In preparation for the Mill Valley Historical Society’s Annual Walk into History, you’ll find some fascinating history about Homestead Valley, along with a map of its primary streets. Homestead celebrates its centennial this year and we have local resident Chuck Oldenburg to thank for his keen interest and hard work in sharing this valley’s lore with us. For those of you who have been walking through history with us for a number of years, you may remember that we walked in Homestead Valley back in 1986. Chuck has researched and written about some new areas that we’re visiting this year and John Leonard has written some relevant facts about the Walk, as well as authored the other articles in the Review.

As one of the unincorporated communities that border Mill Valley, Homestead Valley maintains a strong identity of its own. You’re invited to share its history by starting our Annual Walk into History at the Homestead Valley Community Center on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, beginning at 9:30 a.m. with the last Walk scheduled to leave at 3:00 p.m.

Additionally, in our Annual Historical Review, we are focusing on two of Mill Valley’s earliest service organizations: the Freemasons’ Mill Valley Lodge No. 356 and the I.O.O.F’s (Independent Order of Odd Fellows) Mt. Tamalpais Lodge No. 399. The Masons are also celebrating their centennial this year, along with Homestead Valley. And even though the Mill Valley Odd Fellows suffered their demise over twenty-five years ago, we can at least share a small part of who they were and what they meant in our local history.

Their buildings are a constant reminder of these organizations’ contributions to and presence in our community. You can also read about the Masonic Hall, located across the street from Mill Valley City Hall, and the Odd Fellows’ Hall, located across the street from today’s Sweetwater Bar.

Take a moment to consider how significantly service organizations contribute to the social fabric of our community. As our local demographics have changed and our culture has evolved, so have our local service organizations. Their members’ commitment to the goals of these organizations has contributed immeasurably to our sense of community. The Masons continue to serve their members and fill a civic role in Mill Valley that is very much alive.

Congratulations to Homestead Valley and the Mill Valley Lodge of the Masons on their 100th birthdays.

Joan Murray, President
Happy Hundredth Birthday

Homestead Valley is celebrating its hundredth birthday this year, dating to the 1903 sub-division of Homestead Valley by the Tamalpais Land and Water Company. Formerly part of the Throckmorton Ranch, parcels of which were once leased to Portuguese dairymen, the newly created Homestead Valley lots were sold by Ralston White, the son of Lovell White. This occurred 13 years after the 1890 subdivision and auction of lots in Mill Valley. However, Mill Valley, which incorporated in 1900, dates its centennial from its incorporation as a City, while unincorporated Homestead dates its history from the dates of its subdivision, so that the centennial celebrations of Mill Valley and Homestead are only three years apart. Homestead Valley is, in fact unique, being the only area in Southern Marin that is in a different Supervisorial District!

But the real interest of Homestead is its configuration. On one side it approaches busy Miller Avenue, yet it is a place apart from Mill Valley's bustle. Look at the map of Homestead shows that it has relatively few streets. Montford Avenue on one side, Reed-Laverne on the other, and Evergreen between them, and the cross-streets and lanes, characterize Homestead. Evergreen ends at what was for many years Homestead School and is now the Marin Horizon School. Laverne and Montford continue into the canyon, meeting at Stolte Grove, behind which houses climb the sides of the canyon and make use of a collective mailbox arrangement. This area was originally called Camp Tamalpais, and was a summer camp for San Francisco residents until the Great Depression ended its use as a resort. Stolte Grove itself is named after Fred Stolte, who became acquainted with the grove that would eventually be named after him because he rented a room in Lillian Ferguson's home in San Francisco and used to come over to help her with the three acre property she named Three...
"It's so beautiful here," and these words are inscribed on a plaque in the grove.

Carol Budds, a long-time Mill Valley resident, offers what she refers to as 'Ancient Memories of Stolte Grove'. "My first memory of the Stolte Family was when I was in the primary class at the Mill Valley Community Church and Virginia was a teacher in the Sunday School. We all celebrated her 18th birthday. In the quiet 1930's Mill Valley days that followed, an annual event was the church Sunday School picnic in Stolte Grove. The teachers (all volunteers) and mothers prepared the picnic lunch which was eaten at tables under the redwoods. Lunch was followed by games such as softball or tug of war. (There was no amphitheatre nor any fences.) We could hardly wait for the time to pass (generally one hour after eating) until we could go swimming. I have no recollection of where we changed into our bathing suits, but we swam in the cold creek water that filled their "lake."

"During those depression years and well into the 1950's the Community Church had an active Men's Club and Fred Stolte, Virginia's father, who worked for the San Francisco Examiner and my father attended their monthly evening dinner meetings. Once a year it was an outdoor dinner at Stolte Grove, never catered, but prepared by Ann Stolte and her committee of ladies from the church."

"Ann Stolte and my mother became friends playing bridge and I recall being included at a large dinner party which the Stoltes gave in the grove in 1946. It was the time of the meetings in San Francisco for the formation of the United Nations and Virginia was one of the young Bay Area persons selected to work there. The meat served at dinner was venison and I shall always remember their telling us after dinner that Fred had shot the deer from the bathroom window!"

Groves, and on which she built a home in 1904. After her San Francisco home was destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake, she moved to the home in Three Groves. Fred Stolte worked for the San Francisco Examiner and liked the Homestead area so much that in the early 1900's, he built a small cabin across the street from the Ferguson residence for weekend getaways and vacations. Over time he expanded the house and moved there permanently in 1916 with his wife, Ann. His daughter, Virginia Stolte Spalding, who was raised here with her brother, Frank, was overheard to express the simple and heartfelt sentiment "It's so beautiful here," and these words are inscribed on a plaque in the grove. In 1975 Stolte Grove was purchased by the Homestead Valley Land Trust with funds from a 1973 bond issue. The residence on the property is privately owned.

Another feature of Homestead that cannot go without mention is the Pixie Trail, which runs above Montford Avenue and comes down close to the Montford Street entrance to Stolte Grove. This trail got its name from an English woman, Mrs. Hunsinger, who used to take children for walks along it and refer to the Eucalyptus nuts on the trail as Pixie caps. Large Eucalyptus trees are still to be seen along the Trail and goats can sometimes be seen grazing on the slope below it.

"Several years later Virginia's dance at the Mark Hopkins began teaching in the Mill Valley and also teaching, but in the 1950's, the creek filled lake and only swimming pools."

Homestead is a place apart, both and significant ways. It is connected to other holdings, the Tamalpais Land Mill Valley which increased in size to subdivide first Mill Valley and the Miller Avenue commercial area, a community center for Homestead and became a Buddhist Temple.

Nearby, Whole Foods, which opened years ago, has become a neighborhood. Further down Valley stands The Maples (at the cartouche near the roof), the Jacob Gardner Rosevare, the mother of the Tamalpais Land Mill Valley's most prominent citizen. He was hired by the Tamalpais Land of the Tamalpais Ranch, the Valley's most prominent citizen. Mill Valley's first school, Sonora, he seems also to have been Rosevare mentions some of life written in 1957, a year before kind permission of Gene Smith, Historical Society, in the 1986 Mill Valley was featured in the Historical its conclusion: "As I finish writing this article I was prompted me to write this article for the next generation to the next, which is recording and preserving. Readers, enjoy this year's Historical Review."
The home was in Three Groves. Fred Stolte the Homestead area so much that in 1927, Virginia Stolte Spalding, who could not express the simple and serene words are inscribed on a plaque in Grove was purchased by the Trust with funds from a 1973 bond. The property is privately owned.

Instead that cannot go without it, which runs above Montford Avenue near the Montford Street entrance to its name from an English woman, used to take children for walks along it as nuts on the trail as Pixie caps. She still to be seen along the Trail and seen grazing on the slope below it.

I was what she refers to as 'Ancient the Stolte Family was when I was in church and Virginia was a teacher in this day. In the quiet 1930's Mill Valley a Sunday School picnic in Stolte prepared the picnic lunch which was loved by games such as softball or rice. We could hardly wait for the we could go swimming, I have no suits, but we swam in the cold creek.

Nearby, Whole Foods, which opened to considerable controversy a dozen years ago, has become an anchor for the Homestead neighborhood. Farther down Miller in the direction of downtown Mill Valley stands The Maples (easily identified by the 1889 in the cartouche near the roof), the second of four homes lived in by Lillian Gardner Roseveare, the mother of Gene Stocking and daughter of Jacob Gardner and Annie Roberts Gardner. Jacob Gardner was the last steward of the Throckmorton Ranch, a position of considerable trust. He was hired by the Tamalpais Land and Water Company after the sale of the Throckmorton Ranch, went on to become one of early Mill Valley's most prominent citizens, and was instrumental in establishing Mill Valley's first school, Summit School. An imposing figure on horseback, he seems also to have been a gentle man. Lillian Gardner Roseveare mentions some of his sayings in a lovely account of her early life written in 1957, a year before she passed away. It is printed, by kind permission of Gene Stocking, a longtime member of the Historical Society, in the 1986 Mill Valley Historical Review, the last time Homestead was featured in the Historical Society's annual History Walk. I cannot forbear quoting its conclusion: "At I finish writing, I realize it was my daughter's enthusiasm that prompted me to write this autobiography." It is this enthusiasm, transmitted from one generation to the next, which makes the history of Homestead and Mill Valley worth recounting and preserving. Readers interested in more about Homestead's history can refer to the 1986 Mill Valley Historical Review or to longtime Homestead resident and local historian Chuck Oldenburg.

Readers, enjoy this year's History Walk. And Happy Hundredth Birthday, Homestead.
Benjamin Franklin was a Mason, as were Presidents George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry Truman.

Masonry was of particular importance in an era that provided few ready-made alternatives to the practice of one's occupation and the exercise of one's religion. But the Masons are more than a fraternal order; beneath the elaborate pageantry of Freemasonry stands a foundation of dedication to civic values. This is why so many of early Mill Valley's leading citizens were involved in the establishment of Mill Valley Lodge No. 356, including Harvey Klyce, Louis Janes, Frank Bostwick, Tom Greaves, Fred Schlingman, Casper Gardner, and Gordon Selwood. However, Mill Valley's Lodge has the possibly unique attribute of having had non-Masons as well as Masons involved in its initial attempt at organization!
of two lots and containing, according to Harvey Klyce, three small stores and two cottages. The purchase price was $3,500. Mill Valley’s Masonic Hall was built on one of the lots. The other lot was subsequently sold. (As a comparison the property on which the Outdoor Art Club and its grounds were constructed was purchased in 1904 for $3,000. Land was certainly cheaper in those days!)

Harvey Klyce built the Lodge Hall, and is believed to have been the principal architect. Construction of a building for Lodge activities was not a simple matter. A Mason wrote of such construction, “It requires not only a talented architect, but an experienced Freemason, to build a Lodge which shall contain every requisite for the proper administration of all the ceremonies of the Order.” Among other things, he recommends that the structure, “be isolated, and, if possible, surrounded with lofty walls, so as to be included in a court, and apart from any other buildings.” If this is not possible, “The Lodge should be formed in an upper story; and if there be any contiguous buildings, the windows should be either in the roof, or...
very high from the floor," to ensure the security of Masonic ceremonies. A look at the Masonic Hall, which is still an imposing building in downtown Mill Valley and was even more so at the time of its construction, reveals the influence of such considerations.

The prestige of Mill Valley's early Masons was a match for their new Hall. As noted in an article in the October 16, 1903 "San Francisco Call" newspaper, "The lodge consists of the most prominent residents of Mill Valley as well as some of San Francisco's foremost business men, whose domiciles are under the shadow of Mount Tamalpais."

The article goes on to say of the Hall that, "The lower floor has been leased to the City of Mill Valley for municipal offices." Indeed, the Mill Valley City Council held its meetings there from September of 1903 to 1908. This arrangement might have been facilitated by Louis Janes, who was Secretary of the Tamalpais Land and Water Company and a booster of Mill Valley becoming a municipality and later of the Mountain Railroad.

The Mill Valley Masons soon established an affiliated branch, the Order of the Eastern Star, comprised of Masons and women with proper Masonic affiliations, and the Lodge's Hall became a place for single men and women to become acquainted.

There were 372 Master Masons registered in Mill Valley in 1930. By 1940 that number had declined to 299, but by 1949 the number had risen again to 399. Another way to trace the history of the Masons in Mill Valley is to look at the City's mayors. Thirteen of the first Eighteen Mayors of Mill Valley were Masons. When the present City Hall was dedicated in 1936, the City Hall Dedication Suppformal Past Master's portrait Mayor's were Masons, Willia1934-36 and again from 1949 to 1950.

Stanley Brangrove, who has served as a Valley Mason, notes several organizations such as the Masons, the "paddle box" of the ferries, wheels allowed them to speak World War II, and the suburban lifestyle opening of the Golden Gate system. Masons who commute to work more easily accessible and of other Valley Masons, one curious opening of the Golden Gate System. Masons who commute to work more easily accessible and of other Valley Masons, one curious opening of the Golden Gate System. Masons who commute to work more easily accessible and of other Valley Masons, one curious opening of the Golden Gate System. Masons who commute to work more easily accessible and of other Valley Masons, one curious opening of the Golden Gate System. Masons who commute to work more easily accessible and.

Today many men are unaware Freemasonry does not solicit membership; men with an interest in Masonry must apply for membership. However, the Masons have a better chance of being accepted into many other fraternal orders, according to Stanley Brangrove, who notes the history of Masonry in an interview with his son. The Masonic Hall has taken on a new lease with the Mill Valley Volunteer Firefighters Men's Pancake Breakfast, as well as hosting public lectures. This Anniversary of the Masonic Mill Valley is an opportunity for anyone interested in the rich history of Masonry to learn more at the Lodge's television series public access programming.
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was dedicated in 1936, the picture of Mayor Bagshaw that was printed in the Special City Hall Dedication Supplement of the Mill Valley Record of July 31, 1936, was his formal Past Master's portrait from the Mill Valley Lodge. But only two subsequent Mayors were Masons, William Hamilton in 1941 and Walter Johnson, Mayor from 1934-36 and again from 1944-46. The era of Masonic civic prominence was coming to an end. In recent decades the Masonic Lodge's membership has stabilized at a level of 130-150 members.

Stanley Bransgrove, who has been an invaluable source of information about the Mill Valley Masons, notes several reasons for the decline of membership in fraternal organizations such as the Masons, include the rise of service organizations which were more easily accessible and less demanding of members' time. In the case of the Mill Valley Masons, one curious factor that may have contributed to the decline was the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge and the subsequent elimination of the old ferryboat systems. Masons who commuted to and from San Francisco frequently met by the "paddle box" of the ferries, where the noise generated by the turning of the paddle wheels allowed them to speak confidentially. More broadly, the Great Depression, World War II, and the suburban automobile and consumer-oriented society that emerged in the 1950's reduced the appeal of lodges and societies. Families began to gather in one another's homes to watch slides and movies of recent vacations, and then came television! Later on, the generational schism that occurred in the 1960's alienated many young people from the institutions of their parents' generation.

Today many men are unaware that Freemasonry does not solicit for membership; men with an interest in Masonry must apply for membership. However, the Masons have adapted better to changing circumstances than many other fraternal orders, and according to Stanley Bransgrove there is a renewed interest in Freemasonry. The Masonic Hall has resumed a civic function by hosting the Mill Valley Volunteer Firefighters Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast, as well as having hosted public lectures. This hundredth Anniversary of the Masonic Lodge in Mill Valley is an opportune time for anyone interested in the rich tradition of Masonry to learn more about it. More information is available on the website www.freemasonry.biz or from the Lodge's television series on local public access programming.
The
ODD FELLOWS
Building Comes Alive

Another fraternal organization with a place in early Mill Valley history was that of the Odd Fellows, short for Independent Order of Odd Fellows, or I.O.O.F. The Mount Tamalpais Lodge No. 399 of the I.O.O.F. was instituted in Mill Valley on September 27, 1907. A number of Mill Valley's Masons were among the charter members of the I.O.O.F. Lodge, including John Wooten, Casper Gardner, Horace Henderson, and Christopher Becker. Other important members included Frank Bostwick, S.M. Burt, Bernard Grethel, N.C. Ortman, Jonathan Perry, E.C. Lund, W.A. Sutcliffe, K.J. Streeting, Albino Leoni, Carl Larson, Henry T. Hambly, Jesse W. Aron Halt, Arthur E. Anderson, Robert B. Williams, Joseph Grant Jones and Thomas Hansen.

The Odd Fellows met for a time in the Keystone Building and in 1909 constructed a building at the corner of Millwood and East Blithedale of two stories, and containing a 20 x 30-foot stage.

But the Odd Fellows are best remembered by the post-World War II generation in Mill Valley for what, subsequent to its purchase by them in 1952, was called the Odd Fellows' Hall. Located on the corner of Throckmorton and Madrona streets, this two story structure features retail outlets on either side of a recessed entrance to what began as, and is now once more, a theater.

Fred Schlingman, a member of the Masons who owned and developed considerable tracts of property in Mill Valley's early years, sold the lot on which the building stands to G. H. Mehrton of Berkeley, who owned several theaters in Berkeley and apparently saw a business opportunity in Mill Valley. The lot was purchased on December 1, 1914, and the theater opened its doors in 1915. (A postcard from 1908 shows a building on the lot, but it may have been taken down by the time the lot was purchased, since there is mention of a contract to build being given to Chris Armbruster in April of 1915.) The Mill Valley Record advertised the opening of the Hub Theatre — three performances of a Charlie Chaplin movie at 25 cents per seat. The theater was first operated by Charles Pabst, who had previously the Old Brown's store. In 1917, M. Arthur L. Slade and $1 for children and eventually the first Mill Valley Film Festival was organized.
story was that of the O.O.F. The Mount on September term members of the Henderson, and Istwick, S.M. Burt, Sudcliffe, K.J., Aron Halt, Arthur E. mson. 1909 constructed a es, and containing a II generation in Mill called the Odd of Throckmorton structure features used entrance to what theater. Masons who owned property in Mill which the building k, who owned several saw a business was purchased on opened its doors in a building on the lot, y the time the lot was a contract to build (April of 1915). The screening of the Hub charlie Chaplin movie first operated by Charles Pabst, who had previously operated a part time theater on Miller Avenue near the Old Brown's store. In 1917, Mehrten sold the property to R.G. Sutherland and around the same time, George Cooke became the manager. He would manage the theater until competition from the new Sequoia Theater put it out of business in 1929. Hartie Krausegill played piano and organ for the silent films. Bill Ross recollects, "I had many fond memories of the Hub Theater. Admission to the Saturday afternoon performances was 5 cents. The Saturday showings always included a Wild West Serial with successive episodes extending over several weeks. These were silent movies. Many is the time that I would fall asleep to be carried home to my mother by George Cook, theater manager."

Ownership of the building changed hands again. Tom Caprin may have purchased it in 1936 for $15,000. What is known is that Conrad Caprin in turn sold it to Odd Fellows Lodge #399 in February of 1952, at a price the Mill Valley Record reported as being between $20,000 and $25,000. The purchase price indicates that at this time the Odd Fellows were fairly well off as an organization. However, this may have been a high water mark for the organization. It continued to function for many more years, using the hall for meetings along with the women's equivalent of the Odd Fellows, the Rebekah's. But the Odd Fellows dwindled in membership until finally, in 1978, Lodge No. 399 was terminated without the greater community even being aware of the fact. Like the Masons, the Odd Fellows had secret rituals, but the primary purpose of the Odd Fellows as a benevolent society for the support of needy members became less important with the introduction of various forms of government support such as Social Security and unemployment assistance.

When the Hall was not being used for Lodge activities it was available for rental, and the final years of the Odd Fellows in Mill Valley coincided with the relatively brief but unforgettable period when the Hall served as the venue for the Saturday Nite Movie. The Saturday Nite Movie was originally the brainchild of Don Taylor and Ben Myron. After a year or so, Mark Fishkin, who had been looking for a theater to show classic and contemporary films outside the ambit of commercial theaters like the Sequoia, took over the Saturday Nite Movie. He leased the Hall from the Rebekahs, the O.O.F. Women's Order, who with the disbandment of the Odd Fellows, owned the building, and established relations with film distributors. Mark, who grew up in New York and took film courses at the University of Maryland, originally thought of being a screenwriter. He arrived in Mill Valley in 1976 and was not long in making his presence felt. In addition to putting on the Saturday films at what continued to be referred to as the Odd Fellows' Hall, he showed the films at the College of Marin. And along with arrangement of the film schedules and the publicity he worked on setting up the first Mill Valley Film Festival, which debuted in August of 1978, with most of the films being shown at the Hall, along with midnight films at the Sequoia.

The Saturday Nite movies were always affordable, with prices starting at $2 for adults and $1 for children and eventually going to $3 for adults and $1.50 for kids. Similarly, the first Mill Valley Film Festival was run on an $11,000 shoestring, including funding.
from Fidelity Savings (now Citicorp) and $500 from the Mill Valley Art Commission (note that Proposition 13 was passed the same year) and help from Sali Lieberman and the Mill Valley Center for Performing Arts which then operated out of the Golf Clubhouse and eventually became the Marin Theater Company.

I asked Mark what was involved in showing the classic and foreign films, some of them featuring exciting new directors, that residents who attended the Saturday Night Movies remember so fondly. He said the most important thing in putting together the schedules, starting in January of 1978, was to plan backward, researching films and checking on their availability, then getting on the phone to the distributors, and, finally, taking care of the publicity. The films were shown with two 16 millimeter projectors, and around 150 films were shown during the course of the Saturday Night Movies. Mark remembers most fondly the community-related aspects of showing the films, including the Mother's Day Shows and the Tam High School students who helped with the shows. He said that years afterward some of these former students told him they were happy that they always knew what they would be doing on Saturday night and that it was something they enjoyed. Mark also mentioned that sometimes the enormously gifted musician Michael Bloomfield would sit down and play the piano before the films started. So the "Odd Fellows' Hall" has featured, in its history, Hattie Krausegill and Michael Bloomfield on piano!

As the Mill Valley Film Festival got bigger, the technical difficulties and costs involved with presenting films in the Hall, together with Mark's increasingly heavy schedule, brought the Saturday Night Movie run to an end.

Meanwhile, the former Hub Theater is a theater once more. Lucy Mercer, the current owner of the building, has restored the theater. Her vision is to make the theater a vehicle for the wide variety of talent in the community and says, "Theater and music and art can fill you and make your heart sing." In recent months the theater has hosted a cabaret performance fundraiser for Kiddo by Joan Deamer, a "Salute to the Roaring Twenties" produced by Marilyn Smith, "Cinderella," a Christmas pantomime by the Marin Shakespeare company, "She Stoops to Conquer" directed by Mikel Clifford and put on by the local Curtain Theater group, "For Whom the Bridge Tolls" by Rita Abrams and Stan Sinberg, "Talking With Angels" put on by Cordelia Lives, and the 8th grade performance by the Greenwood School. The theater has also been the venue for the Mountain Play's 90th year retrospective gala and a series of acting workshops put on by the Mill Valley Film Festival. Keep your eye out for what is going on at the once and future theater in the building the Odd Fellows once owned.