



Lt. and Mrs. George Washington Baker, Jr. (Carmen Ghirardelli) on their wedding day, August 22, 1917. Photo: City Archives

“The spacious residence on Highland Avenue made a fine environment for one of the most artistically planned weddings of the season. The drawing room was a charming study in pink, with amaryllis and late pink roses offering the motifs for the final floral decorations. The young people had no attendants, and the ceremony was performed by Rev. Alexander Allen of St. Paul’s Episcopal

church. The bride is a very handsome brunette and she made a charming bride in a wedding gown of white satin, very beautifully trimmed in silver lace. A long wedding veil and a shower bouquet of butterfly orchids completed a very effective wedding costume.”

Although she moved to Tacoma to be near her husband during the war, Carmen returned to Piedmont after World War I and built a house at 210 Crocker Avenue, just across the street from her cousin Juanita. Like Juanita’s house, the Baker residence was designed by Sidney B. and Noble Newsom.

210 Crocker, designed by Sidney B. and Noble Newsom for Carmen and George Baker, was featured in *Architect and Engineer* in 1924. This was one of three Ghirardelli-related houses near Crocker and Farragut. The Sutton-Reed family lived at 200 Crocker, and Juanita (Ghirardelli) and Harry Hush Magee lived at 201 Crocker. Photo: City Archives



“House of Mr. George W. Baker, Piedmont, California. Sidney B. and Noble Newsom, Architects.” — photo caption from *Architect and Engineer*, 1924. Photo: City Archives



Carmen Ghirardelli Baker and her mother Ellie's monkey Figaro at 210 Crocker. Photo: City Archives

The Bakers loved animals and children. Their two sons and a daughter turned the vacant lot next door into a pasture for a goat, pony and other livestock. The children staged impromptu circuses in the field during the summer which often included the family monkey, Figaro. A small barn, similar in style to the family home, was eventually built to house the menagerie.

From 1949 to 1951, George Baker served the U.S. government in Italy, assisting with postwar reconstruction. George, Carmen and daughter Carmencita lived at the Excelsior Hotel on the Via Veneto in Rome, where their neighbors were such luminaries as Orson Welles, Joan Fontaine and Anna Magnani. A grateful Italian government honored the Bakers in later years.

Portrait of Johanna Ghirardelli and her children, daughters Juanita and Elva and sons Louis, Harry and Alfred. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Jerome Magee

LOUIS & JOHANNA GHIRARDELLI

Louis was the only Ghirardelli son not educated in Genoa, Italy. Brothers Domingo Jr. and Joseph spent their school age years (from 7 to 17) at the Collegio Convitto Commerciale in Genoa, but Louis was born during the American Civil War and was a child of the postwar depression in the 1870s. Due to his father's financial reverses, he attended public schools in Oakland and then went on to receive a degree from the University of California. In 1883, he married Johanna Legler, the daughter of a New York surgeon. They lived at 1147 Poplar Street in Oakland for nineteen years and produced five children before Louis died of pneumonia at the age of 46 in 1902. Johanna never remarried.

In 1908, just one year after her sister-in-law Ellie Ghirardelli moved to Piedmont, Johanna built a new house at the corner of Oakland Avenue and Mariposa in Oakland which bore a striking resemblance to Ellie's home. It appears possible that both families hired architect Charles Mau and used basically the same design. (A single, tall palm at 740 Oakland Avenue at Mariposa marks the site of Johanna Ghirardelli's home. – ed. note)

Elva Ghirardelli, Johanna and Louis' oldest daughter, was sent to the Ransom-Bridges School for young ladies on Hazel Lane where she excelled scholastically. Upon her graduation in 1913, she was honored as the Optima girl (the school's highest scholastic honor) but like most girls of that era, she did not go on to college. Instead, she took a series of homemaking classes and traveled widely before marrying Welby Dinsmore in 1923.

