

The Lorge Family of Castro Valley

A Legacy of Community, History, and Service

Deep Roots in the Valley

Lucille Lorge's family has been part of Castro Valley's story for generations:

- Her **great-grandfather, Henry Thomford**, opened **Castro Valley's first business** in the mid-1800s—a general store and saloon called **The Exchange**, located near today's Grove Way and Redwood Road.
- The Exchange served ranchers driving cattle toward San Francisco and became a popular stop for watering horses and sharing news.

The Chicken Ranching Era

Lucille's husband, **Ray Lorge**, also came from a family deeply tied to Castro Valley's growth:

- Ray's father, **Cyril Lorge**, co-owned the **Rio-Linda Hatchery** in the 1920s, during the height of Castro Valley's **chicken ranching boom**.
- In 1934, the hatchery was renamed the **California State Hatchery**, becoming a major part of the local economy.
- Cyril also served in the **volunteer fire department**, reflecting the family's commitment to civic life.

Entrepreneurship and Civic Leadership

- Ray and Lucille later opened **R. & J. Quik Clean**, a local dry-cleaning business.
- Ray was a **past president of the Castro Valley Rotary Club** and served on the **Municipal Advisory Committee** to Alameda County.
- The Rotary Club still honors him with an **annual golf fundraiser** in his name.

Lucille Lorge: Historian and Educator

Lucille has become one of Castro Valley's most respected historians:

- She co-authored the book ***Castro Valley, California*** (Arcadia Publishing, 2005), a visual history of the town from the Ohlone era to the present.
- Alongside Randy Vanderbilt, she curated the exhibit **"200 Years of Castro Valley History"** at the Adobe Art Gallery, showcasing rare photos, films, and artifacts.
- Lucille has long served as a **docent and volunteer** with the **Hayward Area Historical Society**, and continues to collect and share stories from the community.

"You are our history," Lucille often says, encouraging residents to share their photos, memories, and family stories.



LORGE FAMILY



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tury. Henry founded his exchange in the 1870s and ran it through the 1880s.

"It was an old-time 7-11," said Lorge, a long-time Castro Valleyan who sits on the Hayward Historical Society's board of directors and co-manages the historical McConaghy Mansion in Hayward. "At that time, [Henry Thomford] was the only businessman in Castro Valley."

Lorge said her great-grandfather used to adopt fawns and coyote pups, instituting a tradition of animal patronage that has carried through the generations to her own children. If a horse did not get its fill at the watering trough, Thomford would bring it a cold bucket of its own.

Thomford died in 1897 at 59 and the exchange's second owner tore the place down in favor of more lucrative enterprises. Lorge said the tiny structure, which stood near what is now the intersection of Redwood Road and Grove

Way, "wasn't much of a building anyway."

The next generation of Thomfords included Lorge's grandfather, George. And according to Lorge, George's wife, Anna, died young.

"They had so many children then, you know," she explained. "And life was tough."

George made it tougher by becoming the foreman at Epperson Ranch in Livermore. He then moved himself and his children to Sunol and eventually worked manning an enemy aircraft lookout tower atop the town post office during World War II.

Meanwhile he had a son named Andy who fought in the trenches near Breast, France, during World War I. Andy married Dorothy Becker, who was one of the last survivors of San Francisco's 1906 earthquake.

"The only thing she saved was a doll," Mrs. Lorge said of the woman who would become her mother, "because



Lucille Lorge (far left) poses with her parents and her older sister some time in the 1930s.

they started the backfire at her house and burned it down."

Andy and Dorothy built a house at 1010 Grove Way,

Hayward, in the late 1920s. Lorge was born there in 1930, and she went on to marry former Castro Valley Municipal

Advisory Council member Ray Lorge in 1952.

Ray and his brother, Jim, used to own the old California State Hatchery on Castro Valley Boulevard. Lucille assisted in the family business, and she said they used to euthanize the cockerels because they did not sell well. The pullets, however, were always great egg layers.

Lucille and her mother-in-law, Alice, figured out a way to save the tiny male chicks from destruction—they began coloring them and selling them at Easter time. Mrs. Lorge said they would grasp the birds' beaks and feet and dip them into a solution made up of vegetable dye and warm water.

The result was billowy blue, purple, yellow and pink chicks by the dozen. People would line up to buy them for 25 cents every April for about three years. Mrs. Lorge said the converted cockerels did not seem to mind their new wardrobes or the temperate bath it took to get them.

"And they came out just so gorgeous," Mrs. Lorge said. "We would sell them at 25 cents and we thought we were going to get so rich!"

But local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals officials intervened, saying it was not the coloring that bothered them, it was the inevitable neglect the chicks would get from their juvenile owners.

Moving on to more rewarding pursuits, Mrs. Lorge discovered that she was related to Hayward's McConaghy family through an aunt on her father's side. She became heavily involved in the McConaghy Mansion restoration and was among those who first tore up the modern linoleum floors to reveal the old hardwood, which was stained and varnished.

"There're two other women [Lois Over and Esther Jorgensen] who have worked with me in that house for 20 years," she said.

Aside from her housekeeping duties, the recently widowed Lorge devotes what little spare time she has to the Hayward Historical Society. She also works with a group that is trying to open a museum in Castro Valley and serves as a fire commissioner for the Alameda County Fire Department.

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Lucille Lorge Recalls Late Husband's Illustrious Life

by Frank George

Were it not for the oak-shaded hills and the proximity of the Pacific Ocean, Prohibition-era Castro Valley could easily have been mistaken for a Midwestern countryside. Small ranches were sprinkled along what is now Redwood Road, and cattle drives from the Livermore Valley would kick up dust en route to the stockyards of San Francisco.

Locals were quickly impressed with prospering poultry flocks. The gentle



Ray Lorge



A "stabilizer" is born. Civic leader Ray Lorge as a toddler in the late 1920s.