

MILL VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FALL 2008

31st Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper
Thursday, October 30
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. Call Kate Menzies at 388-4475 or 686-1281, or send her an email at kmenzies @pacbell.net Please give her your name, phone number and food you plan to bring.

A short business meeting will follow the potluck supper.

MARIN & MILL VALLEY POLITICS — PAST AND PRESENT

DICK SPOTSWOOD, Marin Independent Journal political columnist and former mayor, will describe the politics that have shaped Mill Valley and Marin County.

NEW LOGO ON KIOSK

Perhaps you noticed our new logo on the Spring newsletter. A much larger version is on the kiosk at Miller Ave. and Camino Alto.

Joan Murray instigated the project. Rachel Riedy coordinated the art work of local artist Mary Osborne, and Tim Amyx saw the project to completion. The Mill Valley Rotary Club manages the kiosk.



TWO NEW MARIN HISTORIES

In May, the Jose Moya del Pino Library-Ross Historical Society published *Ross, California—The People, the Places, the History*. In June, the Nicasio Historical Society published *Nicasio—The Historic Valley at the Center of Marin*.

ROSS

Supplementing the historical information are photographs of early Ross residents and families, houses built between 1850 and 1908, public buildings and distance views of the landscape. Ross Landing on Corte Madera creek, near today's College of Marin, was one of the most important shipping points on all of San Francisco Bay in the 1850s. In 1875, railroad freight and passenger traffic became available. Several chapters cover 20th century subdivisions, roads, bridges, schools, and the 25 floods that have occurred since 1914. An extensive bibliography is included along with three appendices that document town government information. The book can be purchased for \$45 at the Marin Art and Garden Center's Octagon House.

NICASIO

The book is primarily a complete compendium of detailed histories from origin to date of every Nicasio ranch. Histories of village families, houses and commercial buildings are also extensive. There are hundreds of photos: landscapes, people, buildings and cows. The information is based not only on bibliographic references but also on oral histories and interviews with 69 present and former residents. The book can be purchased for \$36 from the Nicasio Historical Society, P.O. Box 111, Nicasio, CA 94946.

MILITARY ON MT. TAMALPAIS

The May First Wednesday Program featured Daniel M. Sebby, director of the California State Military Museum, speaking on the "History of Military on Mt. Tam." Shortly after Pearl Harbor, a radar station was established on Mt. Tam to detect Japanese aircraft. This was one of 60 such sites in California that were active during WW II. Not long after their deactivation the cold war began. In 1954, 12 anti-aircraft missile-launching sites were constructed around the Bay Area to combat the threat of Siberian-based Soviet bombers which carried atomic bombs. The US Air Force Mill Valley Air Force Station (MVAFS) was completed in 1952 on the west peak of Mt. Tam. MVAFS was a small city with 62 buildings and 200 airmen, many with families. Its radar could detect enemy bombers, but MVAFS was also the tactical command center for operations at the 12 Nike sites, each of which had a battery of 12 missiles. The original Nike-Ajax missile with a conventional warhead was replaced by the Nike-Hercules missile with a nuclear warhead and a range of 87 miles. The last Nike missile was removed in 1979. MVAFS was deactivated in 1980; the buildings were removed in 2005. At the present time, the FAA has a radar station there for air traffic control.

JOSETTE GAVIN (1912 - 2008)

Former Homestead Valley resident Josette Gavin died of natural causes in Palo Alto at age 96. After her husband died suddenly in 1970, she moved from Indiana to Mill Valley in 1977 to be closer to her daughter. In 1979 she married Bill Gavin who was surprised to learn that the house they bought on Cape Court was outside the city limits—he had planned to become actively involved in Mill Valley politics during his retirement. Bill died in 1985. Josette was very active in the Outdoor Art Club and the Mill Valley Historical Society—she was president of both organizations. In 2002, Josette moved to Palo Alto Commons, a retirement home close to her daughter's residence.

TAM HIGH WALK INTO HISTORY

On the day before Memorial Day, guides conducted tours of Tamalpais High School which was celebrating its centennial. Many participants were impressed by the fact that Tam has a truly unique campus, much like a university. It's rich history was described in 20 stops. Alumni taking this Walk-Into-History came up with many anecdotes that added immeasurably to the enjoyment of others on the tour as well as the guides. The total number of paying participants was 320, well above an average of about 250 that have taken previous Walks-Into-History. It was a beautiful day and a great success. One negative aspect: there were not enough guides. More guides are needed. Volunteer if you can. It's a really interesting experience.

FIRST WEDNESDAY PROGRAMS

Next year's series of First Wednesday Programs begins in February. These popular and interesting talks are held at 7:30 pm in the Creekside Room of the Mill Valley Library. Tim Amyx has thus far lined up four speakers:

Jeanette Vonier — Archiving Historical Photographs

Lissa McKee — History of Tamalpais Valley

Richard Torney — History of Ross

Chuck Oldenburg — Homestead Valley's 1st Decade

TAM HIGH COMMUTER

Boyd Stewart, born in 1903, lived with his parents and younger sister on the 500-acre Stewart Dairy Ranch in Nicasio. He attended Tam High from 1918 to 1922. Here is how he commuted.

He rode a horse five miles to San Geronimo to catch the six am steam train to Fairfax. He transferred to the electric train to Sausalito, got off at Almonte and walked up the County Road to Tam High. The return trip brought him back to San Geronimo at 6:30 pm. Another five-mile horseback ride took him home.

He claimed that the commute was not as bad as the alternative of milking on the ranch and not attending high school, which some of his Nicasio friends did.

BOARD NOMINEES

The Nominating committee, comprised of Alan Lee and Don Seitas is pleased to present a slate of new board members.

Michael Lipman, a cartoonist and an animator of children's media, has an art studio in the historic 142 Throckmorton Theatre. Since he and his family moved to Homestead Valley 13 years ago, he has grown more and more interested in Mill Valley's history. He, his wife, Suz, and their daughter, Anna, have been actively involved in community affairs in Homestead Valley and Mill Valley. Michael has been so fascinated by our Walks Into History that he hopes to be a walk leader and member of the walk committee.

Betty Goerke, a 46 year resident of Mill Valley, is professor of Anthropology and Archaeology at the College of Marin. She is the author *Chief Marin – Leader, Rebel, and Legend* — a history of Marin County's Namesake and his People. This scholarly work is the result of 30 years research. She talked about Chief Marin and his people at a First Wednesday Program in the spring of 2007. Betty serves on the board of the Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin and the Advisory Board of the Marin History Museum.

Darren Millman moved to Tamalpais Valley three years ago to be close to his boat in Sausalito. His degree in anthropology initially led to positions as an archeologist with the National Park Service as well as private firms. He has since switched careers to Information Technology and is currently manager of computer systems and networks for a San Francisco container shipping company. Darren enjoys historical research and is enthusiastic about working on the MVHS board.

Leaving the board will be Joan Murray, Bill Devlin and Alison Owings

The Board 2008

John Leonard - President
Rachel Reidy - Vice-President
Bill Devlin - Treasurer
Barbara Kent - Secretary

DIRECTORS

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Donna Carrillo
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Barbara Ford
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