



**Historic Black Point Inn**  
By Scott Fletcher  
Marin History Museum Volunteer

The Black Point Inn of Novato, just west of where the Petaluma River enters the San Francisco Bay, was the hub of the Black Point community for close to 90 years. Most sources agree that the first building there was constructed around 1890. Local historians tell the tale of a Norwegian sea captain, who giving up his ocean-going life, beached his boat on the point and built the inn himself. Originally it was a store, tavern and stagecoach stop for guests traveling the route of present-day Highway 37. Through the decades, the 'Inn' served the local community as a post office, hotel, saloon and restaurant, church, railway stop and community meeting house. By all accounts, "Black Point" got its name from the very dark woodland that covered the hills of the point as seen from ships on the bay.

Its location near the mouth of the Petaluma River attracted both hunters and fisherman and, over the years, many vacationers built summer cottages in the area. There are records of the property being purchased in 1920 by William Miller and his wife May. The census of that year lists them as Postmaster and Assistant Postmaster for Black Point. Three years later, William died, and May married Louis Nave. The two managed the Inn, store and post office until selling it in 1944. There were 10 hotel rooms upstairs and a Rosewood bar, restaurant, banquet room, post office, and grocery store on the first floor. During Prohibition, the Inn had a reputation as a 'speakeasy' due to its secluded location near the bay where illegal shipments of liquor could be brought in undetected. That reputation spilled into the later decades when a brawl erupted at the Inn in 1959 between two women over a hurled insult that soon developed into a raging street fight. Three women were eventually arrested in downtown Novato after fleeing Black Point and continuing their skirmish down the road at the Plush Room Bar on Center Blvd.

The Inn changed hands a number of times over the ensuing decades and became a more family-oriented establishment while still maintaining its status as a favorite watering hole and eatery. An outdoor dining-patio and swimming pool were installed to cater to the growing number of

families that were moving into the fast-growing neighborhoods of Novato. Ads for art shows, rodeos and chess club competitions sponsored by the Inn began to appear in local newspapers. Harry Craft's column in the Independent Journal, "Dining Out & Inns", always gave the Black Point Inn top marks for its food, ambiance and service provided by Al & Joe Louie, chefs at the popular 751 Club in San Rafael. Unfortunately, like so many historic establishments, the much-loved roadhouse was gutted by fire on April 29, 1976 and never rebuilt. The property is now home to the Kelleher Lumber Co. of Black Point.

*(July 11, 2022)*