

The Graves Family in Ross, California

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My great-grandmother, Maude Strother James Graves (1861 - 1936) acquired the house at 68 Bridge Road in Ross from the Perry Family in early January 1920. It was intended to be used as their summer home. Additionally, Maude believed that the climate in Ross would ease her husband's asthma condition.

Maude's parents were Jefferson Gilbert James (1829 - 1910) and Lucinda Jane "Jennie" Rector James (1841 - 1902), both of whom were originally from Pike County, Missouri. Mr. James initially came to California toward the end of the gold rush and along with his partners, hit a gold strike that enabled him to eventually invest in cattle and land, to start what became a highly successful livestock and ranching business. By the turn of the twentieth century he was one of California's cattle barons, and by the time of his death, he had significant livestock and ranch land holdings in Fresno County. He also owned his residence, stock yards, and additional investment properties in San Francisco, where his business office was located.

Maude's husband was Walker Coleman Graves (1849 - 1920), a prominent attorney, who in 1888, was appointed Assistant District Attorney, and was soon thereafter, elected District Attorney of San Francisco County. Walker and Maude had three children, all sons born in San Francisco, Jefferson James Graves (1883 - 1973), Walker Coleman Graves Jr. (1885 - 1953), and Rector Chiles Graves (1886 - 1902). Unfortunately, Mr. Graves died within a year after moving to the Ross home, in November 1920. His death was due to injuries resulting from a fall off of a street car in San Francisco.



Maudee Jean Graves, Jefferson James Graves, Sr., Roberta Jean Hewson Graves, Jefferson James Graves, Jr.

Jefferson and his wife Roberta Hewson Graves (1902 - 1992) made their home in San Francisco where their children, Maude Jean "Maudee" Graves (1926 -) and Jefferson James Graves Jr. (1928 -), were born. Roberta was a former silent movie actress who was the stand in for Mary Pickford and worked with Sid Chaplin.

Shortly after Jefferson Jr. was born, the family moved to Normandy, France and settled in a home on the beach in Blonville-sur-Mer. They named it "Villa Roberta." In 1934, the family moved back to the United States. After the death of his mother, Maude in 1936, Jefferson and his family permanently moved to the home in Ross. It is there where, with the exception of his war service as a Colonel in the United State Army during World War II, Jefferson and his wife Roberta raised their children and spent the rest of their lives. Following the death of Roberta Hewson Graves in 1994, the house was sold to Bradley and Elizabeth Nicholson in January 1994.