32nd Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper

Thursday, October 1

Mill Valley Community Center at 180 Camino Alto

Social Time 6:30                   Potluck Dinner 7:00

**WHAT TO BRING:** either an appetizer, a salad, a casserole or a dessert, an appropriate bowl or platter and a serving utensil - we will provide plastic eating utensils, dinner plates, napkins and cups.

**R.S.V.P.** to kmenzies@pacbell.net or 415-686-1281 with following information:
Name of Attendee(s)
Potluck Dish: Appetizer, Salad, Main Dish, Dessert
Phone Number — Important in case of changes

**Please RSVP by Monday, September 28.**

A short business meeting will follow the potluck supper.

The featured speaker will be Fred Runner.

**MOUNT TAMALPAIS SCENIC RAILWAY**

Nothing in Marin has been more missed or as fondly remembered as the steam railroad that once climbed Mount Tamalpais. For 33 years, from 1896 to 1929, a fleet of geared locomotives carried well-dressed tourists to a grand lodge at the mountaintop to see the vast Pacific horizon and the distant snow-capped Sierra to dine, to dance and to spend an elegant night above an ocean of summer fog. In the morning, a gravity car could whisk you back to Mill Valley to catch a commute train to the ferry for San Francisco.

A new book, *Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway*, illustrates the journey, the people and the times of Mill Valley's famed "Crookedest Railroad in the World." Author and historian Fred Runner will bring photos, old movies, stories and his new book for a look at the grit and elegance of the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway.
CHIEF MARIN HONORED IN CEREMONY

On May 8, some 200 people gathered at 48 Locust Avenue, the birthplace of Chief Marin, where a plaque in his honor had been installed by the Mill Valley Historical Society. Vice president Tim Amyx was master of ceremonies. Locust Avenue was closed to accommodate the crowd which included the Coast Miwok tribal council (Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria), Park School 3rd graders, dignitaries from Mill Valley, the Bay area and Sacramento, neighbors and MVHS members. The ceremony began with a prayer in the Coast Miwok language led by three tribal members. Betty Goerke, author of *Chief Marin – Leader, Rebel, and Legend*, and organizer of the ceremony, reminded the 3rd graders of the many Coast Miwok words we still use. Tribal chairman, Greg Sarris, gave an interesting speech about past injustices experienced by the Indians in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
HORSE AND BUGGY DAYS

The 2009 Walk-Into-History on the day before Memorial Day focused on the branch railroad line built in 1889 to serve the Eastland and Millwood subdivisions. Twenty-one guides led 230 walkers from the Outdoor Art Club down Miller Ave. to Willow St. and back with several stops at pre-1910 houses in Millwood. The objective was to try to envision what it was like to live in Mill Valley before 1910.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Mill Valley has a new Planning Director, Mike Moore, and a new Chair of the City’s Planning Commission, Mark Cavagnero, who is interested in historical preservation. This provides an opportunity to address two significant preservation issues:

1. The current process requires the applicant to hire someone qualified to provide a preservation analysis. Since the analyst is a client of the applicant, obtaining a completely objective analysis is problematic. Mark and I agree that the applicant should pay the City to hire an analyst. Mark has spoken with Mike about this.

2. Historical overlay zoning triggers a requirement for historical analysis. This zoning is quite limited in scope and requires property owners to consent to the designation. We should apply other criteria, such as those contained in CEQA (the California Environmental Quality Act), to determine whether proposals to alter a structure should be subject to historical preservation considerations.

I will be stepping down as President of the Mill Valley Historical Society, but hope to remain on the Board for another year to work on these issues. Meanwhile I would like to urge all of you who share an interest in historical preservation to write to Mark Cavagnero, Chair of the Planning Commission (City of Mill Valley, 26 Corte Madera Avenue, Mill Valley, 94941) in support of these efforts. Please send a copy of your letter to Mike Moore, Planning Director, City of Mill Valley, at the same address. Or, use email—their addresses are available by contacting city hall by phone or email.

John Leonard

DIGITIZING PHOTOS

The objectives of the Digitization Project is to make photos in the History Room collection more accessible to the public via the library’s web site, and to preserve and protect the originals. A new group of computer savvy docents and interns are making significant progress on this project. About 1,500 photos have been digitized to date. Another 250 should be completed by year end. There are an estimated 4000 photos in the collection.

FIRST WEDNESDAY SPEAKER PROGRAM

In May, Chuck Oldenburg presented “Homestead Valley—The First Decade.” In 1910 there were only 60 homes and 250 residents. About a third of the residents were employed, and two thirds of them were blue collar workers. But there was a unique situation—a successful San Francisco attorney lived with his wife and three daughters on an 8-acre gentleman’s farm. His diary records activities on the farm from 1906 to 1910. Chuck read several interesting entries. Homestead residents in the audience were particularly interested in this 1906 entry: “Spent all day Sunday in setting out eucalyptus trees I had taken over the week before. Set them along Montford Ave. and also along LaVerne Ave.”

In June, Barry Spitz and Tim Amyx presented “The Dipsea race, a One-Hundred year Tradition.” After viewing a 12-minute documentary on the race, which Tim Amyx had produced for the 2005 Centennial, Barry Spitz gave a 45-minute slide presentation, loaded with historical photos and interesting facts. In 1905 the first official race was opened to all runners—71 runners finished. In 2009 over 1,200 runners competed in the race. In the audience was Russ Kiernan, a three time winner, who added certain details. The Dipsea race means many things to many people. It’s history, it’s camaraderie, it’s the challenge, it’s a party, and it’s one of the most colorful and grueling cross country races in the USA.

NEW MICROFILM READER

The MVHS board has authorized an expenditure of $7900 for the library to acquire and install a new microfilm reader in the History Room, replacing the existing one which is in poor condition. The funds come from a $10,000 bequest made in 2004 via a charitable fund set up by Fred Drexler. A plaque in his honor will be displayed on the reader. It is identical to one recently installed in the Marin County Library.

ANCESTRY.COM

Ancestry.com is a software program used primarily for genealogical research. But it is also a source of information for history research. It contains a data base of five billion names as well as U.S. census data, voter registration records, immigration records, birth, marriage and death certificates, and much more.

The Mill Valley Library will soon provide its patrons with access to Ancestry.com on terminals in the reference area. The Friends of the Library board will fund the $1800 per year subscription fee.
Welcome New Members

Glenn Cavalli
Bob Colombo
Susan Crutchfield
Joan D’Amico
Ann Killion and Matt Gillespie
Lawrence Moehrke
Pavla Podolska
Lise Salmon
Carol B. Schoenfeld
Elizabeth S. Scofield and
Malcolm & Sandy Manson
Liz & Ed Specht

Steps, Lanes and Paths

In 1889, the Tamalpais Land & Water Co. (TL&WC) acquired ownership of Rancho Sausalito and subdivided land now in the city of Mill Valley. One hundred years later, TL&WC went out of business and the Homestead Valley Land Trust (HVLT) accepted a quitclaim deed for all TL&WC’s properties, known and unknown, in Marin County.

A few years later, the HVLT board of directors discovered that HVLT had acquired ownership of properties in the city of Mill Valley. After 10 years of negotiations, the Mill Valley City Council recently agreed to accept a quitclaim deed for 44 HVLT-owned Steps, Lanes and Paths (SLPs). Included in the list are such well known SLPs as Willow Steps, Madrona Steps, and the top flight of the Dipsea Steps. This change in ownership does not affect the public’s rights to use these SLPs—that is a separate issue.