

Mill Valley Historical Society

**TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL WALK INTO HISTORY
SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2006**

**TAMALPAIS PARK SUBDIVISION
CENTENNIAL**

WALK INTO HISTORY 2006 GUIDE BOOK

TO THE GUIDES:

This is the 29th year that the Mill Valley Historical Society has organized a Walk Into History thanks to the efforts of many volunteers working throughout the year as well as on the day of the Walk.

Guides are special volunteers with a responsibility to provide a group of walkers with an interesting, informative, enjoyable and safe experience.

Several guides have been leading these walks for many years. The fact that they continue to volunteer to be a guide is an indication of their enjoyment and commitment.

If this is your first year as a guide, we welcome you and hope you will find as much pleasure in learning and sharing the history of Mill Valley as the “old timers” do.

Walk-Into-History Chair: Laureen Novak

Guidebook Editor: Chuck Oldenburg

Researchers: Gene Stocking, Laurie Harper, Jonathan Jacobs,
 Chuck Oldenburg, Laureen Novak, Charlotte Osborne

Guide leader: Barbara Ford

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR GUIDES

Thank you for being a Walk-Into-History guide. Welcome to those who are leading a walk for the first time. We hope you enjoy the experience as much as the returning guides who tell us they look forward to the experience.

To be a successful guide requires a commitment of time, energy and preparation. The objective is to provide good leadership and well-presented historical information. It is essential that you have the desire and devotion to offer your group an informative and enjoyable Walk-Into-History. The following instructions can make your job easier:

1. Read the guidebook several times to familiarize yourself with its contents. You will be better able to energize your presentation and connect with your audience if you impart the information in your own words.
2. Practice the walk several times. Each guide is required to go on two walks that are conducted by a guide trainer. You should also do one or more practice walks with a friend who can give you feedback on your presentation.
3. Be a strong leader. Keep your group together. At each stop, face the group with your back to what you are describing. Make eye contact.
4. Don't try to cover everything in the guidebook. Focus on what you believe is particularly interesting at each stop.
5. Do not read from the guidebook. Use it primarily for reference only. Tell the story, show pertinent photos and encourage comments and questions. When appropriate, resort to, "Wait a minute – I'll check the Guidebook." In stating the size of a house and the year in which it was built, you may wish to refer to the guidebook.
6. Welcome any information that walkers may wish to contribute. Make a note of it and pass it on to the guide leader, Barbara Ford, after the walk.

Guides and walkers have enjoyed the annual Walk Into History for almost three decades. Good luck, have fun and enjoy the experience of leading a group of walkers interested in the history of Mill Valley.

Lead the group to #10 Catalpa to start the Walk Into History with an introduction and safety instructions

INTRODUCTION

We start our walk into history here at an apartment complex of 8 units which backs up to Warner Creek. It is rather unique in this neighborhood of single family homes. Note how it is hidden from Blithedale by large redwood trees.

This year marks the 29th Walk Into History sponsored by the Mill Valley Historical Society. Lucretia Hansen Little had been Mill Valley's Town Clerk and official historian. In 1977, illness forced her to retire and move away. A group of interested people established the Mill Valley Historical Society. Their primary goal was to make available all historical material relating to Mill Valley, including the invaluable collection of books, pictures and documents collected by Mrs. Little. Other goals established at the outset were:

1. Work for the library in all matters relating to the History Room
2. Take responsibility for the popular First Wednesday Programs
3. Develop an Oral History Program

(Today we will walk on the streets and lanes of Tamalpais Park Subdivision, a neighborhood of about 300 homes that is celebrating its centennial this year. We will stop at several houses of historical and architectural interest. The time required is about two hours. The total distance is 1.0 miles. For the most part the walk is on level streets and lanes.

SAFETY

All the streets have sidewalks on both sides of the street. You may choose whichever side of the street you feel is appropriate when moving from stop to stop. Please stay together and be alert for cars and bicycles.

Try to adjust the pace of your group to avoid other groups. However, if you find it appropriate, you may wish to pass or let pass another group by moving to the other side of the street. Make a special effort to keep your group together. Take as much time as you feel is appropriate for your group. Your objective should be to lead a meaningful tour such that your group enjoys learning about the history and architecture in the Tamalpais Park subdivision.

Strollers and wheel chairs can easily be accommodated on this route. Stairs at the end of one of the lanes can be readily bypassed by an alternate route.

HISTORY OF TAMALPAIS PARK SUBDIVISION

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, seekers of the good life flocked to California, attracted by the sunny climate. Many came to Mill Valley. Tamalpais Park was the first subdivision open to middle income families. Lyon & Hoag, the sales agency, started selling lots in February 1906. Two years later, 86% of the lots had been sold. This turned out to be excellent timing. After the earthquake and fire two months later, many San Francisco residents chose to leave the city and build a house in Tamalpais Park.

The 109-acre subdivision included 317 lots, typically 50 ft. wide and 120 ft. to 150 ft. deep. Individual homes were constructed by many builders. Our tour will stop in front of about forty houses of either historical or architectural interest or both. Sixteen of these houses were built before World War I, an era when the architecture was brown shingle and craftsman style, sometimes with a Victorian influence. Seventeen were built in the 1920s, a time of prosperity when incomes were rising, real estate prices were increasing and automobiles were suddenly everywhere. Architecturally, many of these houses were bungalows. Five of the houses we will see were built recently in the neo-craftsman style. The contrast in architectural styles for these three eras is remarkable. Many houses in Tamalpais Park have been remodeled and enlarged, often extensively, but we will see a few houses still in their original external configuration.

The climate here is one of the best in Mill Valley, and its mild effect and the alluvial soils invited flowers, fruit trees and vegetable gardens. This is one of the few areas where oranges, lemons, figs, apples, kiwis and pears all thrive. We will see a garden of 150 varieties of rose.

Lanes connecting the streets were built to accommodate commuters who took the train to the Sausalito ferry. It was only a forty-three minute commute from nearby Park Station to the Ferry building in San Francisco.

Tamalpais Park subdivision was originally part of John Reed's 4428-acre Mexican land grant, Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio. The land in Tamalpais Park passed to his granddaughter, Jessie Oliver Sollom. She named the streets after trees, and the streets were lined with trees after which they were named. Curved streets were planned to make an agreeable drive for a horse and buggy. We will walk on Catalpa, Walnut, Sycamore, Locust and Elm. We will see the correspondence of the trees with the name of the street they are on.

CATALPA Avenue

Stop at #26 Catalpa. This house was built in 1927. It now has 1965 sq. ft. of living area, probably twice its original size. The architecture is in the Cape Cod cottage style; although having only one dormer is rather unusual. This is a twin of the house at #182 Elm which we will see later. Note that an addition to the house partially blocks the original garage. As we will soon see, the rather large lot, 8550 sq. ft. extends back to Warner Creek.

Turn right between #26 and #30 Catalpa onto the lane leading to Walnut Avenue

This is the first of four lanes that we will walk on. Note the plaque identifying this as one of 170 steps, lanes and paths in the recently published map of Mill Valley.

[The map is for sale in the schoolyard for \$5]

The original purpose of this and other lanes in Tamalpais Park was to connect the streets such that residents could walk directly to a train station on Miller Ave. There were two, one at Park Ave, and one at Willow St. known as Millwood station.

Note Carl's bench. Carl Cole often sat on this bench talking with children from the neighborhood and giving treats to neighborhood dogs. After his death, neighbors placed a plaque on the bench in his memory. For 55 years, his wife Helen has lived in a nearby house where Carl lived.

Proceed down the lane

Note that #30 Catalpa also has an entrance from this lane.

Note the two-story addition on the back of #26 and the large back yard.

Note the tree house and swing next to the creek.

Stop on the bridge. This is the first of several bridges we will cross over Warner Creek. Point out the contrast. Upstream is a natural creek bed with vegetation providing habitat for a wide variety of creatures. This used to be a favorite spot for neighborhood children to observe and catch tadpoles (pollywogs) and frogs. Downstream is a concrete channel completely void of vegetation.

Proceed down the lane.

Stop at #53 Walnut Avenue

Note that the only entrance is from this lane. This small house was built in 1923. It has 832 sq. ft. of living area. Homes in the Tamalpais Park subdivision were often rented during the 1930s. This house was rented for many years to Miss Bishop, a Kindergarten teacher at Park School. In the 1970s and 1980s this was the home of George Sumner an internationally recognized environmental impressionist. He created the whale that appeared on many Golden Gate Transit buses.

This house was recently on the market for \$600,000, advertised as follows: “Meander down a country path to the private world you’ve been waiting for ... seclusion ... serenity ...luscious rose garden, lawn, trees ... architectural charm ... magical Mediterranean style ... quiet and peaceful ... very desirable Tamalpais Park area”. A unique, small, isolated house.

Proceed down the lane.

Stop on the lane after walking about 25 yards.

It is still possible to find shell fragments on these lanes. At least 5,000 years ago, the earliest Coast Miwoks began establishing a permanent residence site nearby which at that time was on the bay’s edge. Shellfish was of major significance in the Miwok diet. Waste products including shells accumulated within the soil. The result was a dark mound called a midden or shell mound bounded by Sycamore, Locust, Hilarita and Amicita. Until 1920, it was

common for Mill Valley residents to haul away cartloads of soil from the midden to pave streets and lanes, line garden paths, surface tennis courts and enriching garden soil. Old timers referred to the nearby midden as Sollom's shell mound. The lanes in Tamalpais Park subdivision were surfaced with soil from Sollom's shell mound. In the 1930s, children hunted for artifacts on the lanes.

The shell fragments were reflective. At night, a bright moon or a walker's flashlight would cause the lane to appear luminescent.

Turn right on Walnut Avenue

WALNUT Avenue

Stop at #41 Walnut. This house was built in 1909. It has 1508 sq. ft. of living area. One of the present owners who inherited this property was three years old in 1923 when her parents purchased it for \$1250.

Point out the garden in the front yard. Each season brings different flowers in bloom, today, beautiful roses. This 6500 sq. ft. lot extends back to the creek. Stand in front of the house and look toward the back yard. Point out the whimsical windmills made by the present owner. There is "wishing well" in the back yard which is not only adorable but also functional. Water is pumped from the creek into the "wishing well" for use in irrigating the vegetable garden, which still thrives in the back yard. All vegetables are grown from seed which takes skill and energy. It would be much easier to buy seedlings at the nursery.

The owners of this house were great friends of the Stocking family. Every time it would rain, even if it was just a sprinkle, Mr. Stocking would call the owners and ask "Do you have the row boat ready?" This little joke went on between the two families for years. Never once did he miss the opportunity to call and ask the question. As a matter of fact, there was a rowboat in the basement until very recently.

Anecdote

A large group of immigrants from Italy lived in Mill Valley and worked in Tiburon at the busy train switching station. Many spoke no English, but realized they had to learn how in order to become US citizens. They attended night school and learned English from Miss Edna Maquire. Then they had to travel to San Rafael to visit the judge. They boarded the train in Mill Valley and transferred at Almonte to catch the train to San Rafael, all the while studying the preamble to the Constitution, which they were required to recite in front of the judge. After becoming a citizen, they registered to vote. This required going to city hall to talk with Mr. Falley, the City Clerk of Mill Valley. Mr. Falley would look up from his desk and ask, "Are you rich or poor?" If you answered "poor" he would say, "OK, then you're a Democrat".

Point left to the house next door at #33 Walnut. This house was built in 1913. It has 1825 sq. ft. of living area. Mrs. DePillo lived here at one time. She was responsible for the installation of the plaque in the "Nook" Armager Memorial Grove, a stop on last year's Walk-Into-History. "Nook" was Mill Valley fire chief from 1942 to 1969.

Cross the street and proceed up Park Ave.

PARK Avenue

Stop at #51 Park Ave. This bungalow was built in 1928. It has 1606 sq. ft. of living area. Not much has been changed inside since the house was built.

It is the home of a famous Mill Valley artist, naturalist and writer of many books and magazine articles about plant life in Northern California. She also created illustrations of the plants she wrote about. Some of these prints are hanging in the Smithsonian. Many paintings and other art displayed in the house are gifts from writers and artists.

She is a close friend of Mrs. Terwilliger, another famous Mill Valley naturalist. One day they decided to check out plant life along the main creek in Mill Valley, Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio. They began their adventure by launching their canoe in Old Mill creek at Old Mill Plaza and paddled through the culvert under Miller Ave. to its junction with the main creek. Canoeing down the creek, passing under bridges and shooting down small water falls was so much fun that they got very little work done.

Return to Walnut Avenue and turn right.

WALNUT Avenue

Stop at #50 Walnut. An English style house with Tudor detailing was built in 1928 on this lot by Melvin Klyce, son of Harvey Klyce, the famous architect. The owners were James and Carolyn Weissich Phelps. Later in the walk we will describe the Weissich family in more detail. Carolyn was a twin in the second generation. James Phelps was a San Francisco food broker and served on the Mill Valley School District from 1932 to 1940.

In 1995, most of the house was demolished. One wall was left standing so that construction of the new house could be legally designated a remodel not required to meet today's setback requirements. It has 3850 sq. ft. of living area and is the largest house that we will see on our walk. The architectural style is contemporary brown shingle.

The spectacular roses along the fence were planted when the house was enlarged in 1995. The roses on the fence are Sally Holmes, a large pink to white rose on a single shrub that can act like a climber. The David Austin rose is also present. Both are repeat bloomers and bloom rather heavily from late April to October.

Stop at #56 Walnut. This house was built in 2004 in the neo-bungalow style with craftsman detailing. It replaced a house in which composer George Cory Jr. grew up. When he was a teenager George played the organ at the Sequoia Theater on Throckmorton. In 1954, he composed the music for "I left my heart in San Francisco." Douglas Cross wrote the words. In 1956, Tony Bennett made it a hit.

Stop at #59 Walnut. This house was built in 1923. Its architecture was originally in the bungalow style but it has been extensively remodeled. It now has 1296 sq. ft. of living area. Note that 4 peaked roofs face the street. Note also the white picket fence, the first of many that we will see in this block.

Stop at #65 Walnut. This is the oldest house we have seen thus far. It was built in 1905. The architecture is bungalow style with Victorian detailing. Other houses that predate the 1906 subdivision were Sollom ranch houses. Note how the downstairs window is not quite the same as the upstairs windows. The stairway that dominates the front of the house was probably added when the house was raised to increase the living area to the present 1833 sq. ft.

Stop at #69 Walnut. This house was built in 1924. It was remodeled after leaving one wall of the original house standing. It now has 2316 sq. ft. of living area. This was the home of “Nook” Armager, Mill Valley fire chief from 1942 to 1969.

Stop at #77 Walnut. This stucco bungalow was built in 1925. This architecture is typical of its era. It has 976 sq. ft. of living area. It appears never to have been enlarged. The floor plan is typical of bungalows. There are two bedrooms, one bath, living room, dining room and kitchen. The one car garage at the rear of the 5489 sq. ft. lot has been extended to provide space for a shop. A rather large cabana is also located behind the house. The property was recently put on the market at \$1,099,000 and sold at a higher price three days later.

Stop at #78 Walnut. This house was built in 1907 and later enlarged to 2089 sq. ft. of living area. At the same time, part of the area under the house was dug out to create a basement where the owner has a woodworking shop. Note the wonderful wildflower garden behind the white picket fence. The current owner discovered an abandoned well in the back yard. It is about 5 ft. in diameter and lined with stone without mortar to a depth of 26 ft. The well produces crystal clear potable water which is used to irrigate the garden. The level of the water is fairly constant year round at 6 to 8 ft. below the surface. The next two properties to the north also have wells still in use.

Stop at #83 Walnut. This craftsman style house was built in 1910. It has 2122 sq. ft. of living area. Note that it has a rock wall in front rather than a white picket fence such as the houses we have just seen. Note the two chimneys. The living room fireplace chimney is made of crushed rock. The brick chimney was probably first needed for a wood stove in the kitchen, but may now serve as a furnace flue. Note also the stained glass above the front windows. This 180 ft. deep lot extends all the way to Catalpa where there is another entrance and a garage. The house appears to not to have been enlarged.

Stop at #85 Walnut. This house was built in 1940 and later enlarged. It has 2193 sq. ft. of living area. The 160 ft. deep lot extends to Catalpa.

Stop at # 89 Walnut. This house was built in 1924. It has 1364 sq. ft. of living area. The 140 ft. deep lot extends to Catalpa.

Cross Fern Ave and stop on the bridge

WARNER CREEK

Note how the creek is channelized. Note that the shed behind the house on the corner is built over the creek.

The headwaters of Warner Creek are about 2 miles from here in the Blithedale Summit Open Space Reserve. The creek flows down through Warner Canyon to the Golf Course then between Del Casa and Buena Vista. It goes underground at the Mill Valley Tennis Club and emerges at Boyle Park before crossing under Blithedale to Tamalpais Park. In Boyle Park, the creek bed is highly vegetated and about 20 ft. wide and 10 ft. deep. At our first crossing of the creek on the lane between Catalpa and Walnut, the creek changed to a channel with concrete walls about 8' high and 10' apart and a concrete bottom - no vegetation.

Channelization of Warner Creek throughout Tamalpais Park allowed more lots to be in the subdivision than would be the case if the creek bed were left in its natural condition. Today, channelization of streams is to be avoided if at all possible. It usually destroys habitat and has adverse hydrological effects. Houses in Tamalpais Park can be very close to the creek. Several houses and garages are actually on top of the creek. Others have the creek in their back yard or front yard. Property lines are often in the creek.

Warner Creek has on occasion overflowed its banks and flooded certain streets and basements in the Tamalpais Park subdivision, but the consequences have not been as serious as with floods from Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio on Miller Ave. and in the Sycamore Park subdivision, e.g., last winter's New Year's Eve flood.

Stop at #107 Walnut. This house was built in 1923 but has been significantly remodeled. It has 1087 sq. ft. of living area. Note that it is very close to the channelized creek. Note also another white picket fence.

Stop at #111 Walnut. This house was built in 1933. It is a two story stucco house with a flat roof and has 1028 sq. ft. of living area. The style of architecture is rather non-descript, not modern and not mission. A few years ago, the owner was Bob Johnson, a Mill Valley motorcycle police officer well known for his dedication to issuing tickets for traffic violations.

Stop at #119 Walnut. This replacement house was built in 2001. It has 2282 sq. ft. of living area. On the first floor the architectural style is neo-craftsman, but on the second floor it is post modern. The same flat stone is used in the wall along the front, the porch pillars and the chimney. This is one of the few symmetrical houses in the neighborhood. David Atwater used to live on this property. He was an assemblyman in the California State Legislature. He wrote the newsletter for the local chapter of the Gray Panthers. He was also an artist specializing in etchings of historical interest and Marin landscapes. After his retirement he was a substitute high school teacher for 20 years at Tam and Redwood.

Stop at # 123 Walnut. This house has 2190 sq. ft. of living area. The gingerbread is a copy of that on a building that formerly stood on Bridgeway in Sausalito. It was added when the current owners bought the house.

The house was originally a model home on display at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in what is now the Marina district of San Francisco. The house as well as the balustrades and pillars were barged across the bay and moved to this site in 1915.

Sam Wilson, the original owner, worked at the Alto power station located at the edge of the marsh below Enchanted Knolls. In August 1903, the railroad from Sausalito to Mill Valley was electrified. A 150-mile high-voltage transmission line (the longest at that time) connected the hydroelectric power plant at Colgate Dam on the Yuba River in the foothills of the Sierra to the Alto power station where three-phase 50,000 volt alternating current was stepped down and rectified to 600 volt direct current for access by trains via a third rail. The buildings were demolished in the 1960's. A PG&E substation is presently located on the site near the corner of Roque Moraes Drive and Longfellow Drive.

Note that two of the pillars lean toward the street. This is caused by the roots of the monkey-puzzle tree (native to Chile) which also came from the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition. About every three years the tree produces pods about the size of extremely large pine cones. When they fall, they are a danger to anyone or anything, such as a car. In 2001, after the house next door at #119 was completed, the two neighbors decided to construct a rather tall fence on the property line to protect the children in the new house from objects that would fall from monkey-puzzle tree. A Mill Valley building inspector wanted the fence removed because its height exceeded the maximum allowed by code. While

he and both families were discussing this subject in the front yard, a large limb of the monkey puzzle tree crashed to the ground barely missing the building inspector. He then became even more insistent that the high fence had to go. The present fence meets code.

Stop at #126 Walnut. This house was built in 1914 and has been extensively remodeled. It has 1376 sq. ft. of living area. The owner, Ben Hartwell started out as a highway patrolman and then served for 33 years as a Mill Valley police officer, much of the time a motorcycle cop. He was also a volunteer fireman and a commercial fisherman. In his younger days, he sparred with Jim Corbett who had been the world's heavyweight champion from 1882 to 1897. Ben Hartwell died in about 1993 when he was 100 years old.

Stop at #133 Walnut. This house was built in 1908 and has been extensively remodeled. It has 2604 sq. ft. of living area. Wayne Lenherr, who owned this house from about 1970 to 1996, reported that ranch hands who worked on the Sollom/Deffebach orchards lived here before the Tamalpais Park subdivision was created. In the 1920s, a San Francisco saloon keeper named Lundsted lived here.

Cross the street and point out the view of Mt. Tamalpais

The 1906 Lyon & Hoag Pamphlet advertising Tamalpais Park lots, said, "Right at your feet Mt. Tamalpais starts to rise and affords a view of which no one could ever tire. You can see it perfectly from top to bottom from all of our lots." Today, this is one of the few spots where one has such a magnificent view of Mt. Tamalpais.

Anecdote

We've seen many houses here on Walnut and perhaps you've noticed the Walnut trees. In the early days, people would gather walnuts for eating and baking. Boys used to throw walnuts as they would throw stones. One girl was ambushed by a boy every day while she was on her way home from school. She happened to be taking violin lessons at the time and became very good at using the violin case as a shield.

Walk between #128 and #130 Walnut onto the lane leading to Sycamore Avenue

Note the plaque identifying the lane. Stop on the bridge to note that the creek flows under the house at #128 Walnut which was built in 1926.

Proceed down the lane.

Note the large redwoods on the left which were likely planted in 1907 when the house on Sycamore was built. Note that the house on the right has an entrance from the lane. Note also that the house is placed well back from Sycamore. This was required in order to avoid building on top of a shell mound. However, a concrete pad for the carport was allowed to be placed on the shell mound when the house was built in 1962.

Turn left onto Sycamore Avenue

SYCAMORE Avenue

Stop at #165 Sycamore. This house was built in 1907. It has 2966 sq. ft. of living area. This large two story shingle house has a turret reminiscent of the Queen Ann Victorian style. The turret was added in the 1970s as someone's idea of what a Victorian house should look like.

Thomas Deffebach II, a grandson of John Reed lived in this house. Five years earlier, in 1902, his sister, Jessie Oliver Sollom, and her husband lived in tents on this property while their house on Locust was being constructed. We will later stop at the Sollom home site.

Stop at #164 Sycamore. This house was built in 1988. Its architecture is neo-craftsman. The current owner believes that a famous artist and sculptor whose work appeared at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition used to live here. The lot extends back to the main creek in Mill Valley, Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio. The property has its own foot bridge adjacent to the Willow Path foot bridge.

On December 31, 2005, the Willow Path foot bridge became hydraulically constricted by debris washed down in a heavy rain storm. Water backed up and flowed both to Miller Ave. where it caused flooding in the Locust shopping area and to Sycamore where it formed a large pond covering the street and front yards. The water was about 2-1/2 ft. deep, covering the large rock in the front yard of #164 and reaching the third step up to the porch. The garage of the house on the other side of the lane was flooded. The flood waters rushed down Sycamore to Locust and crossed the bridge over Warner Creek adding to the serious flooding in the Sycamore Park neighborhood caused in part by an extra high tide.

Stop on the corner of Sycamore and Locust

Note that Warner Creek flows under Sycamore and that Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio flows under Locust. They merge a few hundred yards downstream.

Look down Locust to Miller where the 7 Eleven is on the right and the Mill Valley Coffee Shop is on the left. On that corner there were originally two pedestals with lions on them and a sign indicating that this was the entrance to Tamalpais Park.

LOCUST Avenue

Stop at #44 Locust. This house was built in the neo-craftsman style in 2005. It has 2072 sq. ft. of living area. The creek runs through the yard. Sand bags appeared in the front yard last winter to protect the house from flooding.

Stop at #153 Walnut on the corner of Locust. This house was built in 1924. It has 1715 sq. ft. of living area. The recently deceased owner helped his father build this house when he was 10 years old. He lived here 82 years. His wife of 65 years still lives here. A memorable event took place back in the 1950s or thereabouts. Warner Creek overflowed its banks and the water was 18" deep in this area. Their five sons rowed a boat up Walnut.

Anecdote

One of the sons recalls that one day when he was in class at Park School, the teacher, Miss Jackson, told him, "If you don't stop playing with those marbles and put them back in your pocket, I'll take them away from you just as I took marbles away from your father."

Stop at #58 Locust. This house was built in 1908. It has 2415 sq. ft. of living area. It was originally a simple one story building with a gable roof built as a gun clubhouse. In the early years, members added on to the building several times. Later on, a second story was added, but the size and shape of the original building was preserved as the front lower portion of the house. It is now a magnificent living room with an open beamed ceiling. The large fireplace is made of clinkers (very hard burned bricks) recycled from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire.

Stop at #64 Locust. This brown shingle bungalow was built in 1924 for a bride named Annabelle Gray who lived here until her death in the 1970s. It was then purchased by a young couple who remodeled the kitchen, converted a sun porch to a bedroom and added a bathroom. It now has 1162 sq. ft. of living area. Joan Goff, the fourth owner of the house, moved here in 1992 primarily because of the property's exposure to the sun. She is the president of the Marin Rose Society. She has invited us to visit her magnificent garden which has about 150 different varieties of roses, most of them in bloom at this time, as well as other plantings. Note especially the Mimi Farina rose, a newly developed rose which Joan Goff selected for the Bread & Roses Foundation.

Walk down the driveway to the back yard, turn left onto the deck and left again to the side yard, return to the lawn area of the back yard, walk back up the driveway to the front yard, cross the lawn to the right and return to the sidewalk, all the while inspecting the rose bushes (most are labeled) as well as other plants and trees.

Look across the street at #87 Locust

This bungalow was built in 1923. It has 1489 sq. ft. of living area. Except for the new front door, the outside of the house is unchanged.

Pass by #70 Locust and note the owl carvings on the fence posts.

Cross Hilarita and continue on Locust

Stop at #82 Locust. This property and the next two lots at #90 and #92 were not part of the 1906 subdivision, because this is the site of the original Sollom ranch house.

Maria Inez Reed, who had inherited 646 acres of Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio, married Thomas Boileau Deffebach in 1864. Their daughter, Jessie Oliver (1876 - 1945), inherited land that is now Tamalpais Park. She married Cuthbert Sollom in 1902 and shortly thereafter built a house here.

Stop at #90 Locust. This house was built in 2004 after demolishing the much smaller original 1902 Sollom house located near the back of the lot. It has 3664 sq. ft. of living area, the second largest house on our walk. Its architecture style is very large brown shingle with neo-classical detailing.

Stop at #92 Locust. The house placed at the rear of the lot was built in 1947. It has 2028 sq. ft. of living area.

Stop at #98 Locust. This house was built in 1908. It has a twin at #14 Walnut which we will not see on this tour. A second story was added, increasing the living area to 1744 sq. ft.

Follow the lane along the side of #98 Locust leading to Elm

Note the plaque for the lane. Note the outside plumbing on #98 which was common in 1908. Note the fence on the right for #92 and the large redwoods likely planted early in the 20th century.

Turn left onto Elm Avenue

ELM Avenue

Stop at #182 Elm. This house was built in 1926. It has 1208 sq. ft. of living area. It is in the Cape Cod cottage style, but it has only one dormer rather than the traditional two. It is a twin of #24 Catalpa. Note that the original garage is still accessible contrary to the garage at #24 Catalpa which is partly blocked by a large addition to the house. Here, it is the garage that has been added on to.

Stop at #178 Elm next to the tree at the street.

TREE ASSESSMENT

Note the tag on the tree, #122. Home owners in Tamalpais Park pay an assessment to maintain trees on the streets. Each tree is tagged to facilitate identification so that a problem tree can be easily identified when reporting it to the city.

In the summer of 1980, 60 neighbors met to discuss the deplorable condition of the city street trees, many of which had been planted in 1906. City policy was to neglect the trees until they became a liability and then remove them. In February 1981, two representatives of the Tamalpais Park Neighborhood Association asked the city council to change this policy and treat the trees. In October 1981, the city council appropriated \$36,000 to hire a UC arborist to examine the trees. In January 1982, work crews began to move through the neighborhood removing dead wood and crossing branches from 242 trees. Only 11 trees had to be removed. Any wood of significant size was left in front of each house for fireplace purposes. A few months later, the city agreed to form the Tamalpais Street Tree Assessment District to collect yearly fees of \$12 from each household. The fee was increased to \$20 in 1992.

Proceed to the intersection of Elm, Locust and Fern

The geometry of the convergence of these three avenues seems rather bizarre, but it should be remembered that it was designed in the horse and buggy era. It is alleged that Mrs. Sollom wanted it that way.

Continue on Elm after crossing its intersection with Locust

Stop at #154 Elm. The first house on this property was built in 1913. It was demolished and replaced in 1928 probably as a result of a fire. It has 1071 sq. ft. of living area. Architecturally it is a bungalow typical of its era. Note this lot is 150 ft. deep. This lot borders on seven other properties. The current owner feels very secure with seven next-door neighbors.

See Appendix I for details on the historical ownership of this property.

Turn onto the lane next to #146 Locust leading to Catalpa

Advise those with a stroller or a wheel chair that there are 11 steps at the end of this lane. Those who wish to avoid the steps should go through the school yard to Catalpa, turn left and meet the group at the bottom of the steps.

Stop 30 yards into the lane. Point out the educational garden in the school yard.

HISTORY OF PARK SCHOOL

Mill Valley's first one-room schoolhouse was constructed at the corner of Cornelia and Summit - then called Tamalpais. It opened in 1892 with 32 pupils and one teacher. Over time the local press referred to it as "Eastland

School,” “Mill Valley Grammar School,” “The school,” “The old school,” “The present grammar school,” “The main school,” “Main” and finally, “Summit School.” It was abandoned in June 1939 and demolished in 1941.

The second school in the district, the two-room Homestead School, later temporarily called “Laverne School,” opened in January 1908 with 60 pupils and two teachers.

The school district currently leases it to the private Marin Horizon School.

After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, Mill Valley’s population grew rapidly, with summer residents staying year-round and refugees fleeing from the City. As a result, both Summit and Homestead schools quickly became overcrowded. On March 1907, Mill Valley voters approved a \$25,000 school bond issue for the construction of a third school in the new Tamalpais Park subdivision. Seven lots at the corner of Catalpa and East Blithedale were purchased for \$3,500. The building was erected for \$14,589. Originally the school was for grades 1-4 only, but within six months, grades 5 and 6 were added.

During the 1920s, additional land was purchased. In 1934, local builder Melvin Klyce was awarded the contract to build more classrooms. Tamalpais Park School then housed kindergarten through grade 5.

In 1938, a school bond issue (\$55,000) was passed which permitted securing \$45,000 already pledged by the Public Works Administration (PWA). Parcels of land along Elm Ave. were purchased and a building constructed. The new V-shaped edifice, with an auditorium at its apex and wings extending back from both sides, was said to be one of the most up-to-date schools in the Bay Area. It opened in September 1939 with six full classrooms, two empty classrooms, a health and dental observation room, a music room, principal’s office, and district superintendent’s office. At this point the school shifted to educating students grades 6, 7 and 8 only. A few years later, the name of the school was changed to Park School, thus dropping the word Tamalpais.

In 1961, Mill Valley’s first traffic light was installed in front of Park School at the intersection of East Blithedale and Elm. In 1967, the original building, built to accommodate children of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, was razed because it no longer met state earthquake and fire standards.

All three of the original Mill Valley public schools changed their names, but only Park School is still in operation as a public school.

Continue on the lane toward Catalpa

Note that the garage and carport on the right are accessible only from Locust although they belong to the house at #45 Catalpa. This house was built in 1908. It has 1503 sq. ft. of living area.

Turn left on Catalpa Avenue

Some may wish to leave the tour at this point. The rest of the tour involves going down Catalpa, turning around and coming back to this point.

CATALPA Avenue

Stop at #51 Catalpa. This stucco house was built in 1924. It has 3030 sq. ft. of living area. Note that the style of architecture resembles that of Tamalpais High School. Its architecture reflects a Spanish-Mediterranean-California Mission influence. It was designed and built by Gerald T. Wending, one of Tam High's outstanding teachers and coach of successful athletic teams. While head of the Mechanical Drawing Department under principal E.E. Wood, he designed many of the buildings on the campus with the help of students. Principal Wood made sure that training for the world of business and labor had as prominent a place in the curriculum as preparing students for university. Vocational training at Tam consisted of auto shop, bricklaying, carpentry, electricity, concrete work, drafting, landscaping and print shop.

Stop between #61 and #65 Catalpa. The house at #65 was built in 1906 by Roy and Susanna Whorff Ewing shortly after they were married. It has 1529 sq. ft. of living area. Mr. Ewing was employed by the telephone company, a member of the Mill Valley Masonic Lodge and the recipient of the Silver Beaver award for his work in Boy Scouts.

In 1907 the Ewings built #61 and lived there for a while. Both houses are craftsman style with Victorian influence. But Mrs. Ewing missed her view of San Francisco so they moved back to #65 and rented out #61.

The Swearingen family rented and then purchased #61 and lived there until 1960 when they sold it to Reverend Charles Campbell and his wife Elsie. He was the assistant pastor of the Mill Valley Community Church. The Padover family bought the house in the 1960s and the present owner bought it from them in 1976. The house was raised in 1991 to create a lower living unit. That explains the unusually dominant stairway to the upper story. It now has 1862 sq. ft. of living area. Note the stained glass windows. In the rear of the property is an artist studio which was originally a garage in the model T days.

Stop at #69 Catalpa. This stucco house with applied timber work was designed by Oran A. Jenkins and built in 1929. The architecture is "artsy" with a European influence. It has 2552 sq. ft. of living area. The senior Thomas McWatters lived here until 1957. Their son, Tom, had married Lotte Sporleder who grew up at #29 Catalpa. The house was sold to Bob and Betsy Andresen. Bob had his law office in the Keystone Block until his retirement in 1981. He served on the Mill Valley Planning Commission from 1948 to 1952, the School Board from 1956 to 1960 and the City Council from 1968 to 1972. Betsy taught at Old Mill School and Tamalpais Park School in the late 1940s.

In the original subdivision map, the lots for both #69 and #75 Catalpa were on Fern. The properties were re subdivided so as to front on Catalpa although garage access to both houses is from Fern.

Stop at #75 Catalpa. This house was also designed by Oran A. Jenkins. Its architecture resembles that of #69. Note that the end of the gable has been cut off. It was built in 1924 for Otto and Camille Weissich who lived here with their two small sons. The older son William O. Weissich became Marin County District Attorney. The house has 3027 sq. ft. of living area. In 1926, the Weissich family moved to San Pedro in southern California. The house was purchased by the Tosi family. In the 1940s, it was sold to the Loceys. In 1957, Laura Locey, a widow, married her next door neighbor at #69, Thomas McWatters, a widower. There have been seven different owners since that time. Note the impressive landscaping.

Weissich and Leger (lay-zhair) families of Tamalpais Park

William Weissich (b. 1871) and his wife Augusta Oellrich Weissich (b. 1872) moved to Mill Valley in 1911 and lived at #97 Sycamore. They had four children, Otto (b. 1896), Theodor (b. 1898), and twin daughters, Marie and Carolyn (b. 1900). Marie later lived on Locust. Early in the walk we mentioned that Carolyn Weissich Phelps lived at #50 Walnut. Maurice Leger (b. 1871), his wife Pauline, and their two daughters, Camille (b. 1899) and Juliette (b. 1901), moved to Mill Valley in 1909 and lived at #15 Sycamore until 1913 when they moved next door to #23 Sycamore. Otto Weissich married Camille Leger and they had two sons, William O. (b. 1921) and Paul. As noted above, the family lived at #75 Catalpa. Camille Leger Weissich Folker, now 107 years old, lives at the Redwoods.

Cross Catalpa and turn right, staying on Catalpa

Note that three houses on Walnut, #89, #85 and #83, have rear entrances and/or garages on Catalpa. The owners of #85 installed a plaque for clarification.

Stop at #58 Catalpa. This house was built in 1922. It has 1930 sq. ft. of living area. Note the Mansard roof. Originally the roof was ordinary composition shingles. The present owner replaced them with slate. This is the only house in Tamalpais Park with a Mansard slate roof.

Stop at #34 Catalpa. This house was built in 1951. It was recently remodeled and now has 2144 sq. ft. of living area. Note the modern architectural style.

Stop at #29 Catalpa. This brown shingle craftsman style house with its native blue rock wall was built in 1906 on three lots for Annie and Jacob Gardner, probably using plans drawn by Sam Burt, their son-in-law. It has 3410 sq. ft. of living area. Note that a second story has been added to the garage.

JACOB GARDNER

In 1868, Samuel Throckmorton hired Jacob Gardner to be manager of Rancho Sausalito, a 19,000-acre Mexican land grant originally awarded to William Richardson. Throckmorton lived in San Francisco. When he brought his friends to the ranch to hunt elk and bear, they stayed in one half of his lodge which was located on what is now the corner of Ethel and Linden Lane at Montford. He named it, "The Homestead", a name later applied to the valley. Jacob Gardner lived in the other half of the lodge.

In 1873, Gardner left for greener pastures. He returned with a wife and children in 1880 after the murder of interim ranch manager, Charles Severence. In 1889, the Gardners built and lived in "The Maples" on Miller near Montford. Jacob Gardner was a prominent citizen, county sheriff, town trustee, county supervisor and first school trustee.

Anecdote

In 1921, a German family named Sporleder purchased #29 Catalpa. Hedwig Sporleder was a teacher at Summit, Tamalpais Park and Old Mill schools over a period of 28 years. She retired in 1952. The property passed to her daughter, Lotte Sporleder McWatters.

Recall the stop at 41 Walnut at Park, the one with the whimsical windmills. The young girl who lived there worked for the Sporleders cleaning house. She was paid 25 cents an hour. When Mrs. Sporleder wished for her assistance she would pull down the shade in the top window of this house, #29 Catalpa. At that time there were fewer trees so that

most houses were in sight of each other. The young girl's mother would notice the pulled down shade in the Sporleder's house and call out, "It's time to go work at the Sporleders." The girl went to there by way of the lane from Walnut to Catalpa which we traversed in the first part of our walk.

The property passed to her daughter, Lotte Sporleder McWatters who left the house empty for many years. She was scared to death of the neighbor across the street at #34 Catalpa who scared children in the neighborhood as well. Lotte really shied away from him. He had built his house himself out of Hydite, a lightweight concrete block normally used for partitions within buildings.

Return to the starting point in the schoolyard

Offer to respond to any questions. Significant comments and historical anecdotes should be noted and passed on to Barbara Ford.

APPENDIX 1 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Stop at #16 Catalpa

This house was built in 1925. Note the original windows on the front. This lot is only 40 ft. wide, but it extends about 210 ft. back to Warner Creek. Note the second unit in the rear.

Stop at #66 Walnut.

This house has 3187 sq. ft. of living area. It is the first house in this neighborhood to be constructed with a steel frame. It attracted a lot of attention. It was built in 1983 by the son of Mrs. Mabel Pittinger, the orchestra teacher at Tam High.

Stop at #123 Walnut.

MONKEY-PUZZLE TREE: evergreen tree (*Araucaria araucana*) native to Chile and widely cultivated elsewhere as an ornamental. The symmetrical branches have an unusual angularity and are completely covered by the stiff, overlapping leaves. The monkey-puzzle tree and related species, e.g., the Norfolk Island pine (*A. excelsa*) and the bunya-bunya (*A. bidwillii*), are all good timber trees. The edible seeds of the bunya-bunya are highly popular in its native Australia.

Species of *Araucaria* form the dominant vegetation of the coniferous forests of Chile and southern Brazil. The related kauri pine (*Agathis australis*) of New Zealand is one of the largest commercial trees in the world, sometimes reaching 200 ft (61 m) in height. It yields good timber and the valuable kauri copal (often called Kauri gum), which was collected in fossil or semifossil form. Other species of *Agathis* produce similar copals. The genera *Agathis* and *Araucaria* together comprise the araucaria family. Although now restricted to the temperate regions of South America and of Australia and the neighboring Pacific islands, fossils, e.g., in the Petrified Forest of Arizona, indicate that the group was once abundant in the Northern Hemisphere. The monkey-puzzle tree is classified in the division
HYPERLINK: "<http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/P/Pinophyt.asp>" Pinophyta, class Pinopsida, order Coniferales, family Araucariaceae.

Stop at #35 Locust.

This house was built in 1949. It has 936 sq. ft. of living area. It acquired the name "Roll Away House" because the small prefabricated house was probably hauled to the site on a flat bed truck, unloaded and rolled into place. Note that the original house has been added on to.

Stop at #186 Elm.

History of my home, by the present owner, March 25, 2006

The property at 154 Elm, lot 196, was recorded April 4, 1906, (see Map of Tamalpais Park, book 2, page 55, County of Marin), (parcel No. 028-232-09).

March 29, 1913 - Boston Investment Company was grantor to Robert P. Dunphy, (recorded in Book of Deeds 149, page 419).

There may have been a fire in the original house, as county records show the current house was built in 1928. The water hook-up was 1926. It must have had a well somewhere on the property, but we were not able to find it.

The house may have been built by a Klyce family member, as two adjacent homes have identical fireplaces and one of these homes was definitely built by Harvey Klyce. My home has shutters with cut-out birds and the one at 146 Elm has pine tree cut-outs. This is the Harvey Klyce home.

My next door neighbor, at 150 Elm moved to his house in 1929 when he was 18 months old. He has been an invaluable source of information about my home. He told me that Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Parsley were the first owners of the property. Then in 1934, Tom and Henrietta Rush purchased it. Rush added a small, family room in the rear of the house in 1935. Then he rented or leased the property to Capt. and Mrs. Russell Harris in 1936. It was then leased or rented to Mr. and Mrs. William Wahl in 1938. In 1940, it was leased or rented to Alfred and Hazel Hall. In 1941, it was leased or rented to the John Brown family (4 separate families). Gerrard's Dad, Henry Ross, built the house in front of his family's home (148) in 1937. He also renovated their home, which had once been a barn, in 1940.

According to the County of Marin records (Book 433, page 278), James and Noreen Maxey purchased the home from Lucy L. Pray, (perhaps a realtor who managed the property). This transaction was recorded August 10, 1942.

After James and Noreen purchased the home, they leased the home to Melvin and Susie Schuster in 1943. Then they returned to live in the home in 1944. James added a room over the garage, in the back yard, for his son, but it was never completed. In 2000 I finished up the inside and added a bath and new staircase for family use.

In October 1950, Charles R. Proctor purchased the property from the Maxeys. He then leased the house for one year to Mr. and Mrs. John Pike. The Proctors moved into the house in January 1952. In March 1963, despondent over the death of his wife, Elsie, on February 22nd and his declining health, Charles committed suicide in his car. He was 81 years old.

The property was inherited by his son, John R. Proctor and his daughter. They leased the house to Bernard and Helen Streiding for one year. In February, 1968, my husband and I bought it.

History of Tamalpais Park School

Our walk begins in the Park School playground nearest to the original Tamalpais Park 4-classroom schoolhouse, which faced Catalpa, just west of the current building. Built in April 1909, Tamalpais Park was Mill Valley's third elementary school, and is the only one of the three still functioning as a public school. Summit School (1892), at the corner of Cornelia and Summit near Old Mill, was abandoned in 1939 and demolished in 1941, and Homestead (1908) is now leased to Marin Horizon, a private school.

After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, Mill Valley's population grew rapidly, with summer residents staying year-round and refugees fleeing from the City. As a result, both Summit and Homestead schools were quickly becoming overcrowded. Realizing this, Mill Valley voters in March 1907 approved a \$25,000 school bond issue for the construction of a school in the new Tamalpais Park subdivision. M.M. (Michael Maurice) O'Shaughnessy, who later became engineer for the City of San Francisco and the Hetch Hetchy water system, was elected to the school board to contribute his expertise to the planning of the new building. Seven lots at the corner of Catalpa and East Blithedale were purchased for \$3,500, and the building was erected for \$14,589. Originally the school was for grades 1-4 only, but within six months, burgeoning enrollment added grades 5 and 6.

During the 1920s, meetings were held to purchase additional land for the school, and in 1934, local builder Melvin Klyce was given the contract to build more classrooms. Tamalpais Park then housed kindergarten through grade 5, as did Summit (plus low 6th), while Old Mill (1921) educated high 6th through 8th grade graduation.

Another school bond issue (\$55,000) was passed in 1938, which permitted the securing of \$45,000 already pledged by the Public Works Administration (PWA), and parcels of land along Elm Ave. were purchased from the Dowd, Proctor, and Scott families. The home of Harry Scott, a long-time Tam High auto shop teacher, was leveled to clear the site. Jim Phelps of nearby 50 Walnut, husband of Carolyn Weissich Phelps, was on the school board at this time, and the board hired Walter C. Falch, who designed Mill Valley City Hall downtown, as the architect for the project. Peter Sartorio proposed the winning bid of \$86,759 for the construction contract.

The new V-shaped edifice, with an auditorium at its apex and wings extending back from both sides, was said to be one of the most up-to-date schools in the

Bay Area. It opened in September 1939 with six full classrooms, two empty classrooms, a health and dental observation room, a music room, principal's office, and office of the Superintendent. Elaborate (by today's standards) dedication exercises planned by PTA President Melva (Mrs. Frank) Schroeder, who became president of the Outdoor Art Club in 1941, were delayed until December because the blue drapes ordered for the auditorium had not yet been delivered. Colors were advanced by Troop 1 of Mill Valley Boy Scouts, and Troop 2 gave the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by an invocation by the Community Church minister, greetings by the County Superintendent, and Mill Valley Mayor T. F. Bagshaw, address by F. H. McIntire, Assistant Regional Director of the PWA, glee club performance, and ending with a benediction from the rector of the Episcopal Church.

At this point, the School District made a major shift of grades, with Tamalpais Park educating 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, while kindergarten through 5th grades were moved to Old Mill, and Summit was closed. During the 1950s when the first post-war Baby Boomers started school, Park ("Tamalpais" having been dropped during the 1940s) housed K-6. Grades 7 and 8 were moved in 1956 to the new junior high school in Alto, Edna Maguire, named for the highly esteemed former Park School principal and teacher, "in appreciation for her 34 years of outstanding service to the district and in recognition of her activity in organizations dedicated to highest professional and educational standards for the public school systems".

S. Edna Maguire, born in Nevada Co. CA in 1888, graduated from the University of California at Berkeley and took her first teaching position in rural Mariposa Co. where she rode a horse ten miles each way to school. In 1920, she came to Mill Valley as principal-teacher at Homestead School, and in 1927, she took that same position at Tamalpais Park School. The redoubtable Miss Maguire was said to have held the reins of the school in a firm grip. Before the days of the electric bell system, she would stand at the top of the exterior stairs in the middle of the original building and call the children into class, ringing by hand the old school bell. The children would then line up and salute the flag before marching single file into their classrooms. Miss Maguire was active in the California Teachers' Association (CTA) and the National Educators Association (NEA), and very instrumental in getting teacher tenure law passed. She went back to the classroom full-time in 1947, and retired in 1954, when her third generation of Mill Valleyites began arriving in her classroom!

In 1961, Mill Valley's first traffic light was installed on East Blithedale in front of the Park School auditorium, and the original school building, built 58 years before to accommodate children of the Great Quake and Fire, was razed in 1967 because it no longer met state earthquake and fire standards.

