



A history of the Marin County Historical Society was previously prepared by Mrs. Dorothy Walsh, the society's historian, who was a loyal and enthusiastic member of the society. Her work therefore became the basis of this updated history by William M. Vanderbilt.

## Marin County Historical Society

For the roots of the Marin County Historical Society it is necessary to go back in history to December 2, 1910, when thirty-eight pioneers assembled at the Kentfield Stadium to hold the first "Old Settlers Day". The meeting was held under the auspices of the Tamalpais Center Club with Congressman William Kent presiding. Mr. Kent spoke with regret of the passing of the old California hospitality and pleaded that the pioneers keep this hospitality alive.

Among the assembled guests was Stephen Richardson, grandson of the Spanish Commander, Don Ignacio Martinez. Mr. Richardson was the oldest Native Son of California, having come to Marin County in 1841.

The Tamalpais Center Club continued the "Old Settlers Day" and as time went on Miss Belle Brown, historian and Landmarks Chairman of the State of California, told of a County Museum being established in the basement of the San Rafael Library. This apparently sparked action because on June 6, 1935 Major Newell Vanderbilt presided as chairman at an organizational meeting called to form the Marin County Historical Society. A temporary constitution and slate of officers were approved and the Society was declared to have been duly organized. The first annual meeting was held September 5, 1935 at which time Miss Belle Brown was elected President. The President then announced the following appointments: Vice Presidents - Capt. W.T. Dillon, Sausalito; Casper Gardner, Mill Valley; Henry S. Foote, Corte Madera; Robert H. Menzies, San Rafael; Mrs. Mercedes Boeken, Ignacio; Louis Peter, San Rafael; Fred Dickson, Woodacre. Secretary-Treasurer - Florence G. Donnelly, San Rafael. Executive Committee - Major Newell F. Vanderbilt, San Rafael; Mrs. Jas. Gericke, Fallon; Mrs. Robert H.

Menzies, San Rafael; Mrs. George Boyd, San Rafael; Miss Minnie Keyes, Tomales; Mrs. James B. Burdell, Novato; Charles A Redding, San Rafael; George H. Harlan, Sausalito; Miss Marion Angellooli, San Francisco; John Murray, Kentfield; Thos. T. Kent, Kentfield; Mrs. Henrietta Sweetser, Novato; Dr. Joseph Hawkins, San Rafael; Irving Furlong, San Rafael; Mrs. Sidney H. Mosher, Larkspur; Frank S. Holland, San Rafael.

The constitution was approved. Charter membership was authorized to consist of those persons who signed the charter roll prior to September 9, 1935. 89 charter members were recorded, representing every locality in Marin County. (Note: As of Sept. 1, 1994 there were 484 members of the Society, including 2 charter members).

The Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State of California on November 27, 1935 and show that the Marin County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation formed for educational, recreational and social purposes; specifically to promote the study and research into the history of Marin County and to perpetuate the relics, records and authentic references to the early discoveries, settlement and organization of Marin County. An amendment to the articles filed in 1972 sets forth that "the specific and primary purposes are to engage in historical research and education".

During the World War II period, Marinites continued to collect articles of historic value. These were housed in the Museum room at the San Rafael High School. From 1950 to 1958 our Museum was at Saint Raphael's Mission. Because of crowded conditions and the growing collection of artifacts, the Museum was moved in 1959 to the Gate House at the entrance to Boyd Park, where since then the Victorian house has been rented from the City of San Rafael. This historic

house was built for Ira Cook in 1879. Mr. Cook was the great grandfather of Louise Boyd.

The "Pastimer", a newsletter was first issued in 1943. This interesting bulletin became a powerful factor in holding the membership together, especially during World War II, when, because of gas rationing, it became difficult for members to travel from all parts of the county. Meetings were discontinued for a time.

In September of 1967 the first Marin County Historical Society Bulletin was published. At the present time it is the intention of the Society to publish at least one Magazine, two or more Bulletins and quarterly News Letters each year. (A Magazine normally covers one subject, a Bulletin three or more articles, while the News Letter covers current events and plans.)

Many discussions were held regarding compiling a Marin County History. The last published history of Marin County was published in 1880. The County Board of Supervisors authorized Jack Mason and Helen Van Cleave Park to write an authoritative history. The Marin County Historical Society cooperated in the publication and the first of two volumes appeared in 1971.

Dr. Leo L. Stanley, a retired medical doctor, a local history devotee and writer of several articles and books, graciously volunteered to be chairman of another project. To arouse interest in the Marin County Historical Society, as well as to raise money for the organization, a profile of Marin people was agreed upon by the Board of Directors. The title of the book was to be "Marin People".

On March 30, 1971 the Marin County Historical Society invited the public to a Book Presentation and Wine Tasting Party where the book

was presented. Dr. Stanley autographed all copies of Marin People, Volume I purchased that day. On June 19, 1973, Volume II was presented and in 1980 Volume III was released.

For quite some time plans to restore the building, or at least to paint it, were considered but delayed for several reasons until 1974 when, on September 20th, the Society vacated the museum while the City restored and painted the building. All artifacts were placed in storage. In April 1975 the repairs, remodeling and painting were completed. After the decorators had finished replacing the artifacts, the Museum was reopened on May 31, 1975. A reception was held for the County Supervisors, City Officials and Members of the Society.

In 1968 the Society proposed the preservation of the old Court House built in 1872, as a building of great historic value. Unfortunately the building was destroyed by fire in 1971 before any action was taken.

San Rafael celebrated 100 years as an incorporated city in 1974 and staged a Centennial Celebration. The Society took part in furnishing historical data and receiving many visitors at the museum. In 1989 a Building Fund was established to which members can designate memorial gifts.

In late 1993 painting of the Gate House commenced. A plea was made to the membership for help to supplement what the Society had already appropriated. The response was most gratifying, showing the concern and interest the membership has in and for the Society.

Through the kindness of a local architect and two contractors the historic ship's bell from the James Donohue steamer was installed in a permanent frame at the entrance to the Museum.

The Marin County Historical Society has, for many years, assisted in the investigation of requests to designate a building or an area, for State or National recognition as historic landmarks. The Society was involved in the plans to build a replica of the Mission San Rafael and in the preservation of the Dollar Mansion "Falkirk". The Society investigated and recommended favorably the designation of the San Rafael Improvement Club as an historic building for the National Registry, as well as our own Gate House and Falkirk. A committee worked with the County and State to preserve Olompali where the only real battle of the "Bear Flag Revolt" was fought. It was also instrumental in having Ayala Cove on Angel Island declared a State Landmark (#529). In 1964 the last pear tree planted over 150 years ago at the Mission San Rafael became the victim of the bulldozer but through the efforts of the Society a local nurseryman made 7 grafts of the tree and today one is thriving on the grounds of the Marin Art and Garden Center in Ross while others are in private gardens. The Society assisted in placing a time capsule at the Doughboy statue at the Civic Center.

Among the many historic items owned by the Society which are too large to display in the present quarters are:

1. A large tallow pot presently on loan to the State of California for display at Olompali State Park.
2. A very large mural of the Landing of Sir Francis Drake in Marin County which is on loan to Sir Francis Drake High School in San Anselmo.
3. A 1904 Oldsmobile presently being stored by a member.
4. A baby grand piano presently being stored by a friend.

The Society has long been aware of the need for a fireproof building to house its invaluable artifacts and historic documents (Newspapers dating from 1860). Plans are in process to raise funds to provide the proper facilities.

In 1994 the S. H. Cowell Foundation established the William P. Murray, Jr. Fund, to be administered by the Marin Community Foundation, for the benefit of the Marin County Historic Society, which will provide 5 annual grants to the Society to engage the services of a Museum Development Director.

Marin County Historical Society Charter Members

Jacob Albert	Mrs. Lena Jones
Mrs. Harry B. Allen	Mrs. Victor Jones
Mrs. F. C. Angelotti	Mrs. Thomas Kent
Gail Apperson	Mr. & Mrs. Henry Keuckler
Elizabeth Kent Arnold	Miss Ada Legna
Mrs. F. W. Avery	Mr. August Legna
Mrs. William Babcock	Mrs. Harry Lichtenstein
Mrs. Mabel Bently	Miss Ethel Lilly
Mrs. Mercedes Pacheco Boeken	Miss Margaret MacDonald
Mrs. George Boyd	Mrs. John MacPhail
Jean Boyd	Mrs. W. B. McNamara
Rose Briones	Miss Alice C. Magee
Miss Belle C. Brown	J. Ward Mailliard
Mrs. James Black Burdell	George Mellen
Rev. J. J. Canoles	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Menzies
Mrs. Margaret Elliot Coit	Ethel M. Moore
May Cummings	Mrs. Sydney B. Mosher
Mrs. S. B. Cushing	Mr. Edward Mundt & Mother
Mr. & Mrs. A. B. Dewing	Mrs. Robert Murgetroyd
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Dickson	Mr. William P. Murray
Florence Donnelly	Rev. Daniel O'Brien
Dr. Charles H. DuBois	Mr. J. C. Oglesby
Mrs. Mary Eastman	A. C. Olney
Mrs. Caroline L. Esberg	Miss Loreta Pacheco
Milton Esberg, Jr.	Mrs. H. J. Pederson
Bryce B. Florence	Mrs. Lewis G. Pepper
R. A. Garcia	Mr. Thomas Peryam
Casper Gardner	Mr. Lewis Peter
Mrs. John B. Garrett	Mrs. Somers Peterson
Mrs. John R. Gericke	Miss Edith Pooley
Mr. Russell Gettamy	Dr. L. L. Robinson
Mrs. E. M. Goddard	Dr. Fred E. Sawyer
Eugenia Watson Grady	Mrs. Carl Schuster
Mrs. George Graham	Mrs. William F. Sharp
Mrs. Salvatore Grandi	Mrs. Mary Spellman
Mr. Crawford A. Green	Dr. L. L. Stanley
Henry E. Greer	Mr. Meriam Stetson
Mrs. George W. Hind	Miss Emily Taylor
Mrs. Alice E. Holland	Miss Katherine Timony
Mrs. F. P. Howard	Mr. & Mrs. Philip Tompkins
Mrs. W. S. Hutchison	Mr. William Murray Vanderbilt
Marie Peter Irwin	Major & Mrs. Newell Vanderbilt
Mrs. Harry D. Johnson	Mrs. Frank Williams
Miss Lena Jones	Mrs. G. A. Zeil



Presidents of the Marin County Historical Society

1935 - 1936	Miss Belle Brown	Larkspur
1936 - 1937	Mr. Fred Dickson	Woodacre
1937 - 1938	Capt. W. T. Dillon	Sausalito
1938 - 1939	Mr. Fred Dickson	Woodacre
1939 - 1940	Mr. Henry Foote	Corte Madera
1940 - 1946	Mr. George Harlan, Sr.	Sausalito
1947 - 1949	Mr. John McPhail	San Rafael
1953 - 1956	Mr. George Harlan, Jr.	Sausalito
1956 - 1958	Mr. Bray Dickinson	Tomales
1958 - 1962	Mr. Thomas Peryam	San Anselmo
1962 - 1965	Mr. Alton Larch	Novato
1965 - 1967	Mr. Parker Wood	San Rafael
1967 - 1973	Mr. Frank Galli	Ignacio & Novato
1973 - 1983	Mrs. Elsie Mazzini	San Rafael
1983 - 1984	Mr. Ted Iverson	San Rafael
1984 - 1985	Mrs. Fran Warner	San Rafael
1985 - 1987	Mr. Ken Brown	San Rafael
1987 - 1989	Mr. William Vanderbilt	San Anselmo
1989 - 1991	Mr. Warren Redding	San Rafael
1991 - 1992	Dr. Thomas Snead	San Anselmo
1992 - 1993	Mrs. Eileen Strachen	San Rafael
1993 - 1995	Mr. Lionel Ashcroft	San Rafael

Secretaries of the Marin County Historical Society

Mrs. Florence Donnelly  
Mrs. Robert Murgatroyd  
Mrs. Thomas Harris  
Mrs. Richard Keating  
Mrs. Eli Dalmon  
Mrs. John Machado  
Mrs. Phillip Coady  
Mrs. Catharine Robson  
Mrs. Fran Warner  
Mrs. Catherine Knopf  
Mrs. Eileen Strachen