Mill Valley Chamber Music Society

2015-2016 Season

October 11, 2015
Cypress Quartet & Friends

November 15, 2015
Jasper String Quartet

January 17, 2016
Telegraph Quartet

February 28, 2016
Nicolas Altstaedt, violoncello
Alexander Lonquich, piano

March 13, 2016
Morgenstern Trio

Mill Valley Chamber Music Society concerts are presented at 5 p.m. Sundays at the Mount Tamalpais United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Avenue, Mill Valley.

For more information, visit chambermusicmillvalley.org
REVIEW
FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Mill Valley Historical Society is thrilled to send you the 2015 Review. You will encounter a group of talented writers and an interesting mix of articles covering different facets of Mill Valley history. A number of the articles have direct ties to activities currently being undertaken by MVHS.

For example, the 2015 Annual Walk will be through Blithedale Canyon and will feature a number of historic structures, including Redwood Lodge, built in 1891. The Review includes a discussion of the preservation plans for Redwood Lodge and some history of efforts for historic preservation in Mill Valley. Additionally, MVHS has been actively supporting the Mill Valley History Room, and there is an article covering the History Room and its focus on preserving important local oral histories. One of these, by Dr. Daniel Collins, is excerpted in “How the Collins Family Came to Mill Valley,” about the first African-American homeowners in modern Mill Valley.

The MVHS remains committed to educating the public by gathering, preserving, researching, publishing, and disseminating information about local history. I’d like to thank the contributors to this issue, the volunteers who helped bring it to fruition, and our advertisers, who believe in the importance of what we do.

I hope you enjoy reading this Review now and in future years.

– Bill Stock

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Celebrating the dedication of the Reed Adobe plaque March 28, 2015 were Reed descendants Chloe and Hilary Kretchmer (left) and Denise and Marleen Ravizza (right). Center: Jon and Betty Goerke, Bill Stock. Photo by Christopher Coughlin. See “When Mill Valley Was a Port,” page 23.
Along in the early fifties my wife and I decided for a number of reasons that we didn't want our kids to grow up in a central city. I have great compassion for the central city, great concern, and will do anything I can to help alleviate or ameliorate its problems. [But] our thinking was proper for kids of that age, and we decided we'd get out of San Francisco.

In 1952 it had great risk. There are certain comforts living in the Fillmore District. We were around our friends and it was a very comfortable community for my wife and me. But we decided we didn't want our kids to grow up in any core city, so we began to cast around in various communities. We knew nothing about Marin County, a little more about the Peninsula. We had some friends down there. We shopped down the Peninsula and didn't find anything that we particularly liked in land or houses.

I'm a want-ad freak. I look at want ads in South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee—wherever they're in the English language, I look at want ads—old things for sale. One Sunday morning I was lying in bed, reading the want ads on houses for sale. DeReath was in the kitchen, and I called to her and said, "How would you like to have a house with a 20-foot window that overlooks San Francisco Bay?"

"Fine," she said. "Go ahead and buy it." That was the way she ribbed me. If I'd read a want ad to her, she'd say, "Go ahead and buy five."

Later that day, Dr. Rodney Pain, a dentist and former student of mine at the University who had become an associate in my office, came over to our house. He drove one of those carry-all station wagons that seated nine or 10 people. After dinner we loaded our four kids, his two kids and the three of us in his wagon and headed over here to look at a lot that I had also seen advertised in the newspaper, a lot up behind Tamalpais High School. These lots were just opening up in 1952. I didn't particularly like the neighborhood. The house I would have had to build on the lot would have been out of place in that particular neighborhood. So we came down the hill, back into Mill Valley and were driving out of town when DeReath said, "What about the house you were talking about this morning?"

I really was chicken. I didn't want to come up and talk to the people who had the house. I'd been rejected so much, for apartments and what-not, being Black in the society of 1942. I wasn't particularly excited about confronting the woman and asking about her damned house. I wanted to get out of the city, but to have someone treat you differently because you're Black or Jewish or something is the type of hurt that one doesn't relish. You don't look forward to being denied something because of things you had nothing to do with. So I was a little hesitant about seeing her. I could

The Collins family home at 700 Summit Avenue, Mill Valley, photographed in 2015.
go look at the lot because it was empty and there was no confrontation with anybody. But DeReath said, “How about that house?” and Rodney said, “Yes, how about that house?”

I called the woman, Mrs. Faltin, and she said, “Sure, come right up.” We’d walked over the other property and our clothes were dusty and dirty. The kids were three years old, four, five, six—just a bunch of dirty, snotty-nosed kids. We were all dressed in jeans. So we drove up to this lady’s house at 700 Summit Avenue and began to pile out of this truck-station wagon. She came up to Rodney and said, “Oh, I guess you’re Dr. Collins and want to see the house.” Rodney, with his hard Scottish accent said, “No, I’m Dr. Pain; this is Dr. Collins.” Mrs. Faltin’s mouth dropped to her knees. She said, “Oh, I can’t sell you this house.” I’ve forgotten the dialogue, but Dr. Pain said, “Well since we’re up here, can’t we look at it?” She said, “Oh yes, I’ll show it to you.” She was courteous but rather chilly...

My wife liked the house very much. I liked it. Our kids liked it. They were running around outside, finding a place where they could have their dog, and so on.

Mrs. Faltin said again, “I’m sorry, but I can’t sell you this house.” You must remember this was 1952. The Supreme Court decision outlawing racially restrictive covenants had been handed down in 1949, so any restrictive covenants were legally unenforceable. My deed to the house (and I’ve kept it) still has this long dissertation on who can’t buy the house. I could live in the house as a servant. I could own the house, but I couldn’t live in it. Neither could an “Oriental”. It didn’t say anything about Jews, but no Orientals or Negroes.

Dr. Pain said, “Listen, I’ll buy this house. Will you sell it to me?” Mrs. Faltin said, “Oh yes, I’ll sell it to you. What you do with it is your own business.” She was asking $20,000. I said, “I want you to know that if Dr. Pain buys the house I will buy it from him. I just want you to know that. I don’t want to deal dishonestly with anyone.” She said, “If you want to do that, it’s all right with me.”
So the next day I had my banker come over. He appraised the house, and he had $20,000 available for her as soon as the deal could be closed.

We looked at the house on a Sunday. Thursday morning at 7 o’clock Mrs. Faltin called. She had, I guess, come face-to-face with her Armageddon, with her reality. I guess she and her husband had agonized over their behavior in not wanting to sell me the house. So she called and said, “Dr. Collins, my husband and I have called the University and called around, and we’d be delighted to sell you our house directly and get up on the housetop and shout about it.”

She then called some of the people who live here on the hill, whose names I won’t repeat for the record. By that time the sale was going through escrow as a direct sale. The news had hit the fan! I was being financed by a Black bank, so the white banks couldn’t stop it. She got her cash out, no second mortgages.

By this time she had begun to get calls from some of the local real estate dealers, giving her a bad time. They were rather harsh with her for selling her property to a “nigger.” She said, “Why don’t you come up and have lunch with Dr. and Mrs. Collins before you pass judgment on them?” They were too much cowards to do that. They would not confront either of us, but just began to badger Mrs. Faltin. She said it made no difference to her. She liked us, she thought we were first-class citizens, and she was delighted to sell us her house. And so she did. We bought the house and moved in in a month or two. We were very happy with the occasion.

About a week before we moved in, I got a call from a Mr. Gene Heide, who was a real estate dealer in Mill Valley. His business was in front of the Mill Valley Food Mart. He called me and said, “Dr. Collins, I want to tell you, first of all, that I would welcome you to Mill Valley. If you want to come to Mill Valley, come ahead. But my other real estate associates have asked me to call and pass a message on to you.”

I think [they selected him] because he was the most liberal of the group, and you could at least talk to him. He identified himself and said he was not selling the proposition but had promised to pass it on to me. I never met him, but I felt good about him because he said he was the bearer of this news, that he did not agree with the message but had agreed to make the offer to me.

The real estate people said this property had sort of been held off for future development and what not, that it was prime property and that they would buy it. They said if I would sell this property they would buy it back at a good profit. I told Mr. Heide I had taken a course in real estate and had a license. Although I’d never sold real estate in my life and didn’t intend to sell it, I knew I’d be buying property and I took a course in college in the ’40s for my own edification. I knew that at that time any profit you made from selling your home could be used to buy a new home and was not subject to tax. $20,000 was a lot of money in those days, so I gave him a message. “Mr. Heide,” I said, “I appreciate your call. You tell your friends that I will sign an agreement that I will never come to Mill Valley, neither will my wife come to Mill Valley, neither will my kids ever come to Mill Valley as long as they are living in my household if you will pay me double the price I paid for the house. No bargaining. If you can’t meet that, forget it. No counter offers.” That was the last of the telephone calls.

The second-oldest Collins son, Edward, is a San Francisco urologist and author. He was Student Body President during the second semester of his senior year at Tamalpais High School and an exchange student to Austria with the American Field Service. He received his M.D. from Howard University College of Medicine and finished his specialty training in Urology at UCSF.

**EDWARD (CHIP) COLLINS, 2015**

I remember driving up Summit Avenue to the house that we ultimately bought and seeing it for the first time. I just loved it immediately. It was a cabin, a stucco cabin with a beautiful view onto San Francisco straight on, and one bedroom, one-and-a-half baths, huge living room with big picture windows, bay windows, a galley kitchen, and land—land is what’s ultimately important because it gives you the flexibility to do what you wish. I was eight.

My father was very open in his discussions and I remember the back-and-forth that went on. He did not hide it or blast us with it, but it was clear there was an issue that was quickly resolved, thanks to Rodney Pain and the owner of the property, who found the courage to sell the house directly to my parents.

We moved, and I went to school at Old Mill. I grew up until that time living in a multi-cultural neighborhood—Black, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese people coming back from the WWII internment camps, people from the Middle East who owned the store on the corner. I remember asking my mother whether this Japanese kid and I looked different. She said, “I don’t think so,” so the question was left hanging. You didn’t look at yourself as being Black or Filipino or Chinese, you were a bunch of kids playing on the block.

On the first day of school in Mill Valley I looked around and didn’t see anybody who looked like me. There was one kid, Hinky Kruger, who was Filipino and Hawaiian and Caucasian. During the summer he would get brown. We’d put our arms together and he’d say, “I’m darker than you.” No one else looked like me except one girl whose features were a little thick. She lived on the Middle Ridge. I asked her, “Are you colored?” and she said “Ooh no!” But Hinky and I were pretty good pals. We played on sports teams all through high school.

There were a few incidents at the school that were...I don’t know if it was just boys being boys, I don’t know if it was racially motivated. One boy and I had a little fight in the schoolyard, we cleaned that issue up and became fast friends. Another happened at Alto School—coming off the bus a kid and I kind of traded blows, and that was cleared up. There was never any more of that. There were several families whose doors were wide open to me—you’d walk in and get a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I was a polite kid and they liked their sons being around me. The Community Church was very welcoming; Gordon Foster was the minister.

Baseball was the real leveler when it came to Mill Valley. I had the opportunity to play on the first Little League team Mill Valley fielded in 1954. I was 10. You tried out and the best players got on. It was a total meritocracy. I found I could play the game. It was like picking up a musical instrument and finding you can play it. I had that ability and maintained it until I quit playing ball.

I see Mill Valley as the good, but during that time there were spots of evil. The first occurred when I tried to join the Boy Scout
troop. They would not allow Daniel or me to join the Cubs or the Webelows. My father quickly squared that away, and we were allowed to join another pack. We were at a Cub Scout den meeting on one of those super-hot Indian summer days—and the den mother said, “It’s too hot in here”—she was a member of the Mill Valley Tennis Club—she said, “Jump on your bikes and we’ll go swimming.” So we all rode our bikes down the hill ready to roll. The man at the door said I was not allowed to go into the club. I asked why and he said “You’re just not allowed.” Come to find out, they had restrictions. I don’t hold on to much, but this was visited on a 10 or 11-year-old kid. That’s really cowardice, to take a swing like that. Sometimes that happened in people’s private pools too; we were disinvited.

Another issue was we used to have Arthur Murray Junior Assemblies in Marin. You learned to ballroom dance and learned etiquette. We were not allowed to join. We requested, but we got no response.

After Cubs Daniel and I transferred to the Boy Scout troop. It worked out great that we weren’t allowed to join the first one, because the pack we joined ultimately became the best pack. We stayed together for a long time. Interestingly enough, the son of one of the realtors who was adamant against our moving in was a member of that troop and we still interact at this age—there is a flurry of messages that go back and forth.

Charles (Chuck) Collins, the third-oldest son, is President and CEO of the San Francisco YMCA. At Tamalpais High School he was Freshman Class President. He graduated from Williams College, M.I.T. with a degree in City Planning, and Harvard Law School.

CHARLES COLLINS, 2015

My mother was a country girl. She loved the mountains. She wanted to die where she was happiest, in that house at 700 Summit, and she did. She and my father encouraged us to camp and hike. She would say, “Boys, take your tents and go spend the night under the pine trees and redwoods.” I hiked all the trails on Mt. Tam. We had access to all of that. It was a great point of departure.

Dad and Mother wanted their boys to have an unbridled community in which to grow. The realities here were somewhat different from that: many people here were unexposed to Black people. Their thought was, “You can’t really be Black because you don’t behave Black.” Most people in Mill Valley had never had—except in terms of service—Black acquaintances, not on a peer basis.

You had to grow up with these facts in our family—that we were Black and we had a profoundly disabled child who wasn’t sent away. We wouldn’t be bullied by that. My mother demanded Craig be part of this community. Nobody could stigmatize our younger brother—there was no bullying at all because those were fighting words to us. When he died Craig was named as one of the 10 most influential Marinites of that year. That honor was a part of what this community was. Craig was a rock star and he never spoke a word in his life.

Sixty years ago, Mill Valley was a small community. There was no affordability crisis. The people who owned the market, the plumber, the electrician, the fireman, the teacher, the person who worked at the cleaners, lived here. The view of the world from our house—the isolation of the top of Summit Avenue, and the larger view of the city, the Bay Bridge, Alcatraz—this big world in front of us—I think that shaped in some ways our world view. In 1959 at age 11 I went to Finland for the summer. Our parents really encouraged us to be curious about a larger world, not to be limited by other people’s limitations. They encouraged us to explore what’s out there and discover what you can gain from your own experience. I went east to college to be challenged academically and also to contend with much broader influences.

I think my childhood in Mill Valley was the perfect setup for that. It’s not always going to be welcoming, it may be hostile and unwelcoming, but that’s the way the world is. Speak other languages, learn other cultures. My comfort zone was established here. Everybody’s got limitations. You can take your limitations as binding, but you can also build from them.

Mill Valley is the tale of two cities. Imagine this: the Mill Valley Board of Realtors tried to keep us out, and my brother Chip became the star of the baseball team named the Mill Valley Realtors.

The interviews with Edward and Charles Collins were conducted by Abby Wasserman. Dr. Dan Collins’s complete oral history is archived in the Mill Valley History Room.
Storytelling is having a major moment. From the growing popularity of podcasts such as *This American Life* to true storytelling nights put on by New York City’s *The Moth* or the Mill Valley Public Library’s own *Naked Truth*, there’s something incredibly compelling about the ancient art of sharing stories. It’s no wonder why, from the cathartic experience of telling a true personal tale to the unifying feeling of relating with another person or expanding one’s world view through another’s lens.

The stories within these oral histories, are powerful indeed. They bring history to life, infusing the historical record with personality, color, and feeling.

Together, the Mill Valley Public Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society have been dedicated to gathering and preserving the voices of Mill Valley residents. The roots of the Mill Valley Oral History Program hail back nearly 50 years. According to the 1980 oral history of Joe and Ruth Wilson, the couple who founded the program, the Mill Valley Library Association (which later became the Friends of the Mill Valley Public Library) put out a letter to its members in September 1968, asking them to volunteer their time for a few select projects that had been approved by the board. Joe Wilson explains that the letter described one such project as “Collecting Millvalleyana: A committee to organize the preservation of Mill Valley history, principally through tape-recorded interviews with old-timers whose memories would otherwise be lost.” Joe, a newspaperman, and Ruth, a former school teacher who helped her husband with editing and transcribing, volunteered to take the project on. The Wilsons...
had no previous experience working with oral histories, but they had much drive to learn. They attended the National Oral History Colloquium in 1970, taking in as many sessions as they could and using the information they gathered to set the foundation of Mill Valley’s developing oral history program. They also received guidance from Willa Baum, then head of the Regional Oral History Office at UC Berkeley’s Bancroft Library.

The Wilsons conducted their very first interviews on what they described as “bulky reel-to-reel equipment that weighed 25 or 30 pounds.” The first two interviewees were Margaret Dowd and Clarissa Byrne, Mill Valley residents who described life in Mill Valley in the early days after incorporation. According to Ruth Wilson, the interviews of Dowd, Byrne, and eight to 10 others were part of an initial group called “Reminiscences of Mill Valley in the 1890s”. This designation limited the scope of the program, which would later become known more generally as the “Mill Valley Oral History Program”.

According to the Wilson oral history, the Mill Valley Library Association sponsored the program for the first 10 years, at which point it was taken over by the Mill Valley Historical Society. During the bulk of the program’s years, and still today, the program has been a collaboration between the Historical Society and the Library. The Historical Society’s Oral History Committee identifies interviewees and its members conduct the oral history interviews. The Library, meanwhile, archives the recordings and transcriptions and makes them accessible to the public.

Over the years, the tools used to capture oral histories have changed. The early reel-to-reel tapes were replaced in 1973 by cassette tapes, and today, interviewers use small, handheld recording devices or laptops to create digital recording files that can be easily emailed or shared online. Despite these changes, much has remained the same, including the value that oral histories add to the historical record. As Joe Wilson explained in his oral history, “More than anything, we’re preserving primary memories. There’s nothing secondhand about these tapes. This is the best way to gather facts that I know of, even though people’s memories sometimes betray them.”

Joe Wilson points out that one will find factual errors throughout the oral histories, but that “having gone over early Mill Valley history many times in these tapes, we can see a pattern. In most areas there is general agreement, and you get a fairly accurate idea of what happened and what Mill Valley looked like through the years.”

The Mill Valley Oral History Program remains vibrant today, with new oral histories and the stories and reminiscences within adding to our understanding of what Mill Valley is and what it was. The program’s mission has evolved from its early focus on collecting reminiscences from the 1890s to its current mission to: “collect, preserve, and share the voices and stories of local residents whose experiences help to shape the collective memory of Mill Valley. The Program reflects a diverse array of backgrounds and narratives, and documents the changing culture and landscape of Mill Valley.”

All are invited to visit the Library’s Lucretia Little History Room to delve into the amazing collection of stories that are part of the Mill Valley Oral History Program. Just as the technology behind capturing the oral histories has evolved, so too are methods of sharing the oral histories. The History Room will be adding a selection of oral histories to its website, making it easier than ever to step back into history, get to know the people who have made up the fabric of Mill Valley, and immerse oneself in the vibrancy of Mill Valley’s past.

Cate Mayfield is Librarian of the Lucretia Little History Room, Mill Valley Public Library.

LEND YOUR STORY!

What’s happening right now will be history tomorrow. Would you like your story to be a part of the Mill Valley Oral History Program? The History Room and the Mill Valley Historical Society are always seeking candidates to speak about their lives and their experiences of a changing Mill Valley. Or, do you have a recommendation for someone that you think would be a fantastic candidate?

Let us know by contacting Cate Mayfield, History Room Librarian, at 415-389-4292, ext. 4738, or cmayfield@cityofmillvalley.org.
Preserving Our Architectural History

BY ABBY WASSERMAN

Mill Valley in 2015 is in the throes of a building and real estate boom. Homes built in 1940 for a few thousand dollars are selling for a million or more. Pretty old cottages or Victorians with yards to run around in are being demolished to make way for structures that crowd their lots, leaving barely enough room to throw and catch a ping-pong ball. Historic neighborhoods where marshland waterways licked the toes of the hills, where Coast Miwok elders told stories, where early settlers harvested fruit trees, are undergoing dramatic changes. Will the small-town character of our neighborhoods be lost to those who would build bigger and sell? Can Mill Valley protect its small-town atmosphere and irreplaceable historic buildings in such a speculative climate?

Preservation Efforts to Date
Every town in Marin County has wrestled with these questions, and at least three communities, Sausalito, Belvedere, and Larkspur, have answered by putting historic preservation ordinances in place. Up until now, Mill Valley has chosen a different path. Consulting existing inventories that listed scores of structures considered historic, the City of Mill Valley elected to create a Historic Overlay (H-O) zoning designation, giving owners an out: if they did not agree to the designation, their building could be taken off the list. Records from 1987 indicate that 23 of 25 originally proposed properties were placed into the Historical Overlay, although the most recent records from the City of Mill Valley indicate that 22 residential and five non-residential properties are currently included in the H-O Zone.

The legal definition of a historic structure is one of historical significance (person, event, characteristic of a type or period) and architectural integrity, meaning one can discern the original footprint, roofline, windows, materials and so on, even if the structure has been added onto. These are the criteria by which the State of California defines “historic” for listing on the California Register, which encourages recognition and protection of historical resources.

The inventories compiled by volunteers knowledgeable about Mill Valley history were essentially recommendations for structures that should be preserved. But there were no legal requirements to adhere to any specific preservation guidelines for homes on the list. Historic Overlay zoning created those requirements, though for only a fraction of the recommendations.

Historic Overlay meant that if an owner wished to add to or alter their building, Mill Valley required a design review by the Planning Commission. If the owner wanted to demolish it and build something else, the law delayed demolition while alternatives were explored. It also encouraged preservation by waiving building permit fees for necessary maintenance and repair of Historic Overlay structures.

A state law added backbone to the Historic Overlay rationale. The 1970 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that the owner of a structure built before the last 50 years who has plans to demolish or significantly change the exterior of a structure must have it evaluated by one of four architectural firms

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN MILL VALLEY: A TIMELINE

**1966**
The Federal Government creates the National Preservation Act, which defines historic resources or properties.

**1968**
Through the Junior League, a historic resource survey is conducted and published.

**1970**
The State of California gives Marin County the responsibility for inventorying properties relevant to the National Preservation Act.

**1974**
Mill Valley Historic Resources Committee initiates a “Heritage Resource Survey,” a.k.a. “Mill Valley’s California Historic Resources Inventory.”
pre-selected by the City to determine if the building is historically significant and has retained its architectural integrity. Both these criteria must be met; if not, the structure does not qualify as a historic resource. Obviously, going through this process on a case-by-case basis is not an easy task. It calls for education and experience not only of City staff and commissioners, but of the citizenry.

**The Holes in the H-O**

In 1987, the five non-residential structures given Historic Overlay status by the City were the Old Mill (c. 1834-36), The Depot (rebuilt 1940, originally 1889), The Outdoor Art Clubhouse (1904), the Old Post Office (1941), and the Ralston White Retreat (“Garden of Allah,” c. 1912-1915). Not given H-O status were other signature buildings: City Hall (1937), the Carnegie Library (1911), Masonic Lodge (1903), Hub Theatre/Oddfellows Hall (1915), Sequoia Theatre (1929), and Mill Valley Lumber (1890). The reasons for these and other exclusions of signature structures are not clear.

On the private side, a large number of historically important residences cited in Mill Valley Historical Society (MVHS) inventories didn’t make the list either. Happily, among the 22 residences zoned Historic Overlay were two parcels of the Redwood Lodge (1891) in Blithedale Canyon (see “Redwood Lodge Renewal,” page 14), and Throckmorton rancho superintendent Jacob Gardner’s home on Ethel Avenue, “The Maples” (c. 1891), best seen from Miller Avenue. Again, there were inconsistencies. While “The Maples” remains architecturally intact, Gardner’s later home, 29 Catalpa (1905), named in MVHS inventories but not zoned H-O, has been allowed recently to undergo significant remodeling.

One thing is clear: the Historic Overlay list from 1987 and MVHS Historical Society inventories (the last was in 1998), remain static or obsolete, and are badly in need of updating. Every year that passes is a year in which potentially historic properties that are not listed are at risk of being demolished or remodeled beyond recognition.

**The Choice to Preserve**

As has happened in numerous cases here, owners proud of their buildings’ historic value can choose to upgrade them without destroying architectural integrity, says Lauri Harper, Mill Valley Historical Society board member and Chair of its Preservation Committee. “If the owner of a historic resource listed on the MVHS inventory but not the Historic Overlay hires a sensitive architect
who is experienced in preservation issues, historic properties can be saved and new owners accommodated. The house at the former 217 Miller Avenue, now One Park Avenue, is an example. It was recently remodeled by Richardson Architects, who added on much square footage by following the Secretary of the Interior’s Standard for Rehabilitation #9."

Rehabilitation #9 is the federal standard for historic preservation that requires that “new additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction won’t destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property,” and that new work “shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.”

Harper points out that the house at One Park Avenue now has four bedrooms and three baths in 3,200 sq. ft., and recently sold for over three million, advertised as “historically listed.” With a preservation-sensitive architect, it’s possible to retain historic integrity while redesigning and adding on in order to accommodate a family’s modern lifestyle.

Preservation as a Core Value
Mill Valley’s newest General Plan, MV2040, completed in October 2013, a long-range planning document and the third the City has ever done, embraces historic preservation more strongly than ever. The title refers to the year, 2040, that all of the City’s goals should be achieved. Its importance cannot be overemphasized. It is a comprehensive document stating Mill Valley’s core values and outlining goals to strive for, policies to implement the goals, and programs to support the policies.

The Historical Society’s Historic Preservation Committee, chaired by Lauri Harper since late 2012, worked with the then-Planning Director to include prescriptive language for historic preservation in the Land Use section of MV2040. Consequently, a historic preservation ordinance is among the General Plan’s recommendations.

The beauty of an ordinance is that it is a legal document giving clear guidelines to the City’s Planning and Building Department in any review of a remodeling proposal. An ordinance typically includes a Historic Resources Inventory, or HRI, a previously

217 Miller Avenue, 1980. In *Mill Valley: The Early Years*, Barry Spitz writes of 217 Miller Avenue (now One Park Avenue) that James and Emily Mackie bought the lot in the 1890 auction and built the house and a cottage in the rear soon after. The Mackies also kept an orchard on the site. In 1906, Park Avenue was opened, reducing the parcel size. Photo by Gene Cohn. Courtesy of the Lucretia Little History Room, Mill Valley Public Library.

One Park Avenue after remodeling by Richardson Architects in 2014. Photo by Jeff Zaruba. Courtesy of Richardson Architects.

2005
City of Mill Valley states that properties listed in the “Partial List of Historic Structures,” as well as those already included in the H-O Zone, are presumed to be historically or culturally significant “unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that they are not.” Lacking, however, is any measurable positive protection for the structures.

2007
MVHS submits a list of 24 properties for protection, all on Miller Avenue. Added to the list of 95 properties from 2002, the City has now been asked to provide protection for 119 properties. No action is taken.

2010
City of Mill Valley Planning Commission receives recommendation from the Planning Department that all structures on the 1998 list be subject to the same requirements as structures in the H-O Zone. Planning Commission does not act on Planning Department recommendations.

2012
At the invitation of Planning Commission Chair Heidi Richardson, Architects Page & Turnbull give a presentation on historic preservation issues and procedures to the Planning Commission.
agreed-upon professionally done list of structures and neighborhoods built before the last 50 years that fulfill the legal definition of “historic,” and establishes standards and processes for handling of listed structures. It also involves a context statement explaining the evolution of the built environment to validate the inventory. In the General Plan, MVHS is named to partner with the City to develop and implement a comprehensive inventory of potential historic and archaeological resources. However, MVHS is a volunteer organization that, while essential to assist with an inventory, cannot provide the professional expertise called for in this instance.

The Future
The Planning Commission’s 2015 Work Plan includes both a Historic Resources Inventory and an ordinance; and the 2015-23 Housing Element lists the Planning Commission, the Planning and Building Department, and the Mill Valley Historical Society as the responsible entities for getting all this done. However, the two-year City budget passed recently by the City Council allocated no funding for any of it.

It’s not as though Mill Valley has just awakened to the complexities of this issue. Passion and untold hours have gone into preservation efforts in the past. Many who were local leaders in the preservation endeavor have died, among them Gene Stocking, Jean Barnard, Jan Upham, Bud Ortman, Lucretia Hanson Little, and Dory Bassett. Preservation committees have come and gone, like the Historic Homes Committee headed by the late Ron Olson and including Mill Valley architect Jonathan Jacobs, who wrote a Review article on the Redwood Lodge in 1992. Former MVHS board members Stephanie Wickham Witt, John Leonard, Barbara Ford, and Carol Connelly Budds worked hard for historic preservation while on the board. All are lifelong Mill Valleyans who wish to save Mill Valley’s architecture, legacy, and character for future generations. Now, perhaps, it’s time for newer residents to step up.

The essence of historic preservation is this: The homes we own and the neighborhoods we live in are ours in trust for the future. If their character and integrity remain after we are gone, that will have been our gift.

Abby Wasserman is Review Editor.

2013
The General Plan, “MV2040,” is approved. Chapter 2, Section 4 states: “Identify, preserve and protect potential and listed historic and archaeological resources citywide.” This is to be achieved by “work with the Mill Valley Historical Society to develop and implement a comprehensive inventory of potential historic and archaeological resources”...further, that the City “adopt and implement an historic and cultural preservation ordinance that could include regulations and procedures....”

2014
Mill Valley Historical Society committee on historic preservation requests a meeting with the Interim Planning Department Director to discuss the inclusion of funding in the new budget for an updated, professional survey, as old lists are now outdated, and some important historic properties by now have been altered and compromised. No meeting is scheduled until after July, when the budget has been finalized.*

City of Mill Valley finalizes its two-year budget. No funds to conduct a “comprehensive inventory of potential historic and archaeological resources” are allocated. There is no line item covering any aspect of historic preservation.

* This item is a correction from the magazine’s printed version.
REDWOOD LODGE RENEWAL

BY LAURI HARPER

Its name evokes images of a rustic retreat set in a sylvan glade, and the Redwood Lodge in Mill Valley is that and so much more. It is a historic resource consisting of a main dwelling, two cottages, a playhouse, a tennis court, stone paths, walls and bridges; heritage second-growth redwoods; soil containing Coast Miwok midden material; and a lovely stream that runs throughout the entire 2.5+ acre property in Blithedale Canyon.

A Brief History
At the Tamalpais Land & Water Company land auction in 1890, George E. Billings and his wife, the former Susannah Maria (pronounced Mariah) Hall, purchased four lots on Corte Madera Creek and began construction of a summer home on the property. The young Billings had come to San Francisco in 1868 from New York and found employment with the Hall Shipbuilding Yards, owned by the man who was much later to become his father-in-law. The Redwood Lodge, designed at least in part by renowned Berkeley architect Walter Ratcliff, was built in 1891, and became the Billings family’s primary residence when they left San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Tillicum Cottage was built in 1902 as a guesthouse for the Billings’s only child, May, whose friends often visited from San Francisco at the weekends. She later married Roy Ward, twice mayor of Mill Valley, and they lived for a time at Tillicum also.

A yachtsman and founding member of the Corinthian Yacht Club in Tiburon, Billings named Nixie Cottage, built later in the decade, after his schooner, which was in turn named for a mythological water sprite. An avid athlete, Billings took to tennis with alacrity and hosted tournaments at his private courts at Redwood Lodge before public tennis courts or clubs were built in Mill Valley.

Current Status and Future Plans
During its second century of existence, the Redwood Lodge property and its structures have fallen into varying states of disrepair, and different plans have been promoted to change it. Because the main house is protected by the City of Mill Valley’s Historic Overlay (H-O) zoning designation and residents of Mill Valley have such strong sentiments about it, those plans have not been approved.

A recent plan proposed within the past two years would have involved the development of five single-family houses on the site, rehabilitation of Redwood Lodge at 160 Corte Madera, and demolition of Nixie, Tillicum, and the Living Doll House, now located at 178 Corte Madera, 9 Eldridge and 144 Corte Madera, respectively.

Many members of the Mill Valley Historical Society were surprised to discover that the H-O designation did not cover anything but the Redwood Lodge itself; it had been assumed that the entire property was a historic district. It was with relief, then, when the draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) concurred with the organization’s supposition, and required mitigation measures to be taken if any of the structures were to be demolished.

A “Historic Rehabilitation Alternative” was created within the EIR document. This “environmentally superior” alternative would rehabilitate Nixie and Tillicum Cottages in addition to the Redwood Lodge. The alternative allows the construction of two new houses and the inclusion of four residential second units and five garages. It also creates two new zoning overlays: a Planned Development (PD) to allow for variances to accommodate the creek and trees, and the extension of the Historic Overlay to the entire site to protect the historic structures, pathways, and bridges. In January 2015, the Mill Valley Planning Commission held a public session to discuss this alternative. After the final EIR is completed and it is approved by the City Council, the Planning Commission will conduct Design Review of the plans for the structures.

Heidi Richardson, of Richardson Architects, will be doing the rehabilitation of the three historic structures, following the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards. Rehabilitation standards are more flexible than restoration ones, allowing for modifications that would retain the historic character, materials, and features of the original structure while additions would be differentiated from the old but compatible with it to maintain architectural integrity. In this way historic structures can be preserved for posterity while contemporary homeowners can enjoy the modern conveniences of 21st century Mill Valley living.

The Mill Valley Historical Society is pleased with the outcome of many discussions with the Planning Commission, the Planning and Building Department, and the public. We look forward to the Redwood Lodge plans being brought to fruition in the next couple of years. Those who join us on our annual Walk Into History in Blithedale Canyon on May 24 (see back cover) will get a glimpse of the current conditions of the Redwood Lodge property and imagine what it may become.

Lauri Harper is MVHS Historic Preservation Committee Chair.
The Redwood Lodge at 160 Corte Madera Avenue, 1891, originally owned by George E. Billings. The original purchase price was $2,125. Besides the lodge, Billings built two guest cottages on the property and a “living doll house” for his daughters. The lodge is surrounded by gardens and has fine stone walls and bridges. There are about 100 redwoods on the property and the creek was dammed every summer to form a pool so deep that a man could dive in head first. All photos courtesy of the Lucretia Little History Room, Mill Valley Public Library.
Music thrives in Mill Valley, all kinds, so it’s not surprising that we are home to an organization that brings chamber music from all over the world to our community.

BY TINA KUN AND ABBY WASSERMAN

The Mill Valley Chamber Music Society (MVCMS) has settled handily into a groove carved by previous musical groups, including the Outdoor Art Club’s Mill Valley Concert Series in the late 1940s, classical concerts at Stolte Grove, and Candlelight Concerts at Brown’s Hall. There was also the splendid Marin Music Fest at the Mt. Tamalpais Methodist Church (1980-1992).

Of these, the Chamber Music Society has had the greatest staying power. Audiences have come to expect the highest quality with each new series—five concerts by internationally renowned ensembles, as well as a concert by young musicians and an Outreach Program to the schools.

MVCMS expresses the long-time distinctive character of Mill Valley. Residents from the start have been known as bohemian, nature-loving, simple, direct, and arty. Here, captains of industry lived next to their handymen in comfort and respect. This egalitarian spirit is honored by the Chamber Music Society, which tries hard to keep ticket prices affordable and resists the tendency to go upscale or become exclusive in any way. The board of directors is ever on the watch to make this open spirit evident. The word “society” was adopted not to describe a closed group but, on the contrary, to echo the first definition of the word in the Oxford English Dictionary: “Association with one’s fellow men esp. in a friendly or intimate manner; companionship or fellowship.”
The Audience
Sit towards the back of the hall at any MVCMS concert and you will be looking over a frothy sea of white hair. This audience is not young—many have been attending these concerts for decades—but the preponderance of very senior citizens does not mean that the group is in danger of losing its followers in the near future. Chamber music typically appeals to people more and more as they age and become increasingly familiar with music. New audiences will appear.

Chamber music is a revelation—a few players on a bare stage can create an even more compelling emotional journey than an opera cast and crew of hundreds. The immediacy is most striking. The music is spare but intense. Just as there is joy in a single line drawing by Matisse, artistry is clearly evident in great music created of single lines.

The advent of LPs brought chamber music to a much wider audience. In San Francisco of the 1950s and early 1960s, there were occasional chamber music performances, but nothing like today, where every week there are many to choose from. Originally there had been concern that the LP would diminish audiences, but to the contrary, it brought new knowledge and thirst for this music. And no doubt, chamber music is best heard with others. Being part of a sympathetic audience is a great experience.

The Performance Space
It’s Sunday afternoon about 4 p.m. A few cars pull into the parking lot of the Mount Tamalpais Methodist Church on Sycamore at Camino Alto. By 4:30 the parking lot is filling up. Many of the concert-goers have been devoted to this series for decades, and they know the ropes—getting there early to make sure they get their preferred seats. With seating in pews rather than individual chairs, open seating is a necessity. Most of this audience knows what to expect and they line up patiently, awaiting the opening of the doors, greeting their old friends and listening to the faint last strains of the musicians’ warm-up.

Except for sightlines, the venue has many advantages—excellent acoustics in a space that accommodates an audience of about 300, an ideal size for the intimate experience of chamber music; a level entrance without steps, ample free parking, a convenient location—and a very hospitable church.

The camaraderie of the audience is extraordinary. Some have been loyally attending these programs from the very start in 1976. Music lovers would feel lucky to hear such concerts in New York or London, and yet are attending them in Mill Valley often for half the cost charged for these same groups elsewhere. This is made possible by volunteer labor and individual donors. A devoted board does as much of the work as possible, a generous audience contributes reliably, and a number of Mill Valley businesses have supported the Society by placing advertisements in the concert program.

Credit for the high quality of the performances should go mainly to the presidents of MVCMS, who negotiate the artists’ contracts. Since 1985 there have been just three presidents: Nelson Foote, Larry Snyder, and Bill Horne. Musicians enjoy performing for the series and will often accept less than their usual fee, with a bit of cajoling. It helps that over the years the audiences have become known among musicians and their agents for their intense and appreciative concentration.

The Founders
The organization began as a modest effort. In 1973 David Subke, a flutist in the Oakland Symphony living in Mill Valley, set up a series of chamber music performances so that he and his friends could perform. Chamber music is probably the preference of most musicians, but many spend their lives fulfilling the rigorous duties of symphony players while rarely having the chance to perform the chamber repertoire. The performances that first year included woodwind and string ensembles directed by Subke as well as recitals by Paul Hersh, the eminent violist and pianist then on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and living in Mill Valley; as well as piano duo Peggy and Milton Salkind, cellist Laszlo Varga, soprano Anna Carol Dudley, and pianist Robin Sutherland. The second season was equally ambitious, but still with only scant organizational framework. At this point the Society was a performing rather than a presenting organization. It had modest help from the Mill Valley Art Commission (a small subsidy, some graphics, and a mailing address). Membership sales were small; most of the revenue came from tickets sold at the door. Often the musicians were performing only for the love of playing.

In 1976 Carolyn Bender Goldsmith agreed to take over leadership. An amateur musician who played piano, guitar, and harpsichord, she had a devoted circle of Baroque music players whose...
help she enlisted. She also brought in her good friends, Gloria and Henry Wachs. Carolyn’s husband, Richard Goldsmith, was a judge and the first U.S. Magistrate for the northern district of California. He played the saxophone; his sister Phyllis was a piano prodigy. The Goldsmiths were Jewish, their political beliefs were progressive, and they were a force in Mill Valley’s cultural life. When Mill Valley Center for the Performing Arts (later Marin Theatre Company) founder Sali Lieberman, an immigrant from Germany with left-wing politics, encountered resistance to his application for citizenship, Richard used his influence to intervene, and Lieberman got his papers.

Carolyn applied to the Buck Trust for a chamber music series grant, and since only non-profit organizations could qualify, she enlisted her husband’s help in acquiring 501(c)(3) status. It took several years, and consequently the official establishment of the Mill Valley Chamber Music Society is dated 1979.

During the following five years the Mill Valley Chamber Music Society presented a series of concerts ranging from five to eight programs yearly. It was a homegrown affair: Carolyn and Gloria did most of the work, and the original treble clef logo was designed by Gloria’s son Rick, who also set type for the first programs. Most of the music was Baroque and most of the performers were from the Bay Area. Flutists Jeanie Chandler and Bonnie Williams Lockett performed, as did the youthful Kronos String Quartet.

Tragedy struck in 1984. Carolyn and Richard Goldsmith were killed in an automobile accident, leaving the Society grieving and in turmoil. At the Temple Emanuel funeral service, landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and Mountain Play Executive Director Marilyn Smith gave eulogies. At a memorial gathering at the Outdoor Art Club, the Kronos quartet performed. The Society was saved by the work of Gloria Wachs, Agnes Oman, Bonnie Lockett, and Millicent Tomkins, with Gloria serving as president for a year followed by Millicent the next. The board appealed for volunteers at their last scheduled concert, and among the new recruits were Nelson Foote and Don Oman. In 1987, Millicent handed the presidency over to Nelson, but stayed active with the Society as chair of the artist selection committee. One of her coups was a concert featuring the young Joshua Bell and Jean Yves Thibaudet (1988).

The next crisis took place two years later, when support from the Buck Trust was terminated. A lawsuit had resulted in the creation of the Marin Community Foundation to administer the Trust, and the new entity did not choose to continue funding the Society and many other arts non-profits. Luckily, the MVCMS board’s energetic executive vice-president, Fred Taylor, appealed to all subscribers and to as many interested potential audience members as he could find, and the series was saved. The number of concerts in a season was reduced to five, and soon the Society was operating in the black, presenting artists of not only local repute but national and international fame. Nelson Foote established the smoothly working system that allows a board with limited or no experience in the music business to present concerts. He had recently retired from his professorship at the University of Chicago, and he and his wife, Geraldine, had moved to Mill Valley to be close to their daughter, Kathleen. Almost immediately he developed means to contribute to his new community, and having been previously associated with a chamber music series, he had the experience to develop a board and lead in a style of independent but cooperative work that persists to this day. The Society grew into financial stability, developed a dependably loyal contributor base, and made great advances in musical reputation.

After the 1995-96 season, Larry Snyder took over the presidency of the organization. Larry had served as president of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and more recently, chairman of the Music Department at Sonoma State University. His congenial style of leadership fostered the very cooperative and agreeable spirit that still marks operations of the board. The next and current president, Bill Horne, energetically sought extraordinary musicians to present on the series, to the point where it has achieved significant respect in the world of music. Among notable concerts over the years: Angela Hewitt (twice), Jon Nakamatsu and Jon Manasse (twice), the Prrazak Quartet (twice), the Emerson Quartet, the Takacs Quartet, as well as many less well-known names who have given equally stunning performances. In 2013, on its 40th anniversary, the Mill Valley City Council, under the leadership of Mayor Andrew Berman, issued a Proclamation lauding MVCMS for its stellar performances and outreach program.

At present, the board has 15 members, led by Horne, a retired physician and resident of Scott Valley. An avid amateur pianist who has played with many professional musicians, he lends his knowledge of chamber music to many organizations, including Chamber Musicians of Northern California, San Francisco Friends of Chamber Music, and the Associated Chamber Players, a worldwide organization. Longtime MVCMS treasurer Bob Glasson does all the accounting, tax return preparation, budgeting, and paying.
He also has been liaison with the Mount Tamalpais Methodist Church, making sure that the hall is in good shape when the musicians and audience arrive, and left in equally clean condition.

The work of every member of the board is essential to the presentation of the concerts. Secretary John Cutler keeps the minutes of meetings, is responsible for advertisements in the program, and takes responsibility for Outreach Support. Joe Angiulo schedules and arranges Outreach presentations. Hana Dahl, who joined the board at age 16, is the webmaster who created the website and keeps it up-to-date, even though she's currently attending film school at the University of Southern California. Jeff Gordon monitors subscriptions and donations, a job long performed by Elsa Burton. Iyana Leveque, Artist Relations, ensures that the musicians have transportation, lodging, and the equipment they need. Betty Musser is responsible for the coffee and cookie sales at concerts, providing concert-goers with a bit of refreshment and adding to the Society's coffers. Ruth Rosen helps with ticket sales, and Liz Stone manages public relations as well as responding to telephone inquiries. Tina Kun sees to the production of concert programs and the annual brochure. All board members fill in for all the odd jobs that crop up.

Backstage Stories
There is often more behind-the-scenes drama than one might imagine for something as sedate as a musical concert. A nerve-wracking situation developed some years back when a San Francisco ensemble failed to appear at the predicted hour (3:00 for warm-up). As the clock ticked, approaching 5 p.m. with no performers in sight and the audience waiting in their seats, Nelson Foote became increasingly agitated. Finally, one of the performers arrived and nonchalantly told Nelson he could improvise something until the rest of the group got there, and to stop worrying. After that, no local groups were signed up until the board could be very sure that they took the concert seriously. Once, with just two weeks' notice, a quartet was unable to travel from Europe due to a serious illness of one of its members. Fortunately, Horne was able to book a replacement quartet from Los Angeles so that the performance could go on.

Another interesting situation evolved on the day of one of the concerts when it was discovered by the quartet during their pre-concert rehearsal that lighting was inadequate for the players to see their music properly (the ceiling lighting in the church is 30-40 feet high over the performance area). A board member made a mad dash home for stand lights. The church addressed its lighting issue before the next performance.

The sixth presentation each season for the last three decades has been the Young Artists’ Concert, which is co-sponsored by the Marin Music Chest. A selected group of scholarship winners (ages 15-20) of the Music Chest’s rigorous round of competitions give one of the most enjoyable musical experiences of all, astounding the audience with their musicality, technical prowess, and artistry. Hearing these young musicians each year, we anticipate a bright future for chamber music.

Tina Kun is a longtime board member of the Mill Valley Chamber Music Society. Abby Wasserman served on the MVCMS board in 1988-89.
A

bove the mantle in the Mill Valley Outdoor Art Club library hangs an impressive portrait of a woman dressed in the fashion of 1902. She seems to reign over the room where club members congregate, and yet many who pass under the portrait don’t know who she is, or why her picture is there. The woman is Laura Lyon White, the wife of Lovell White, one of the first presidents of the Tamalpais Land & Water Company. And though never a president of the Outdoor Art Club, she founded it.

Mrs. White was born Laura Lyon on April 12, 1839 in French Lick, Indiana. Wildly independent as a girl (she once ran away from home, living on bread and radishes for three months), she grew into an intelligent young woman. She attended Oberlin College, where she embraced the broadminded ideals taught at the institution, including abolitionism. She would be influenced by those ideas for the rest of her life.

In 1858, Laura married Lovell White and followed her new husband west to pursue opportunities opened up by the California mining boom. They set up a merchandising store in the mining town of French Corral. These years were hard on Laura. She gave birth to two children, only to lose them to scarlet fever. (She would have a third child, Ralston, 20 years later.) She also witnessed the devastation that mining had on both nature and the mineworkers themselves.

While working in French Corral, Lovell White met San Francisco banker William C. Ralston, who offered him a job at his bank, the San Francisco Savings Union. In 1864, the couple left the rural mining town and moved to San Francisco, where the city’s social elite welcomed them.

The Whites arrived at a time of great industrial expansion. Aware of the negative impact on both the working poor and the environment, Laura used her membership in San Francisco’s “Blue Book” society—with its access to the city’s most powerful businessmen and politicians—to advocate against the negative consequences of uncontrolled industrialization.

The irony should not be lost here. Laura’s financier husband enjoyed great success and wealth due to the very industrialization that Laura seemed to be fighting. She always insisted, however, that it was not progress she objected to, but rather, unregulated progress.

Laura White belonged to numerous women’s clubs, including political and suffrage groups, and many of her accomplishments were achieved through these clubs. Although women’s clubs are sometimes associated with negative images, such as the gossipy
“Pickalittles” portrayed in the musical The Music Man, that image belies the true value of the clubs during the late 19th century and first years of the 20th century. These clubs provided a platform and structure for political engagement before women had the right to vote. They took up civic, state, and national causes that no government or professional entity was addressing.

In 1897, Laura formed the California Club, which focused on a variety issues, including the establishment of kindergartens; anti-truancy and mandatory schooling legislation; a juvenile justice system; improved tenement and workshop conditions; public playgrounds; and what was called “outdoor art,” a philosophical element of the “City Beautiful” movement. In his article “A Cult of Beauty: the public life and civic work of Laura Lyon White,” Cameron Binkley writes,

For White, artistry or ‘outdoor art’ was key to civic planning and urban design. She had seen directly how environment shaped the human condition and believed that urban dwellers required beauty and nature to remain healthy.

Women’s clubs were responsible for the establishment of 75 percent of the country’s public libraries, kindergartens in the public schools, the creation of food and drug regulations, and the conservation and preservation of American forests. By 1898, the California Club had become one of the largest women’s civic associations in the country, and the prevention of forest degradation, caused by poor logging practices and other factors, was one of its major campaigns.

Nationally, women’s clubs were forcing many such subjects into the legislative process. They characterized their efforts as “municipal housekeeping,” a phrase undoubtedly selected for its non-threatening and domestic tone. One cause that Laura fought for passionately over many years was the preservation of the Calaveras giant sequoias. In 1908 she went to Washington, D.C. and finally convinced Congress to pass a bill allowing for the purchase of Calaveras Big Trees and its conversion to a national park. On February 18, 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill with a gold pen, which he presented as a gift to Laura.

Laura White was unaltering in her convictions. Her accomplishments ranged from environmentalism to the rights of children and the disenfranchised, but she commonly redirected credit for these accomplishments away from herself and toward the men she wanted most to influence. This strategy garnered men’s constant praise, even as she pressured them to adopt her proposed changes.

In 1900, Laura White co-founded the California Federation of Women’s Clubs (CFWC), fortifying the influence of individual women’s clubs in the state. As founder and vice-president, she was the presumptive nominee for CFWC president in 1902, but events took an unexpected turn. At the CFWC conference that year, members voted on whether they were in favor of allowing “colored” women’s clubs into the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. When the CFWC voted “no,” Laura withdrew her name for nomination. She had not forgotten the lessons learned at Oberlin. “Nothing is fixed,” she said at the time. “Everything moves, changes. Nature has set no permanent nor eternal stamp of

California women won the vote in 1911, but all of Laura’s achievements were done before the 19th Amendment gave all American women the right to vote. She accomplished her goals through the application of charm, shrewd intelligence, determination, and humor.
Maybeck’s and Laura’s paths crossed again between 1911 and 1915. In 1911, she was one of a delegation to go to Washington, D.C. and successfully argue the case for holding the 1915 Pan Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. She was then appointed to the Exposition’s Women’s Board, serving as vice-president. Maybeck designed the Exposition’s Palace of Fine Arts.

Laura White died in 1916, not long after the exposition closed.

Credit for at least one of the Outdoor Art Club’s biggest achievements has been largely forgotten—the establishment of Muir Woods National Monument. The traditional story of Muir Woods tells of Laura’s husband, Lovell, asking William Kent to buy the pristine “Redwood Canyon” and save it from development. But wouldn’t Laura White have been the more likely one to appeal to Kent, her friend and fellow Progressive Republican, on behalf of the forest (or at least insist that her husband do it)? The headline of a January 1908 article in the San Francisco Call about the transfer of the land to the federal government read, “Mill Valley Women Win in Fight Against Water Corporation.” The article went on to state:

William Kent, a wealthy Marin county resident, and the Outdoor Art [Club] of Mill Valley, have outwitted the Tamalpais water company in its efforts to condemn for water purposes a section of the picturesque redwood canyon . . .

Associated with the league was Mrs. Lovell White [who] gave full cooperation to the movement.

Laura Lyon White never served as president of the Outdoor Art Club, but the organization’s archived letters and newspaper accounts clearly indicate her role as a “Leader-at-Large.” Her efforts on behalf of Mill Valley set the course of the town for years to come, but oddly, the only publicly accessible tribute to her in Mill Valley is an obscure dead-end road with only two houses on it—Lyon Place. California women won the vote in 1911, but all of Laura’s achievements were done before the 19th Amendment gave all American women the right to vote. She accomplished her goals through the application of charm, shrewd intelligence, determination, and humor. She believed that her work in women’s clubs prepared women for the day when they would not be marginalized by virtue of their gender. “Yes,” she said in a 1912 interview, “when we get our rights we’ll all earn our own living—that is the only respectable way—and then we’ll marry all the handsome men.”

Joyce Kleiner is the author of Legendary Locals of Mill Valley. Her column, “Civics Lessons,” ran in the Mill Valley Herald from 2007 to 2013, and her essays have appeared in literary journals, newspapers, and magazines.

Laura Lyon White’s Accomplishments

**FOUNDER**
- The California Club
- The California Federation of Women’s Clubs
- The San Francisco Outdoor Art League
- The Sempervirens Club (Save the Redwoods Foundation)
- The Outdoor Art Club

**LEADERSHIP**
- 41st District Assembly Club
- National Women’s Suffrage Association
- The General Federation of Women’s Clubs (chairman of the forestry committee)

**CIVICS AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS**
- President of the San Francisco Municipal Playground Commission
- Delegate to the Conference of Governors in Washington, D.C.
- State president of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress
- Pan Pacific Exposition Women’s Board

**ADVOCATE**
- Universal kindergartens
- Passage of compulsory education legislation
- Passage of a juvenile court bill
- Creation of the first public playground on the Pacific Coast
- Improved working and living conditions for the underprivileged
- The appointment of women physicians in women’s mental health institutions
- Formation of the Calaveras Big Trees Reserve
- Protection for redwood trees in Big Basin—Santa Cruz, CA
- Establishment of a state forestry department and Forestry Service training program
- Preservation of Telegraph Hill as a civic monument
- Successfully lobbied in Washington, D.C. to bring the Pan Pacific International Exposition to San Francisco in 1912
- Preservation of what would become Muir Woods National Monument

Marsh, winding waterways, sailboats: Will Brooks’s watercolor captures a long-forgotten way of life in Mill Valley. John T. Reed’s home to the right, on his Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio land grant, looked out onto a navigable landscape. His homestead was reached by a path from a boat landing near present-day Valley Circle, which at that time connected to what is now Locke Lane. It included his two-story adobe, built in 1843, and four other buildings which may represent the remains of his first burned adobe, as well as a barn, drying shed, and an outhouse. They stood near the intersection of Locke Lane and La Goma Avenue, where on March 28, 2015, a historical plaque was dedicated.

The nearby Indian village, Anamas, was known by the Coast Miwok Indians for its port. When the Spanish military at the San Francisco Presidio needed lumber they came to Mill Valley, toppled the redwoods, and floated the logs down Corte Madera (“cut wood”) creek. So Reed was just carrying on a tradition when he settled here, in 1834, and used the waterways near Anamas for transporting goods. His family and friends arrived by sailboat and on foot. All visitors were received graciously with a bed for the night, hearty meals, and a horse if the visitor needed it. There was nothing to be paid—this was the style of the Mexican period in California.

The Coast Miwok believed this land would be theirs again, after the Mexican government in 1834 told the missions they had to give up their vast landed property. But in short order, the Mexican government began granting Coast Miwok land piece by piece to Europeans and to Mexican soldiers. Reed helped the Indians out by employing them on his ranch. One, Neri, was on the team that originally surveyed the rancho.

If we mentally remove all of today’s houses and trees, we can appreciate what a stunning setting this was during and preceding the Reed years. From one side of Reed’s home you had a view of marshes, creeks and waterways that flowed into Richardson Bay, and on the other side it was a clear shot to the mountain.

Will Brooks’s watercolor was painted when John and Hilaria’s daughter, Inez, her husband, Thomas Deffebach, and their four children were living here. The wooden beams of the adobe burned in the 1880s, making the home uninhabitable. By that time Inez and Thomas were dead, and their children were living with their aunt, Hilarita Reed Lyford, in what we know today as Strawberry. The plaque placed by the Mill Valley Historical Society honors the memory of them all.

Chief Marin, our county’s namesake, was said to have been born in Anamas, but he left the village for Mission Dolores in San Francisco 30 years before Reed arrived. The two men would have known each other eventually, during an eight month period in 1836-1837, when the older, rebellious Marin was living and working at Mission San Rafael and Reed was its young civilian administrator.
though often people call it a circumnavigation, the circumambulation of Mt. Tamalpais is decidedly a walk, not a voyage. Hiking boots are used, not canoes.

After traveling extensively in Mexico and some of Western Europe in the early 1960s, my wife and I were settling into life in Mill Valley, starting a family and clearing a lot for a house and garden. I was pleased to return to a job at Dimitroff’s Frame Shop just after it was moved from the Bank of America building up to 173 Throckmorton.

I had been a fan of Gary Snyder’s poetry for some time, being raised with similar experiences in the Northwest woods. Also, I liked his “plain speak” everyday English manner of expression. So when I read in the Haight-Ashbury Times about a proposed walk around the mountain to be led by Snyder, just returned from a Buddhist monastery in Japan, I wanted to participate. That Snyder was involved with Zen was an added incentive. I had been on a Far Eastern cruise with the U.S. Navy, visiting temples and shrines and ambling on rural lanes looking at traditional houses and farmsteads. I had enjoyed Alan Watts’s KPFA broadcast for years and had met him at the Dimitroffs’. In San Francisco my wife and I met Bill and Laura Kwong at a wedding banquet. Bill, now Jakusho Kwong, roshi (spiritual teacher) of Sonoma Mt. Zen Center, introduced me to Shunryu Suzuki Roshi of San Francisco Zen Center and Trudy Dixon, editor of Suzuki’s Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind.

So, the circumambulation was an excellent match-up with my interests, which included hiking trails on Mt. Tamalpais in all directions and in all seasons. Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, and Philip Whalen, Buddhist-inclined poets all, had “opened the mountain” over a year earlier. “Opening” means initiating rituals in a certain location. Snyder had walked in mountains near Kyoto with “mountain yogis” of the area. Bob Greensfelder, a Homestead Valley resident, accompanied Snyder on the second spiral walk (circumambulation) a few months after the Opening. The first publicly announced walk took place on a pleasant early February day in 1967.

Cultural changes were happening more than I knew. The somber “Beats” had segued into colorful Hippies. When I showed up that February morning I was surprised by the flower-children atmosphere: long flowing dresses, long hair, lots of color, jangling

Top: Matthew Davis on the Spring Circumambulation, March 22, 2009. The spot is called ‘tree-out-of-rock’ and the mantra the group chants there is to Chanda Maharoshana, Great Lord of Heat. Photo by Willo Hausman.

Left: Trail map of the circumambulation with chanting stations marked. The walk begins and ends at Redwood Creek. Courtesy of Matthew Davis.
ankle bracelets, bells on toes, and flute music in the air, along with an occasional whiff of patchouli oil. There was a feeling of festivity, of celebration.

Other Mill Valley residents were there: Greensfelder, Albert Saijo (himself a Beat poet), Eugene Doherty, Jay Blaise, and Larry and Catherine Shaw. Snyder led us in a few chants, including the Heart Sutra, printed on a small handbill.

As we crossed Redwood Creek and began heading up the Dipsea Trail, I found myself walking at the front, eagerly looking for the second chanting station, which I hoped I would recognize by Gary’s description in his poetic account of the opening hike. The walk is strenuous, but we were young. The occasional stations allowed a re-charge of energy and oxygen in the blood. The route took us to the top of East Peak in a roundabout fashion. By the time we again reached Redwood Creek near twilight, our muscles and feet were well used, but the main feeling was of a deep connection to the mountain and to each other. Close to 70 people made that walk.

Several of us wanted to do the hike again, and we decided on Buddha’s Birthday in April the following year. Allen Ginsberg led chanting on that 1968 walk, with the largest attendance of any to date. Soon we regulars wanted to join in this ritual hike more than once a year. We decided to do so quarterly, on solstices and equinoxes, and dropped the April walk—too soon after spring equinox.

Tom Killion, Robin Collier, and Bill Kwong were often participants; and Snyder has returned a few times. When Greensfelder moved to San Juan Ridge (where Snyder has lived for many decades), I became, by default, the leader. On one walk Bob, his four daughters, and I were the only participants. Once, on the night of a full lunar eclipse in winter, Collier and I did it, walking on frozen ground on the north side. We had trouble seeing the trail on the final downhill into Muir Woods.

Snyder’s account in his *Mountains and Rivers* collection has 10 stations, including Redwood Creek at beginning and end. Whalen’s account in *On Bears Head* has eight; he omitted the start and the finish. Changes over the years have led to 12 ritual locations, plus a rest stop at Pan Toll on the way up, a lunch time by Portrero Meadow, and a short detour to what we call Fern Spring on the railway grade as we come down.

Two people who once came talked endlessly about their computer activity. After that we decided to not talk as we climb the mountain, assuming an attitude of walking meditation (*kinhin*). Participants took to that silence very well, but occasionally other hikers can be spooked by our suddenly appearing, their talking having masked the sounds of our footsteps.

Next to me, the most persistent hiker of the circular route is Laura Pettibone, who has gone around the mountain 80 times or more. One wet winter day she and I were the only ones to make the hike. Now she is pleased to bring up the rear, helping those who want to do so stay on course.

Since a rather horrendous bike crash in March 2014, I have not been able to do the walk. My son, Oren, who first did it around age nine, has been leading the walk the past year, doing a first-rate job from what I hear. I am grateful for the 47 years I was able to make the grade, and grateful to him for taking it on. His wife, Willo, sometimes comes too.

Recent turnouts have been from one to two dozen. Some come every time, some are intermittent, and others have learned about it and want to try it. A few do it on their own and maybe tell me about it later.

One might wonder how we could keep doing the same hike over and over, year after year, for over four decades, and not become bored. Though it’s been largely the same route, each walk has had its own flavor in terms of weather (two have had snow), participants, and tempo. The different seasons make for variety, and the fall of one year might be quite a contrast to the fall hike the year before or after. There is no boredom if one pays attention, being as aware as possible of each time, and place, the wildflowers that are blooming, the other creatures around.

Though I can’t do the hike, I’ve been attending the opening chants. In September 2014 Mike Scott, Tom Killion, and Gary Snyder conspired to present me with some treasures along with spoken appreciation: a deluxe edition of Snyder’s *Mountains and Rivers Without End* and Killion’s block print of the Lone Tree Spring locale. I felt very honored.

The basic attribute of the circumambulation is that it takes intention and effort to the point of exhaustion, but the glow of achievement by the end makes it all worthwhile. The beauty one sees along the way adds to that glow. Each station offers a unique feel. I’ve noticed that disjointed as people might be chanting the Heart Sutra at the beginning, they always do much better by the end of the day. The experience encourages harmony.

Matthew Davis is the author of *On Foot in Homestead and Opening the Mountain (with Mike Scott)*.

Allen Ginsberg, bare-chested with beard and glasses, chants at the Rock Springs station on the second Mt. Tamalpais Circumambulation on Buddha’s Birthday, April 8, 1968. Matthew Davis is seated at right in a white T-shirt. Philip Whalen stands immediately behind him. Photo by Bob Greensfelder.
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