

# MARIN HISTORY MUSEUM Bulletin

Summer 2019



## MARIN ON FIRE!

The Great Fire of 1891  
Looking Back - Marin's Fire Equipment  
From the Collection  
American Distillery Fire  
San Rafael - Firemen and Fires

Corte Madera's First Firehouse  
Tiburon's Fires of 1921  
A "Rendezvous for San Francisco Club  
Men" Burned  
Charles Russell Reilley, Jr.

## The Marin History Museum

Founded in 1935, the Marin History Museum celebrates the traditions of innovation and creativity of the people of Marin County. Through exhibitions and educational programs, the Museum inspires honor for the past, an understanding of the present and an imagination of the future.

### Board:

Al Boro, President  
Gary Ragghiati, Vice-president (Rotating), Secretary  
Peter Grant, Treasurer  
Harry Barbier  
Charlie Barboni  
Ann Batman  
Jeff Craemer  
Dennis Fisco  
Jaime Pera

### Staff:

Michelle S. Kaufman, Director  
Heather Powell, Collections  
Lane Dooling, Administrative Asst.

### *The Bulletin - Volume XXXV*

The Bulletin is a publication created by the Marin History Museum.

### Contributors:

Susan Cluff  
Brian Crawford  
Jo Haraf  
Robert Harrison  
Claire Hendren  
Patricia L. Keats  
Jean Mansen  
Heather Powell

**Advertising:** Jeff Craemer

**Editor:** Jo Haraf

**Layout/Design:** Ann Batman

**Copy Editors:** Ed Remitz & Larry Paul

Marin History Museum  
PO Box 150727  
San Rafael, CA 94915  
415-382-1182  
Email: [info@marinhistory.org](mailto:info@marinhistory.org)

## In Dedication

The Marin History Museum dedicates the Summer 2019 *Bulletin* to Marin's firefighters. We give our thanks to the men and women, both volunteer and professional, who protect our lives, homes, businesses and natural beauty in the past, present and future.



We offer special thanks to the Marin Fire History Project ([MarinFireHistory.org](http://MarinFireHistory.org)) from which we took inspiration for this issue.

## Collections & Research Center

The Marin History Museum collects and preserves a wide range of artifacts, photographs and archival materials chronicling Marin County's rich and diverse history. In total, the Museum cares for over 25,000 artifacts and 200,000 photographs in the Craemer Family



Collections & Research Facility in Novato. Objects in the collection are conserved for their historical and educational relevance and serve as the cornerstone of the Museum's exhibitions.

This facility also houses the Museum's Research Library where visitors may research any aspect of Marin's history. The Research Library contains rare manuscripts, maps, newspapers, directories, ephemera and a reference collection of over 1,000 books.

To make an appointment, email [research@marinhistory.org](mailto:research@marinhistory.org) or call 415-382-1182



Hello Friends,

With your support, the staff, volunteers and board members continue to push hard to meet the Museum's mission for three years and counting.

**Collections** - We continue to accept and care for dozens of new donations each year. So far this year we have received these wonderful objects:

Collection of textbooks, c. 1900, once owned by the Klyce family of Mill Valley

Collection of gold pins and awards from San Rafael High School, c. 1940  
December 1943 issue of *The Architectural Forum* with feature article on the development of Marin City

**Programs** - The monthly Speaker's Series continues to be one of our proudest outreach programs. This year we re-initiated our classroom visits and have received charming artwork from 3rd and 4th grade classes as a thank you.

**Exhibits** - We are looking forward to collaborating with Dominican University who graciously offered to host an exhibition in their space this fall. Stay tuned for more information on this front.

These three elements are the cornerstone of the Museum's mission but they require financial support. To that end, we invite you to become a member. Not only will you receive wonderful benefits, but your contribution will underwrite these efforts and help preserve our history.

Your membership, donations and attendance at events provides stability for the Museum. Please continue to support MHM.

Kind regards,  
Al Boro

President, MHM Board of Directors

## CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE

**MARINHISTORY.ORG**

### HERE YOU CAN

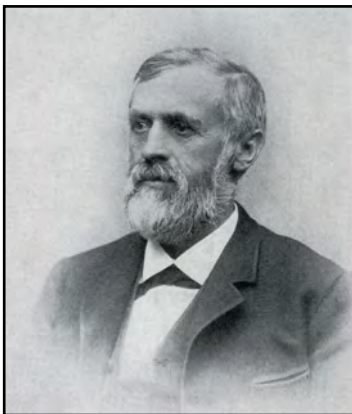
- ◆ CHECK THE CALENDAR
- ◆ READ OUR PUBLICATIONS
- ◆ SEARCH THE COLLECTION
- ◆ JOIN THE MUSEUM
- ◆ DONATE AND VOLUNTEER



# The Great Fire of 1891

By Brian Crawford

The last week of June 1891 was a scorch-er. Temperatures had been around 110 degrees for three days. At 4:00 in the afternoon of Monday the 29<sup>th</sup>, a horseman galloped into San Rafael and reported a large fire had broken out on Mount Tamalpais near Tucker's Camp. There was fear it would spread to Larkspur and Corte Madera. A group of volunteers headed up into the hills. A telephone call notified the San Rafael Water Company, which operated a dam and



Albert E. Kent  
Source: Anne T. Kent California Room

flume in nearby Bill Williams Gulch. They quickly sent out a crew of 15.

A number of large homes were endangered, including the magnificent estate of Albert E. Kent, a Chicago millionaire. Unluckily, the Kents had moved to Marin in 1871 following the 1871 Chicago Fire. The

landowners offered five dollars a day to any man who would fight the fire, five more if they worked through the night — roughly \$250 in today's money. Scores of men turned up to join the fight.

The fire had already burned 70 acres of hay and was advancing on two ranches. The firefighters cut fire lines and set backfires, saving both ranches. Their work was hampered by the extreme heat. Because it



Flames crossing Bill Williams gulch  
Source: *San Francisco Call*, June 1891

was early in the dry season, the chaparral burned fiercely, creating thick oily, smoke

and sending flames leaping into the treetops. A newspaper reporter arrived but his party fled for their lives when the fire leaped across the canyon, "roaring like an express train." "She's gone," shouted a policeman. "There's nothing to stop those flames now from wiping out everything this side of San Quentin!"

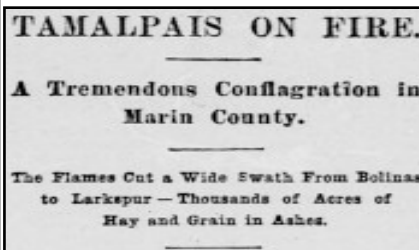
The men fought all night. On Tuesday morning, some of Kent's outbuildings were burned, but the crews managed to stop the fire's advance to the north. It then curled around to the east side of the mountain and



Mt. Tamalpais, June 1891  
Source: MHM

threatened Mill Valley. By Wednesday morning they declared the fire under control, but a strong wind came up and it broke out again. More volunteers poured in from around the Bay Area.

On Thursday the wind died away, and by that afternoon the fire was fully con-



tained. In its three days of terror, the great fire had burned from Bolinas nearly to Larkspur. An estimated 20 square miles of forest had been de-

stroyed, but no major structures were damaged, and no lives were lost. A few days later an unseasonal rainstorm finally put out one of the worst fires in Marin history.

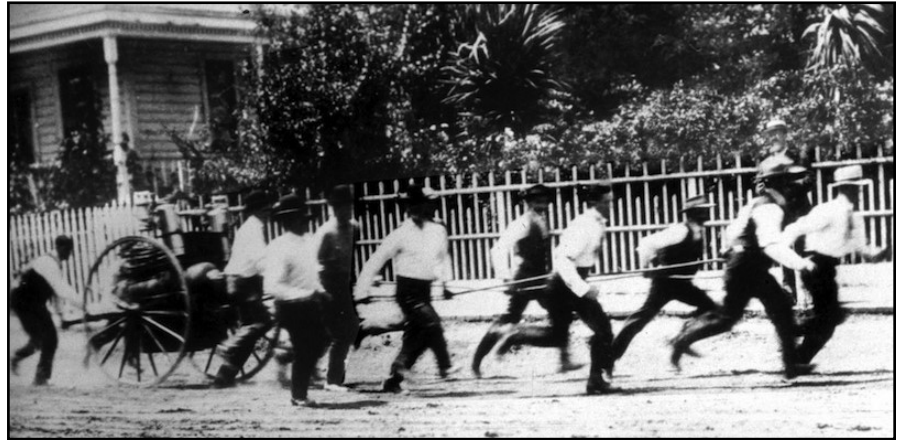


# Looking back — Marin's Fire Equipment

By Jean Mansen

In the early 1900s, Marin's firemen pulled their equipment to fires by hand. Some carts carried hoses to connect to local water sources, while others carried a fire-quenching mix often made of vinegar and baking soda.

Larkspur Fire Department in route to a blaze  
Source: MHM



The introduction of horse-drawn fire engines vastly improved response times to fires. San Rafael and San Anselmo acquired horse teams — Tom and Jerry and Major and Colonel, respectively — to tow their apparatus. San Anselmo provided a lovely retirement for their fire horses in 1915 when a new chemical wagon replaced their duties.

San Rafael's Tom and Jerry at work (1913)  
Source: MHM

In 1910, the Ross Fire Department saved the home of John Martin, described by the Sausalito News as a "well known resident of Ross who never does anything by halves." In gratitude, Martin donated a \$5,500 combination chemical and hose wagon — thought to be one of the first on the West Coast. The lucky fireman who drove the new engine was the only salaried member of the department.

The Marin County Journal reported on December 8, 1921, that San Rafael purchased a 1922 Stutz Fire Engine costing \$12,750. The sale included pneumatic cord tires. Other engines were usually delivered with solid rubber tires. The Stutz's appearance retired fire horses Tom and Jerry to their new careers towing a coal wagon in San Anselmo. San Rafael's first pumping engine remained in service until 1949.



Restored 1922 Stutz fire engine  
Source: MHM

Many years later, Robert and Marty Marcucci located, purchased and restored San Rafael's 1922 engine to showroom condition. Second-generation firemen, the two had fond memories of hiding on the floor of their father's car as he, the San Anselmo Fire Chief, raced to fires.

# From the Collection

By Heather Powell

In a county as old and brittle-dry as Marin, a long history of structure and wildfires is not unexpected. The Marin History Museum is honored to be the custodian of our county's fire-related artifacts. Here are a few of our favorite pieces.



September 27, 1904, was a special day for James Rasmussen. After “having served the term of five years as requested by the Laws of the State of California, James was duly elected an Active Member of the San Rafael Fire Department.”

Unfortunately undated, this jaunty blue felt and black leather cap must have perched proudly on the head of a San Rafael fire fighter. It's fun to imagine James Rasmussen tossing his hat in the air upon receiving his Active Member certificate.



Hotel Rafael in 1900



Hotel Rafael fire on July 29, 1928



Spoon engraved *Hotel Rafael*

On July 29, 1928, an angry employee set the Hotel Rafael on fire. Built in 1888, the 200-room structure burned in three hours. Bank of Italy Club members attending a convention lost furs and jewelry, but none of the 150 guests lost their lives. The Museum's collection includes another fire survivor: a spoon engraved *Hotel Rafael*.





We are grateful to Chuck Daniels for remembering that today is tomorrow's past when he donated the turnout coat he wore while serving in the Ross Fire Department. "Turn out gear" is named for how a fireman turns out his pants over his boots.

Sometimes old looks new again. The family of owner Jordan Smith, who acquired the engine when it was retired from service, donated this 1934 Tamalpais Fire District engine to our museum. A bit large for our shelves, the fire truck is on loan to the Marin County Fire Department for safekeeping.



# *Mount Tamalpais*

---

## MORTUARY & CEMETERY

We offer sensitive, personalized service to meet the full range of funeral and graveside needs. The staff consults with family and clergy, offers complete administrative and clerical services (including preparation of death certificates and assistance with union or insurance documents), and makes comprehensive plans for funeral and memorial needs.

We are fully equipped to handle either cremation or burial. A full line of caskets and urns are offered in a variety of woods, metals and fabrics to meet every family's budget. All religious denominations are accepted.

2500 Fifth Avenue • San Rafael, CA 94901 • (415) 459-2500 • [www.mt-tam.com](http://www.mt-tam.com)

# BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!

Please join us at one of the following levels by going to [marinhistory.org](http://marinhistory.org) or calling 415-382-1182.

Your membership will help us to grow and fulfill the Museum's mission.

## \$50 Individual

One-year membership  
Complimentary copy of Biannual Bulletin

## \$100 Supporter

Free admittance to lectures with membership card  
Discount on book purchases  
One-year membership  
Complimentary copy of Biannual Bulletin

## \$200 Contributor

NARM benefits - Free admission to 1000s of museums  
Free admittance to lectures with membership card  
Discount on book purchases  
One-year membership  
Complimentary copy of Biannual Bulletin

## \$300 Patron

NARM benefits - Free admission to 1000s of museum  
VIP tour of Craemer Collections Facility'  
A curated tour of your home town in Brady Aerial Collection  
Free admittance to lectures with membership card  
Discount on book purchases  
One-year membership  
Complimentary copy of Biannual Bulletin



To all our Loyal, Talented Volunteers

*Thank you!*

Azalia Arona  
Mary Ann Bell  
Rob Carey  
Susan Cluff  
Brian Crawford  
Traci Dunkel  
Scott Fletcher  
Carol Gordon  
William Graves  
Jo Haraf  
Robert L. Harrison  
Claire Hendren  
Izzy Kaufman

Max Kaufman  
William Kaufman  
Patricia L. Keats  
Kathleen M. Kelly  
Michael P. Kelly  
D. C. Koenig  
Ray Lorber  
Jean Mansen  
Judy Mayne  
Marcie Miller  
Ruth-Louise Moran  
Jocelyn Moss

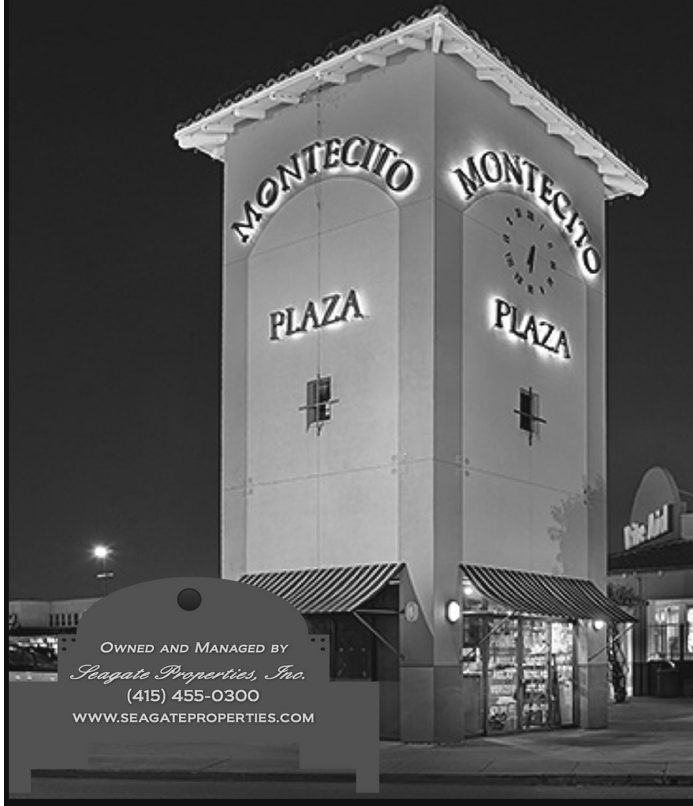
Melissa Mumbauer  
Mary O'Brien  
Larry Paul  
Ned Purdom  
Ed Remitz  
Ian Sethre  
Iman Sheikh-Ahmad  
Andres Stinchfield  
Alice Tanner  
Jeanne Wilson



**40 FINE SHOPS and RESTAURANTS**

*Third and Grander Than Ever*

PROUDLY SERVING THE MARIN COMMUNITY FOR 57 YEARS





## Chalet & Basque

RESTAURANT

**(415) 479-1070**

405 N. SAN PEDRO ROAD  
SAN RAFAEL

— IN SANTA VENETIA —

One Mile East of County Civic Center  
patrick@chaletbasquemarin.com

S-S Dinner 4-9pm  
Tu-F Lunch 11:30am-2pm  
Dinner 5-9pm  
Closed Monday

Telephone 454-6066  
Fax 454-4447



**MORRIS ROOFING COMPANY**

1435 FRANCISCO BLVD., SAN RAFAEL, CALIF. 94901

BARRY J. ARENDS

LIC. #259426



## QUALITY PAINTING

Interior / Since 1987 / Exterior  
Serving the entire Bay Area  
All Aspects of Painting  
Some related Trades

**Joel Collins**

**Free Estimates**

Priced to your Budget

**415-847-6192**

Lic. 758655



## *Smith Ranch*

### Deli & Cafe

**1-415-491-1212**

101 Smith Ranch Road  
San Rafael, CA 94903

US & Foreign Coins Bought and Sold

Estate Appraisals and Purchases

## SAN RAFAEL RARE COIN COMPANY

**415-457-2646**

1219 Fourth Street  
P.O. Box 150959  
San Rafael, CA 94915-0959

**ROGER TOBIN**  
Professional Numismatist  
and Precious Metals Dealer



San Rafael

# Joe's

931 Fourth St., San Rafael, CA

CYNTHIA FARINA



Kayak and Stand up  
Paddleboard Rental,  
Storage, Sales, and  
Instruction

115 Third St., San Rafael CA 94901  
415-524-8492 info@101surfsports.com



Cafe • Breakfast & Brunch Restaurant • Sandwich Shop

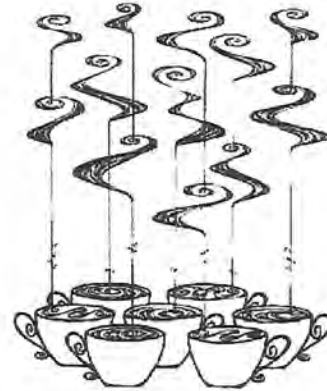
1335 4<sup>th</sup> Street, San Rafael, CA 94901 Phone: (415) 492-1530

# Depot Garden Cafe

**Now Open**

**8:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

*We serve Breakfast and Lunch!*



**\*ONLY A 3 MINUTE WALK\***

**718 B St, San Rafael, CA 94901**  
**[415] 521-5866**



## Marin County's Only Two Antique Collectives

Just 20 Minutes North of the Golden Gate

### Antiques-Legacy of San Anselmo

- Rugs
- Fine Orientalia
- Jewelry
- Ephemera
- Nautical
- Linens
- Furniture
- Lighting
- Antiquities
- Fine Art
- Primitive Art
- Maxfield Parrish Prints

204 Sir Francis Drake Blvd  
San Anselmo ■ (415) 457-7166

### A Sentimental Journey of Novato

- Jewelry
- Coins
- Watches
- Linens
- MCM
- Rugs
- Ephemera
- Home Decor
- Vintage Clothing
- Lighting

**902 Grant Ave**  
Novato ■ (415) 892-0640



# Distillery Fire in Sausalito, 1963

By Susan Cluff



American Distilling Company c. 1930s  
Source: MHM

On May 4, 1963, the American Distilling Company on the west side of Bridgeway near Nevada Street caught fire. Employing 225 workers and producing 60,000 cases of high-grade alcohol a month, it was the largest independent liquor producer west of the Mississippi when sparks from faulty wiring turned the four-acre building complex into a raging inferno. “Explosions and flames hundreds of feet high devoured about 167,000 gallons of bourbon, scotch and tequila plus an undetermined amount of other types of liquors and high-grade whiskeys,” wrote the Marin Independent Journal. “For two hours, the (fire) roared

and boomed out of control like a crashed bomber. Even after sun-up today, the occasional whiskey barrel exploded like cannon.”

More than 175 firemen fought the flames from 11:30 p.m. until daybreak. Because of the heat, they had to stay back 50 feet, making it difficult to get close with their hoses. Over 200 residents were evacuated, jumping into cars and taking their valuables with them. A dozen other fire units were sent from as far away as San Francisco, coordinated by Sausalito Fire Chief “Matts” Perry.

Local accounts say the stench of raw and exploding alcohol that night, and for days after, was overwhelming. Rivers of alcohol burned with a blue flame and could be seen as far away as the Oakland hills. Some even claimed seagulls flew crooked for weeks, drunk on wafting alcohol fumes.

In the end, the fire consumed two large buildings and their contents plus a maintenance shop, the wholesale premises, and three storage warehouses. Spared were the main six-story building, a brick warehouse containing thousands of gallons of 195 proof alcohol, and four empty fermenters.

Plant superintendent Fred Schmidt reported losses of \$2.5 million, later recalculated as \$550,000 plus the loss of government taxes on the liquor — the largest fire loss in Sausalito history.

The company resumed operations at the site producing gin and grain alcohol until 1965 when they shut down and consolidated their operations in the East Bay. The distillery and 13 acres were then sold for about \$1.1 million to a San Francisco firm that planned to transform the old buildings, once the old Mason Distillery, into a development similar to Ghirardelli Square. But plans and ownership changed and in 1970 the last buildings were torn down. Eight years later, 215 townhouses and condominiums were built at “Whiskey Springs.”



American Distilling Company fire  
Source: MarinFireHistory.org



American Distilling Company Brand Bourbon  
Source: Wikipedia

# San Rafael – Firemen and Fires

By Jo Haraf

A notice in the December 3, 1874, issue of the Marin Journal, between reports of public drunkenness and boys sledding on wet grass, sought volunteers for a new San Rafael fire company. A week later, the newspaper listed the 27 members of San Rafael Hose Co., No 1 under the command of James Tunstead, County Sheriff.



San Rafael Firemen, 1895  
Source: MHM

Four years later, the renamed San Rafael Hose and Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 pulled their hose cart in the 1878 St. Patrick's Day parade. "The San Rafael Firemen never looked so well," reported the Marin Journal. While we don't have photographs of those early

firemen, the 1895 company looks mighty smart indeed!

Later in 1878, the fire company announced their fourth annual New Year's Eve Ball. Tickets were one dollar and the firemen hoped "our citizens will buy the tickets, whether they wish to go or not." A charity ball you don't have to attend is an innovation whose time should come again.

In early 1915, a few of the San Rafael Fire Department's "Gallant Hundred" posed in front of their fire truck for a souvenir brochure. A few months later, on June 28, the firemen were tested when a fire started in the rear of the Kozy Kitchen restaurant on B Street.



Source: MHM



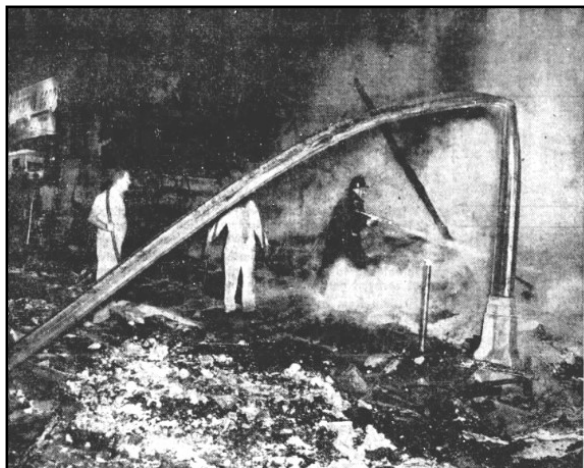
San Rafael B St. Fire  
Source: MHM

The blaze swept down B Street damaging four shops and their second-floor apartments.

Losses were estimated at \$9,000 (\$226,000 in current dollars). At one point, with water pressure failing, it was feared the fire would destroy the entire block bordered by A, B, Third and Fourth streets. When the pressure was restored, Chief Schneider and his lieutenants, who had climbed to the buildings' roofs, directed seven streams of water onto the flames. Responding to screams, Under-Sheriff Charles Redding rescued a young woman paralyzed with fear in an upstairs apartment, carrying the struggling woman to safety. The firemen's skill and courage, as well as the day's lack of wind, saved San Rafael's downtown core.



On July 29, 1957, 29 years to the day after the Hotel Rafael burned at the kerosene-slick hands of a disgruntled employee, San Rafael's Fourth Street between D and E streets met a similar fate.



Light Poles in San Rafael  
Source: Daily Independent Journal

The fire started with a “whoosh” around 7 p.m. in a garage warehouse. At its peak, flame and smoke were visible from Sonoma and San Francisco. Melted light poles sagged like licorice sticks. Flames destroyed nearly 20 businesses at losses of over \$2 million (\$18 million in current dollars).

The flammable materials stored at Morwear's Paint Store proved to be the most difficult to extinguish. “It was the most disastrous business district fire I have ever seen in 33 years with the fire department,” said Fire Chief Johansen.

“Very kind people” mobilized to help residents in the fire's path. Mrs. Thornhill was drying dishes when a sheet of flames roared toward her kitchen. She grabbed what she could while volunteers collected furniture and bedding. Two minutes later, her

house was fully engulfed.

Other volunteers moved Miss Margaret Rose's possessions, including a television set and typewriter, from her apartment above the Cottage Bookshop to the Marin Orthopedia Company. Shortly thereafter, an enormous tongue of flame licked across Fourth Street, consuming the Orthopedia offices and all of Margaret's belongings.

Vic Koll, absorbed in the Floyd Patterson – Tommy Jackson heavyweight boxing match, ignored the sirens until alerted by volunteers that he “better get out; the place is on fire!” He escaped with a coat, trousers and a pair of shoes. Apparently, boxing is best watched bare-chested. (For the record, Gentleman Floyd Patterson won the title bout.)

Glass cuts, a sprained ankle and a nail-punctured foot were the only injuries suffered by four of the hundreds of firemen, volunteers, police and servicemen from Marin, Oakland and San Francisco who fought the blaze. “We were lucky,” said Dr. Rafael G. Dufficy.



Fire viewed from 4th Street  
Source: GenDisasters.com



Final destruction  
Source: MHM

Not everyone found destruction in the flames. Heat popped open Fourth Street's parking meters, pouring hot nickels and pennies onto the sidewalk and gutter. “Moppets” dodged fire hoses and risked burnt fingers to collect their treasure.

TEL (415) 457-1771 CELL (415) 264-0361 FAX (415) 457-5067

## Marin Fence Co.

COMMERCIAL-RESIDENTIAL  
ORNAMENTAL IRON  
GATE OPERATORS  
PVC PRODUCTS  
RENTAL FENCING

OUG MONTI  
AL. LIC. 977667

INFO@MARINFENCE.COM  
WWW.MARINFENCE.COM

P.O. BOX 4324  
SAN RAFAEL, CA 94913-4324  
63 LARKSPUR ST  
SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901



160 Bellam Blvd • San Rafael, CA 94901

[www.hnjtire.com](http://www.hnjtire.com)

**Chris Johansson (415) 457-2952**

- Goodyear
- Dunlop
- Pirelli
- Firestone
- Bridgestone

### Service

- Alignment
- Brakes
- Shocks

## MARTIN & HARRIS APPLIANCES SALES & SERVICE

Paul Berry

454-2021

FAX: 453-0905

[www.martin-harris.com](http://www.martin-harris.com)

2158 Fourth Street  
San Rafael



ZEPHYR  
REAL ESTATE

**Jaime Pera**  
Senior Associate

CELL 415.505.7197

LIC 01442699

[JPera@ZephyrMarin.com](mailto:JPera@ZephyrMarin.com)

[www.LifeinMarinCounty.com](http://www.LifeinMarinCounty.com)

**Earl "Cal" Farnsworth, Jr.**  
President



Agent for Mayflower

CAL T-139.099  
US DOT 125563

2111 Francisco Blvd. East, San Rafael, CA 94901

Tel: (415) 459-6683

Toll Free: (800) 201-6683

Fax: (415) 459-2724

E-mail: [cal@farnsworthmayflower.com](mailto:cal@farnsworthmayflower.com)  
[www.farnsworthmoving.com](http://www.farnsworthmoving.com)



Serving Marin Since 1950

## Chuck Nerviani

NERVIANI PAVING INC.  
3150 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.  
Fairfax, CA 94930  
PO Box 714  
Novato, CA 94948

415-454-2662 Office

415-559-2832 Cell

[Nervianipaving@gmail.com](mailto:Nervianipaving@gmail.com)

Grading & Paving Contractor  
Lic #564392



**Brandon Tire**  
Tires • Wheels • Brakes • Shocks • Front End Alignment

773 Lincoln Ave.  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
(415) 456-1035

**Daniel M. Murphy**  
Senior Vice President  
Wealth Advisor

**Wealth Management**  
750 Lindaro Street  
Suite 300  
San Rafael, CA 94901

direct 415 451 1425

fax 415 451 1401

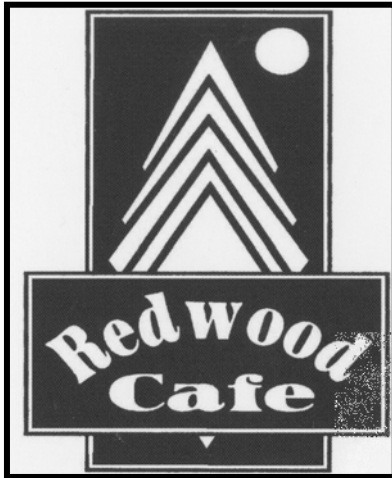
CA Insurance Lic. # 0A81239

## Morgan Stanley

NMLS # 1401579

[dan.murphy@morganstanley.com](mailto:dan.murphy@morganstanley.com)





**Redwood  
Cafe**

Leo C. Haginicols  
175 Paul Dr. San Rafael  
94903  
415-479-8989

HEATING - AIR CONDITIONING - WATER HEATERS  
SERVICE AND INSTALLATION

**Dickson Co.**  
35 MILL ST.  
SAN RAFAEL, CALIF. 94901



DANIEL DICKSON  
Owner

FAX 456-4903  
OFF. 456-1830

**NORINE SMITH**  
REALTOR®  
NorineSmith@hotmail.com



415.497.9955 DIRECT LINE  
415.488.1525 FAX

36 Tiburon Boulevard  
Mill Valley, CA 94941




**JOHN GODSEY**  
OWNER

Digital, Offset and Wide Format Color Printing  
882 FOURTH STREET • SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901  
415-457-4273 • 415-457-0821 FAX  
www.fourthstreetpress.com • EMAIL: john@fourthstreetpress.com

We are truly thankful to be selected as

**Best Accounting Firm  
&  
Best Tax Preparation Firm!**

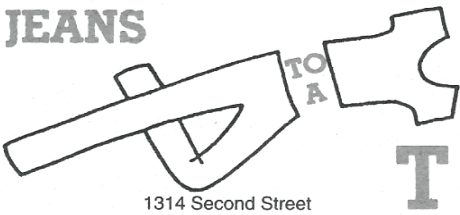
(As voted by the readers of the  
*Marin Independent-Journal*)

Perotti and Carrade has been a full service CPA firm for over 30 years. Our team offers much more than tax preparation and attest services. We get involved with our clients-individuals, businesses and non-profits. If you are in need of our services, please give us a call.

**PEROTTI & CARRADE**  
**Certified Public Accountants**


A Professional Corporation  
1100 Larkspur Landing Circle, Suite 358  
Larkspur, CA 94930  
(415) 461-8500

**JEANS**



1314 Second Street  
San Rafael, California 94901

THOMAS J. DIETRICH  
PRESIDENT



Phone (415) 456-6841

**Michael Good-Books**

P. O. Box 521  
Woodacre, CA 94973

(415) 488-9057  
mgoodbooks@aol.com

# Corte Madera's First Firehouse, 1930

By Patricia L. Keats

Corte Madera, begun as a summer cottage community, had many year-round residents in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1908, a volunteer fire department was formed, operating with a chemical engine and two hose-carts.

Chemical engines, common in 19<sup>th</sup> century fire-fighting, were basically a large fire extinguisher mounted on a cart. The engine and one hose-cart were kept in a station built for \$214 adjacent to Mahood's Store, on Redwood Avenue beyond Menke Park and the Gazebo. The other hose-cart was kept at Roberts' Garage on Redwood Avenue at Morningside Drive. The department's first fire truck was a small Chevrolet Pope Hartford, purchased in 1916. A bond issue in 1928 allowed the purchase of a large American LaFrance 500 gpm (gallons per minute) pumper — the pride of the department for years.



Corte Madera "fire boys" c. 1916  
Source: MarinFireHistory.org

Incorporated in 1930, volunteers began to collect the \$8,000 needed

to build a new fire station. They were spurred by the new LaFrance truck, as well as the devastating 1929 Mt. Tamalpais and Mill Valley fire, which destroyed the Tam O'Shanter Inn at the top of the Corte Madera Grade. The volunteers raised funds through operating the concession stand at The Larkspur Rose Bowl, the dance operated for decades by The Larkspur Volunteer Fire Department.



Ground breaking for new firehouse in 1930  
Source: MarinFireHistory.org

Volunteer firemen constructed the new building under the supervision of local builder W.F. Wegner. The station included office space for

the police chief and town clerk, and an assembly hall for local groups. The Corte Madera firehouse, located at Willow and First streets, now Tamalpais Drive, was dedicated on January 18, 1931, by the Larkspur fire department and other local civic groups.

The firehouse was sold to the town of Corte Madera in September 1953 and is still in use today as the town hall, where you can recognize the arches which were entrances to the firehouse. In 1965, the fire department moved to new quarters on the adjacent lot to the east, their current location – on the corner of Pixley and Tamalpais drives.

A film of the volunteers building their firehouse, believed to have been shot by George Nivena, a Larkspur businessman who lived in Corte Madera, is available at [vimeo.com/205730987](https://vimeo.com/205730987) and at [MarinFireHistory.org](http://MarinFireHistory.org). Keep an eye out for the photobombing goat and don't miss how the firefighters smoked like, well, a house ablaze!



Former Corte Madera firehouse  
Source: Google Earth



# BUILT TO LAST

Bringing 105 years of knowledge,  
experience and innovation to  
every project we do.

**GHILOTTI BROS.**  
OVER 100 YEARS  
SAN RAFAEL

[ghilottibros.com](http://ghilottibros.com)

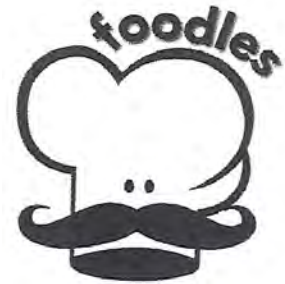
LICENSE #132128

Susan's Store Room  
Susan's Card Company  
Traveling Bear Press



239 San Anselmo Ave.  
San Anselmo, CA 949560  
Phone: 415/456-1333  
FAX: 415/456-4935  
[www.susansstoreroom.com](http://www.susansstoreroom.com)

Susan Hoy



3140 Kerner Blvd. #G  
San Rafael  
M-F 7am - 2pm

Salad Bar  
Daily Specials  
Homemade Soup  
Korean Special Platters  
415-457-5000



**MOUNTAIN MIKE'S**  
PIZZA

Jonathan Girard  
Owner

Cell (415) 827-6556  
[jgirard76@gmail.com](mailto:jgirard76@gmail.com)

Store (415) 454-4300  
2100 4th St, Suite B  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
[mountainmikes.com](http://mountainmikes.com)





# Please patronize all of our advertisers



Museum  
(415) 454-1460 x5803

**JEFF CRAEMER**

Open Tues. & Thurs., 10 to 4  
**SAN QUENTIN MUSEUM**

BLDG.#106, DOLOROS WAY • P.O. BOX 54 • SAN QUENTIN, CA 94964



CA Lic. No 769295

**Marianne Dwelly**

415-456-2871  
415-730-2024 cell

1201 Andersen Dr. Suite O San Rafael, CA 94901

marianne@deckmastershousesavers.com  
www.deckmastershousesavers.com

**TREEMASTERS**

Serving Marin County For Over 25 Years

**415-455-9933**

Lic# 660226  
Fully Insured

*Providing great care and attention to the One Tree we are working on at that moment*



**WWW.TREEMASTERS.COM**



**CALL FOR YOUR FREE ESTIMATE**

**TREE REMOVALS  
PRUNING  
TREE HEALTH CARE**



## TEST YOURSELF: HOW WELL DID YOU READ THE ARTICLES?

1. What Sausalito neighborhood stands in the same location as the American Distilling Co.?
2. Which Marin fire chief founded the county's volunteer fire departments?
3. The Corte Madera Town Hall was once a \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What is "turn out gear"?
5. Besides water, what did Marin's 1900s firefighters use to extinguish flames?
6. Did the 1891 Bill Williams Gulch fire destroy Albert E. Kent's estate?
7. What year was San Rafael's first fire company formed?
8. What Tiburon building, now a pizza parlor, survived the April 1921 fire?
9. In 1913, an Italian mobster from San Francisco bought what soon-to-burn hotel?

Answers on p.23



# Tiburon's Fires of 1921

By Robert L. Harrison

**F**ires in 1890 and 1906 destroyed Tiburon's business district on Main Street, but the two fires in 1921 caused the greatest loss.

The first fire, on February 24, 1921, burned the Northwestern Pacific Railroad's machine and car shops. In addition to the shop buildings, one passenger coach, one electric motor coach and two flat cars under repair in the car shop were destroyed.

On April 4, 1921, the business section on Main Street was destroyed for the fourth time in 31 years. The fire started in Sullivan's Pool Hall — a facility known as Sullivan's Saloon and Pool Hall before the town "went dry" with Prohibition.

Nine-year-old Marjorie McNeil noticed the fire when a bright light woke her at 2 a.m. Marjorie ran through the neighborhood rousing those still asleep.

With the fire out of control, Tiburon sent for help from San Francisco. When San Francisco Fire Department Chief Thomas Murphy reported that his fire boats were out of service but he would send help if transport could be provided, the ferryboat *Tamalpais* was dispatched. Engine Company 12, including eight men, a motor-driven engine and hose wagon, arrived in Tiburon too late to save the buildings on Main Street — 11 commercial buildings and six dwellings were destroyed.

The fires shared a common victim — the infamous saloons. That the saloons remained in clandestine operation during Prohibition was one of the worst kept secrets in Marin. In the Prohibition era, boats loaded with illicit liquor motored under the buildings and liquor was brought up through trap doors. Some say the McNeil Building, re-built after the 1906 fire and still standing today, was saved by the firemen in 1921 because they knew that was where the booze was stored.



Tiburon Main Street - April 1921. Fire Damage to the North Side of Main Street. Looking east from Ark Row. The McNeil building, last on the right is still standing. Today it houses Waypoint Pizza restaurant.

Source: Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society

Tiburon Main Street - April 5, 1921. The Fire Still Smoldering. Looking northeast from the Corinthian Yacht Club driveway. Water supply tanks above the railroad fuel oil tank on the hill in the distance.

Source: Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society

# A “Rendezvous for San Francisco Club Men” Burned

By Claire Hendren

The Tocaloma Hotel might not sound familiar today. But in the late 1890s, the hotel, a couple miles east of Olema on the banks of Lagunitas Creek, was a popular vacation spot. The Northern Pacific Coast Railroad serviced the area beginning in 1875, attracting hunters, fishermen and bikers seeking escape from San Francisco.

In 1879, John Lycurgus built a two-story hotel called the Tocaloma House. Only three years later, Lycurgus passed the business to Joseph Adams before the building underwent its first fire in 1885. Owing to the hotel’s success, Joseph Bertrand oversaw the hotel’s



Tocaloma Hotel  
Source: MarinCountyFire.com

\$25,000 reconstruction, resulting in the reopening of a vast 42-room, three-story guesthouse in 1889. Under Bertrand’s management, the Tocaloma Hotel became a destination hotspot, offering weekly rates ranging from \$8 to \$12 and a public restaurant and bar, where it hosted grand balls and Thanksgiving events.

In 1913, Caesar Ronchi, associated with an ill-famed Italian mob in San Francisco and looking to flee potential harm from his past associates, eagerly purchased the hotel. Three years later, on December 26, 1916 at 3 a.m., the Tocaloma burned down. Luckily, only five people, including Ronchi and his wife, were staying at the hotel that night. All managed to escape the building with minor injuries. The Mill Valley Record recorded the “fire presumably was caused by a defective flue.”

Newspapers all over the area spread the word about the fire. A December 30, 1916 article from the Mill Valley Record called Tocaloma Hotel “a landmark of Marin County” and a “onetime famous resort, a rendezvous for San Francisco club men on their way to the Pacific Union Club’s summer quarters in Marin County.” The Petaluma Argus-Courier informed readers that once the fire broke, cases of champagne were removed from the bar and put next to the railroad stop, in the hopes of saving some of the celebratory beverage. Unfortunately, the bottles “were exploded by the terrific heat.”

While plans to build a “modern villa” on the site were briefly mentioned, the replacement consisted only of a \$15,000 tavern that lacked the hotel rooms of the institution’s grander days. The hotel became a private residence that was later abandoned.

**Health and Summer Resorts**

**AS ALL TRAINS ARE RUNNING**  
REGULARLY, THE STAGE ROUTE BETWEEN Arctich and Byron Hot Springs will be discontinued from this date.

**BERTRAND HOTEL, TOCALOMA, N. P. C. R. R.**  
A NEW FIRST-CLASS HOTEL, CONTAINING 42 rooms, handsomely furnished and fitted up with all the latest improvements: gas, water, large dancing hall, billiard-room, croquet grounds, swings, etc.; delightful climate, fine trout-fishing, hunting; splendid drives to Bear Valley, etc.  
Terms \$8 to \$12 per week. 1894

Jos. F. BERTRAND, Proprietor, Tocaloma, Marin County. Office, 327 Bush st., S. F. Victor W. Krauss, agent. 1894

Hotel advertisement

Source: San Francisco Call, August 8, 1894



# Charles Russell Reilley Jr.

## January 3, 1896 – September 4, 1970

By Jean Mansen

Charles Reilley Jr. (Charlie) was born in Victor, Colorado, the second of Charles and Mary Ellen Reilley's six children.

The Reilley family moved to Goldfield, Nevada, in 1904. By 1905, Charlie, his younger brother and his mother were all who survived. He delivered newspapers to help support his family. At age 15, he quit school to start an electrician's apprenticeship program paying two dollars a day.

Charlie enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1917 and fought in France and Belgium during World War I. On November 1st, Sgt. Reilley voluntarily accompanied a patrol into the enemy-occupied city of Audenarde. For his bravery, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the World War I Victory Medal with three Campaign bars.



Fire Chief Charles R. Reilley in the dispatch room, 1959

Source: MarinFireHistory.org

After the war, Charlie returned to Nevada and worked as an electrician before moving to Marin. He married Alice Fountain on St. Patrick's Day in 1923 and settled in Point Reyes. In 1930, he became a member of the Point Reyes Volunteer Fire Department and later joined the neighboring Olema Volunteer Fire Department.

Charlie was hired in 1945 as a Fire Warden in Point Reyes for the four-year-old Marin County Fire Department (MCFD) and became Deputy Sheriff in 1950. Charlie was promoted to acting MCFD Fire Chief in 1951. As Chief, he faced public controversy throughout the 1950s, including over deciding whether fighting vegetation or structure fires were at the heart of MCFD's mission.

While we think of fire seasons stretching longer now, a December 10, 1959, Mill Valley Record article noted that Chief Reilley had obtained from the Board of Supervisors an extension of the dry-season controls until the rains came. Other evidence of Charlie's ability to work with the Board of Supervisors included obtaining \$25,000 for a substation on Mount Tamalpais and \$4,000 in standby pay for firemen.

Among many notable acts, Charlie supported the formation of volunteer fire departments, including the Strawberry Fire Department, to form a fire district with adequate equipment and staff to provide local protection.

Charlie quietly rebuilt the MCFD until 1962 when illness forced his retirement at age 65. He distinguished himself both as a fire chief and a leader in Marin County.

# THANK YOU TO OUR MHM MEMBERS!

The Marin History Museum would like to recognize the following individuals and families who have recently joined or renewed their membership

Vicki Abballo	William Farrer	Valerie Lels	Robert & Graciela Placak
Steve Agazzi	Roy Farrington Jones	Jonathan Lemberg	Sharon Pollaczek
Durlynn Anema	Ted Fehlhaber	Raymond Lent	Bonnie Portnoy
Jeffrey Babcock	Elizabeth Fernbacher	Kenneth Licht	Carol Possin
William & Diane Bagley	Dennis Fisco	Margaret Linden	Ivan Poutiatine
David Baker	Andrew Fletcher	John Lister	Audrey Pulis
Theodore Barnett	Scott Fletcher	Dewey Livingston	Carol Randall
Ann Batman	Thomas Forster	Sue & Stan Loar	Maren Randrup
Arlene Battaglia	James M. Fulcomer	Ray Lorber	William & Paula Raudio
Joan & Kirk Beales	Holly Gallagher	Sandra Luna	Marleen Ravizza
Charles Bennett	John Gallagher	Gordy MacDermott	Brad Rippe
David Bernardi	Cliff & Sonia Gallant	Michael MacIntosh	Charlotte Rissling
Brian Bettini	Carole Garcia	Steven B. Mains	Gary Robards
Cecile Bodington	Marilyn Geary	Lenore Maionchi	Dexter Roberts
Jeff Bodington	Michael Geister	Jean Mansen	Alistair Roberts
Rosalind Borba	John Geoghegan	Jean Marchant	Michael Rosenthal
Albert & Patricia Boro	Lynne Ghilotti	Daniel & Virginia	Ed Rossi
Cheryl Brabo	Gary Ghilotti	Mardesich	Louis Rutledge
Larry & Brennie Brackett	Gladys C. Gilliland	Judy Mayne	Donna Ryan
Linda Brady	Jacquelyn Giuffre	Kevin & Jill McConnell	Beverly Sarjeant
Paul Brinich	Salvador O. Gutierrez	Stephen McCurdy	Rockne Schatz
Diana Britting	Barbara G. Haim	Daniel L. McNear	Nancy Schlegel
Stuart H. & Jean Brown	Jo Haraf	Ralph G. Mihan	James Scriba
Joan Brown	Tom Heinz	Stephen & Mary Mizroch	Harold L. Sherley
Barbara Brownson	Diane Henderson	Doug & Vicki Monti	Michael Simmons
Francis Cappelletti	Thomas Hendricks	Madelon Montobbio	Helen Sitchler
Joanne Capurro	David Hirzel	Ruth Louise Moran	Roger Smith
Alan Cascio	James Holmes	Robert Morey	Edward & Nancy Smith
John Chiosso	Doris Hunker	Kenneth Morrison	Michael Smith
Richard Cimino	Peter & Kathy Jaeger	Jocelyn Moss	Sue Smith
Owen Clapp	Christine Johnson	Mike Moyle	Philip Snell
Alice Cochran	Kate Johnston	Thomas Mulvey	Neil Sorensen
Fred Codoni	Terry Jones	Laurie Nardone	Donna Sousa
Damon Connolly	Michelle Kaufman	Jim & Terry Nevin	Kay Spitzer
Jeff & Celeste Craemer	William Kaufman	William & Carland	Dick Spotswood
Brian Crawford	Peter Keenan	Nicholson	David Sullivan
Jim Crumpler	Kathleen M. Kelly	Howard & Pam Nurse	Stuart Swiedler
Bill & Diane Curry	Pamela R. Keon	Vincent O'Brien	Matt Thompson
Peter & Larissa Daniels	Paul Killion	Diane Ongaro	Roger Tobin
Phillip A. Danskin	David Kimball	Bonnie Page	Richard Torney
Jack & Kathleen Devlin	Mark and Jane Knowles	Diana Painter	Gary Van Acker
John Doble	Mark Kroncke	Douglas G. Paul	Dean Varni
Sheldon Donig	Paul Kryloff	Paul Penna	Lochlan Weatherford
Elaine Doss	Gregory Kunz	Gene Pennington	Barbara A. Weaver
Alice Duffee	Peter Lacques	George Pepper	Carol Wells
Dan & Joanne Dufficy	Lelia Lancot	Thomas Ross Perry	Penny Wells
David & Janet Dunn	Cynthia Landecker	Ronald & Mary Pharis	Gary Widman
Susan Egisti	Thomas J. Lapinski	Gary O. Phillips	Tom Wilson
Ken Eichstaedt	Tanya Laramie	Joy Phoenix	Lynn Yock
Joseph A. Faimali	Richard & Ann Laurence	Peter Pike	
Sydney Fairbairn	Edith Lawrence	James & Jacquie Placak	



## MEET OUR BULLETIN WRITERS

Thank you for Sharing your time and talent with the Marin History Museum



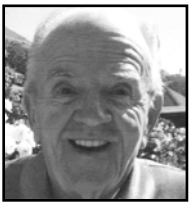
Susan Cluff is a freelance writer and speech coach who's lived in Marin since 1980. She also writes historical mysteries and flash fiction.



Brian K. Crawford is a retired computer programmer who spends his time doing historical and genealogical research, writing books, and building trails.



Jo Haraf quilts, gardens, hikes, and trains Betty (her precocious terrier-mix) when not writing about Marin County history.



Robert L. Harrison has been writing articles on Marin history for the past two years. He enjoys relating local history as a docent in the Tiburon Railroad and Ferry Depot Museum.



Claire Hendren graduated with a M.A. in Art and Museum Studies from Georgetown University and received her PhD in Art History from Université Paris Nanterre.



Pat Keats, with degrees in history, art history, and library science, has worked at libraries since 1974. She is currently the Library Director at The Society of California Pioneers.



Jean Mansen is an editor and writer who, when not at her desk, can be found hiking Marin's trails with her dog and listening to audiobooks.

*Serving Marin County for over 50 years!*      contractors license #676584

- DRIVEWAYS
- PATIOS
- INTERLOCKING PAVERS
- STAMPED CONCRETE

PROUD MEMBER

**THINK GREEN**

**THINK CONCRETE.**

415.459.2530

We give Personal Attention to Each Client and Creative Care to Each Project.  
490 B Street San Rafael CA 94901 [www.vanmiddeconcrete.com](http://www.vanmiddeconcrete.com)

## TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Whiskey Springs
2. Chief Charlie Reilley Jr.
3. Fire station
4. Firefighters' protective uniforms
5. A mix of vinegar and baking soda.
6. No. Kent paid volunteers \$250 a day (current dollars) to protect his home.
7. 1874
8. The McNeil Building
9. The Tocaloma Hotel



Heather Powell is the Collections Manager at MHM. She holds a M. A. in Museum Studies from John F. Kennedy University and a B. A. in Photography from San Francisco State University.

Marin History Museum  
P. O. Box 150727  
San Rafael, CA 94915

# COMING EVENTS

**2<sup>nd</sup> annual**

Marin History Summer Awards Celebration



**\$35**  
includes  
BBQ meal

**\$45**  
includes  
BBQ meal  
& wine glass with  
1st glass of wine.

**Marin County 2nd Historian Award**

Sunday, August 18, 2019  
1 – 4 pm | Pacheco Winery  
235 Alameda del Prado, Novato



**GUEST SPEAKER**  
HERB ROWLAND



**MUSIC BY KEVIN & JILL MCCONNELL**



**TIN TYPE PHOTO BOOTH**  
\$35 per photo



**POP-UP MUSEUM**

Tickets available at  
marinhistory.org or  
415.382.1182

415.382.1182 | marinhistory.org | info@marinhistory.org

**MARIN HISTORY MUSEUM**

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Help Us Keep Our Past Alive For Future Generations**

Join us Thursday, October 17, 2019 from 6:00 to 9:00 PM  
At A Private Car Collection in San Rafael.

The Collection Facility venue has been generously donated  
for the event to benefit the Marin History Museum.

For more details please visit: [www.marinhistorymuseum.org](http://www.marinhistorymuseum.org)



Marin History Museum, P.O. Box 150727, San Rafael, CA 94915  
Tel: 415-382-1182, Email: [info@marinhistory.org](mailto:info@marinhistory.org)  
Web Design: Jim Moon Designs

## WALKS AND TALKS

Programs are presented monthly  
Watch for emails about these events

ALSO

Check new MHM website for up-to-date  
information