

# **MILL VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

## **THIRTY FOURTH ANNUAL WALK INTO HISTORY**

### **INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS (LIBRARY, NEWSPAPER, CHURCH, SCHOOL)**

#### **Guidebook**

Version 11B 2/16/11

**SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2011**

**Co-hosted with the Outdoor Art Club**

## TO THE GUIDES:

This is the 34<sup>th</sup> 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 guides 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.

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## TIPS 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 do, They 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 practice 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. Cover as much guidebook information as you can, focusing on what you believe to be particularly interesting at each stop. Describe the history in your own words—use the guidebook for reference. To assure accuracy, you should read the anecdotes.
5. Show pertinent photos. Encourage comments and questions. Participants may have interesting anecdotes to relate. This type of discussion should generally be encouraged. Welcome any information that walkers contribute. Make a note of it and pass it on to the guide trainer, Vivian Broadway-Firmage, after the walk.
6. Try to avoid groups ahead and behind your group. Speed up or slow down by covering some information before or after the stop where it should be related.
7. Ask one of the participants to manage the photo album for you.

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

## **LEAD GROUP OUT SIDE GATE ONTO WEST BLITHEDALE**

**Stop #1. Along the fence on West Blithedale.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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 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. Continue the Oral History Program.

This year marks the 34th Walk Into History sponsored by the Mill Valley Historical Society. In 2008 we toured Tamalpais High School which was celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our 2006 tour helped celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tamalpais Park subdivision. This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of a permanent public library in Mill Valley. We are proud to participate in the library's centennial celebration.

Today we will walk from the Outdoor Art Club to the Mill Valley Public Library. The distance is a little less than a mile. The time required is about 1-1/2 hours. The route is quite level.

Introduce yourself. Determine if there are some in the group who are not Mill Valley residents. Be prepared to provide more information for non-residents.

## **SAFETY**

The entire walk is on sidewalks. Keep the group together at crosswalks and be alert for cars and bicycles.

## **OVERVIEW**

In addition to helping celebrate the library's centennial, we will learn about the history of other sources of intellectual information: newspapers, churches and schools.

### **CROSS WEST BLITHEDALE AT CROSSWALK PROCEED TO #34 BUENA VISTA**

### **STOP #2 In Front of Mount Carmel Convent at #34 Buena Vista**

Mill Valley's catholic church has an interesting history. Spiritual needs of Catholics were initially provided by Saint Mary's Star of the Sea Church in Sausalito. In 1891, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church Mission was established. Monthly services began in the home of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Thompson on Molino Ave. Their daughter, 11 years old at the time, would become the famous novelist, Kathleen Norris.

In 1892, mass was said at the Grammar School (later known as Summit School) on the corner of Cornelia and Summit. Every Sunday, the assistant pastor in Sausalito drove a horse and buggy to Bolinas for mass and then to Mill Valley for a mass in Portuguese for the ranchers and a second mass in English.

### **PHOTO OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL —1910**

In 1893, the first catholic church was built next to the school at what is now 43 Summit. It was a plain wooden building 33 ft. by 65 ft. In 1910, the Mill Valley parish was established. When the church became too small, the overflow met across the street in the house of Michael O'Shaughnessy at 60 Summit—in 1889, he had surveyed the land for development of Mill Valley.

### **PHOTO OF CHURCH ON SUMMIT AVE.**

In 1917, a new church was built down the street from here, and in 1955 a school was built next to it—we will stop at both sites. Nuns teaching at the school were from the order of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph which had first come to San Francisco in 1930. Some of the nuns were from Ireland. The nuns were initially housed on La Goma Street, about a mile away.

### **PHOTO OF CONVENT**

This convent was built for them in 1959. Upstairs are a large bedroom en suite for the mother superior, her office, 10 small bedrooms and bathroom facilities. On the ground floor are the dining room, kitchen, living room, library, work room, guest bedroom en suite, and a housekeeper's bedroom. In a wing of the building is a chapel initially used for a daily mass, but in 1974 it became a pre-first grade classroom. Behind the building is a landscaped outdoor sitting area for the nuns.

The school closed in 1983 and the nuns moved on to other assignments. Since then the convent has been rented to house Dominican nuns some of whom teach at Dominican University in San Rafael. At the present time there are only 2 nuns in residence.

### **CROSS BUENA VISTA MID-BLOCK, TURN LEFT PROCEED TO GREENWOOD SCHOOL**

### **Stop #3 Under the pergola in front of Greenwood School**

In 1991, Peter and Mimi Buckley started a kindergarten in their home in Tamalpais Valley. They later moved to a home in Fern Canyon where they continued to educate a growing number of children. In 1996 with 28 pupils in what they called Garden School they tried to establish a school at the historic Redwood Lodge in Blithedale Canyon. Their plan met hot opposition. In 1998, they found a home for three classrooms in this building. The entire building is now used for grades K through 8. The teaching is Waldorf-inspired.

The building was originally Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School which opened in the fall of 1955 with 176 students in grades one through four. Plans called for adding one class each year until the school had eight grades. These plans were realized in 1959. In June 1960, Mt. Carmel graduated its first eighth grade class. During the period 1960 to 1967, the average size of the eighth grade graduating class was 49 students.

The school faculty was composed mainly of sisters until 1972 when lay teachers were in the majority. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph always filled the principal's position.

Initially, this was the only parochial school in southern Marin. Both boys and girls came from parishes in Sausalito, Tiburon and Larkspur as well as Mill Valley. The auditorium with 400 seats was used for Church services from 1956 to 1968. In 1969, a library was added, the auditorium was outfitted for basketball and a stage was added to provide for multipurpose functions.

In 1968, the size of the eighth grade graduating class began to decrease, averaging only 32 students for the period 1968 to 1975, compared with 49 before that. This was the result of the declining birth rate and the opening of other parochial schools in southern Marin. In 1979 there were only 127 students in grades one to four, much less than the 176 in 1955. The school closed in 1983 for lack of students.

Between 1983 and 1998, some of the classrooms were rented as office space, although a few were used on a weekly basis for Christian education classes.

**ENTER PARKING LOT NEXT TO GREENWOOD SCHOOL**

## **Stop #4 In Parking lot next to School**

By 1916, the first church on Summit Ave. proved too small, so the new pastor engineered a new frame and stucco church in the Spanish Mission style which seated 200. A five-room rectory was built next to it. The church was dedicated in 1917.

During the time of the great flu epidemic of 1918/1919, services were held out of doors under the great palm tree. Everyone felt protected from infection by wearing a white cotton cloth mask at all times in public.

### **PHOTO OF SECOND CHURCH IN 1919**

In 1919, Sisters of the Holy Family of San Francisco began catechisms instruction for children of the parish. They came to Mill Valley three times a week, more frequently when preparing them for first communion and confirmation. Sunday School also began in 1919.

In order to raise money for the parish, the pastor sold the first church at 43 Summit Ave. Louis Mauer, a Mill Valley entrepreneur, remodeled the church between 1923 and 1927 into an apartment building which it is today.

Among the pioneer parishioners of the church was Michael Maurice O'Shaughnessy, a native of County Limerick, Ireland. He was the distinguished City Engineer of San Francisco whose monument in California is the O'Shaughnessy Dam built across the Tuolumne River at the outlet of what was Hetch Hetchy Valley. He retained his house on Summit Ave., spent summers there and remained associated with this church until his death in 1934.

### **PHOTO OF SECOND CHURCH IN THE '30s and '40s**

The church was demolished in 1956, and planning began for the construction of the third church on Oakdale, our next stop.

#### **ANECDOTE**

Contractor Tony Brabo, who is now 99 years old recalls what happened in 1956 when he had the job of demolishing the church. He put a cable around the building and pulled on it. The church bounced back and forth in the process and hit the rectory. A furious priest came running out of the rectory followed by a young woman. Both were scared to death.

### **PROCEED TO UPPER CORNER OF PARKING LOT**

### **Stop #5 In upper corner of parking lot**

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church was dedicated in 1968. According to the architect, Fred Houweling of San Mateo, the design is a composite of semi-contemporary and Mill Valley traditional architecture. The copper covered spire, with a gold leaf cross is 140 feet from the sidewalk level—quite a landmark. The main entranceway area consists of lava rock surrounding massive redwood doors. The church is constructed as a twelve sided polygon. Inside are 850 seats—the previous church had 200 seats, and the school auditorium had 400 seats. The pews were constructed by the Trappist Monks of Oregon.

Once inside, the visitor is immediately impressed by the blend of color and lights, and by what appears to be an enormous seating area. Yet the fact is that none of the 850 seats is more than 17 rows from the altar. Huge vertical columns are finished on the inside as sand-blasted shale aggregate with Venetian glass mosaic inserts whose colors coordinate the unique faceted glass windows.

Special lighting is employed to create interesting effects, both inside and outside the Church. A bank of overhead spotlights accents the pure white wall behind the altars.

The ten faceted glass windows which ring the Church vary in color from blue to red in progression and back to blue, representing the major days and seasons of the liturgical calendar in symbolic form. The entrance window over the narthex shows Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

## **PHOTO OF THE PRESENT CHURCH**

### **ANECDOTE**

Obtaining the city's approval to build the church was challenging. The first step, a review by the Architectural Advisory Committee led to the IJ headline: "Mill Valley Rejects Catholic Church 'It Looks Like a Supermarket'". Other involved bodies were the Planning Commission, the City Council and the Archdiocesan Building Committee. The architect suffered a heart attack and was replaced by one of the architects that had designed the new cathedral in San Francisco. Other challenges were: setback problems, required variances, an existing home, curving the street, a retaining wall, parking, and neighborhood objections. But in the end, it was approved and an architect on the Planning Commission said, "This will be a real monument for the City of Mill Valley."

**TURN LEFT ON OAKDALE, CROSS WEST BLITHEDALE,  
TURN RIGHT THEN LEFT ONTO THE FIRST DRIVEWAY  
FOLLOW PATH TO CITY HALL PARKING LOT  
TURN LEFT TO ERNEST BLOCH PARK**

## **Stop #6. In Ernest Bloch Park**

The Outdoor Art Club was founded in 1902 by a group of women who were concerned about preserving the natural beauty of the Mill Valley area from rowdies and from the destruction of plant life along the hiking trails. The main hall designed by Bernard Maybeck was built in 1904. Subsequent modifications and additions include a library wing, an enlarged kitchen, side porches and a wedding garden.

Traditional uses include civic affairs, disaster assistance, community service, social activities, parties, weddings and recently the Mill Valley Film Festival. Special uses have been a town library and church services.

In 1904, part of the Outdoor Art Clubhouse was used as a town library open three days a week. In 1908, the Club gave 750 volumes and furnishings to the town for the first Free Public Library in the Assembly Room of the Town Hall, above the firehouse.

In 1924, the Federated Community Church of Mill Valley was organized and services were held in the Outdoor Art Club. By 1930, members had raised sufficient funds to erect a church on the corner of Olive and Throckmorton.

In 1954, the Church of Our Savior held services in the Outdoor Art Club during reconstruction of the church at Lovell and Old Mill.

In 1964 the Christian Science Church sold its building at Olive and Lovell. While their new church was being built on Camino Alto, services were held each Sunday and Wednesday at the Outdoor Art Club. The Sunday School was held in the club's library. The Christian Science Reading Room was directly across the street on Throckmorton, next to El Paseo.

There were other temporary venues for protestant church services in Mill Valley. For example, in 1969, the Church of Christ met in Brown's Hall on Miller Ave., the First Southern Baptist Church met in the Masonic Hall on Corte Madera Ave., and the Full Gospel Service met in the American Legion Hall on Miller Ave.

**PROCEED THROUGH PARKING LOT  
CROSS CORTE MADERA AT CROSS WALK  
TO #21 CORTE MADERA AVE.**

## **Stop #7 At #21 Corte Madera Ave.**

Both the *Mill Valley Record* and the *Pacific Sun* were published in this building. We'll discuss the history of the *Record* at the stop after the next one.

In 1963, Merrill and Joann Grohman created the *Pacific Sun* in the back of a Stinson Beach grocery store. They moved the “Mom and Pop operation” to the garage of their home on Panoramic. In 1966 the *Pacific Sun* moved to San Rafael. Steve McNamara bought it that year. In 1972, he moved operations to this location where they remained until 2005.

The *Pacific Sun* is the second longest running alternative weekly in the country—Village Voice is first. In 1984 The *Sun* won the award for General Excellence from the California Newspaper Publishers Association. There have been many other awards.

The San Francisco Press Club awarded The *Sun* first prize for the best news story in a northern California non-daily paper for 1968. The story, “The Night Nicasio Fired the Principal” was written ten months after Steve McNamara took over as editor and publisher. The story described the school board’s firing of the principal for asserting that she had smoked marijuana for 18 years.

Before making a name for herself in politics, Barbara Boxer gained recognition as a journalist for the *Sun*. During her two-year stint as a reporter, she won a Press Club award for a 1973 story on a state supreme court controversy.

Alice Yarish, with the *Sun* from 1969 to 1973, won two Press Club awards, one in 1973 for “The Single Mother in Marin”, the other for her 1972 series on the Marin County Drug Abuse Bureau.

For 52 weeks in 1975-1976, Mill Valley resident Cyra McFadden authored a chapter of “The Serial”, a satire about “pseudo-hip life in Marin”. In 1977, Alfred A. Knopf published all 52 episodes in a spiral bound 111-page book that sold for \$4.95. In 1978, NBC produced a special news cast hosted by Edwin Newman entitled, “I Want It all Now”. It was apparently inspired by “The Serial”, purporting to describe life in Marin County”. Unfortunately, NBC missed the point and made up material. The National News Council voted to censure NBC over their portrayal. In 1980, Paramount Pictures produced “Serial”, starring Martin Mull and Tuesday Weld. Hollywood lacked McFadden’s deft touch and the movie was rather a bust.

### **ANECDOTE**

From the back cover of the book, *The Serial—A year in the life of Marin County*: “Here in 52 zingy episodes is a hilarious and deadly account of *The Liberated Life à la Marin County, California*—featuring an average couple.”

**PROCEED UP CORTE MADERA AVE.  
TURN LEFT ON LOVELL**

## **STOP #8 45 Lovell — Mount Carmel Shop**

The Robert F. Russell Mortuary was at this location from the mid-1930s until 1945. Mr. Gooch joined Mr. Russell as partner in 1946 and their new funeral parlor opened on Miller Ave. in 1947.

In the 1950s the Mount Carmel Salvage Shop evolved from church rummage sales that had been held periodically nearby. The church rented the building from the mortuary's owners and converted it into a thrift shop. In 1951, when the owners decided to sell, the church bought the building. The church's Women's Club had hopes of raising enough money to found a parochial school which was indeed built in 1955.

A major remodeling of the shop in 1973 added more windows to lighten it up and create the spacious basement area where furniture and bulkier items are located. In 2004, shop management replaced a wall, did some repainting, added new awnings and started a landscaping project, all funded by proceeds from sales.

The shop has seven paid staff and a volunteer corps of about 36. Each day there are two three-hour shifts: from 10 to 1 and 1 to 4. Some call it Mill Valley's only department store. Everything the shop sells comes from donations from all over Marin.

It is also a great recycling outlet. Items that remain unsold are sent to other places where they can help in all kinds of ways. For example certain towels and rugs are given to the humane society. Some items are picked up weekly by WHAP (Women Helping All People) of Marin City for sale or distribution to those in need. The shop benefits a variety of causes, from the homeless to the hungry.

Although this stop has little to do with "Intellectual Pursuits" it is included in our walk as part of the history of Catholicism in Mill Valley.

**TURN LEFT ON MADRONA AND PROCEED TO A POINT  
OPPOSITE FLAT SHED PIZZA**

## **STOP #9 Opposite 17 Madrona - Mill Valley Record**

The Mill Valley Record was published in this building from 1905 until 1940. The first newspaper published in Mill Valley was The Mill Valley Times published by Frederick F. Runyon every other Saturday during the three summer months of 1893. Next came the Marin Press in 1895 and 1896 with Runyon as editor. Next was the Marin County Enterprise which was published weekly between 1899 and 1904. The weekly Mill Valley Record had begun in 1901. After competing for three years, the two weeklies combined in 1904 as the Record-Enterprise. Between 1908 and 1910 there had been competition from the weekly Mill Valley Independent. In 1917, the name Enterprise was dropped.

With competition no longer a factor in 1914, the Mill Valley Record announced that it was published every Saturday morning by the Mill Valley & Sausalito Publishing Co. with Business, Editorial and Printing Offices on Madrona Street. A subscription cost \$2.50 per year with copies delivered to subscribers through the Mill Valley Post Office. Single copies could be purchased at Relmann's and at Hervers' News Store for 5 cents.

This is what the banner on the front page looked like in 1914: in the center in large Old English Text (like today's New York Times): "Mill Valley Record"; under it in small common text: "The Record-Enterprise"; on the left side in italics: "Independent and Dependable"; on the right side: "Aggressive and Progressive". That says it all.

In the days before radio, Mill Valley residents got much of their news from newspapers. Commuters to San Francisco could pick up a San Francisco morning paper at the depot and read it during the 50 minute trip on the train and ferry to the city. There were afternoon papers for the return trip. The Mill Valley Record covered local news plus ads for local stores and services. At first it came out on Saturday then it was Thursday and later, Wednesday. The Record was Mill Valley's source of local news. The City Council changed its meeting night to Monday so that a report of its meeting could appear in the Wednesday Record.

In 1940 the Record moved to 70 Throckmorton and later to 21 Corte Madera. In 1963 Katherine and Ned Mills bought the paper. The press was an old fashioned flatbed and was forever breaking down.

### **PHOTO OF PRINTING AT 21 CORTE MADERA IN 1965 (MVU #2757)**

In 1966 the operation moved to 78 East Blithedale and in 1978 to 438 Miller. In that building there were only people, typewriters and a Xerox, no printing press. The Mills sold the paper in 1987. It ceased to be published in September 1991. The Mill Valley Herald has replaced it as the source of local news.

### **CROSS MADRONA AT MID-BLOCK, TURN RIGHT, RETURN TO LOVELL AND TURN LEFT**

## **STOP #10 Across from #52 Lovell – Carnegie Library**

Until 1911, Mill Valley's library was housed in temporary quarters, first the Outdoor Art Club, then the Town Hall. In 1908, voters approved a bond issue to purchase a permanent library site, and library enthusiasts applied to the Carnegie Foundation for \$20,000 to finance the library. In 1909, property taxes were increased to guarantee \$2000/year to operate the library, as required by the Carnegie foundation. The lot at 52 Lovell was purchased.

Andrew Carnegie (1835 – 1919) was an industrialist, businessman, entrepreneur and a major philanthropist. He was born in Scotland and migrated to the United States as a child with his parents.

He earned most of his fortune in the steel industry. In the 1870s, he founded the Carnegie Steel Company. By the 1890s, the company was the largest and most profitable industrial enterprise in the world. In 1901, Carnegie sold it to J.P. Morgan who created U.S. Steel. Carnegie devoted the remainder of his life to large-scale philanthropy, with special emphasis on local libraries, world peace, education and scientific research.

From 1901 forward, public attention was turned from the shrewd business acumen which had enabled Carnegie to accumulate such a fortune, to the public-spirited way in which he devoted himself to utilizing it on philanthropic projects.

In total Carnegie funded some 3,000 libraries, located in 47 US states, and seven other English speaking countries. His method was to build and equip, but only on condition that the local authority provide the land and a budget for operation and maintenance.

Mill Valley's Carnegie library opened on July 22, 1911. Miss Lillian Gardner, daughter of prominent citizen Jacob Gardner, was appointed librarian and served until 1917. She was followed by Miss Sybil Nye who served for 22 years. This building was the Mill Valley Library until August 1966 when the present library was built at 375 Throckmorton Ave.

**Photo of Carnegie Library – 1911 (MVE 0018)**

**Photo of Lillian Gardner – 1911 (MVE 0019)**

In 1970, the Carnegie library was sold at auction for \$16,500. In 1979, it was sold for \$420,000 and remodeled into a luxurious 5100 sq. ft. private home which was opened for our Walk-Into-History in 2000. Art exhibitions have been held in the home. A portrait of Andrew Carnegie has been passed on from owner to owner. The house was sold again in 2010 for about \$2.7 million.

**PROCEED ON SIDEWALK OF LOVELL TO OLIVE**

## **STOP #11 Corner Olive and Lovell**

In 1897, the reverend John Rea, a Congregational minister from Oakland, retired to Mill Valley where he became a successful real estate broker and builder (he built the Keystone block on Lytton Square and the Congregational Church on Summit Ave.). He founded the Congregational Church and served as its first pastor.

### **PHOTO OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

John Rea's wife, Catherine Pauline Rea (nee Elizabeth McKee), after being healed by a Christian Science practitioner from severe burns in an incinerator explosion, developed an interest in the Christian Science faith. She held meetings at first in their home and then in another person's home. Increased attendance soon outgrew the space for services—a Reading Room was located in the Christian Science Hall upstairs in the Keystone Building.

The Christian Science Society was organized in 1907. This building was formerly the Christian Science Church. In March 1909, 15 members made pledges sufficient to buy the lot and to contract for a building to contain an auditorium and a Reading Room at the back. Services were first conducted on July 11, 1909. By 1912 there were 35 members. In January 1914, the adjoining lot on Olive St. was purchased. In February 1914 the Reading Room was moved back to the Keystone Building and the auditorium was extended to the full length of the building.

### **PHOTO OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH IN 1919**

In 1936 the members borrowed \$4000 to build a two level addition on Olive St. for Sunday School, Readers and Committee room. The loan was paid off in 1944. In 1951, a nursery school was set up at 73 Lovell for kids too small for Sunday school. In 1958, members rented and renovated 15 Throckmorton for a Reading Room next to El Paseo.

In August 1964, this building was sold to the Community Church for \$39,000. The members of the Christian Science Church had bought 5.2. acres at 279 Camino Alto, and commissioned architect Charles Warren Callister to design a new church. Services were held in the Outdoor Art Club until the new church was completed 15 months later.

In the 1960s, the Quakers held their meetings in this old church. In the 1990s, the Wee Care nursery school was here. The Community Church office is upstairs. Since 2004, the lower floor has been occupied by the Old Firehouse School Mill Valley which is licensed for 30 children ages 2-5, in two classrooms. The school was founded in 1966 in an old firehouse in Lafayette. Its philosophy of education is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. It has campuses in Lafayette and Walnut Creek as well. This building was never a firehouse.

### **TURN LEFT ONTO SIDEWALK OF OLIVE**

## **STOP #12 At Olive and Throckmorton - Community Church**

Mill Valley's Congregational Church held its earliest services in Koerner's Hall and Sunday school in Summit School. The Tamalpais Land & Water Company donated land at 24 Summit where a church was built in 1897.

Church membership sagged in the 1920s. A group of members wanted to start a non-denominational church in Mill Valley. So, in 1924, the Federated Community Church of Mill Valley was organized. The new Community Church with 50 members began to hold services in the Outdoor Art Club in 1925.

By 1929 plans had been developed for a church to be erected on lots purchased from the California Home Missionary Society (Congregational) on the corner of Olive and Throckmorton. By 1930, members had raised sufficient funds to erect a new church.

Tamalpais Union High School principal Ernest Wood and his wife Mabel were among the founders of the church. Wood made construction of the church a practical crafts project of his Tam High students. The mechanical drawing teacher drew plans for a one-room church based on the Maybeck-designed Outdoor Art Club. The woodworking teacher built the edifice under private contract. The pews, chancel furniture and the pulpit were constructed by the students of the woodworking class. The "Little Church in the Redwoods" opened for services in 1930.

### **PHOTO OF COMMUNITY CHURCH - 1930**

In 1957, a memorial chapel, library and parish hall were added. The aim of the church to affiliate all of the churches in Mill Valley into one organization was never realized—the Congregational church was the only one to give up its active church program.

### **PHOTO OF COMMUNITY CHURCH – 1960's**

In 1975, the church became part of the United Church of Christ, a national communion formed by the merger of the Congregational-Christian and the Evangelical-Reformed churches. In the late 80's and early 90's the Church provided space for the Metropolitan Community Church, which served the gay and lesbian community.

**TURN RIGHT ON THROCKMORTON  
PROCEED TO OLD MILL TURN RIGHT  
PROCEED TO LOVELL**

### **STOP #13 At Old Mill and Lovell - Church of Our Savior**

A few years before 1890, the first rector of Sausalito's Christ Church (built in 1882) and his wife took their horse drawn wagon to the Mill Valley area each week to hold Sunday school classes. There were often just four pupils including the children of Jacob Gardner. In 1890, the Sunday school classes were supplemented with services for an expanding congregation in the redwoods of Old Mill Park.

In 1892, an Episcopal mission was founded. The congregation held its first service on June 12, 1892 in Summit School. The Tamalpais Land & Water Company donated a three-lot site at the corner of Lovell and Old Mill. Architect Willis Polk drew up plans for a building and oversaw the construction which was financed by Mrs. Frederick Wilcox Reed in memory of her husband, former rector of Christ Church in Sausalito. The first service in the new church took place in September 1892. A rectory was added on Old Mill in 1898. The Mission was reorganized as a parish in 1903 and changed its name to Episcopal Church of Our Savior. Guild Hall was added on Lovell in 1908.

### **PHOTO OF CHURCH - 1892**

The original church was torn down in 1954. A new larger church was built on the site. Services were held in the Outdoor Art Club during construction of the new church. The first service in the new church was in April 1955. An addition was constructed on Lovell in 1960.

### **PHOTO OF CHURCH - 1955**

#### **ANECDOTE**

In 1893, members had a large bell made for the belfry. But it was too heavy to be hung anywhere in the church. So it was loaned to Summit School where it was used periodically for 46 years until the school closed for good at the end of the 1939 school year. In 1940, before Summit School was razed in 1941, the bell was returned to the church and stored in the basement of the church. It was finally hung in January 1948 on a low support in the entrance of the old church. In October 1954 the bell was hung in the tower of the new church.

### **PROCEED UP LOVELL TO SUMMIT AND PAUSE**

### **LOOK UP SUMMIT TO SEE THE SUMMIT SCHOOL PLAQUE**

### **CROSS ELMA, TURN LEFT**

### **Stop #14 On west sidewalk of Elma – Old Mill School**

In 1891 School Trustee Jacob Gardner dug into his own pocket and had the first school building erected and furnished near Madrona and Throckmorton. As the legal minimum for opening a school was 12 children, the area was combed to get enough pupils to qualify as a school district. Two Johnson children were discovered in the Muir Woods area bringing the enrollment to 13—enough for a school. This old school building was later incorporated into the home of Mrs. M.F. MacNamara and still stands today.

In 1891, townspeople voted to tax themselves to build a Mill Valley schoolhouse on the corner of Cornelia and Tamalpais (now Summit). The one-room schoolhouse opened in 1892 with 32 pupils and one teacher. Over time, the 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.

### **PHOTO OF SUMMIT SCHOOL - 1892**

Other elementary schools soon followed: Homestead in 1908 and Tamalpais Park in 1909. In 1918, School Trustees purchased the 2.5-acre Sulphur Spring block bounded by Throckmorton, Elma, Lovell and Old Mill. It was the site of a mineral spring discovered in 1890. Attempts to market the spring water for its medicinal powers had limited success. The block was used as a baseball field for many years. By 1918, six houses stood on the block. After the sale to the school district, four of the houses were moved up Throckmorton.

Construction of Old Mill School began in 1920. The school opened in 1921 with a kindergarten, five grade rooms, an assembly hall that could hold 300, a library and offices.

### **PHOTO OF OLD MILL SCHOOL AND BUS – 1930s**

In 1937, Old Mill School was remodeled to make it earthquake-proof—classes were held in the Episcopal and Congregational churches and elsewhere. In the 1950s two classrooms and a new wing were added. In 1994-5, extensive remodeling and renovation took place and a detached multipurpose building was built to replace the old auditorium.

### **PROCEED ON ELMA TO THROCKMORTON CROSS TO LIBRARY**

### **STOP #15 — MILL VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Efforts to build a larger library began in 1937. The hillside site of the Carnegie library proved inconvenient and the building was too small. Over the next several years, eleven sites were considered including a branch library in Park School, R&R Garage at Lovell and Corte Madera, corner of Miller and Park, Greyhound bus depot, the old post office, Dowd's Storage Yard, Mill Valley Lumber Yard, and the tennis courts at Boyle Park.

The site ultimately selected, the upper part of Old Mill Park, was first mentioned in April 1959. In August 1959, the City Council increased property taxes to use toward a new library building. In 1964, voters approved a bond issue. The architect was Donn Emmons of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons. The landscape architect was Lawrence Halprin. The new library opened on August 21, 1966 with a collection of about 52,000 volumes.

### **PHOTO OF GROUND BREAKING – 1965**

A study completed in 1992 documented the library's pressing need for additional space to house the collection and accommodate growing technology needs. Seismic safety concerns and improved access for the disabled had to be addressed. In November 1996, voters approved a bond issue for a 9000 square foot addition and renovation. The design architects were Turnbull Griffin Haeslop.

### **PHOTO OF GROUND BREAKING – 1997**

The grand opening was on Labor Day weekend 1998.

### **History Room**

The History Room contains books, pamphlets, maps, photos, newspapers and newspaper articles. There are also a number of paintings of Mill Valley and Marin County scenes as well as historical artifacts. Over 150 oral histories have been transcribed which are also available in their original audio form. The focus is on materials for research on the history of Mill Valley, nearby communities and Southern Marin. These materials constitute an important and largely irreplaceable historical record. Over 2000 photos have been digitized for archiving and easy access. An ambitious program is underway to digitize documents and maps. Copies of the Mill Valley Record and its predecessors and census data are available on microfilm.

## **CONDUCT THE GROUP ON A TOUR OF THE LIBRARY**

## **END OF WALK-INTO-HISTORY**

## **ENCOURAGE A RETURN TO THE OUTDOOR ART CLUB**