

**MILL VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2009**

**WALK INTO HISTORY**

**HORSE AND BUGGY DAYS**

**MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND – SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2009**

**Purchase tickets that day at the Outdoor Art Club**

**Members \$7; non-members \$10**

THE ORIGINS OF MILL VALLEY

THE HISTORY OF THE RAILROAD ALONG MILLER AVE.

LIFE IN MILLWOOD BEFORE 1910

Guided tours begin at 9:30 am. The last tour leaves at 3 pm

**HORSE &  
BUGGY**



**MILLWOOD DEPOT**

### **FIRST WEDNESDAY SPEAKERS PROGRAM**

In February, professional photographer Jeanette Vonier presented, "How to Preserve & Protect old Photographs." She defined the problem and offered general principles to be followed for archiving as well as longevity expectations. There were many questions from the audience. One question in particular remains unanswered: what to do with the thousands of digital images that young people produce these days.

In March, historian Lissa McKee presented, "Tamalpais Valley History." Slides included topographical maps of the Coyote Creek watershed showing the marsh extending up to Maple St, and the locations of the dairy ranches. What followed was an interesting history of residential development and the commercial development at the junction of the road to north Marin and the road west to Bolinas.

In April, Richard Torney presented, "Ross, a Rich History." It was amazing to see so many nineteenth century photos of Ross Valley homes. But this was just one part of the "Rich History" which included many photos of early residents, the railroad, the roads, the bridges, the periodic floods, the school children, all supplemented with interesting and often humorous stories.

In May, historian Chuck Oldenburg will present, "Homestead Valley—The First Decade". What was life like in Homestead Valley at that time? The answer lies in old photographs and a 1906 to 1910 diary.

In June, Barry Spitz and Tim Amyx will present "The Dipsea Race, a One-Hundred Year Tradition." Barry, the local Dipsea historian and race announcer will share his knowledge of the race. Tim will show video clips from the numerous films he has made about the Dipsea Race.

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

On October 30, 2008, the Mill Valley Historical Society held its annual meeting at the Community Center. Local political writer and long time Mill Valley resident Dick Spotswood talked about "When Marin was a Republican County." A near capacity crowd enjoyed his tales of Marin county politics. In the Q&A that followed, Tim Amyx posed a few humorous questions that challenged Dick and conventional political wisdom.

Fred Runner, a Railroad & Mt. Tam historian, will be the featured speaker at the next annual meeting on

October 1, 2009. Mark your calendar for this memorable evening of fun, food, friends, and history.

### **PRESIDENTS MESSAGE**

I hope you are looking forward to this year's Walk into History; I know I am.

A few words on history, change, progress and repetition: There are those who claim, correctly, that change isn't always progress; we are certainly going through a period which seems to offer proof of this claim. But while the claim that change isn't always progress seems irrefutable, some who make this claim seem to object to change as such. More specifically, those who dislike change, dislike historical change.

There is a type of change that is essentially a-historical, change that is repetitive, cyclical. In Homer we find:

"As is the life of the leaves, so is that of men. The wind scatters the leaves to the ground: the vigorous forest puts forth others, and they grow in the spring-season. Soon one generation of men comes and another ceases."

And in the well-known and magnificent passage from Ecclesiastes:

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever... The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose... The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north, and whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits... All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."

What these statements have in common is a fundamentally cyclical, repetitive view of life, and such a view is common to traditional cultures.

History is not only about change, it is particularly about change that does not lead back to where it started from, and it is this aspect of change that is particularly frightening to some people. It is why evolution is frightening to adherents of some belief systems: evolution is emphatically historical.

So what about the element of truth in the claim that change isn't always progress? It should be a warning to us to be mindful of change – and history can help us be so.

John Leonard

## GUIDES NEEDED

On Sunday, May 24 between 9:30AM and 3PM, every ten minutes groups of about 10 will leave the Outdoor Art Club with a Walk-Into-History guide. The walk is 1.6 miles long and takes about 2 hours. Some of the guides will have to lead a group in the morning and another group in the afternoon unless more guides are recruited.

Guides learn a lot about the history of Mill Valley, and meet interesting walk participants. Guides can keep the history-filled guidebook and the album of historical photos. Guides prepare by studying the guidebook and attending training walks.

The walk is about the origin of Mill Valley in 1889 and what it was like to live on Miller Ave. a century ago: no cars, just a dirt wagon road and a railroad with smoke belching trains every 15 minutes. Being a guide can be a lot of fun. Remember the old truism, "To really know a subject, teach it."

If you would rather pass up the opportunity to be a guide,, volunteers are also needed for part time assignments at the Outdoor Art Club: greeting the public, selling tickets, offering refreshments, selling memberships, selling publications, etc.

For further information please contact:  
Barbara Ford at 388-7233 or  
fordbarbara61@yahoo.com  
Chuck Oldenburg at 388-9315 or  
chuckoldenburg@gmail.com

## HISTORY ROOM DOCENTS

Four new docents recently joined the History Room staff, bringing the total to 15 docents. With one substitute, two temporaries and two library staff, the History Room is now open seven days per week and fully staffed every evening plus five afternoons and three mornings per week.

## NEW HISTORIES OF MT. TAM

### **Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway, by Fred Runner**

Another book in the Images of America series—there are more than 4000 others. This one updates the 1984 book, "The Crookedest Railroad in the World: California's Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railroad" by Ted Wurm and Al Graves. During the last years of his life, Ted gave railroad historian Fred Runner his collection of Mount Tam photos, maps, brochures, timetables and other memorabilia. Fred organized and annotated much of Ted's collection, adding vintage photos from his own and other collections. From 1896 to 1929, elegantly dressed men and women would take the gritty steam train up 8-1/2 miles of track with 281 curves to dine, dance and spend the night, then in the morning coast down the mountain in a gravity car. The book brings this image back to life.

### **Tamalpais Walking: Poetry, History and Prints -72 views of Mt. Tamalpais, by Tom Killian and Gary Snyder**

The book explores the natural, cultural, historical and spiritual dimensions of Mt. Tamalpais. The art work is the product of Tom Killian's decades of depicting and interpreting the mountain's many moods and aspects. Gary Snyder has been hiking Mt. Tamalpais since 1948. His poetry and essay offer his thoughts on the mountain, its history and the practice of walking meditation.

Woodcut and letterpress artist Tom Killian grew up in Mill Valley on the slopes of Mt. Tam. Gary Snyder is a well known poet, author, scholar, cultural critic and professor emeritus of UC-Davis. In the spring of 1956, Gary Snyder and Jack Kerouac lived in a Homestead Valley cabin where beat generation poets and writers including Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Rexroth and Lew Welch gathered for poetry readings, meditations and serious discussions. The book includes selections from the work of Jack Kerouac, Kenneth Rexroth and Lew Welch. There is also a Haiku poem by Homestead resident Laurie Stoelting.

### The Board 2009

John Leonard - President  
Tim Amyx - Vice-President  
Rachel Riedy - Treasurer  
Barbara Kent - Secretary

### DIRECTORS

Donna Carrillo  
Betsey Cutler  
Barbara Ford  
Betty Goerke  
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Kate Menzies  
Darren Milman  
Chuck Oldenburg  
Leslie Reiber  
Wendy Zheutlin

**Mill Valley Historical Society**  
**375 Throckmorton Ave.**  
**Mill Valley, CA 94941**



### Welcome

### New Members

Sue Blackstone  
Don Campbell  
Ron & Joan Davis  
Rob DeLong  
Amihan Mahovan &  
Darren Milman

### **millvalleyhistoricalsociety.org**

Have you seen the web site lately? Alan Nayer designed and created it. Rachel Cleaveland-Riedy has been enhancing it. Lots of information about historical resources in the History Room.

- Several photographs of old Mill Valley plus links to other web sites with many more.
- A list of close to 200 oral histories which are a great source of historical facts.
- A short history of Mill Valley written by historian Henri M. Boussy with Edgar Sliney.
- The history of Homestead Valley - over 100 one-page articles.
- The events page is updated monthly and well worth checking.
- Links to pertinent web sites.