wiser, in all ways, that she did it.

But she and I, not when they were right in the divorce, but afterwards, became great friends.

Baum: Did Barbara come to stay with you sometimes after the divorce?

MWB: Many, many times. She came here to La Jolla. When we lived up the hill, she and her second husband and the two children came and spent a month with us.

Baum: I wondered, when she was a child, did she visit?

MWB: Barbara was twelve and a half when I first knew her. Of course, when a child is fourteen, they have more or less a choice. She naturally stayed with her mother.

Baum: Was she as rambunctious as those two boys?

MWB: Oh, yes. [laughter] Yes, very--and very funny. She used to claim she was the oldest of the grandchildren because I think she was about six months older than Paul, Jr. I can still remember their getting into a fist fight over that when they were just about thirteen or fourteen years old and [chuckles] I had to separate them. She just went like a wild woman--like a woman would fight. But she had a great, sharp sense of humor sometimes. Pretty satirical--but she was a charming personality. A great reader. She made her living for a long time, writing. Part of it.

She was married, too, but she always wrote. Her first husband, Samson Raphaelson, who wrote the story that one of the great comedians that blacked his face--

Baum: Al Jolson?

MWB: Al Jolson.

Baum: I've almost got it, but I can't think--it's the name of an occupation, like the singer--

MWB: The Jazz Singer.

Baum: The Jazz Singer. He wrote that?

MWB: Samson Raphaelson, and he married Barbara Bancroft right at that time. It was such a success that they went to Europe, and she came home with a divorce. Samson Raphaelson is still alive. He's writing in Hollywood.

Then her second husband was Louis Molloy, who was private lawyer to Mayor La Guardia in New York City. He was in quite deeply in politics, and a very attractive person. He is dead.

Baum: Barbara's dead, too, you say.

MWB: Yes.

Baum: Do you know if Hubert Howe Bancroft spent any time with Barbara?

MWB: As a tiny child, very much, because she was the first-born grand-child, you see, and he was very interested in her. She came and spent the summer months with us when we were there.

Baum: In Walnut Creek? In 1917?

MWB: Yes. He was very interested.

Baum: I know you lent me that lovely picture of Matilda with Barbara.

Why don't you give me a little summary of Griffing, Jr. and Howe. I know we've talked about them on and off throughout, but it would be nice to have a little summary of Griffing first.

MWB: Griffing went to school right in San Diego, a grammar school. Then he graduated from the University of Chicago.

After trying to do some importing business out of Mexico with a friend of Griff's, he came back and decided he wanted to go into writing. I remember taking him down to the San Diego Sun, which was at that time owned by the Scripps. The editor, Hal Bartlett, was a great friend of mine. He was very blunt and stormed around and he said to Griffing, "What do you know?" about this, that, and the other. Griffing said, "Well, I can start out with reviews because I am such a great--" He was such a great reader.

He said [gruffly], "When can you go to work?" Griff said, "Now." He said, "Take off your coat and do so and so," and that's what he did. [chuckles] Then he went from the Sun to the Hearst papers and was with them in Chicago. From Los Angeles and Sacramento, he went east and worked for Hearst.

Then he went into the war. He was in three and a half years as a correspondent. He managed one paper right in Italy. Then he came back and went with Marshall Field, a paper in Chicago. It failed. Then Griffing went into CBS.

His real baby was "Capitol Cloakroom." That was done first on radio and then from that he went into television. He stayed with that until he retired. Now he's down in Florida, writing, studying and working with the Audubon Society, and he goes on guided tours, which he loves dearly. I've got an awfully good story done by a Fort Meyers paper on him.

His first marriage was to Mary Jackson, who is now with "The Waltons" on television. She's one of the elderly sisters that make--they call it "the recipe" and it turned out, of course, it was nothing but good old corn whiskey brewed slowly. They're great characters! She's in Los Angeles. I see her now.

Baum: She was an actress?

MWB: Always an actress. She played with the first group that played in the Globe Theater. They did that shortened version of Shakespeare. 1935, 1936. They were married in '36. Then they went east and she did a lot of work. She played on and off Broadway. She never was a star, but she was a grand supporting actress.

She and Griffing broke up while Griffing was abroad, and he married Jane Eads. Jane Eads was with the Washington Post for years. She wrote anything she wanted to write about Washington, D.C.--women, always women. They live in Captiva [Florida] and in the summertime they go north. She's a charming person. You would enjoy both of them; they're just darling. They're so much fun, and attractive.

Baum: Sounds like the Bancroft boys brought interesting girls into the family.

MWB: Yes, they did. They certainly did.

Baum: Starting with Griff and bringing in that movie starlet. [laughter]

MWB: Then the last one is Howe. Hubert Howe named him that and always called him Howe. Howe had two years at Stanford; then he quit. He was in love and wanted to go into business, and he finally ended up in Washington in "Voice of America." He was with the Agriculture Department, writing for two or three years. Then he went into "Voice of America" and traveled all over the world with that, and retired. He retired and lives in Alexandria. He's coming to visit me on the 12th of October.

Baum: And who did he marry?

MWB: His first wife was Mary Durand, a very attractive woman. They were divorced. He married a second time, and I can't just at the minute think of that wife. Then she dropped dead--a heart attack--and now he and his first wife, Mary, are really great friends. Kind of one of those working arrangements people have at that time of life.

Baum: Oh, he and his first wife again.

MWB: Mary Durand, his first wife, whom I always liked better.

Baum: Well, that's nice, isn't it.

MWB: Yes. She's a delightful, very well bred person. Her father was tariff commissioner under five presidents. They spent time in Europe. She worked with the French in the CIA. She went in

MWB: because she spoke beautiful French and was a very good pianist. I just visited them when I went with them to the wedding of their daughter in Cape Cod, second time around.

Baum: Oh, yes, I remember when you were going last year.

MWB: Yes, it was about this time September last year. It was a lovely trip.

Baum: I don't think I got the children. Howe had two children?

MWB: Yes, two daughters.

Baum: By Mary.

MWB: By Mary, the first wife, who is now his companion. [laughter]

Baum: They ought to put that back together again.

MWB: No. If they did, it wouldn't work five minutes. No, he has his own house; they're about ten minutes apart by car. And that's just fine! We traveled together and she and I always had a room on this trip. I was nearly two weeks with them. Couldn't be more attractive. I just had the best time. [laughter] She's not awfully proud of having been in the CIA.

Baum: Well, it's become unpopular since she was in it.

MWB: Oh, Lord, yes! Her father got her the job when it started and everyone thought it was going to be such a wonderful way of handling so much of the information, getting information, and it sort of ran away with itself.

Now they have plenty of money and they don't have to work. Both of them have reached their retirement age.

Baum: It sounds like both Howe and Mary led interesting lives.

MWB: They did.

Nancy is their oldest daughter and Beverly is the second. Nancy's is the wedding that I went to at Cape Cod. Nancy teaches. She is a professor at Bryn Mawr, teaching the study of religions of the world. I wouldn't say she's a religious person at all, but that's it.

Baum: Scholar of religion.

MWB: Yes. Very pretty girl. She's in her thirties. I would say she was thirty-two when she married.

Baum: Did Griffing have any children?

MWB: No.

Baum: No children.

Well, that takes us through Griff's family. We've gone through Kate, Paul, Griff, and now that brings us to Philip.

MWB: Philip's oldest daughter, as you know--you have all that, right?

Baum: Actually, a lot of that's in Philip's oral history. Anne's his oldest.

MWB: Yes. She was married and divorced and took back her name of Anne Bancroft.

Baum: I had her name--oh, Mrs. Wyman Graham.

MWB: Yes, that's it--Wyman Graham. She's a very sick person now. She's living way north there. You and I were going to get up there, and I still would love to do it.

Baum: Yes, I'd still like to do it. Santa Rosa, wasn't it?

MWB: Santa Rosa, yes. It's about fifteen miles out of there.

Baum: That's not so far away.

MWB: No, it isn't.

Baum: Did she have children?

MWB: Anne had a son and a daughter, and the daughter died of ptomaine poisoning when she was about eight years old. The son is not married, and he is living there with her.

Then Lucy was married to John Redfield and she died two years ago. Lucy had two boys.

Baum: So Lucy had two sons who would be Redfields.

Then there's Philip, Jr. who carries on the ranch, I know, or the farm--he manages the farm.

MWB: They sold the whole thing, you know.

Baum: Oh, they just sold it?

- MWB: In the last two or three years, they sold it piece by piece. They have nothing left but--I think it's twelve acres. Ruth, his wife, has turned that into one of the most spectacular cactus and succulent gardens in the United States.
- Baum: Is that right? Oh, I was there at Philip, Sr.'s ninetieth birthday and saw a lot of succulents in lath houses.
- MWB: They built a huge one and it has just gone wild! [laughter]
- Baum: Well, Philip, Sr. had gone wild over irises, I think. He had the most beautiful irises there.
- MWB: Yes, but they were really Ruth's.
- Baum: The irises, too?
- MWB: Yes, that belonged to her. That was something, you see. Phil lived across the street, you know.
- Baum: Now, Philip and Ruth have three children, am I correct? Nina was one.
- MWB: Yes. First is the one we know--Peter; he's not married. Then Nina. Nina is married and is going to have her first baby this month. Then the younger one who married about a year ago.
- Baum: I think that just about does it, at least in the genealogy of the Bancrofts. Perhaps we could just finish one more thing, and that's Griff's book on the Flight of the Least Petrel. I don't think we mentioned that. That's a book about the trip to Mexico? Baja?
- MWB: Yes. It's right here. I'll put it out here. They must have this, of course, in the library up there. And there are all the dates, you see. Imagine, that book was \$4.50. We worried and worried over that price of it.
- Baum: [looking through book] 1932. I see Griff's copyrighted it himself. When was the year of your trip?
- MWB: 1920. We were gone nearly six months.
- Baum: [reading] "Dedicated to the partner."
- MWB: Yes, that's the one.
- ##
- MWB: Isn't that a nice way to dedicate?
- Baum: [examining another book] This is by Griffing Bancroft and that's your stepson.

- MWB: Yes. You see, he dropped the junior after Griffing. He has three of those books.
- Baum: [reading title] Snowy, the Story of an Egret. This is copyrighted 1970, McCall Publishing Company.
- MWB: Here are the other two.
- Baum: And it's dedicated to "Margaret W. Bancroft and to the memory of her husband and my father."
- MWB: That's nice, isn't it?
- Baum: That's beautiful, yes. This is another book by Griffing.
- MWB: Vanishing Wings. Those three books.
- Baum: And here's a book by Griffing called Vanishing Wings by Griffing Bancroft, Franklin Watts, Inc., 1972, A Tale of Three Birds of Prey. Here's another book by Griffing Bancroft, The White Cardinal, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., New York, copyright 1973.
- MWB: Here's a book on The Meaning of Communism by Griffing, too.
- Baum: That's kind of off of his birds, isn't it?
- MWB: And he's written a book about all of the years of collecting. Time and time again, publishers have said yes, they'd take it. Then when they'd read it, they'd say that the ecologists and all the rest of those people are so violent about people who collected birds' eggs that they wouldn't publish it. He's thinking of revising it now.
- Baum: But he's such an avid Audubon member and all that.
- MWB: You just can't tell about people.
- Baum: This Meaning of Communism looks like it's a textbook. Oh, it is.
- MWB: I'd love for you to meet Griffing. He may come out here.
- Baum: Here's the other one of Griffing's. "Dedicated to the Partner"--getting back to the Flight of the Least Petrel--"written on board by Griffing Bancroft."

We had previously discussed how you met Griff on the boat, I believe, coming down from Los Angeles after a big flood?

- MWB: Yes.

Baum: Is that right? You met Griff on the boat? You'd known him before, but only as a child, only in passing, and your families had known each other slightly. Then I believe you explained that he was separated then, wasn't he?

Problems of Griffing Bancroft's Divorce and Child Custody

MWB: Yes, he was living at the Cuyamaca Club and was separated. His wife was visiting--I guess staying almost permanently with her parents. Her father was still Senator Works at that time.

Baum: I know Griff was separated at that time. I just wondered if you'd tell that story of how that divorce worked out and why it took so long and was so difficult, since I believe he'd been separated quite a while.

MWB: Yes. I'm thinking of the necessity of that for a moment.

Baum: Probably it's in the newspapers, isn't it?

MWB: Yes, at the time of the divorce.

Baum: The scandal part is in the newspapers.

MWB: No, there was never any scandal; it was just simply that he got this divorce. Their families were prominent. Nowadays no one in the world would look for a divorce to be in the newspapers like that. They never came out with any of the real information in the--

Baum: Trial proceedings?

MWB: Yes, the trial proceedings. Then it's in the supreme court of California, the decision. We appealed the case, you see.

Baum: Much of the problem was because Ethel Works was Senator John D. Works' daughter.

MWB: Yes. And they were such prominent people in those days that the Los Angeles Times had quite an article at the time of the divorce. There was never anything about his--well, it did say that. Are we on tape now?

Baum: Yes.

MWB: Turn it off a minute until I get my brains together.

[tape turned off briefly]

Baum: This is the part that will be a little hard to edit.

MWB: Yes.

Baum: Let me see if I remember what it was. I think Griff and Ethel had separated about 1912 and the children--Barbara was with Ethel, and were the boys with Griff?

MWB: They moved to Coronado and tried it again.

Baum: Seems to me I remember a 1914.

MWB: I think it was 1914 when they were separated. And it was 1915 when I was coming down to--

Baum: This probably works in somehow with Senator Works' election, too, doesn't it?

MWB: He was going to run for office in 1916, but by that time he was one of the men Woodrow Wilson spoke of as "seven nasty old men" who had gotten together to keep us out of the war. (That was World War I.) There was so much opposition to him because of that, he finally withdrew from running for office again.

Baum: Oh, Senator Works didn't run, finally.

MWB: The second time, he didn't run because that was that great period between the time war was on in Europe and we declared war in 1917, you see. By that time, in '16, he had announced he was against us going into war, and lost his popularity. So he didn't run.

Then Griff filed suit as soon as possible for divorce, and because he thought it could be done without any antagonism, he let Ethel file for the divorce. She had been living in the East, anyway.

When it came to trial, it was a great shock to him to see that he was not going to have control of the boys.

Baum: She'd asked for the custody of all the children--all three.

MWB: Custody of all three children and alimony, too, and money to care for them. So, with the lawyers he decided to appeal the case and they did appeal it. There was a gap in there of three days that he was actually divorced before the appeal had been filed, which was just time enough for him to get his children out and for them to file the appeal. And they did file an appeal.

Baum: Who filed the appeal?

MWB: Griff filed it.

Baum: Griff's attorney.

MWB: Yes, filed an appeal. We stayed north that whole fourteen months until the supreme court of California upheld the decision of the superior court in San Diego.

Baum: So this divorce was filed in San Diego County.

MWB: Oh, yes, it was all in San Diego County.

Baum: I think you mentioned Griff was supposed to turn the children over to the Works family--

MWB: To Ethel and her attorney on the courthouse steps. That's when he kidnapped them and then they sued him for kidnapping his own children. We had only been married a very few weeks when the sheriff appeared at Walnut Creek, at the farm, and took Griff back to San Diego.

The first thing he said, "I'll trust you if you tell me you won't run off on me or do something, but I won't submit you to having handcuffs. But I could handcuff you." And Griff said all right, he'd submit to it. So he came back to San Diego to answer the fact that he had filed by an appeal case. It was quite a technical point in the law of it. Then he came back in a few days to San Francisco and then to Walnut Creek, and that's where we lived for the fourteen months until the case was settled.

Baum: I see. Now, do I have this correct? First, Griff got a divorce, which was a divorce, but it included giving Ethel the custody of the children.

MWB: No, he filed.

Baum: He filed, but didn't you say he was divorced for three days?

MWB: Filed a suit for divorce, and then it's the judge's decision as to the custody of the children. Then they said that she was to have complete custody of the children, but Griff was to have them part of the summer on the vacations. They would have divided the vacations. That's when I guess he was so terribly upset.

He at one time thought we might go to South America and live someplace where they couldn't bring us back to California. But at the end of the time, the boys had grown old enough and they were very determined they wanted to stay with their father, and Barbara wanted to stay with their mother. After having them for two or three small vacations, Ethel decided that they were too much for her anyway.

- MWB: Of course, by that time, money was such an involvement and then she wasn't going to get enough of an allowance to live as she had lived; so she just gave up the boys completely. From that time on, the children didn't see their mother for several years. Then, after they were grown, they did see her at times, but there never was a real relationship there.
- Baum: Sometime in there, Margaret, you asked for a dispensation for marrying a divorced man. When did that happen?
- MWB: That was before we knew there was going to be any trouble about the children, and we asked for a dispensation.
- Baum: This is before you were married.
- MWB: Oh, yes.
- Baum: In order to have a religiously proper marriage.
- MWB: Yes. We spoke to Bishop Conanty of Los Angeles, who knew my mother. We did everything and we had a just cause because she had never been baptized and Griff was baptized. Also, the church--you see, they don't consider that a religious marriage.
- Baum: I see. Ethel had not been baptized.
- MWB: No, she never had.
- Baum: How come?
- MWB: Well, they were Unitarians; I guess it was Unitarians. So they absolutely refused to give us a dispensation. Then when all this crisis came, I made up my mind I was going on to get married, and then if I could straighten it out later, I would. By the time I got around to doing it, I didn't want to continue to be a practicing Catholic. I still have loyalty there sometimes, you know. [chuckles]
- Baum: On what grounds did they refuse to give you a dispensation? It wasn't your dispensation; it was Griff's, wasn't it?
- MWB: It was a dispensation for me to marry Griff. It was again the publicity. The Catholic church would have gotten too much adverse publicity, we felt, and that's why I left the church, because I didn't think they'd been fair-minded about it. Other people were getting a dispensation, but we simply would have gotten too much publicity for the Catholic church.

Nowadays you wouldn't even think of it, but in those days, people were far more religious and followed the forms of the church so much more. I think that's enough for that part of it.

Baum: Yes. So this led you away from the church.

MWB: Yes.

Hubert Howe Bancroft's Religious Attitudes

Baum: How did the Bancroft family feel about your Catholicism?

MWB: Oh, it didn't bother them. They knew that I wasn't going to ask the boys to become Catholics. I wasn't going to, in any way. At one time, they went to the Episcopal church as youngsters. Hubert Howe Bancroft was an agnostic.

Then I began studying religions, the Catholic religion and other religions, and the more I studied, the less I wanted to become a member of any church. So I, from that time on--although I have great respect for a great many things they do, it kept me from ever wanting to go into any church as a member of a church.

Baum: Hubert Howe Bancroft had been very religious at one point, I know, because I've read his journals.

MWB: Oh, yes, but he finally became very much of an agnostic.

Baum: Is that right?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: Did he talk about things like that when you were at Walnut Creek?

MWB: Oh, yes, a little bit. He used to tease his old Irish nurse because she was ignorant, and very Catholic in her point of view in everything, and he teased her about it. He'd say, "Ask Margaret because she knows." [chuckles] He didn't really make fun of her church, but he didn't belong to any church.

As the children grew up, I think the girls--some of the family--became Episcopalians.

Baum: Kate's daughters?

MWB: Yes. They were Episcopalians.

Baum: I see.

MWB: Kate used to sing in the Episcopal choir.

Baum: Did Hubert Howe Bancroft try to talk to his grandsons about religion ever?

MWB: No.

Baum: It wasn't one of his special concerns, one way or the other.

MWB: No, no. He left that to the womenfolk.

Baum: I see. [laughter] It seemed like he was interested in your education. I wondered if he was that interested in making sure his grandsons followed the line he took.

MWB: No, not at all. He was extremely interested in getting them to know the histories of the world and getting them deeply interested in ancient history and getting them to learn, to put some depth into their education.

That was the one thing. He was always giving them a prize if they could memorize every state in the union and they could know the principal rivers, and he'd give them a few dimes. From day to day, it was different things that he'd ask them to learn. As they grew older, he got them more interested.

Baum: So he was more concerned about their historical training than their religious training.

MWB: Absolutely. He paid no attention to their religious training. I don't know, if one of them had become very active in some church, but then none of them ever did. Episcopalians--I think Kate did that because she sang in the choir. I don't think she was a particularly religious person.

Baum: Did Griff remain an agnostic throughout his life?

MWB: Yes.

Baum: So you really weren't related to a church after your marriage very much.

MWB: No. Griff never interfered with it, but he just left it entirely up to me.

Baum: I remember when I was talking to Phil that he pointed out to me that his father sometimes was concerned that when he died, he would just be gone. That was sort of a feeling of loss, but he still didn't believe in an afterlife any more.

- MWB: Of course, I don't know. I have absolutely no faith--dust to dust. There we are--grow daisies with the dust and the world goes on. Only if you've left something behind you that's worthwhile for people to remember; otherwise, you'd simply go into dust. Well, now, let's get out of religion after the poor pope has died. [The death of Pope John Paul I was announced this morning.]
- Baum: Yes. Well, I see that is a concern to you even if you've left religion. You're interested still in the Catholic church.
- MWB: I am interested in it because I think it has great influence over the world at large. And I think that if the Catholic church would become more liberal--I do think that as children grow up, it's good for them to have the knowledge of the church anyway, and then let them make up their minds later on what they want to become. They ought to have at least a knowledge and a knowledge of how to behave in a church, and have respect for other people's opinions about their religion. Beyond that, I think that it's up to the individual.
- Baum: Do you have any comments you'd like to make about Hubert Howe Bancroft, or his influence on Griff, or the grandsons?
- MWB: I think he was a remarkable father in that he took a vital interest in their lives and he never ceased to until the day he died. He wrote to his sons, I would imagine, a letter maybe every week or something, just a note, just a few words maybe, but he never lost track of his sons. He did, though, with his daughters. But he had that intense interest, and they had it for him.
- At times, one time or two, Griff would always spend the money, and then he'd be awfully cross with him, and I think that is in some of those letters. But when anything happened to them, like Griff's divorce, he just was violent against the woman. He was violent against anyone that did anything wrong to his boys.
- What's next now?
- Baum: I think that's all we have on our agenda, Margaret. I think we've covered the waterfront unless I come up with more questions. I've gone through the transcript, and most of the things are pretty clear.
- MWB: Now, that one article there on Griffing. I'll see if I can get Howe to do one for you.
- Baum: Yes, that would be good. So that would trace them.

MWB: I don't know who else. Phil covered his own children, and we've pretty well covered Paul Bancroft's, and then I think that's it.

Baum: We've come to the end of the tape. We're just about finished.

Transcriber: Marie Herold
Final Typist: Marilyn White

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Spring Valley refuge 10,000 years old

By GUS STEVENS

Ten miles east of downtown San Diego there is a spring that has produced fresh, life-giving water for thousands of years.

It is a green spot to this day, surrounded by very large palm trees and high grass, only a few yards from small houses, an apartment house construction project and the busy traffic of a highway.

Ten thousand years ago the spring provided life to Indians, according to study of excavations at the site which has gone as deep as seven feet while yielding rich discoveries.

A village existed on the site from about 900 to 1835 A.D. It was called Neti (or Meti) and its residents were members of the Kumeyaay Indian tribe. Archeologists believe the village covered 30 to 50 acres.

Indians in the spring area were baptized by Spanish priests in October 1775, according to mission records, and at the same time the padres changed the village name to El Aquaje de San Jorge, Springs of St. George.

The first house erected by a white man — probably with the help of Indian labor — was built in 1863. Two years later the white man died and the next owner, at the urging of his daughter, gave the area a new name.

The name has persisted. It is Spring Valley.

The first permanent house, now 114 years old, also persists. It now is called the Bancroft Ranch House and it has become a state and national historic landmark.

Today the house, a small, white, two-room adobe with walls 10 inches to two feet thick, is owned by the Spring Valley Historical Society, which also owns three-fourths of an acre of property at the site.

The address is 9060 Memory Lane, about 200 yards east of Bancroft Dr. It is in a grassy spot, snug behind its front porch of uneven lines and under its shake roof.

In the front yard are tables for picnickers and overhead is an umbrella of thick palms and very large pepper trees.

Mrs. Karna Webster, the president of the historical society and hostess to visitors at the ranch house, is an insatiable expert on the history of Spring Valley and environs.

The ranch house is heated only by light bulbs, but despite the bone-chilling cold which hangs inside on a cloudy winter day, she is pleased to sit in the living room and talk Spring Valley history.

The adobe house was built by Judge Augustus S. Ensworth, who homesteaded 160 acres in what later was to become the heart of Spring Valley. Some of its timbers came from the wrecked hulk of the sailing vessel Clarissa Andrews, which had broken up after running aground off Ballast Point.

Ensworth was a San-Diego justice of the peace and he served a year in the state Assembly in 1859, nine years after California became a state.

Later he was a partner with Thomas Whaley, the two lawyers working together in Old Town's Whaley House. Ensworth suffered a fall in Whaley House, contracted blood poisoning and died soon after.

"Some say Ensworth is one of the well-known Whaley House ghosts," Webster said. "I don't know about that, but he led a colorful early life, too: He was a Texas Ranger and he fought in the Mexican War."

Capt. Rufus K. Porter bought the house after Ensworth's death and moved into it with his family from San Pedro in 1865. Porter — the "captain" was an honorary title — was a clockmaker, peddler, railroad worker, deputy sheriff, schoolteacher, miner and innkeeper over the years.

"He was a man of charm and personality," Webster said. "He added a frame kitchen-dining room and two bedrooms to the house and entertained many travelers in the years when it was a day's journey into San Diego.

It was his daughter, Rufina, who persuaded her father to name the place Spring Valley. Porter developed the property as a farm — there were many olive trees — and he became well known through letters and columns he wrote for California newspapers. He later became the valley postmaster.

Fame came to Spring Valley in 1885 when Hubert Howe Bancroft, a wealthy San Francisco book publisher, bought the property as a retirement home.

He also bought additional land and called his 700 acres Helix Farms. Experimental farming produced subtropical trees, palms, olives and citrus.

"We think Bancroft planted the pepper trees you see," Webster said. "We know they were full grown 50 years ago."

Bancroft lived in the ranch house and another larger house he built nearby for 33 years, until his death in 1918. Much of the work on his monumental Western history books was done in Spring Valley.

The 39-volume series was called the "West American Historical Series" and these, written with staff help, and others made Bancroft the West's leading historian. In 1905 he donated his collection of 60,000 historical volumes to the University of California. The Bancroft Library is housed at the Berkeley campus.

"I wanted to find out more about his death, which took place in Walnut Creek," Webster said. "I went to San Francisco and found his obituary in the newspapers. He was hit by a San Francisco streetcar and never recovered."

A few years ago an unused set of Bancroft's history volumes was found still in its packing crate. Bancroft heirs gave the set to the ranch house, where it rests in a bookcase, the cornerstone of the little museum.

Elsewhere in the museum's living room are other books by the famed historian, portraits of Bancroft and others, models of ancient Indian workshops, antique furniture and a fireplace.

In the bedroom are many Indian artifacts, some of which Webster describes as rare.

There are quartz crystals and bat ray teeth used by shamen as magic things, grinding stones, clay pipes, arrowheads, pottery, sea-shells, beads, pendants and bone needles. Two burial urns containing the bones of children have been found. From the white man's period there are bottles, belt buckles and nails.

Dr. Paul Ezell, a San Diego State University anthropologist, began excavation of the site in 1969. "Every shovelful of dirt has something in it," Webster said.

The property is kept under the eye of Charles Harmon, a retired Marine and decorated veteran of Nicaraguan campaigns, who lives in a nearby house owned by the society.

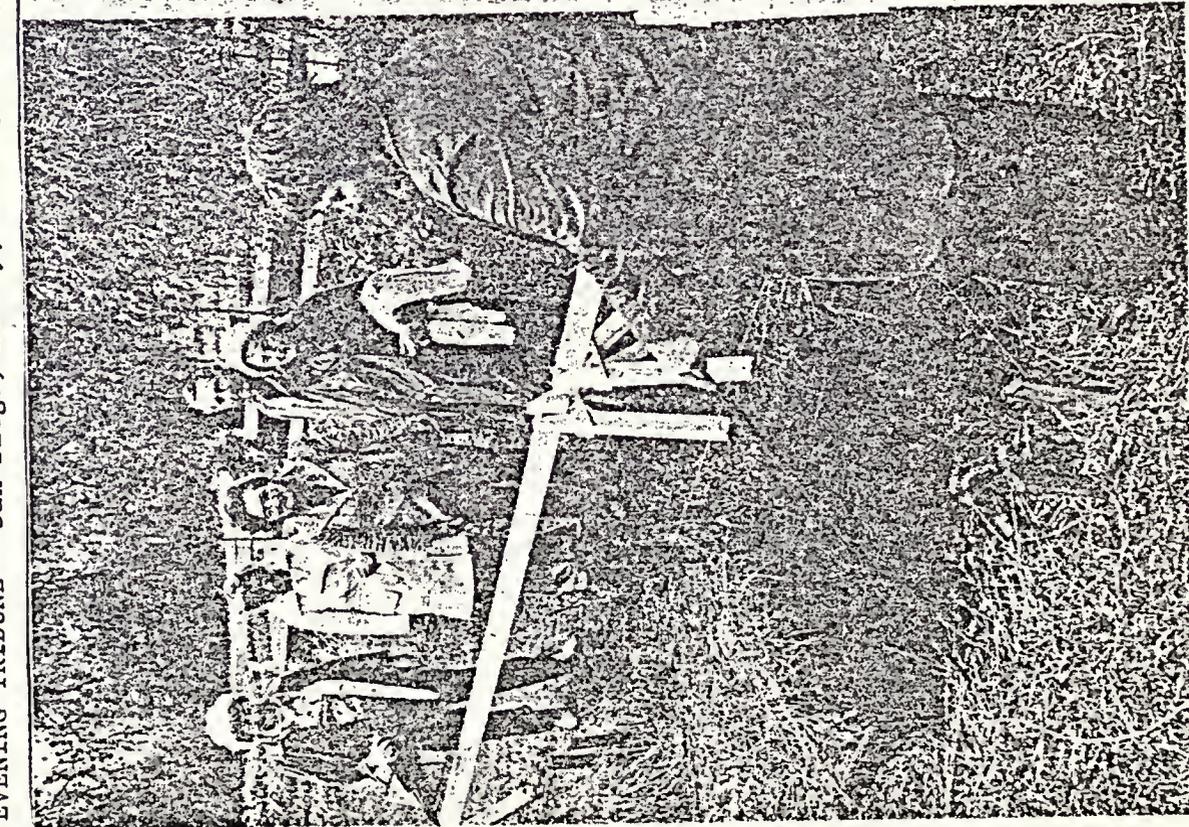
Last Dec. 27 the Board of Supervisors approved purchase of an acre of land from the Goodbody estate. The land adjoins the spring and it is hoped that in a year or two a county park will encompass the ranch house.

"Helix Farms filled much of the valley," Webster said, "and Bancroft built several structures. Some remain in use, including a foundation that now supports a church building across the highway. There's a stone house nearby where he kept some of his papers. We'd like to save that."

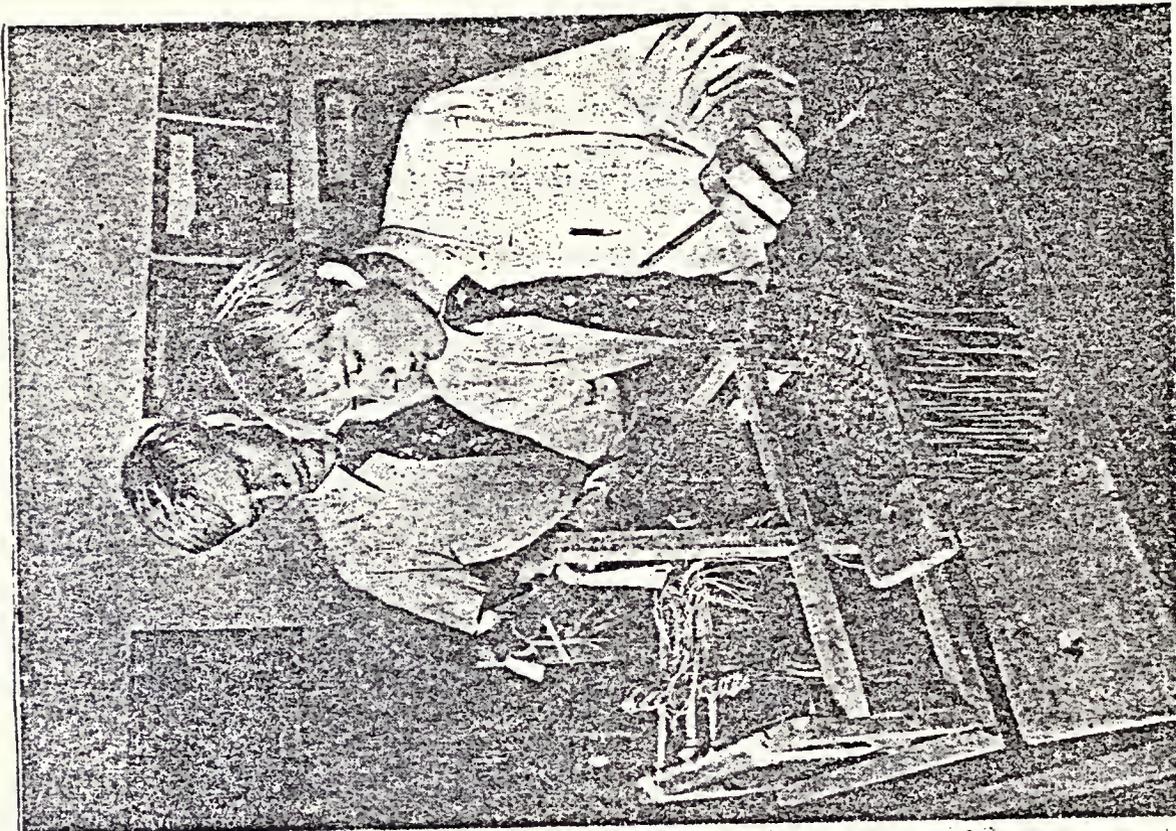
The ranch house museum welcomes tour groups and visiting individuals daily, except Monday and Tuesday, between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Support costs the historical society and its patrons about \$1,000 a year.

Meanwhile, the spring which started it all thousands of years ago continues to offer its fresh, life-giving water to its neighbors and weary travelers alike.

EVENING TRIBUNE - San Diego, Monday, January 24, 1977

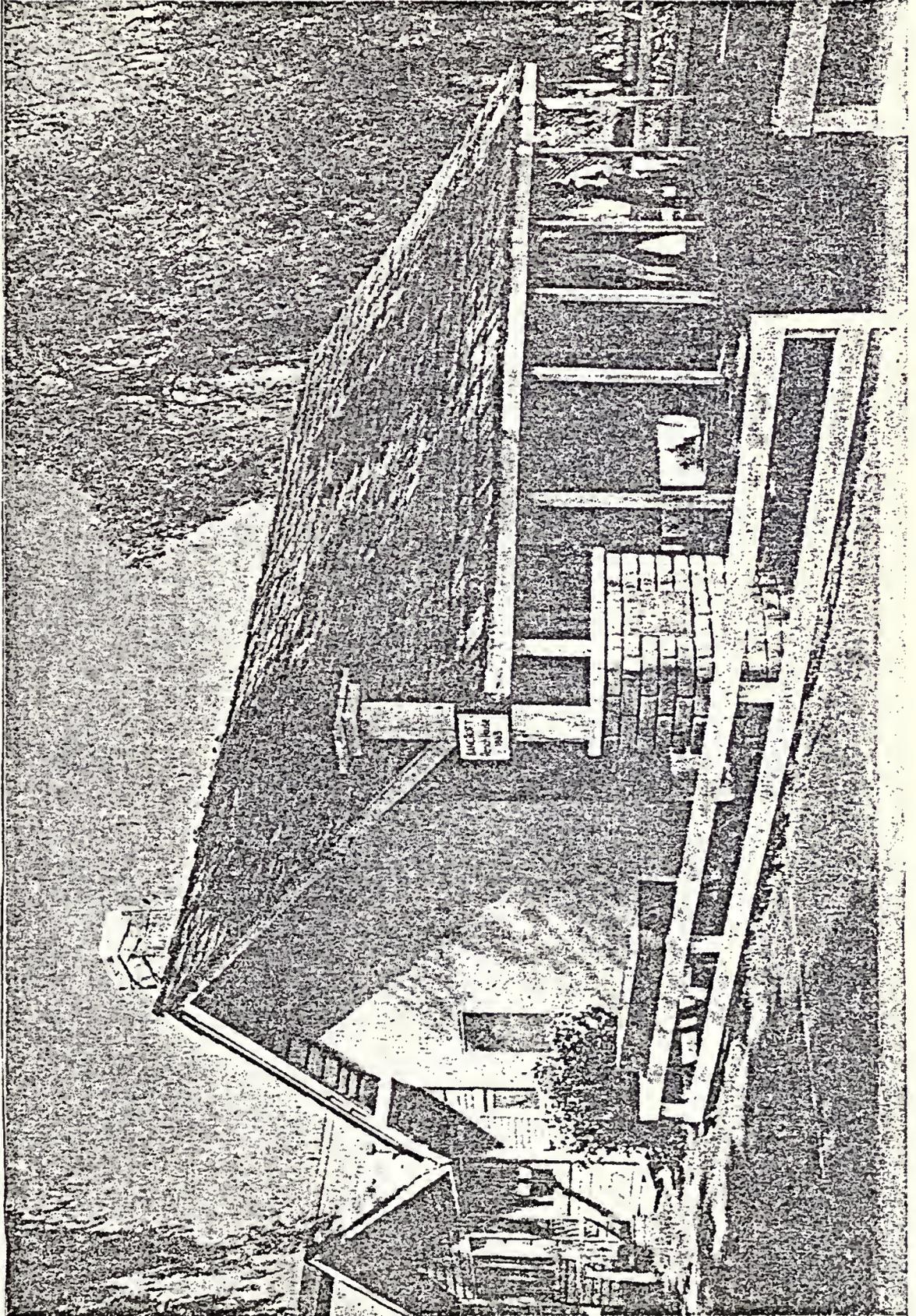


SPRING IS HERE — Bancroft House, 114 years old and thriving in Spring Valley, lures visitors to its doors in search of history. Just outside, historical society president Karna Webster shows a tour

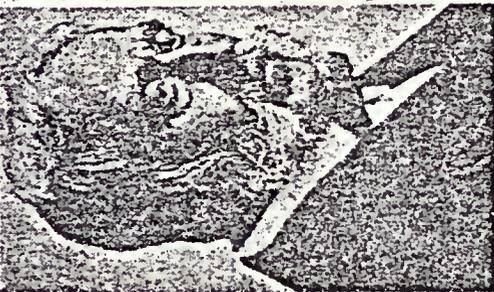


group details of archeological dig. Utah missionaries Stuart Black and Wayne Iverson examine artifacts inside the house. — Photos by Joe Holly and George Smith, Evening Tribune Staff Photographers

EVENING TRIBUNE - San Diego, Monday, January 24, 1977



BANCROFT OUSTED IN 1893



HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT
... California pioneer

By JOE STONE
Staff Writer, The San Diego Union

Eighty-two years ago the name of the famed historian of California and Spanish North America, Hubert Howe Bancroft, was stricken from the list of honorary life members of the Society of California Pioneers. A San Diego organization wants Bancroft's membership restored.

The local group is the San Diego County Cultural Heritage Committee, which advises the county Board of Supervisors on historical matters.

At a meeting of the committee Monday, a motion to prepare a resolution asking the society to restore the name of Bancroft to its honorary membership rolls was approved unanimously by 10 members present. The to prepare the resolution for

Local Group Takes Up Cause For Historian

passage by the members, honorary life member of the Jan. 3 in the CalTrans Auditorium in Old Town.

The committee is interested because the Bancroft Ranch House, state Historical Landmark 626, in Spring Valley, is under consideration as part of a proposed Bancroft County Park.

Bancroft bought the Spring Valley ranch in 1885. The adobe had been there 29 years.

Bancroft died March 2, 1918.

Philip Hudner, a San Francisco attorney, is the president of the Society of California Pioneers. He said he did not know that Bancroft had been an honorary society member or that his name had been stricken from the rolls, or if it had been restored. He said he could not comment on the action of the San Diego committee.

"I have no background," he said. The society has 1,000 members, most of them in San Francisco, where it has an office staff.

The Bancroft 39-volume history is still selling. Wallace Heberd of Santa Barbara is publishing the books.

How Bancroft became an

activities of Maj. John C. Fremont during the pre-conquest and conquest periods. Bancroft called Fremont, a U.S. Army officer, a filibuster.

At a meeting Feb. 5, 1894, on the motion of Dr. William Simpson, 80 members of the society voted unanimously to adopt the report and resolution of Dr. Washington Ayer that "the name Bancroft be stricken from the roll of honorary membership."

Heberd said the principal complaints concerned Bancroft's only surviving child, Lucy Bancroft, lives in Buelton, Calif. A daughter-in-law, Margaret Bancroft, widow of Griffing Bancroft, lives in La Jolla.

GRIFFING BANCROFT
 CAPTIVA ISLAND
 FLORIDA 33924

January 28, 1977

Dear Margaret:

As I told you on the phone my memories of HHB are so mixed up with what was actual reality and what was family legend that I can not for certain guarantee all of this to be verbatim truth.

I do recall his giving each of us (grandchildren) \$50 for memorizing what he listed as the fifty most ^{of his} important dates in history. Today I do not remember any ^{of} date.

It seems to me that he also had us learn the capitals and principle products of each state with a rhyme starting in the far northeast with "Augusta Maine, tar pitch and turpentine." That is all I can remember of that, if it indeed came from him.

I know ~~we~~ ^{we} grandchildren were told that our cousin Martin Bancroft had to sneak onto our farm if we played together there because if HHB caught him he would whip him back through the barrier trees between his farm and ours. This, of course, because he was alleged to have carried on his ~~first~~ feud with his younger brother, A. L., even unto the third generation.

I remember Dad being very proud of the fact that his father (HHB) had a letter delivered to him that was addressed simply.: "Mr. Bancroft, California."

Then there were, of course, all the stories about his desire for male offspring solely: e.g. that he stopped sleeping with his wife (who had given him three sons) after she produced a daughter (Lucy). That he credited Philip's first ~~two~~ daughters to Nina, but when a grandson was produced proudly said "Philip's had a son." (Much of this, it seems to me, is belied by the fact that he spoke warmly ~~of~~ his daughter Kate and used her as a secretary in interviewing many of the pioneers.

Of his resentment of the automobile he is said to have kept his horse and buggy in the middle of country roads and when a motorist had to plow through a ditch to get by he would shoot at him "road hog!"

A story Dad used to tell: When his wife (Matilda) was going away for 2 weeks she made him promise to write her every day. Disliking to have this hanging over his head, he saw her off, returned to his office, dictated 14 letters and instructed his secretary to mail one each day.

I don't know if any of this is helpful, but I'll send it along:

Love,

Griffing

Article about Griffing Bancroft, Jr.
Islander (Captiva, Florida), May 9, 1978

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Tuesday, May 9, 1978

ISLANDER

Various Island Personalities by miller davis

Griffing Bancroft

Nearly every morning a 71-year-old man with closecropped hair and darting brown eyes leads a small procession through the wooded and marshy labyrinths of Sanibel and Captiva. With impeccable choice of words, he explains to his followers the animated, color-splashed wonders of possibly the most fascinating branch of zoology—ornithology.

He points with his hands and his eyes as he explains the habits of the most numerous of all warm-blooded vertebrates—birds.

This remarkable man came by his knowledge of birds as a young boy in Southern California; he followed his father through the less tangled but equally verdant hills and valleys of that area.

Griffing Bancroft Sr. taught Griffing

Bancroft Jr. about birds—their purpose in nature's scheme, the reasons for their high degree of mobility, their uncanny ability to survive through the incessant workings of an inner com-



Griffing Bancroft enjoying life today on Sanibel.

pass that guides birds on every continent.

So distinguished in the field of ornithology was Griffing Bancroft Sr.—and later, Griffing Bancroft Jr.—that at least two species bear their name: the Bancroft Yellow Crowned Night Heron, and the Bancroft Screech Owl.

The people who follow Griffing Bancroft, Jr. these early mornings on Sanibel and Captiva—on these three-hour pilgrimages into the fluttery, sound-filled world of birds—probably know Bancroft only as a scholarly writer-expert in the field of ornithology.

What they don't know is that the name Griffing Bancroft (he has dropped the "Jr.") stands high in the American radio hall of fame. Stands shoulder to shoulder with the names of Edward R. Murrow, Lowell Thomas, H.V. Kaltenborn—and, yes, with the name of possibly the most respected voice in the world: Walter Cronkite.

Griffing Bancroft knew them all, worked side by side with some, and remembers the day when Cronkite came to CBS and asked for a job.

"Television was just beginning and radio newsmen didn't want any part of it because there wasn't much money in it then, and radio people distrusted this new medium," Bancroft recalls.

"But Walter Cronkite gratefully and eagerly accepted a job as an early TV newscaster. I remember he sat in a cubbyhole and worked hard at his new job.

"And today? The world knows Cronkite as the news anchor man with probably the greatest degree of integrity."

Bancroft himself was hired by the late Edward R. Murrow, and rose steadily in the ranks of the nation's top professional radio commentators.

His programs—Capitol Cloakroom, Face the Nation and World News Roundup—are considered classics in the field.

Bancroft in 1948 covered five national political conventions, and looking back, considers his coverage of the Sen. Joe McCarthy hearings his chief assignment.

Bancroft's debut in the news field came about from an economic situation—he was graduated from the University of Chicago in 1930.

"I was a Depression graduate," he says, smiling back over the years.

"I'd studied business in college, but the only job I could find was rewriting obits for the San Diego Sun." Later he

covered police and city hall.

From there it was on to the Los Angeles Herald-Express where he covered the California legislature, then he wanted to become a foreign correspondent at the outbreak of war.

"I wanted to be another Richard Harding Davis, but I got stuck in Washington instead."

In the interim Bancroft was a stringer of INS (the defunct International News Service), and next wound up on the Chicago Sun just before it merged with the Times to become the Chicago Sun-Times in 1948.

(Bancroft left the Sun-Times to join CBS just a year before his ISLANDER interviewer went to work for the Chicago Daily News—hence Sunday morning's interview in Bancroft's Captiva home was the first meeting of the two men, though the interviewer long had known of and respected Bancroft).

Eating breakfast with Bancroft Sunday was a strikingly attractive woman in a blue gown topped by bouffant silvery-white hair. She is Jane Eads Bancroft, his wife, a former nationally-known newswoman whom Bancroft met in Washington some years ago.

With patent pride, Bancroft said,

"Jane really made her mark in a field then almost reserved for men. "She wrote a column for the AP (Associated Press) that ran in more than 300 newspapers."

Griffing and Jane Bancroft came to Captiva in 1958.

"I wanted to write and I did indeed write a book on communism and did some writing for the Voice of America," he says.

And then—it was back to his first field of study and enjoyment. Birds.

A shelf in his library is devoted to ornithology and among the books are those he's written.

Griffing Bancroft—a man who has led two divergent lives.

And has grabbed the brass ring of success in each.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH - Howe Bancroft

I was born July 30, 1909, the youngest son of Griffing Bancroft--who was, of course, a son of Hubert Howe Bancroft. I was named after my grandfather, but have never used the first name.

Unfortunately for your purposes, I barely remember H.H. (as he was usually called in the family)--I was only nine at the time of his death. I have an extremely vague memory of an aged man, heavily dressed, sitting in a small interior room in Walnut Creek. Also, that myself and the other children were not to bother him.

(I do have one peripheral recollection. As you probably know, H.H. had quarreled bitterly with his brother, A.L. Bancroft, a quarrel that was clung to with true New England vigor and tenacity, and that, so far as I know, was never settled. Unfortunately, A.L.'s son Frank and his family lived on a farm separated from that of H.H. only by a row of tall eucalyptus trees. I recall that one of Uncle Frank's sons, Martin--a boy slightly older than myself--used to come over and visit us. "Sneak over" would be a better phrase, for Martin's visits were kept as secret from H.H. as Juliet ever kept secret from the other Capulets the visits of Romeo.)

As for myself, I had a normal childhood and youth, then articulated at Stanford. However, I had at that time incurably itchy feet and left after two years. Unfortunately, this was in the year 1931--the bottom of the Great Depression of the 1930s--and work was hard to find. So for three or four years I had a number of short-lived jobs--on a small town newspaper, in the new oil fields in Kettleman Hills, on a construction job, for a gas company, on a fishing boat, etc. Finally, on the always dubious theory that the grass in the next pasture is greener, I went east, gravitating to New York. Here there was the same job trouble, but after a few months I got work as a rewrite man on the old New York Journal, which lasted until that paper went out of existence about two years later. Meanwhile, I had had some success in selling pulp magazine and children's stories--not that I knew the slightest thing about children--and made enough to live on, though somewhat precariously.

At that time, I lived in Greenwich Village, with occasional visits to Provincetown, and there, in 1939, I met a girl from Washington--a place I had never been to. We agreed to marry, and since I had no roots in any particular place, I decided to go south with her to Washington and try my luck there--both maritally and professionally.

And that changed everything in my life, for Washington meant the government, and the government became my employer for twenty-eight years. I was first with the Department of Agriculture, shifted to intelligence work when the war began, was briefly in the army and after the war in the Veterans Administration--but nearly always functioning as a government writer. About

that time I was divorced, quit the government and returned to my family's home in La Jolla for a few months. Then I went to New York, worked in a hospital for a while and finally got settled permanently with the Voice of America, which at that time was located in New York. I began as the agricultural editor, because of my previous experience in that field, later became a Voice of America commentator on current foreign and domestic affairs, and finally a branch chief with a group of writers and technicians under me. I was with Voice of America for twenty-one years, retiring in late 1969.

Since then I have been living very quietly in Alexandria, across the Potomac River from Washington. I read a lot, as I always have, attempt to play the piano, take a great interest in cooking, and go traveling at home or abroad whenever I feel unduly bored.

I got married again, but my second wife died in 1966. I have two daughters by my first marriage, one living in Philadelphia and the other in France.

Howe Bancroft
Fall 1979

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Willa Klug Baum

Grew up in Middle West and Southern California.

B.A., Whittier College, in American history and philosophy; teaching assistant in American history and constitution.

Newspaper reporter.

M.A., Mills College, in American history and political science; teaching fellow in humanities.

Graduate work, University of California at Berkeley, 1949-1954, in American and California history; teaching assistant in American history and recent United States history.

Adult school teacher, Oakland, in English and Americanization, 1948-1967; author of teaching materials for English, and summer session instructor in English for foreign students, Speech Department, University of California, Berkeley.

Interviewer and then department head of Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1954 to present.

Active in developing the techniques of oral history through practice, participation in professional association meetings and training workshops, and writing and speaking on oral history. Author of Oral History for the Local Historical Society, an oral history manual published by the American Association for State and Local History, fourth printing, 1975.

Member, Oral History Association (council member, 1967-1969; co-chairman, Colloquium, 1970); Western History Association; Conference of California Historical Societies; Society of American Archivists (committee on oral history); Society of California Archivists; International Association of Sound Archives.

