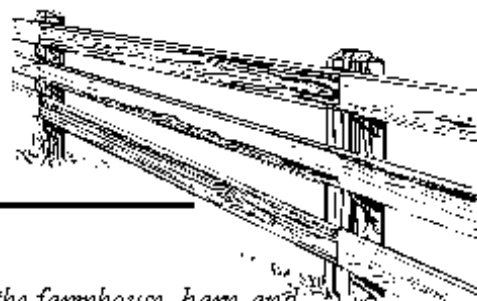


# Rodgers Ranch Fencepost

A Friends of Rodgers Ranch Publication

October, 2004



## Mission Statement

*Friends of Rodgers Ranch is dedicated to restoring and maintaining the farmhouse, barn and grounds at Rodgers Ranch as a living history museum while educating residents of Contra Costa County through classes and activities.*

## Famous Author lived at Ranch

After Patrick Rodgers died, the ranch was passed on to his descendants who eventually sold their parcels. By 1937 the lot containing the house and barn was down to 18 acres. Earle and Alice Tisdale Hobart had returned from living in China and were seeking a home in California. Alice Tisdale Hobart, born in 1882, had already become a successful author and was best known for her book about China, **'Oil for the Lamps of China'**, written in 1933.

In her autobiography, **'Gusty's Child'**, Alice writes about seeing the ranch for the first time and of the strength and inspiration she gained from her love of the earth. After purchasing Rodgers Ranch in May, 1937, she wrote two books. The first, **'Their Own Country'**, brings the couple in **'Oil for the Lamps of China'** back home to Kansas to face turmoil with the economic growth of that time. The second, **'The Cup and the Sword'** is a story about a French family running a winery in Napa during prohibition. This book was later made into a movie, **'This Earth is Mine'**, starring Rock Hudson, Jean Simmons, Dorothy McGuire and Claude Rains. Soon after the Hobarts purchased the ranch they began building a new home on the property. The style was a unique combination of Eastern and Western influence and in May, 1939, it was featured in *Sunset Magazine*. This house is now privately owned, but the owners have retained a 'Yin-Yang' symbol originally painted on the outside of the fireplace. In 1951, Alice was listed in the first edition of **'Who's Who of American Women'** and maintained that honor until 1969. Earle Hobart was fluent in several Chinese languages, so in 1941 when the U.S entered WWI, he volunteered his services. Alice sold the ranch in 1942 and moved to Mexico until he returned. She died in 1967 at the age of 85.

## Passing of a Pioneer

### Verna Mary Welch

Feb. 22, 1906 - Sept. 1, 2004

Verna Welch was born in Martinez to well-known Martinez nurseryman Thomas Duane and Pleasant Hill pioneer, Sadie Rodgers (Patrick and Mary Rodgers daughter who was born at Rodgers Ranch) Her family had strong ties to such local figures as John Muir, John Swett, and Luther Burbank. Verna united two pioneer families when she married George Welch, great-grandson of William Welch and Maria Galindo, owners of the Spanish land grant, Rancho de Las Juntas. A graduate of Holy Names College in Oakland, Verna taught music for 50 years. In Franklin Canyon, Verna raised two sons, Duane and Tom (both deceased), four grandchildren, Mark, Stephen, Deborah and Eric and three great-grandchildren, Ryan, Thomas and Evan. Her classical piano playing and singing, as well as her profound intelligence and wisdom are enduring memories of a woman who embodied love.

Verna's legacy lives on at Rodgers Ranch. Her grandson, Stephen and his wife, Genee are active members of Friends of Rodgers Ranch. Genee is on the FORR Board and presents the children's programs. Their son, Tommy, who is now one, is the latest Rodgers decendent.



Verna Mary Welch  
Feb. 22, 1906 - Sept. 1, 2004