

MILL VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
FALL 2006

29th Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper

Thursday, October 12th

Mill Valley Community Center at 180 Camino Alto

Social Time 6:30

Potluck Supper 7:00

WHAT TO BRING: either an appetizer, a salad, a casserole or a dessert, an appropriate bowl or platter and a serving utensil - we will provide plastic eating utensils, dinner plates, napkins and cups.

R.S.V.P. Peggy Chenoweth at 381-7908 or peggycheno@aol.com.
Please give her your name, phone number and type of food you plan to bring.

A short business meeting will follow the potluck supper.

HISTORIAN RICHARD TORNEY will then make a two-part presentation related to this year's Centennial of the San Francisco Earthquake & Fire.

Hygienic Catastrophe Averted & Ned's Snapshots

In the aftermath of the April 18, 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, city officials recognized the urgent need to maintain the health of the citizenry. On April 20, United States Army Surgeon Lt. Col. George Henry Torney, Commander of the Presidio's U. S. Army General Hospital, was ordered to become San Francisco's Chief Sanitary Officer. His successful efforts to prevent any serious outbreak of contagious disease and his creation and enforcement of regulations to establish safe and sanitary conditions for the city's population are illustrated in this presentation.

On the day of the earthquake, and in the following days, Lt. Col. Torney's 26 year old son, Ned, went around the city with his camera taking snapshots of the devastation, the raging fire, and scenes showing some of the city's displaced residents. A selection of these recently rediscovered images will be shown.

FORMER BOARD MEMBER PASSES AWAY

HENRI BOUSSY died June 18, 2006 at age 88: Tam High teacher; renowned historian; author of "Mill Valley Moments" a weekly column in the Mill Valley Herald; Milly award winner in 1997; a Mill Valley citizen par excellence.

WALK-INTO-HISTORY A GREAT SUCCESS

The Twenty-Ninth Annual Walk-Into-History on May 28 celebrated the centennial of Tamalpais Park Subdivision. The one-mile level route on Elm, Locust, Walnut, Catalpa and Sycamore near Park School took more than two hours to traverse. There were stops at over forty homes with architectural and/or historical significance. Many were either bungalows built in the 1920s or craftsman style homes built before WW I. Several had been homes of prominent citizens. A garden with 150 different varieties of roses was a high point.

BOARD NOMINEES

The Nominating committee, comprised of Joan Murray, Gene Stocking, and Cris Chater, is pleased to present a slate of new board members.

Alan E. Lee has a keen interest in Mill Valley history and has been a Walk-Into-History guide for three years. He and his wife both grew up in Mill Valley - he was a track star at Tam High. He has an M.S. in City and Regional Planning, works for BART and is studying to become a Certified Financial Planner. He will bring to the board an excellent knowledge of Mill Valley.

Barbara Kent and her husband moved to Mill Valley 30 years ago. Their two children attended Park School. Her experience as school secretary, and more recently as administrative assistant and student registrar for the Mill Valley School District, will bring excellent skills to the job of board secretary.

Rachel Cleaveland Riedy is a third generation Mill Valley resident. Her four grandparents are Carla and John Hoag and Helen and Fred Cleaveland. Rachel and her husband Mark own Troop 80 Mountain Shop, which is just a block away from Dr. Hoag's optometry shop established in the 1930s. She also works as a photo/prop stylist for such Bay Area companies as Restoration Hardware and Williams-Sonoma. She will bring to the board an excellent knowledge of Mill Valley and its business community.

Leaving the board will be Shannon St. Clair Burck, Bob Huber, Melissa Kurtz and Lauren Novak

ANCIENT REDWOOD FALLS

The centuries-old redwood on the corner of LaVerne Ave. and Tamalpais Drive in Homestead Valley was about 8 ft. in diameter at its base and about 175 ft. high. Long ago, the heart of it had been burned out. It leaned toward LaVerne at an angle of about 25° to 30° from vertical. While walking or driving under it on Laverne, one couldn't help but be concerned that eventually it would fall onto the street.

It fell on Friday, July 28 at 12:56 pm. The trunk broke off at ground level. The noise was tremendous. Nearby houses shook. It fell onto LaVerne and hit a power pole about 125 ft. down the road. The tree broke at that point. The trunk rolled down into the creek in Stolte Grove, and the top section landed on the street.

On Saturday, workers removed the trunk in 8 foot sections starting at the base. The first log shattered, but the second section was solid. It was moved to Stolte Grove to serve as a monument and play structure. It is planned that a tree scientist determine its dendrochronology. Ring counts by non-experts suggest an age of 700 to 800 years.

It is likely one of the oldest redwoods in the Mill Valley area.



President's Message

From my home on Lower Molino I have easy access to the Dipsea steps which in three flights take me to the top of the ridge. Sometimes, I do a loop, up Cascade Drive to Marion then to Millwood and down one flight of the Dipsea steps.

In the other direction, a short way up Molino are steps down to Ethel Avenue. Turning left and crossing the creek brings me to Throckmorton near downtown. Turning right on Ethel leads me to steps down to Throckmorton or Miller. If I continue on Ethel to Mirabel to Molino to Cape Court I follow a path to the Pixie Trail. Following it to the right takes me to Montford where I enter a gate in the deer fence surrounding Three Groves. After wandering through this magnificent garden I exit via the back gate to Stolte Grove, a redwood park. Across the street is Eagle trail one of Homestead's Open Space trails that lead to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Mount Tamalpais State Park.

I recount these pleasures within easy walking distance from my house not to excite envy, but to encourage emulation. All of us in Mill Valley have access to steps, lanes, and paths leading to parks, gardens, and open space. We enjoy this benefit because of the way the City and its environs were laid out. We owe it to early efforts to preserve such special features as Stolte Grove and Cascade Falls, and to many open space preservation efforts in succeeding years. And we owe a recent debt of gratitude to the efforts of Victoria Talkington and her volunteer assistants, which culminated in the production of a map of our steps, lanes, and paths rights of way.

As President of the Mill Valley Historical Society, I invite you to look around at what the history of our community has bequeathed us, and what an appreciation of that history has helped preserve. As you enjoy these historical resources please continue to support, and encourage others to support, the efforts of the Mill Valley Historical Society to value and protect our local heritage.

Sincerely,
John Leonard

"Marin, a History"

In his latest history book, Barry Spitz takes a new approach. "Mill Valley - The Early Years" (1997) is organized by topic, e.g., "Municipal Affairs." He built "Marin, a History" around landmark days that shaped the County. For example, October 2, 1834, to John Reed (8878 acres), Corte de Madera Del Presidio, and February 11, 1835, to William Richardson (19,571 acres), Saucelito. Mill Valley is situated on parts of these Mexican land grants.

"Marin, a History" is the result of three years work using for the most part the resources of the Anne T. Kent California Room at the Marin County Civic Center.

Whole Foods in Quonsets

Visitors accustomed to shopping at elegant Whole Foods markets such as the one in the Time-Warner building in New York find it interesting that the Mill Valley, Whole Foods is in Quonsets. But these Quonsets are historic. No, they weren't moved here after WW II as war surplus, although they were manufactured by the same Oakland company that supplied the military.

After the war, Louis Ferrera, an experienced food marketer, developed the property. The swamp was drained and filled, a concrete pad was poured and new interconnected Quonsets were erected. He created the Miller Avenue Shopping Center, one of the largest shopping centers in northern California when it opened on April 18, 1947. Inside were Ferrera's Grocery and Vegetable Departments, Gosser's Meat Department, Doris Baby Shop, Dorothy's Beauty Salon, and the G&G Company: a pharmacy, beauty bar, fountain, camera shop and liquor store. Frank Gelardi and Joe Gaidano were Messrs. G&G.

The Board 2006

John Leonard - President
Joan Murray - Vice-President
Bill Devlin - Treasurer
Marianne Babal - Secretary

DIRECTORS

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Cathy Blumberg
Shannon St. Clair Burck
Peggy Chenoweth
Barbara Ford
Robert Huber
Melissa Kurtz
Laureen Novak
Chuck Oldenburg
Alison Owings
Beth Spotswood

Welcome New Members

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Mimi Hartford
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