The Mill Valley Historical REVIEW

Spring 2001

Walking the Rails | Riding the Buses
Mill Valley in the 40's | A World at War
A City's Resilience | Peace | Prosperity
Published by

THE MILL VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
375 THROCKMORTON AVENUE • MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA 94941

Stephanie Wickham Witt  President
Joan Murray  Vice President
Bill Devlin  Treasurer
Gracy Lary  Secretary

Marc Brusvev  Publisher
Judy Anderson  Design/Art Direction
Deborah Anker, Bestype  Production
Paradise Printing  Printing

Membership
Membership $15.00
per calendar year.

From the president...

Mill Valley in the 40's is the focus of this year's Review. We take a look back at life in our town during the World War II decade. Thanks to all our skilled researchers: Tim Amyx, Marianne Babal, George Caswiv, Donna Carrillo, Chuck Crawford, Janice Legou, Joan Murray, Ellen Olson, Nancy Padon, and Marianne Shine, who provided us with vignettes and historical perspective. We also thank the Mill Valley Library, the Marin History Museum and each contributor for permission to reprint photos from their pictorial archives.

Our History Walk this year begins with a trolley ride that takes you into the Blithedale Canyon. Small groups with guides will meander along the old railroad bed on this “walk in time.” The walk begins and ends at the Outdoor Art Club and takes approximately two hours. Enjoy!

—STEPHANIE WICKHAM WITT
The War Years

Mill Valley differed little from most other coastal towns in California. During the years America was directly involved in the war, times were hard for those who lived here. Hard times emotionally and economically. Sacrifice was required from all. Be it rationing rubber, sugar, gasoline, or not seeing your father for months or years on end, wondering if you'd ever see him again. Each air raid was met with anxiety and fear. Life on the daily and more mundane level was also interrupted. The Mountain Play was canceled for the first time in 30 years during the war years. The Dipsea race was not run from 1942 to 1945. The entire upper half of Mt. Tam was closed to the public as the army took it over. The GI bill provided free education for veterans and low interest loans for purchasing homes. The few years that followed World War II in Mill Valley were the only real years of building "low cost" housing for the working class. Small, simple houses went up in Strawberry, Tam Valley, and at the south end of Tamalpais Park, through the mid-1970's Mill Valley was an affordable town for the blue-collar working class. Because of this the population in Mill Valley increased from 5,000 in 1941 to slightly over 10,000 in 1950. Along with the explosion of home construction and development in Mill Valley came the growing pains that are still felt today—traffic, parking, loss of old time small businesses, and those pesky out-of-towners who keep showing up!

As the decade began, long time lovers of the commuter train and ferry service saw it take its last run. Bus service to the city began in 1942. The school became integrated during the war years as many blacks from the south relocated to the newly built Marin City to work on the ships that were being built for the Navy.

Before 1958, if you wanted to make a phone call you had to call the operator and ask for the 3-digit number and she'd connect your call. Shortly after the new telephone company was built in 1947, all houses in Mill Valley were given dial phones. You could then dial your 3 or 4 digit number directly! The average salary in the late 1940's was $7,700. That couldn't get you much today, but if you lived in Mill Valley in 1947 you could buy a loaf of bread for 14 cents, or a gallon of gas for 16 cents. Coffee was 48 cents per pound, a lube job cost a dollar, and a new car could be bought for $1,200. How about a dozen eggs for 32 cents? And after breakfast, you could go play a round of golf in Mill Valley for 75 cents.

The years 1946–1949 brought back the optimism that existed in the 1920's. There was hope for the returning veterans and their families.

Tamalpais Highschool Principal Wood retired in 1944, after serving the school in that role from 1919. After the war, the desk was added to the tower at Wood Hall in honor of the 40 former Tam students who died in the war.
Buses! Rails! Automobiles!

The biggest story of the year was transportation! With the Depression finally over and the ever-increasing purchase of automobiles, the number of Mill Valley commuters using the N.W. P. interurban system of rail and ferries fell off markedly. Early in 1935 the Greyhound Bus Company made application to the state railroad commission to set up a system of commuter buses from Mill Valley to San Francisco as well as county-wide. However, the people of Mill Valley, still ready and able to provide their own bus service, and in a May election, voted 1,633 to 531 to authorize the city to start a municipal motor coach system "when and if train and ferry service ceases." The battle lines were drawn, and the controversy persisted throughout the year. That same month the state railroad commission officially authorized the abandonment of train and ferry service and its replacement by Pacific Greyhound bus service.

The Mill Valley City Council refused to accept this as abandonment of train and ferry service and its replacement by Pacific Greyhound bus service. On September 17 it was announced that Pacific Greyhound would take over all Mill Valley bus transportation for Mill Valley affected more people than any change in Marin's varied transit history. With the mellow past is the transportation story, which started in 1826 when Captain Reed first operated a sailboat from San Francisco to Southern Marin, and...
omobiles!

An Tuesday morning would be the last in story. Fare was set at $3 a month for bus. The revolution from ferry to train to public transportation on Sir Francis, the first ferryboat having a scheduled run between San Francisco and Marin, had been a system of ferries. The first ferry, the 361, crossed its last scheduled crossing. This was a double feature with James Cagney starring in "City for Conquest" and W. C. Fields as the lead actor in "The Bank Dick." Dimension was given away on Saturday nights, and all tickets are subject to the U.S. Defense Tax. In the first category of the Record, there is a partly furnished 3-bedroom house, automatic hot water and gas. Hooray for buses!... They brought Marin a rare charm that it has come to a newspaper in Northern California.

PREPARING FOR War!

Nationally: Armament... building a defense... preparing for war, while threats are perceived from within and aid is offered to Britain. Locally: With a population of almost 3,000, Mill Valley experiences growth and a new prosperity. New homes were going up all around town, with a couple of good-sized tracts to open near the southern boundary. Our nation was now involved in building a strong defense as Germany absorbed most of Western Europe and appeared ready to invade England. This massive effort was not lost on Mill Valley, and soon there were indications everywhere that we were heading for war. A draft of young men for military service was initiated; draft boards were set up, and groups of Mill Valley men were being shipped off for military training. Every issue of the Mill Valley Record included a list of selective service registrants who had been sent questionnaires, and many issues held lists of those actually drafted.

Items from the Mill Valley Record...

- T-1940 official census count shows Mill Valley with a population of 4,847 and the County at a whole with 52,907. Reports that army authorities may be negotiating to take over a major part of Mt. Tamalpais State Park for military purposes are discussed.
- Entirely new mail service for Mill Valley and all Marin County by special truck across the Golden Gate Bridge starts. All mail service by ferry ceases.
- Salary increases for some city employees in the street and park department change the budget for city government. John Azevedo receives $140 to $145; Henry Fustine from $165 to $175; Andrew Younger from $110 to $115.
- The U.S. Army acquires 14 acres of the tip of Angel Island Tuesday to expand its defense facilities in Marin County.
- A story of old China, "A Thousand Years Ago," is selected for the 50th Mountain Play... Help Wanted Female: Refuse woman as a housekeeper and care of three-year-old key. Board and room and $30 per month.
- All slot machines, pinball games, punch boards, 25c machines, and other such coin machines are banned from the County as a threat to Marin youth.
- U.S. defense savings stamps and bonds in denominations from 10 cents to $1,000 are on sale at the Mill Valley Post Office.
- The importance of Mt. Tamalpais to the national defense program is forecast this week when a listening post functions 24 hours daily. Monday through Saturday, in the fire lookout's glass enclosed eerie. Reception on the mountain top is reported as ideal.
- Fire: Tie houses with $3,150. One 4-room, one 5-room, Garage, large lot, near Sanuriale...

AIR RAID INSTRUCTIONS

AIR RAID is indicated by a series of rapid blasts on the whistle for two minutes, or by fluctuating tones on sirens.
ALL CLEAR is signalled by one long sustained blast for two minutes, or by fluctuating tone on siren.
1. Remain indoors without panic. Do not believe rumors.
2. Leave all orders from civil defense officers.
3. If you are in an automobile, roll clear of road or byways, remove keys, and seek shelter.
4. Do not report telephone lines with calls. Do not use highways. Do not phone defense officials.
5. Men all defense stations to which you are appointed.
6. If bombs fall, lie on floor.
7. Keep dry sand available to cover incendiary bombs.
8. Do not congest telephone lines with calls.
9. Do not use highways.
10. Do not phone defense officials.

Aho: Civil Defense training of women for fighting during World War II. Fire Chief is Leslie Armsage.

Left: The Eureka was built from the keel July 1 in 1925. With a seating capacity of 2,300, the Eureka was the largest passenger, double-ended ferry in the world. When the ferries went out of service in 1941, she was selected to host 2,000 dignitaries on a Bay trip as a farewell to the ferries.
AND THE WAR GOES ON...

By 1942 Mill Valley was totally entrenched in the war. A month after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Red Cross work room opened. By now Mill Valley has had its fourth "blackout." There was a $25 fine for a blackout violation. The City invested in air raid sirens, took over defense activities, a tire rationing board was formed, and volunteer air raid wardens were signed up.

Rationing of cars, gasoline and sugar was instituted. Requests to drive less and "drive share" were advertised. It was suggested that for the public good, long distance phone service be limited to allow for the heavy military use. War stamps were on sale everywhere. Gas masks arrived in Mill Valley. The first Mill Valley woman joined the WAVES. The Upper regions of Mt. Tamalpais were closed by the Army.

Dim-Out rules were more stringent than ever.

An official bulletin from Mill Valley area civil defense headquarters launched the efforts of the general public: "Citizens of Mill Valley are particularly responsive to wartime requests such as this," the chief declared. "There were a few complaints Sunday night, but when the regulations were explained, everyone was glad to cooperate to the fullest extent." According to articles in the Mill Valley Record: "Pull your shades down, Mary Ann" was the literal warning of dim-out officials, who stated that "the best way to meet the requirement of having 'shades below the level of the lowest light in a room,' is to have them clear down." Tires were at a premium and had to be rationed. Car owners could have only five tires and others needed to be turned over to the war effort. Drivers were encouraged to "have worn tires replaced in time... drive slower... avoid striking curbs, road holes, rocks..." and not to use their car "unless you have to. The saving of rubber and fuel will contribute greatly to the winning of the war."

The Sequoia Theater advertised "FREE movies for kids if they brought in 1 lb. or more of scrap rubber. The draft age limit was upped from 38 to 35. Headlines revealed the fear of possible subversive acts by Japanese Americans and so began the internment of many Japanese American citizens. Marinship, (shores of Richardson Bay in Sausalito) where 10,000 men were employed to help build cargo vessels for the war effort, had a monumental effect on the home construction industry in Mill Valley. The first ship was launched in September of 1942 with a crowd of 20,000 on hand. It was the first of 12 ships.

Builder/developer George Goheen, 100 homes at Alto and south of East Ridge, c.1940s.

At a glance...

- With the advent of war, many things change in Mill Valley: Women are urged to become firefighters... the Mountain Play is canceled for the first time in 30 years... Women are being recruited as Bus Drivers... Carpeting is rented for $2.90 per yard...
- 81 graduate from Tam High... there is a crackdown on speeders over 35 mph... "SIV police to be hard on drunks... Mill Valley will not be permitted to become a resort for drunks, either on the streets or in any other public place," according to Police Chief James McGoon...
- Rent Control goes into effect on July 1, 1942...
- Mill Valley's first woman taxi driver is 24-year-old Elmore Cline... 
- Rent Control is a favorite for breakfast, lunch and dinner... At Tam High 100 Christmas packages for soldiers are prepared and include: gum, cigarettes and games.
- Fashion: an ad appears with a woman wearing an ermine coat with parachute sleeves, bolero pockets, and cartridge belt plaiting "for that military look...."
- Babson's Thumbail Outlook for 1942

The following is the annual forecast of Roger W. Babson regarding business and finance for the year, 1942. Mr. Babson's comments and analysis appear weekly on the editorial page of the Mill Valley Record.

1. TOTAL BUSINESS: Defense production will be up sharply; non-defense down sharply; average before war.
2. EXPENDITURE: The above also applies to employment and wages.
3. EARNINGS: The above also applies to employment and wages.
4. BUSINESS PRODUCTION: There will be more in 1942 than in 1941.
5. COMMODITY PRICES will strengthen somewhat, especially the prices of imported goods.
6. TAXES will be greatly cut, especially by the white-collar group who can expect tax cuts.
7. RAIL TRAFFIC will be a little off in 1942 compared with 1941.
8. HIGH-GRADE BONDS should decline, but bond stocks should hold.
9. CIVIL WAR - Congress should pass, not yet passed.
10. CONSUMER COSTS will continue throughout 1942.
ES ON...

1943 Mill Valley, California... you are there!

World War II raged in Europe and in the Pacific Theatre. It affected the whole world profoundly and also invaded the serene hamlet of Mill Valley.

Even as the war years were ingrained into the everyday life of our town, they also became a part of our entertainment. Imagine the Mill Valley Forum hosting a discussion by Ivan Jacobson of his escape from the Nazis in Norway called “Norway’s fight against Nazism.” (John Lawrence, USN, was there. There was an ordinance before the Council to limit the number of poultry and animals on residential lots. Three homes burned in May on King Street, Woodside Lane and the Tam Valley home of Noel Waite of San Francisco.

Business marched on. Mill Valley’s Tamalpais Mutual Bank and Loan merged with Northwestern Bank and Loan of Sausalito. Locust Bakery was purchased by J.A. Bell of Vallejo. E.L. Egger built some greenhouses for vegetable growing.

A collection of vegetable seeds to be sent to Britain is being sponsored by the Belvedere-Tiburon unit of British War Relief Unit for recreational areas. A fortune telling business advertised FREE movies for kids that night in a lb. or more of scrap rubber. The draft limit was upped from 38 to 35. Headlines feared the loss of possible subversive acts by Japanese American citizens.

Politics were ever present, even in years of distress. Lenin’s Death and high winds that caused “death and destruction.” There was a state visit by Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg who came to view our treasured Muir Woods causing much excitement.

An article in the Mill Valley Record reported: "A collection of vegetable seeds to be sent to Britain is being sponsored by the Belvedere-Tiburon unit of British War Relief Unit of American Red Cross. One dollar’s worth of seeds supplies a family of five with vegetables for a year." The town was saddened by the loss of many Native Sons... 612 of our local boys did not come home, the biggest year in Marin building ever.

Mill Valley Chamber of Commerce is disbanded. It may be re-formed because of local problems resulting from the local influx of population and the resulting problems. An increase of population by 1,675 people is revealed by applications for ration books.

The Tamalpais Union High School Night School Program is entitled "Consumers in Wartime..."

Air Raid Wardens to be assigned districts. Community said drills and incendiary drills are scheduled.

Alta Camp is started with facilities for 25 trailers...

Mill Valley Chamber of Commerce is disbanded. It may be re-formed because of local problems resulting from the local influx of population and the resulting problems. An increase of population by 1,675 people is revealed by applications for ration books...

Louise, a Shetland belonging to Nancy Baghramian joins the "Dogs for Defense." A month later, three other children also offer their pets for "Dogs for Defense." June 20, 11 a.m., a "Red" alarm is sounded as an unidentified aircraft approaches the coast... 40 minutes later, the aircraft is determined to be friendly.

In an advertisement, PG&E proudly proclaims: "Since Pearl Harbor, more than two thousand "speed-ban" have been sold to employees of this Company entering the military service. Our 200th is a Woman..."
Mount Tamalpais * Muir Woods Railway

This year the History Walk will focus on the old railroads. We will give you an idea of what it was like for a Mill Valley resident to ride a train to the top of Mt. Tamalpais, to Muir Woods, to downtown Mill Valley to shop and to Sausalito to board a ferry to San Francisco. Mill Valley was once the home of the “Crookedest Railroad in the World” with 281 curves and approximately 22 trestles over creek beds meandering up Blithedale Canyon culminating at the top of Mt. Tamalpais.
1. ENGINE HOUSE AND SHOPS
2. MOTOR CAR SHED, WATER AND OIL TANKS
3. NORTHWESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD DEPOT
4. N.W.P. ELECTRIC TRACKS TO SAUSALITO
Mill Valley resident George Cagwin recalls...

A seven-year-old, my mother would give me cans of bacon grease to take to Gossen’s Meat Market as part of the war effort to recycle waste fats for explosives. We would get 20 cents per can.

“...When using the telephone locally, the operator would say, ‘Number please.’ To call home I would say: ‘13351.’ The Pennys next door were ‘15551.’”

“We had blackout shades for the windows. If the sirens went off, it was lights out and blackout shades down.

“...Sometimes when I was out in the garden at 164 Tamalpais Avenue, I would see squadrons of planes darkening the sky for 15 or 20 minutes flying west in formation. I supposed that they were going to fight the Japanese. My buds and I dug foxholes up on the hill as a precaution in case we were invaded.”

Above: A portion of a printed postcard that declares: “Ensuring the beautiful City of Mill Valley where poles and sewers are buried and railroad grade line become their impression.”

Regular Business hours at Miller and Lomita, c. 1940.

Mill Valley as reported by the Mill Valley Record...

- Safeguarded ad hoc Fliers at 49 cents; 8 oz. plugs of Chocolate at 16 cents; 10 lb. sack of Potatoes at 40 cents; 1 lb. of Coffee at 20 cents. “The six for five tokens on Mt. Tam at Bodega is 3 cents.”
- Total assessed value of property in the County is $798,424,000.
- Marin Realty advertises: “A home with 3 bedrooms, an acre of level grounds, and 2-car garage for $13,700 a house on Millie Avenue with 2 bedrooms, close to high school and bus for $4,000. Rent on first floor is raised to 3 cents/sec. and annual to 84 cents.”
- A Ration Calendar was published every week in the paper stating which ration books were currently valid for specific goods: Green stamps D, E, and F for fruits and vegetables are valid through Jan. 26. Brown stamps for meat, cheese and butter are valid through Jan. 24. Bulletin says Mill Valley residents to participate in the war effort: “A Scrap Drive is set for Sunday at the Compass Club. All homeowners are encouraged to bring materials until victory is won.”
- In its fourth Bond Drive, the Sequoia Theatre will give free admission to the current movie to all Bond buyers.
- “Buy War Bonds! The Good Victory. The place: Sequoia. The time: This year. The responsibility: Yours.”
- “...Do your part to win the Axis. Get those extra War Bonds at an ever-familiar Smaller and Save Party (Men only) in the Mill Valley American Legion Hall on Locust.”
- “Keep our fliers supreme in the sky. Be a WAC in the Army Air Force.”
- The Mill Valley Anti-Fascist Society asks for contributions.
- Mayor Ralph H. Thomas and members of the city council lay groundwork for post-war construction in Marin, including the straightening of Mill Ave.
- Mill Valley will get increased water supply to a 10th line going to Lynmar Square because of rapid growth. Lt. Commander Wilson Cockrell (of 333 Mount View) is cited by Admiral Halsey for professional skill in action. There is one male associate member in the Outdoor Art Club.
- Mill Valley was the first city in Marin to reach its fourth War Bond quota raising: $124,638.
- George Godden is chosen to lead the Business Group in M.U. The USS Tamalpais is launched at Marshall Yard in Marin City.
- The go-ahead is given to build more homes on the tract of marshland bounded by Sycamore and Miller Avenue on one side, and the old highway (Camino Alto) north of Tam High on the others. Ditto 50, 1.5 miles will be needed to raise the level of the land. There will be 150 building lots in all. The total price of this purchase is $21,200.
- A dance series for teenagers will start at Old Mill School auditorium.
- E. E. Wood, principal of Tam High from 1919 to 1944, will retire. His successor will be William Van Dyke.
- H. W. Johnson is elected mayor of Mill Valley.
- Lt. Rennie Siao of 76 Edgell Avenue, excepted from a German prison camp after having been shot down in a P-38 fighter over Italy.
- Traffic signals are set up at the Alta Way.
- The need for preserving food at home is urgent. Large quotas of canned fruits and vegetables must be set aside for our armed forces. It is the responsibility of every homeowner to assure family’s supply. Free Canning Clinic is offered at Park School.
- Douglas Nye says Sequoia Ranch, 1,600 acres, under the Stinson family for $41,000. The Stinson family acquired the property as a part of an original Spanish grant known as the Rancho Las Bodegas in 1860. Nye expounds to develop the property on an extensive scale. The land extends from the Bellman Lagoon to the top of Mt. Tam bordering the Ridgecrest to road.
- All liquor sellers, except one in Mill Valley, are to cease immediately when official announcement of V-Day is made. The decision was made in the interests of general welfare and the public good and out of respect to the solemnity of the occasion.
- Appeared is given to ordain Miller Avenue into a four-lane busier centered by the railroad right of way. Three Mill Valley residents are arrested and fined $20 each for failing to return books in a timely manner to the library. Judge Hildebrand said this sort of negligence must stop.
- A 4-engine Navy patrol bomber crashes on Mt. Tam killing all eight crewmen. Five school girls are the first to discover the wreckage when they hike up the mountain.

PEACE...

Within hours of President Truman’s announcement that WWII had ended with the Japanese surrender on August 14, 1945, the air raid siren on the roof of Sequoia Theatre wailed in celebration. In front of the Hall, the old firebell resounded with enthusiastic repeated clangs. Jubilant Mill Valleyans rushed the streets, laughing, crying, tossing confetti, and waving flags while cars race around Lytton Square with joy.

...the story of the world’s largest celebration in the little town of Mill Valley. Within hours of President Truman’s announcement on August 14, 1945, the air raid siren on the roof of Sequoia Theatre wailed in celebration. In front of the Hall, the old firebell resounded with enthusiastic repeated clangs. Jubilant Mill Valleyans rushed the streets, laughing, crying, tossing confetti, and waving flags while cars race around Lytton Square with joy...
in recollects...

...for the windows. If the sirens at Mill Valley or blackouts down the street, the loud sounds of airplanes 5 or 20 minutes flying in sight that they were going to fight the war, and I dug foxholes up on the hill where we were invaded."

We can't write a policy to insure PEACE but we insure almost anything else!

Dad's Memories

"I moved back to Mill Valley around November of 1945. I had spent three years in the Navy with stints of six months each in bomber squadrons. The folks still were here on Mill Valley and we rented from her grandparents, the Weissels on Ryan Avenue. My time there was 8½ months pregnancy and we were home on leave with our baby girl, George, Wren, who was 8½ months pregnant and we lived with her grandparents, the Weissels on Ryan Avenue. The house was aaraming built or remodeled. A big issue was the American Legion Hall at the end of Sycamore and off towards Tam High, now the site of the Recreation Center and the Baseball fields..."

"Your grandfather, Jim Phelps, was part owner of the Locust Food Mart and one up there on Marin Flooring. There was a soda fountain where people could eat and drink and have coffee..."

"After the war I went back to school at Cal and commuted via ferry stagecoach to San Quentin. Your great-grandfather used to drive the ferry stagecoach to San Quentin. In those days, we had only one car..."
Life Gets Back to Normal

In January of 1946, the Mill Valley Record announces that Frank Dittle is coming home to Mill Valley from "the war to end all wars." Frank, still a resident in the home where he grew up on Walnut Avenue, served in the Aleutian Islands for "four years, six months and eleven days." His wife, Frances, counted the days, weeks, months and years while she waited for him. Some men, like Frank, are fortunate to come home to the job they left behind, but they come home to a dramatically changed landscape. Having hunted for quail and deer in Homestead Valley before his family moved into the house his father built on Walnut Avenue in 1923, the increased population prevents Frank from returning to hunting in Homestead Valley after World War II.

The tract housing built in Mill Valley by George Goheen, east of the Tamalpais Park neighborhood, accommodates some of the burgeoning population, many of whom are employed at the shipyards in Marinship. When the liberty ships were no longer needed, 1,000-1,500 new jobs were approved to support the supply efforts needed for the war. Some of our residents are not so fortunate. David Holly ran for the council in 1932. His mother heard from him after he was purchased by the State of California.

Veterans return home to resume businesses and to begin new ones. Wanted to rent advertising for apartments and homes open with "veteran seeking home." Veterans were given preference whenever possible. Many delayed weddings are announced as men come from the Pacific and Europe and the postwar baby boom begins.

Post-war Boom

1947: Mill Valley found itself in midst of a post-war boom. The rapid expansion of population just after the war, however, had also caused the community some growing pains. Mill Valley suffers under a severe housing crunch caused in part by wartime price controls that placed a ceiling on the price of new homes. After price controls were lifted, homes started accelerating with several large developments underway in Tam Valley and Strawberry Point.

1947 Highlights from the Mill Valley Record

- January: Sequoia Theatre starts Saturday morning shows for kids and features Disney's "Pinocchio." Fibes for the adult crowd include "The Big Sleep" and "Bring Up Baby." Marin Municipal Water District records a morning temperature of 29°F—lowest on record. Mill Valley planning group and city council support a county-wide garbage disposal service as an alternate to extension of permit allowing MV garbage to be dumped at existing location (Bayfront Park).
- February: The city council votes to institute a 15¢ cent garage sales tax. "Two inches of rain flooded several downtown businesses on Lytton Square, including the offices of the Mill Valley Record. Mill Valley Junior Chamber of Commerce plans OK to build pool...
- March: Angel Island declared as a national park by Congress. The rapid expansion of population during World War II.
- April: PUC approves a new grade crossing across Belvedere and extension of Tam Valley Drive, a major artery leading to connecting from Tam to Strawberry Point. This road to serve Sonoma to Miller and relieve traffic congestion in Lytton Square—will it be to the benefit of preserved redwoods in Tam Valley?

1947: Mill Valley found itself in midst of a post-war boom. The rapid expansion of population just after the war, however, had also caused the community some growing pains. Mill Valley suffers under a severe housing crunch caused in part by wartime price controls that placed a ceiling on the price of new homes. After price controls were lifted, homes started accelerating with several large developments underway in Tam Valley and Strawberry Point.

Life Gets Back to Normal

In January of 1946, the Mill Valley Record announces that Frank Dittle is coming home to Mill Valley from "the war to end all wars." Frank, still a resident in the home where he grew up on Walnut Avenue, served in the Aleutian Islands for "four years, six months and eleven days." His wife, Frances, counted the days, weeks, months and years while she waited for him. Some men, like Frank, are fortunate to come home to the job they left behind, but they come home to a dramatically changed landscape. Having hunted for quail and deer in Homestead Valley before his family moved into the house his father built on Walnut Avenue in 1923, the increased population prevents Frank from returning to hunting in Homestead Valley after World War II.

The tract housing built in Mill Valley by George Goheen, east of the Tamalpais Park neighborhood, accommodates some of the burgeoning population, many of whom are employed at the shipyards in Marinship. When the liberty ships were no longer needed, 1,000-1,500 new jobs were approved to support the supply efforts needed for the war. Some of our residents are not so fortunate. David Holly ran for the council in 1932. His mother heard from him after he was purchased by the State of California.

Veterans return home to resume businesses and to begin new ones. Wanted to rent advertising for apartments and homes open with "veteran seeking home." Veterans were given preference whenever possible. Many delayed weddings are announced as men come from the Pacific and Europe and the postwar baby boom begins.

Post-war Boom

1947: Mill Valley found itself in midst of a post-war boom. The rapid expansion of population just after the war, however, had also caused the community some growing pains. Mill Valley suffers under a severe housing crunch caused in part by wartime price controls that placed a ceiling on the price of new homes. After price controls were lifted, homes started accelerating with several large developments underway in Tam Valley and Strawberry Point.

1947 Highlights from the Mill Valley Record

- January: Sequoia Theatre starts Saturday morning shows for kids and features Disney's "Pinocchio." Fibes for the adult crowd include "The Big Sleep" and "Bring Up Baby." Marin Municipal Water District records a morning temperature of 29°F—lowest on record. Mill Valley planning group and city council support a county-wide garbage disposal service as an alternate to extension of permit allowing MV garbage to be dumped at existing location (Bayfront Park).
- February: The city council votes to institute a 15¢ cent garage sales tax. "Two inches of rain flooded several downtown businesses on Lytton Square, including the offices of the Mill Valley Record. Mill Valley Junior Chamber of Commerce plans OK to build pool...
- March: Angel Island declared as a national park by Congress. The rapid expansion of population during World War II.
- April: PUC approves a new grade crossing across Belvedere and extension of Tam Valley Drive, a major artery leading to connecting from Tam to Strawberry Point. This road to serve Sonoma to Miller and relieve traffic congestion in Lytton Square—will it be to the benefit of preserved redwoods in Tam Valley?
Post-war Boom and Growing Pains...

In 1947, Mill Valley found itself in midst of a post-war boom. The rapid expansion of population during and after the war, however, had also caused the community some growing pains. Mill Valley suffered under a severe housing crunch caused in part by lingering wartime price controls that placed a ceiling on the sale price of new homes. After price controls were lifted, housing starts accelerated with several large developments underway in Tam Valley and Strawberry Point.

In September, the baby boom reverberated in Mill Valley schools as record numbers of youngsters were enrolled.

In 1947, Mill Valley residents also thought globally and shopped locally. Clothing drives collected tons of goods for the needy in war-torn Europe, while Mill Valley's local business community met increased consumer demand by opening several new shopping centers on East Blithedale and Miller Avenues.

1947 Highlights from the Mill Valley Record...

- January: Sequoia Theatre starts Saturday morning shows for kids and features Disney's "Pinocchio." Films for the adult crowd include "The Big Shop" and "Bringing Up Baby." Marin Municipal Water District records a morning temperature of 29° - lowest on record. Mill Valley planning group and city council support a county-wide garbage disposal service as an alternative to extension of permits allowing MV garbage to be dumped at existing location (Bayfront Park).
- February: The city council votes to institute a 12.2% retail sales tax. Two inches of rain flood several downtown businesses on Lytton Square, including the offices of the Mill Valley Record. Mill Valley Tennis Club membership gives OK to build pool. Russell & Great marble construction begins at 276 Miller.
- March: Angel Island declared surplus government property—several proposals for future use arise: a state park; and sending the island to create an airport with two 7,000' runways. New superb "country" shopping center opens at E. Blithedale and Sunnyvale—includes a grocery, butcher, pharmacy, plumbing & appliance store, and car dealership. Outdoor Art Club opposes reactivation of old sewer in Old Mill Park. City budget $15,000 for the work. Garden Street Bridge opens and stationery store to Keyes Building from Miller Avenue.
- April: PUC approves a new grade crossing across railroad tracks and extension of Sunnyvale Avenue. This road is common Sunnyvale and Mill Valley and relieves traffic congestion in Lytton Square—it is to be effort to preserve rural

grove... Miller Avenue Shopping Center opens between Montfond & Reed (now Whole Foods). Vandals open faucets of Cascade Dam, shortly releasing 1.5 million gallons of water on store for firefighting purposes...
- May: Soggy pumping plant under construction at the end of Sunnyvale Avenue. Elsie Magazine School is under construction at Alto... The Mountain Play is to be "Alice in Wonderland." "Newfoundland idles" (i.e. with garbage disposals) are illegal according to Robert Bannenberg, city manager; other local ordinances prohibit food waste from entering sewers...10 year anniversary of opening of Golden Gate Bridge. As of May, 1947, some 50 million cars have crossed the span.
- June: Richardson Bay locally polluted, according to county health department... City planning commission adopts zoning of property at Walnut & E. Blithedale to be sever use permitted... City council determines that it is in the public interest to allow construction of new dul telephone switching facility...211 students graduate Tam High and 90 volunteer...131 children...44,000 as a ship returning the bodies...235 a month...Mill Valley voters approve by a 515 margin a $1.75 million bond issue to build a new hospital in Greenbrae. The bond sold by $300 votes in the race of the County.
- October: 1,000 repubs reelected for planning on city property—a gift from Holland in thanks for 3,000 pounds of clothing donated by residents. On October 16, Mill Valley joins the rest of the Bay Area in passing a moment of silence at noon as a ship returning the bodies of servicemen killed overseas enters San Francisco Bay. On October 24 an ordinance is introduced by the town attorney to change the legal name of the town to City of Mill Valley.
- November: A $20,000 retail and office addition to the Ely Place commercial development is announced... Improvements begin at Ely Place in the Rhine-Nelson section. Filled by request to the city by Mrs. Ella Freeman for recreation purposes... Grocery store at stage a three-week strike demanding a 40-hour week... Tam High boys beat San Rafael 32-7 in the Big Game... and win the North Bay football championship...
- Post Office announces city mail delivery to Aliso, Almonte, Homestead, Tam Valley and Marin Heights neighborhoods... Former RFD routes.
- Groundbreaking for the $1.3 million radio telephone switching building at the corner of E. Blithedale and Walnut...
- December: Parking on south side of E. Blithedale is prohibited... Mill Valley resists a late Christmas tree request...
Polio, Growth and Change

In the National News: President Harry Truman... Invention: Scrabble, Polaroid Camera, Holography, The Studebaker... Average income: $2,916... New Car: $1,230... New House: $7,700... Loaf of Bread: 14¢... Gallon of Gas: 46¢... Gallon of Milk: 87¢... Best Picture: Hamlet

In a glance...
- President: Harry Truman...
- Invention: Scrabble, Polaroid Camera, Holography, The Studebaker...
- Average Income: $2,916...
- New Car: $1,230...
- New House: $7,700...
- Loaf of Bread: 14¢...
- Gallon of Gas: 46¢...
- Gallon of Milk: 87¢...
- Best Picture: Hamlet

1948

Racial Segregation ends in military... Truman approves Marshall Plan... State of Israel comes into existence...
- Noteworthy in Mill Valley: 10,000 Residents, 21,000 registered cars in Marin County
- General Concern around town: Tuberculosis is found... Police auctions prompt instance: fundraisers... Red Cross Annual Drive... Meat and chicken pan out... 19 of the wealthiest in 1948 as compared to 1947. Beer meat has no chance... Drunk Driving is a problem — patrol using drunk-o-meter... Community Club formed... Must supply less, cannot afford electricity — electricity is rationed. Residents must slash use by 50%. Severe system needs updating... Major Sloan designs 10-year master plan for city layout... Daylight Savings starts for first time... 3,500 blue books mailed out — "The Best Book in Town..." City prepares for dial telephones... School enrollment growing at rate of 100% a year

Presidential Inauguration... 1948

In February, funeral services were held in San Francisco for Allison H. Coney, original owner of the Mill Valley to Sausalito Beach Pier. In 1949 traffic in Marin County... issue as it is today. On March 27th...
change county hundreds in court costs. Meat and eggs. The annual city Easter egg to the high prices. However the city quarters for all ghosts and goblins at stores. A new children's wing at the library was approved for the city $500 a month.

**Highlights from the End of a Decade...**

On the night of January 26th the mercury dropped to 26 degrees.

In February, funeral services were held in San Francisco for Aldora M. Cone, originator of the Mill Valley to Stinson Beach Dipsea Race. He was 81 years old. In 1949 traffic in Marin County was as much an issue as it is today. On March 29th, a meeting was held by City Manager, Ted Adist. It was felt there was a need for a major county highway along the existing highway from San Anselmo past Mill Valley to Corte Madera-Larkspur. It would parallel U.S. 101 and become an even more heavily traveled thoroughfare.

Also the Chamber of Commerce was considering parking meters in the downtown area of Mill Valley. Merchants voted 7-1 in favor of the meters.

Since 1940 Mill Valley almost doubled in both population and telephone service. The telephone building at 300 East Blithedale had an open house for all to see the marvelous equipment being assembled to handle all the calls.

Mt. Tamalpais officially became a state park. The Marin Municipal Water District received a check for $25,000 from the California State Division of Beaches. The check was in exchange for 22 acres of land at the top of Mt. Tam, including an old tavern and parking area.

Spareribs were 43 cents a pound; frying chickens were 75 cents a pound and coffee 43 cents a pound. Old Brown's store sold a three-piece bedroom set for $89.95. You couldn't get such low prices at a garage sale.

The Mill Valley City Council installed parking meters along Mill Valley streets following the adoption of the parking meter ordinance.

The Garden of Allah was up for sale.

City Manager Ted Adist heard delegates at a three-day conference of the League of California Cities warned the various communities to find adequate off-street parking space or face the consequences of a scattered business area. Cars parked on streets were the greatest single obstacles to the movement of traffic.

Greyhound Lines applied for permission to increase commute rates that would boost monthly commute costs for Mill Valley residents by almost fifty percent. Instead of an $8.00 monthly book or $7.50 5-day week monthly book, the company sought to issue a twenty-ride book for $6.00—"times are a changing."

Above: Postcard of "picturesque" Mill Valley in the 1940s.

Left: Christmas/New Year's celebration, December 23, 1949 at the Swiss Club.

The Garden of Allah was up for sale.

City Manager Ted Adist heard delegates at a three-day conference of the League of California Cities warned the various communities to find adequate off-street parking space or face the consequences of a scattered business area. Cars parked on streets were the greatest single obstacles to the movement of traffic.

Greyhound Lines applied for permission to increase commute rates that would boost monthly commute costs for Mill Valley residents by almost fifty percent. Instead of an $8.00 monthly book or $7.50 5-day week monthly book, the company sought to issue a twenty-ride book for $6.00—"times are a changing."

Above: Postcard of "picturesque" Mill Valley in the 1940s.

Left: Christmas/New Year's celebration, December 23, 1949 at the Swiss Club.
PLUMBING REPAIRS
STANLEY SEARLES
415-388-8260

LAW OFFICES OF
LINDA ALDEN SWANSON
150 MADRONE AVENUE
LARKSPUR, CALIFORNIA 94939
TEL (415) 927-1990 • FAX (415) 927-1950
Email: Linda@SwansongLaw.com

When choosing a printer, it's wise to consider one's style and flair...