



NEWS FROM HAVERFIELD PARK

GATEWAY TO A PERSONAL PARADISE

By Barbara Caswell



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Petaluma has largely escaped the gated communities that have been proliferating in the rest of America. Books such as “Fortress America” argue that they are elitist and prevent the casual daily interactions that create true communal feelings among neighbors. Even in quieter times, Robert

Frost romantically protested that “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.”

Well, darn it, Bob! Something there is that doesn’t love traffic either, and that something is me. So as much as I desired a welcoming home, the decision was made to



My favorite masonry is aged brick casting lots of shadows, with irrigated planters to act as finials on substantial columns and just enough gate to keep wandering dogs out of bird nests. I prefer copper to gold for highlighting wrought iron details. Two gates opening in the middle cost more than one single span, but it’s worth it.

create a gate that would be as open as possible in appearance, but would keep strangers from casually driving through my garden to surprise me in my tattered bathrobe.

And there's the accountability issue. Back in the day, with neighborhood beat cops and alert old ladies peering from every window, people tended to curb their behavior. In old Petaluma, their deeds were likely to be published in the Argus the next day!

I like the idea of accountability, and so gave in to the idea of creating a gated community, despite the snobbish reputation they have. No public land is being blocked, and pursuing peace and privacy in your own home is nothing to apologize for.

In the days that our property was farmed, cross-fencing had great value in converting sections of the property to different uses for farm animals, and for the changing phases of their short lives: protecting baby animals, keeping dogs from sheep, separating hospitalized animals from rambunctious healthy ones.

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But now that the property is making the transition to residences, all those many fences had to come down. We used to have to stop to open three different gates to reach our house, and now it's all one big open garden.

It's interesting to me how the same square of soil can serve so many purposes to man, and with different surface treatments of fencing or landscaping, can assume entirely different aspects. Part of good property management is envisioning these different possibilities, and getting a parcel ready for its next use.

Here are some design tips for gating Petaluma's many long driveways:

For a gate to look more impressive:

- Use expensive-looking materials. Custom patterns in iron can be wrought and gilded, and custom designs can be worked into your gate.

- Make the gate as tall as possible. A central arch requires visitors to look upwards at your entry
- Don't skimp on the width of the pillars. West Petaluma's sandy soil requires deep posts and a real foundation under masonry columns.

Don't forget to contact the fire department and install a "Knox Box," so emergency personnel can easily access your road when you need them.

For a gate to look more friendly (my personal choice):

- Gates can be lowered in the middle to allow a preview of coming attractions.
- Make the spaces between pales, or pickets, as wide as possible to keep gate as "open" as possible.
- I love those ornate lacy gates on English estates, but they are a little too ostentatious for my location. I use only a few cast parts.

For a sloped driveway:

- Your gate will appear taller if you approach it uphill, and may be too low for your purposes if your slope is downhill. The gate will always have to swing to the downhill side.
- Why did the conduit cross the road? To spoil your brand-new asphalt driveway, of course. Country property owners always complain about the expense of maintaining private roads, but they get the benefit of making choices. For example, you can control hasty drivers by installing speed bumps, and they don't have to be plain old blacktop, with an even uglier sign announcing them. You can make a stripe in your road out of classic brick or stone, which can serve the dual purpose of providing access under your drive, and marking the bump with a different color.



Gate Design: Designs of the Times
Masonry: Bill Fotos Masonry
Gate Fabrication & Installation: Northgates in Motion, Inc.