

Volume XXXVIII Issue II

Winter 2017

MARIN  
HISTORY  
MUSEUM

# Bulletin

MARIN WATERING HOLES



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## 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.

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The Bulletin is a publication from the Marin History Museum. Each issue covers a specific topic in Marin's history.

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Hello Friends,

On behalf of Board of Directors I want to thank the nearly 300 individuals, families and businesses that made our Community Celebration a huge success. A special thank you goes to Charlie & Barbara Goodman who graciously allowed the Museum to host our October 19 event within their classic car collection. It is an exceptional collection and set the tone for the whole event. If you were not able to make it to the Celebration, we plan to have future events and look forward to your participation in the fun.

Your support is providing stability so the Museum can continue to grow. This year the board, staff and volunteers re-launched our membership program adding over 100 new members, created three exhibitions on Marin County history, and hosted ten very successful lectures from local historians and authors. In 2018 we plan to continue adding members, presenting lectures and creating exhibits as well as collaborating on programs and exhibits with local historical societies, hosting an antiques appraisal event and reaching out to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students with curriculum based educational programs.

We are delighted to present MHM's second *Bulletin* of 2017. In it you will find the history of many of Marin's historic, well-known watering holes, some more notorious than others - all with very interesting histories.

Please enjoy this issue and let us know what history topics you would like to see covered in future issues.

Happy holidays to you and yours,

Al Boro, President of the Board



### MARIN HISTORY MUSEUM SPEAKERS SERIES

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*January* - **The Bolinas-Fairfax Road: 139 Years of History**, by Brian Crawford

*February* - **It Happened in Marin**, by Jim Holden

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*April* - **The Northwestern Pacific Railroad, Lifeline of the Redwood Empire**

**Boom and Bust 1951-2001**, by Angelo Figone

*May* - **Modern San Rafael**, by Michelle Kaufman

*June* - **Marin Revealed through Historic Maps**, by Dewey Livingston



# 2AM CLUB

By Chris Barnett

The 2 AM Club looks like a place Bonnie and Clyde would have holed up in if they were robbing banks in Marin instead of Missouri. The vintage saloon, frozen in time on the corner of Miller and Monfort in Mill Valley, is a throwback to the 'thirties, except for the Teslas and Beamers in the tiny parking lot instead of Packards and Buicks.

Slip in the side street door and an all American girl-next-door bartender named Sheila will greet you like family. "What's your pleasure?" she asks, with this mile-wide smile.

It's dim inside but not dark. The bar is long—a good fifty feet—and busy on a Tuesday at 5 pm. While the years have flown by, nothing has changed. It's still easy to scare up a game on the two pool tables. There's a nice mix of guys and ladies, mostly regulars, I reckon, because Sheila knows them all by name.

She glides along the bar like a ballet dancer and gently nudges me for my order. "Manhattan, straight up, extra biters." In San Francisco, that's a \$20 cocktail, including tax, tip, and a couple mandatory bucks for the employee's health insurance fund. Here at the 2 AM Club, it's \$10. And it arrived with a perfect to-the-brim infinity pour.

This corner thirst parlor has kept a low profile. A transplanted Chicagoan named John W. "Bill" Brown opened "The Brown Jug" across the street from the Mill Valley town limits in 1906. The saloon morphed into a grain and feed store during Prohibition where it was rumored to be a speak-

easy, but I couldn't find anyone to prove the legend.

In 1939, Mill Valley bluenoses passed a law requiring saloons to shut down at 10 pm. The Brown Jug, safe in unincorporated Homestead Valley, was exempt and was almost instantly renamed the 2 AM Club.

Current owners David Marshall, a contractor, and Amanda Solloway, a career barkeep, practically grew up in their joint. "I lived around the corner and drank here seven nights a week for years," says Marshall, who just celebrated his tenth year of sobriety. "Amanda was my bartender."

One day, state drug agents started snooping around. A threat to pull the liquor license forced the owners to sell. "Since I was always bugging them to buy it," Marshall explained, "they paired me with Amanda and we did the deal."

As a saloon lord for the last eight years, Marshall doesn't just host and glad-hand. He remodels houses by day and bartends at night. "Now I'm swinging drinks instead of swigging them," he says.

The homey, hideout ambiance has



Photo Source: SF Chronicle

played well with Marin's low key celebrities. Rocker Huey Lewis and The News shot an album cover here. The late Robin Williams dropped by. The Grateful Dead guitarist, singer, song-writer Bob Wier played some gigs on the Club's makeshift

stage. When he lived in Marin, Sean Penn would occasionally slide in for a cold one.

Meanwhile, it's 7:30 pm, the crowd is building, and Sheila is humming.



Photo Source: Wikipedia

# SMITTY'S - SAUSALITO'S NEIGHBORHOOD BAR

By Swede Pedersen and Larry Clinton

Ralph "Swede" Pederson, who wrote the following article for *MarinScope* in 1972, was a venerable Sausalito character. He also was a legendary historian and storyteller. Here are lightly edited excerpts from his history of one of his favorite hangouts:

Originally, the property belonged to Joe Bettencourt. In 1916, Bettencourt had his beer bottling plant in a barn on what is now 2000 Bridgeway, next to the old Pembroke Hotel. He decided to move closer to the main drag, so he purchased the big barn by the Buena Vista Park site next to where Smitty's now stands, 214 Caledonia. He continued with his beer bottling operation, adding soda pop to the plant's efforts during Prohibition

In 1925, Bettencourt added a bar and saloon to an already flourishing business with soda pop and beer bottling. Jack Witsch and Hans Stritmatter took over after the bootlegging days, incorporating a card room with a "drinking palace." As the good money-spending times faded (during the Depression), the building was vacated for a time and placed in the hands of the bank.

In 1938, railroad man Frank "Smitty" W. Smith leased the bottling works and saloon, turning it into a bar and Chinese restaurant. In 1941, Smitty was fortunate to win a good sum of money in a lottery. With this

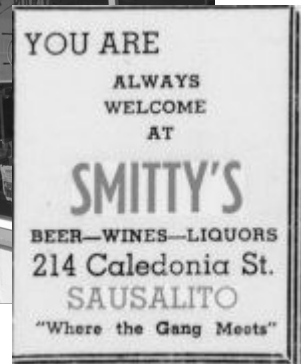
money, he converted the bottling plant behind the bar and restaurant to three bachelor apartments and a family home as it stands today.

Smitty continued working at his establishment until 1948. (Danny Durant took over the place for a short time during the early part of the war years and then Smitty resumed ownership again.) In 1948, Smitty's daughter and her husband, Bill Masha, purchased the business. Bill and Susie successfully ran the business until June 1958 when Bill died. Susie, who had strong determination, continued to work behind the plank along with her bartenders. Due to illness, Susie sold her license to her long-standing bartender, George Salata, in December 1968. George, his wife Virginia, and son Danny continued the bar's "family affair" with all pitching in behind the bar.

Smitty's sign still hangs in front of the bar for sentimental reasons, and George and Virginia are seeing that the "last neighborhood bar" gives customers without families a chance to sit down and eat with others, being a part of the neighborhood. Smitty's is the last bar in Sausalito that has retained its original construction. Here everyone knows each other by name and can be challenged to a game of shuffleboard or



Smitty's exterior has changed very little over the years  
Photo by Larry Clinton



This ad from the 1948 Sausalito News pretty well describes Smitty's today

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pool or can relax and watch sports...it's almost like home.

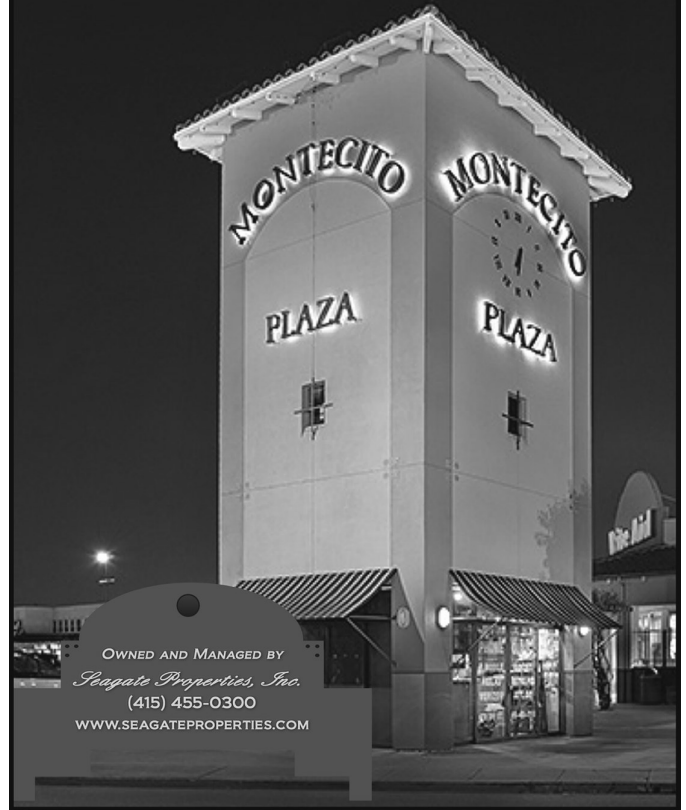
Since 1992, Smitty's has been owned by three partners and is known for its annual pig roast, theme parties on holidays, and participation in community events including the annual Chili Cook-Off, Sausalito Art Walk and Labor Day Art Festival.

In 2003, Smitty's was named one of the "Great Gin Joints" by the San Francisco Chronicle, and proudly displays a Dive Bars plaque from *Marin Magazine*.

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# NAVE'S SPORTS AND SPIRITS

By Ned Purdom

**W**ith an average lifespan of about two years, how does a bar last for more than eighty, while watching over downtown Fairfax from the same spot?

“We’re just a simple neighborhood bar, nothing fancy, not even a computer cash register,” explains Fairfax native Ed Bacci, who has owned Nave’s, known formally as Nave’s Sports and Spirits, since 1983.

The spot’s longevity is likely testament to Bacci, a St. Anselm’s and Marin Catholic grad who knows as much about the town’s freewheeling restaurant and tavern history as anyone.

Bacci explains that his family has been lifelong friends of the Nave family, whose patriarch Paul came to Fairfax in 1920. Paul Nave constructed the building at 24 Bolinas Road as a grocery store with apartments above. The Nave family operated Cascade Fruit Market on one side, and George Coco ran Cascade Meat Market on the other.

“My dad came to Fairfax in 1929 from San Francisco. His first job here was as a butcher at Cascade Market,” Bacci notes. Nave’s son Louis worked for the produce market. But, as Bacci explains, the younger Nave was a bit too “generous” as a grocer. Following Prohibition, the Naves recast the location as a bar, opening it in 1934. Louis Nave proved adept in this endeavor, running the cocktail lounge (as the place is called in 1950s telephone directories) for decades.

Two large windows and Nave’s front door open directly onto the always-lively first block of Bolinas Road. Think what the bar has seen. “Fairfax was a real destination,” says Bacci, “with crowds coming for their vacation homes, for the Town and Country Club, even trainloads of workers from Mare



Island Shipyards. They needed places to drink.”

In the 1970s, Steve Hercorn and Wally Larder took over the bar, creating what Bacci describes as the “second fern bar” in the region—just behind San Francisco’s Henry Africa. Nave’s became a hangout for local musicians, including members of the Grateful Dead.

*Marin Independent Journal* readers including Stuart Kaufman remember the 1970s Nave’s fondly, noting that on occasion, and without notice, local talent like the Sons of Champlin would play Nave’s, with “babes dancing on the bar and the line outside all the way down the block to the Sleeping Lady.”

Bacci, who has operated Nave’s for more than thirty years, has witnessed his share of change in town, and at the bar. “We don’t get the same blue-collar crowd we used to. The kids today drink lots of top-shelf stuff.”

Despite such changes, Nave’s remain central to the neighborhood. It is one of those special saloons that hosts an unusual bar game. Patrons wrap paper money around a thumbtack and several quarters. The weighted package is thrown up to the ceiling; you win if your bill sticks and the quarters fall to earth.

Several years ago one of Nave’s customer’s sons was severely hurt in an accident. To help with expenses, Bacci gave the family several months’ worth of game proceeds—\$3,500.

# THE SILVER PESO

By Jean Mansen

The Silver Peso, at 450 Magnolia Avenue in Larkspur, is housed in a 1870s building constructed with wood from the then nearby Larkspur Lumber Company. Originally built for the Ambrosy Blacksmith Shop and purportedly a Pony Express office, it subsequently merged with the Larkspur Firehouse, and later became Carl's Market. In 1935, Bob's Tavern took over half of the building and Fay and Willie Wilson's Coffee Shop the other half. The historical remnants of these two structures remain: on one side a traditional ceiling hangs over an enormous, timeworn, hops and elbow grease stained wooden bar, while open rafters support the other half of the building.

Around 1946, Bob's Tavern was sold to Chester Wolmack, a World War II Navy diver who'd been stationed in Manila and had (rumor has it) seen Philippine government officials dump thousands of silver pesos into the Bay of Manila to keep the Japanese from confiscating them. After World War II, when the United States helped free the Philippines from the Japanese, the veteran looked for—and found—the silver pesos. He brought the haul to Larkspur and used them to purchase the bar, giving the Silver Peso its name. During the first week the bar was open, Wolmack handed out pesos to patrons. One patron saved his silver peso, which his son found after his death. That son, Gordon, has tended the Peso's bar for the past fifteen years.

The upright piano that Janis Joplin and Big Brother bandmate Sam Andrews played waits, a bit out of tune, to have its ivories tickled. Other famous barstool

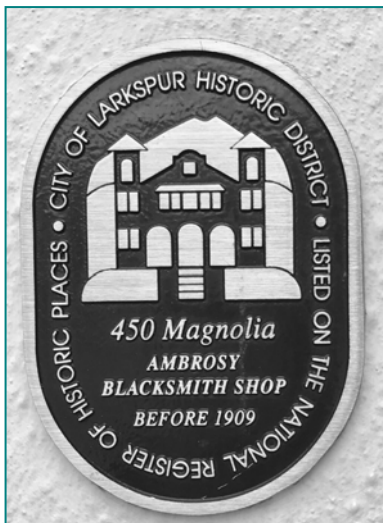


Photo Source: Jean Mansen

warmers include Huey Lewis and Barry Bonds.

During the 1960s and 1970s, it was typical for the sidewalk in front of the bar to be thick with Harley Davidsons and for the Hells Angels who rode them to occupy the Peso. Some even rode their bikes inside the bar. The place got rough on a regular basis with fights breaking out and drunken Hells Angels causing more problems than the bartenders and bouncers could handle without law enforcement intervention.

When current owners Rick and Robin Adams took over, the crowd changed. The couple learned the tavern business in some of Marin's saloons, including Bit-A-Honey (Novato), where they tended bar, met, and married.

The Peso is friendlier now with more of



Vintage Silver Peso

Photo source: MHM

a "Cheers" atmosphere. Groups gather after weddings and reunions at the Catholic Church and school across the street. The décor remains the same: pool tables (\$1/game), shuffleboard, funky beer signs perched in open beam rafters,

(continued on next page)



Continued from p. 8

dusty rhinestone-covered sombreros overhead, and the requisite peanut, candy, and popcorn machines that line the walls.

Like any exceptional dive bar (the Peso is on Thrillist's "The 21 Best Dive Bars in America 2014"), the beers are cheap and the shots are strong. With a jukebox, seven flickering TVs, near historic video games, books in a reading nook, yellowed newspaper clippings, and tarnished trophies—the Peso stands out among Larkspur's posh downtown populated with pricey boutiques and high-end eateries.



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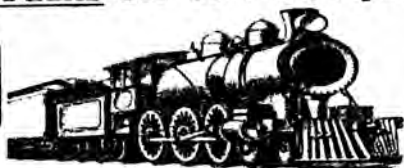
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## Trivia Questions

Here are some fun questions to pass the time on a cold winter day. The answers can be found in the Bulletin articles.

1. In what notable year did The Brown Jug (the predecessor to the 2 AM Club) open?
2. What Sausalito bar was described in the 1930s as a "drinking palace"?
3. In which Fairfax bar will you find green-backs tacked to the ceiling?
4. What did Chester Wolmack hand out to patrons when he opened his bar?
5. What still operating vineyard, planted in 1840, was Marin's first commercial vineyard?
6. Jean Escalle delivered his wines by horse drawn carriage. What was his horse's name?
7. How many bars were there in Sausalito in the Gay Nineties?
8. What was Marin's population in 1900?
9. If you ordered a cup of tea in a blind pig, where are you and what would you be served?
10. What furry pet did Tony De Borba bring to his bar?
11. What singer rediscovered his musical soul at Pier 15?

Answers on p. 15



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# CAN I BUY YOU A DRINK?

Marin County's long, colorful, and complicated relationship with alcohol

By Ned Purdom

## Producing For A Thirsty Region

Marin's climate, abundant water, and entrepreneurial spirit—not to mention the thirst of its citizens—spawned a full menu of alcohol production. In her book, *Chief Marin*, Betty Goerke notes that soon after Mission San Rafael Arcangel's founding in 1817, "an orchard of pear and apple trees and a vine-yard were planted east of the mission." Tended by Miwok neophytes producing sacramental wines, the vineyard at the base of San Rafael hill was productive enough that "General Vallejo appropriated some of the stocks for his vineyard in Sonoma in the 1840s."

Marin's first commercial vineyard appears to be that of Ignacio Pacheco who planted grapes in 1840 on his Rancho San Jose land grant property in what is now Novato. Pacheco's descendants continue the tradition today with their Pacheco Ranch Winery.



San Rafael Brewery

Photo Source: MHM

While locally brewed beer is ubiquitous now, in the eighteenth-century Marin your only option was the San Rafael Brewery. In her article "San Rafael Brewery Produced Self-Proclaimed Best Beer on the Coast," Marilyn Geary reports the operation was located on Greenwood Avenue west of the Gerstle Estate. Started in about 1871 by A.J. McClellan and Rufus A. Roscoe, the brewery advertised its "beer, in kegs and bottles at wholesale."

German immigrant partners Henry Boyen and Fritz Goerl purchased the San Rafael Brewery in 1872, selling their wares at Gieske's Grocery on 2nd and B streets. Despite run-ins with the authorities over licensing and taxes, Goerl operated the brewery until its sale to a group of Englishmen in 1905. With Prohibition in 1920, the Brewery ceased operations.

For those with a taste for hard liquor, Marin did not disappoint. Located in Sausalito, Mason's Distilling manufactured alcohol since its founding in the 1880s by Clinton Dewitt Mason, who came to California for gold but found his fortune making whiskey for miners, as Doris Berdahl explains in articles for *Marinscope* and the Sausalito Historical Society.

In 1933, the American Distilling Co. became the nation's largest independent producer of liquor and supplied many jobs during the Depression. At its peak, American produced 60,000 cases of booze a month, under brands including Meadwood and Guggenheimer bourbon, Burton's and Ballard's gin, Carioca rum, Tavorski vodka, Casa Blanca beer, and El Toro tequila. The American Distillery was destroyed in 1963 by a spectacular alcohol-fueled fire. The Whiskey Springs condominium complex occupies the thirteen-acre site today where Miwok Indians once had a village.



Entry Sign

Photo Source: MHM

(Continued from page 10)

Jean Escalle, a native of France, was one of Marin's earliest wine producers. In the 1880s, he planted twenty-three acres of grapes on the northern hillsides of Larkspur. He produced more than 9,000 cases of wine annually, much of it claret, and delivered his

product to locals by a carriage pulled by a horse named Pedro. The winery became a favorite gathering place, attracting San Franciscans as well as local French and Italians. During Prohibition, the vineyards were razed for cattle ranching and dairy farming.

### Clean, Well-Lighted Places

In the mid-1890s Sausalito boasted twenty-five bars, smelled like stale beer, and had become a rowdy, gambling center unsafe for respectable women. Many of these early bars—the Buffalo Hotel, George Ginn's, M. Beiro's, Ferry Café, Tamalpais Hotel, and Lisbon House (today's No Name



Escalle Winery

Photo Souce: MHM

Bar)—were lost to all-too-frequent fires.

Saloon proprietors took advantage of the byzantine liquor licensing laws in effect (or not) in the young county, which in 1900 had a population of about 15,000. On the shore of Richardson's Bay, Victor's Roadhouse, renamed Manzanita Villa in 1906, was cleverly constructed in an unincorporated territory to skirt the "dry" laws in Mill Valley proper. Built on a sacred Miwok burial ground, the infamous site was rebuilt in 1916 and has served the drinking public illegally and legally as the Manzanita Roadhouse, the Top Rail, and The Fireside until its redevelopment in 2008.

Liquor was central to San Anselmo's decision to incorporate in 1907. While its population boomed with San Francisco earthquake refugees, the unincorporated county area was officially dry, due in part to pressure from the Presbyterian Orphanage and the San Francisco Theological Seminary. Just days after the voters chose incorporation, the newly elected board of trustees banned the sale of liquor within city limits.

Pre-incorporation, San Anselmo resident Dominic Arbini operated a bar in his residence at 1571 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. After the dry vote, Arbini moved his operation one hundred feet west into wet Fairfax. He later built the Old Timer's Tavern adjacent to his home to move the saloon out of his residence. Both structures remain today.



Unnamed Marin saloon

Photo source: MHM

(Continued on p. 12)



(continued from p. 11)

## Demon rum

Many Marinites recognized the problems associated with alcohol and worked diligently to rid the county of demon rum in all its forms. By the 1860s, Bolinas and Olema had active Sons of Temperance chapters. The Tomales Town Hall was constructed in 1874 as the Tomales Temperance Social Club, in stark contrast to what was perceived as a hard-drinking farming community.

In 1862, the San Rafael Sons of Temperance chapter sponsored a lecture by Reverend G.B. Taylor, who according to the *Marini Journal*, engaged a packed audience “while depicting the horrors of that fell enemy of mankind—whisky.”

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) boasted active chapters throughout the North Bay. San Rafael battled alcohol through literacy. In April 1887, the WCTU established a coffee and reading room and funded by a Flower Festival and Musicales.

When temperance became law through the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on July 16, 1920, savvy residents knew where to get a drink of “tea” at a neighborhood “blind pig.”

Some enterprising souls prospered from their efforts to skirt new vice laws. Marin’s miles of coast, as well as its well-developed marine and rail infrastructure, made the county ideal for “rum-running.” Ships loaded with whiskey and rum from Canada and Mexico waited offshore to be offloaded by smaller boats from Tomales Bay. In his book *Point Reyes, the Solemn Land*, Jack Mason notes that every inlet of Tomales Bay with a private wharf was used in these smuggling operations.

From the coast, the hooch often paused in Sausalito. In his essay “Where Temperance Never Caught On,” Phil Frank explains how rumrunners’ fast boats, often built and serviced in Sausalito’s boatyards, crossed the bay to San Francisco and East Bay customers. A more brazen approach, according to Frank, was to load cars and trucks with booze and send them on the North Bay ferries.

The county’s legion of Italian, Swiss, and Portuguese immigrants knew how to make legal wine, and they certainly had access to acres of grapes. Phil Frank writes that when planning parties, the Sausalito Women’s Club would call the Sausalito Pharmacy, where a prescription for five gallons of “medicinal” alcohol would be written.

Larkspur might take the prize for covert Prohibition watering holes. In his pictorial history of Marin County, Branwell Fanning notes that in addition to the historic Blue Rock Inn—now the Left Bank Restaurant—the town housed twenty speakeasies during the era. Standing in the compact downtown today, it is hard to imagine what Larkspur business did not run a clandestine saloon.



Library vs. Wine Cellar - Women’s Christian Temperance Union bravely set up the first free public library in San Rafael in a wooden building on Fourth street shown above. It competed successfully against the neighboring wine rooms from 1887 to 1903. *Marin IJ*, June 19, 1958

(continued on p. 13)

(continued from p. 12)

### Happy Days Are Here Again

In addition to bringing existing drinking establishments out of the shadows, repeal of Prohibition in 1933 fueled the birth of new bars and saloons, as did the post-World War II boom. Look at any photo of Marin downtowns in that era and you'll see neon martini glasses beckoning patrons. Sausalito boasted eighteen saloons after Prohibition, watched over by a lone constable. Some of the county's post-Depression establishments are still with us: Nave's in Fairfax, the Silver Peso in Larkspur, and Pete's 881 in San Rafael to name a few.

### Share Your Memories

In researching this article, friends have eagerly shared personal stories of saloon nights that turned into mornings, finding true love perched on a barstool, or bar hopping on horseback at Marin's old watering holes. The Marin History Museum wants to add your memories to our collection. Please email [info@MarinHistory.org](mailto:info@MarinHistory.org) or call 415-382-1182 and leave your stories on our voice mail. We'll record your history in our collection and will share a few remembrances on our Facebook page.

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# DE BORBA'S IN NOVATO

By Laura Meier

Walking into De Borba's Saloon on Grant Avenue in Old Town Novato is a step back in time.

The wooden floor, old signs, fading photos, and other relics evoke the old California West. Deborba's is one of the last best-preserved remnants of early Novato, and Marin for that matter.

It began with Antonio V. De Borba, an immigrant from the Portuguese Azore Islands. Antonio, like many of his fellow immigrants, had great dairymen skills that proved to be an asset for himself as well as his new community. His wife Anna (nee Machado), also from the Azores, joined him. The couple first settled in Lucas Valley and later moved north to Novato where Antonio operated the Black Point Creamery on Deer Island. Antonio and Anna were well-known citizens of early Novato and active in many civic groups.

The De Borba's eldest son, Antonio Jr. or Tony, grew restless in the dairy business. In 1908, he became proprietor of De Borba's Saloon at 819 Grant Avenue. Occasionally he would entertain customers by parading his descended skunk along the bar top.

When Tony opened De Borba's Saloon, Grant Avenue was located in New Town among the businesses that grew up around the train depot at the east end of Grant at Railroad Avenue. Trains came to Novato in 1879 and connected Novato to Sonoma County, Ignacio, and San Rafael. School children attended high school in San Rafael by railroad. Hotels, livery stables, a grocery store, cheese factory, and a blacksmith made up the heart of the town. Cowboys herded cattle down New Town's dusty



Photo source: Laura Meier

streets along wooden sidewalks and horse troughs. Every winter, puddles formed in the street's ruts and potholes. After a hard rain, ducks paddled and preened in the middle of Grant Avenue.

Prohibition was a game changer for Tony. He quickly opened a more politically correct ice cream shop and lunch stand on the northwest corner of Grant Avenue and Hwy 101 (now Redwood Boulevard).

It became a popular stopping place for motorists returning from Russian River vacation spots. The saloon became a billiard parlor and, according to family lore, if you wandered around to the back you could get a drink as well as play cards.

After prohibition, De Borba's bar was back up and running. In addition to being a place to belly up to the bar, De Borba's served authentic Chinese food. Tony encountered a talented, young Chinese cook in San Francisco and convinced Jimmy Lack and his father Sid to lease the restaurant space added to the original saloon.

Meals were served through a side window. In a cultural mixing so familiar in the old west, the Portuguese bar became Novato's first Chinese restaurant.



Vintage ashtray Photo Source: Frank Kelesey

*(continued on p. 15)*

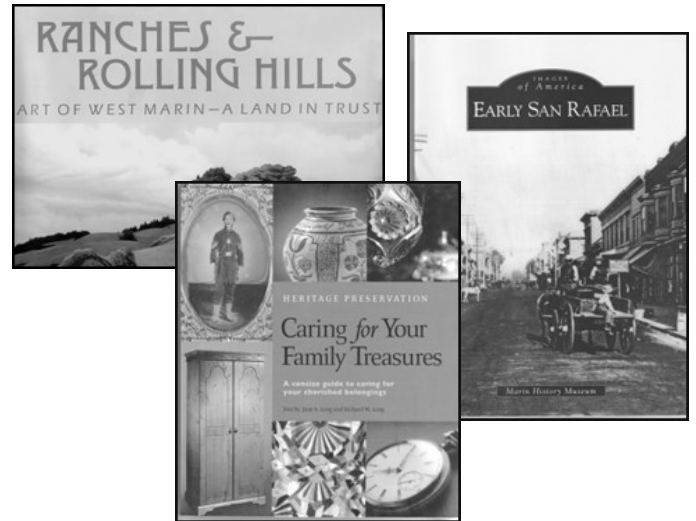


(continued from p. 14)

Three generations later, De Borba's remains family owned and operated. It is the kind of establishment where everyone is welcome—a congenial mix of white and blue-collar patrons. Grab a beer, play some pool, watch a Giants game, or just settle onto an old leather barstool and enjoy the conversation.

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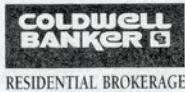


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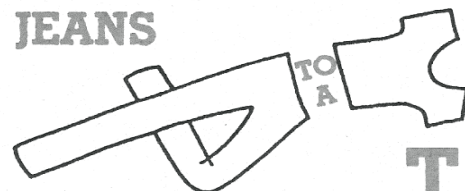
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### FROM P. 9

### Trivia Answers:

- |                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. 1906              | 6. Pedro        |
| 2. Smitty's          | 7. 25           |
| 3. Nave's            | 8. 15,000       |
| 4. Silver pesos      | 9. A speakeasy, |
| 5. Pacheco Vineyards | 10. A skunk     |
|                      | 11. Bob Dylan   |

# PIER 15

By Peter Grant

In 1956, Pete Lind acquired a boat repair facility situated on a channel off the San Rafael Canal. The building, surrounded by auto repair shops and other small businesses, overlooks a yacht basin. The area is known by the locals as “The Canal”.

In 1957, Lind converted his space into the Pier 15 bar and restaurant, running the eatery through the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1990s, Pier 15 picked up a first name as Art’s Pier 15 and was known for its superior libations and bar food.

In 1987, Bob Dylan joined the Grateful Dead in their studio at 20 Front Street to prepare for their July tour. The self-described “folk-rock relic” was at the bottom of his creative talents. In his 2004 memoir, *Chronicles*, Dylan says he “felt done for, an empty burnt out wreck.” Unable to find the emotion in his own songs, Dylan fled the rehearsal session and walked in the drizzle to a tiny bar with a long counter and a brick wall backing a small stage. Over a gin and tonic, Dylan listened to the singer, an older man with a mohair suit and a shiny necktie. “Suddenly and without warning,” the fu-

ture Nobel Laureate recalls, “it was like the guy had an open window to my soul. It was like he was saying, ‘you should do it this

way.” Dylan left Pier 15 and returned to the Dead renewed, thanking the old jazz singer for showing him the way back.

Adriano Orsi purchased the Pier 15 in 2006, leaving the bar intact except for removing the pool table and adding additional televi-



Pier 15 Today

Photo source: Peter Grant

sions for sports fans. He transformed the worn restaurant into a clean and cozy Mediterranean spot, serving traditional favorites as well as seafood and Italian dishes. Diners relax on the waterside deck enjoying lunch and dinner on weekdays as well as brunch on the weekends.

Some suggest Pier 15 is a dive bar. Its modest credentials include the “not much to look at” 1956 exterior and a bar interior pretty much unchanged from that same vintage. But the friendly restaurant and food enhancements tip the judging in the direction of—if not *fine* dining—then *pretty good* dining. Why not stop by and decide for yourself?

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# FROM FERRIES TO FINE DINING

By Larry Clinton

The property at 660 Bridgeway, which houses the Barrel House Tavern and the year-round Holiday Shop, has played several important roles in Sausalito's history.

In the 1860s, the Sausalito Land and Ferry Company began to operate ferry service from a wharf built at the foot of Princess Street. The small steamer was thus named Princess and became the first Sausalito ferry to serve San Francisco. When rail service came to town in the early 1900s, a new ferry terminal was built to connect with the trains on the site of the current ferry plaza.

For a time after that, the property housed Sausalito's City Library. In 1941, a Purity Market was opened there, featuring a distinctive arched roof. It was "our proto supermarket," in the words of Sausalito native Rick Seymour.

According to the book *Saucelito/\$au,\$alito* by George Hoffman, "The Purity store was well liked. Although it

was one of a huge chain of stores, it had a homey feeling to it. It was not large, all the clerks were local, the manager was a native of Sausalito, the butchers knew everybody, and all customers knew each other. It was a very important business establishment, and

although they had a monopoly in town the prices weren't high because the manager wouldn't be a part of it. The policy at Sausalito Purity was dictated by the manager mainly, and not by a hard and fast rule from Chicago. This was one store where it was safe to say that everybody shopped. The floor was like an old school room; heavily

oiled, dark, worn in places and squeaky. The butcher counter was near the entrance so there was always a trickle of sawdust where you entered, and tracks leading further in. A favorite drinking fountain dispensed icy water that came through pipes within the heavily walled refrigerated meat storage room. Stepping into the store, you were immediately greeted by a friend; customer or clerk."

The website [www.OurSausalito.com](http://www.OurSausalito.com) reports: "When big supermarkets invaded the area the market was finally closed in 1968 and converted to a visitor-targeted mini-shopping mall, and throughout the 1970's the building was extensively remodeled. The current facade dates to 1981." A plaque in front of the building commemorates its historic status.

Since then, a series of restaurants have occupied the space. The Houlihan's chain was famous for its Houlihan's to Houlihan's fun run over the Golden Gate Bridge. Bob Freeman, who runs the nearby Trident and Ondine today, operated the Water Street Grille.

After an almost two-year renovation, which retained the landmark arched roofline, the property reopened as the Barrel House Tavern, an award-winning restaurant with a bar

that features classic Manhattans and Negronis aged—appropriately—in wooden barrels, plus a seasonal selection of craft cocktails, and some adventurous appetizers, such as crab donuts. From the bay front windows, you can watch the ferries come and go—just as in the old days.



Purity Market in 1941

Photo source; Sausalito Historical Society



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## MEET OUR BULLETIN WRITERS



Chris Barnett is a San Francisco-based freelance journalist who has been chronicling the sociology of saloons, bartenders, and devotees of the cocktail culture worldwide for longer than he can remember.



Larry Clinton has been a resident of Sausalito's floating homes community for thirty-five years. He is a past president of both the Floating Homes Association and the Sausalito Historical Society.



Peter Grant, a Marin county native and retired CPA, serves on the Marin Historical Museum board. In his youth, Peter tried to close and not get 86ed from as many dive bars as he encountered.



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



Ned Purdom is a retired high school English teacher. A lifelong Marinite, he is slowly working on a novel about his family's roots in Sierra County.

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