

Valley View Ranch, Healdsburg, CA

Nestled among the verdant hills of Sonoma County's rich Russian River grape growing region sits Valley View Ranch, an exquisitely appointed home reminiscent of a turn of the century farm house. The country home built in 1986 and 12 acre spread is surrounded by rolling hills and oak strands, offering breathtaking views of the Russian River Valley. Family owned for over 100 years, an extensive written history has been kept by the current owners who offer a captivating history of the property.

The original 500 acre ranch was purchased by the owner's grandfather, Sheridan Ballard, in 1908. Located 10 miles southeast of Healdsburg, it was a foreclosure property owned by Wells Fargo Bank. Ballard grew 60 acres of plum and pears, 16 acres of alfalfa and grazed livestock and harvested timber on the rest of the property. Considered a progressive innovator of crop irrigation, Ballard demonstrated his pioneer spirit when he installed an electric pumping plant designed to pump water from the Russian River to irrigate his orchards. Later land was dedicated to the growing of hops and a hops kiln was erected on the property.

Throughout the years, much of the original 500 acres was sold or donated. "Getting to town was a challenge due to the river so Grandfather and another gentleman convinced the County Council to approve and finance the building of the Wolher Road bridge which still stand today," explains owner, Doris. Land was donated in 1922 and the single lane bridge is an icon in Sonoma county and driving across the single lane truss bridge allures to the bygone era. Additional acres were parceled out as outsiders discovered the quality of the soil conducive to planting vines that have made Sonoma County synonymous with great wines, particularly pinot noir, and yet others came for the peace and tranquility the areas natural resources offer. One famous neighbor was actor Fred MacMurray who purchased a parcel of valley acreage in 1941, now the renowned MacMurray Ranch owned by the Gallo Family.

Doris reminisces about her childhood growing up on the ranch: "The original house sat at the bottom of the property and as a young girl in the 30's it was my job to hike into the hills and bring the milk cows in for my mother to milk. Where the home sits now was my favorite spot and I would often bring along a book and my dog and I would sit on the grass and gaze upon the valley below. When it came time to choose my parcel, I knew exactly the spot. I recalled those wonderful days on the hill and I knew that someday I would build a home on that very spot."

The couple could imagine the yet to be built home but after extensive searches of home plans, hadn't found one that appealed to them. "We were having no luck in finding plans that suited our ideas for this home. One day on a drive we ventured upon a home under construction. As we walked through the house being built, we saw many elements that we liked." related Doris. "We thought perhaps this builder, Paden Prichard, could build our vision."

Thus was born a two year odyssey of creative architecture and meticulous construction. Designed to nestle into the hillside and take in the sweeping views of the Russian River Valley and distant Sonoma Mountain, the 3,200 square foot home is solidly constructed of redwood offering the proportion and balance that the couple wanted. The white two-story colonial style home recalls a bygone era with dormers and a sweeping porch surrounding three sides of the home perfect for watching the multitude of wildlife. Flanked by magnolia trees and perennials, the entrance opens into a flowing main floor of solid oak flooring, stately molding, vertical grain fir doors and exquisite antique brass lighting throughout.

The French-style cook's kitchen evokes old world charm and also offers spectacular views. The adjacent copper screened porch is perfect for alfresco dining. The first floor master suite accords the same splendid views and the master bath boasts an antique claw foot tub in a sunny alcove. The second story provides wonderful space for a guest retreat or office suite. Antique bricks taken from the ruins of a hop kiln provide mantel pieces and a massive chimney for the 3 fireplaces in the home. Re-sawed oak panels from a 1930's Christian Brothers wine vat provide wainscot for the upstairs suite. "We enjoyed taking pieces of history from the property and the region such as the bricks and wood from the wine vats to accent the house," said Doris. "The history of the land and these things makes the home a very special one."

This exquisite home is being offered for sale by The Atkin Brandon Group at Artisan Sotheby's International Realty. For more information please visit www.RussianRiverValleyViewRanch.com.