On August 25, 1900 residents voted to incorporate as the Town of Mill Valley. This issue will start with 1900 in honor of the centennial of this incorporation as a town with its own local government, ordinances and a few city employees.

Of course, the Mill Valley area had a rich history prior to 1900: Coast Miwok camps, John Reed's Rancho Corté Madera del Presidio (1834), William Richardson's Rancho Sausalito (1835), Reed's Mill (c. 1855), Samuel Throckmorton's Homestead ranch house (1866), John Cushing's Blithedale health & summer resort (1873), a sprinkling of other early settlers and, of course, the Tamalpais Land & Water Company acquiring Throckmorton's Rancho Sausalito lands and subdividing, grading streets in the area west of Corté Madera Creek, and auctioning several hundred lots in 1890.

Mill Valley by 1900 already had about 500 homes and an estimated population of 1,000, but many of these were cottages for summer residents. There were views of Mount Tamalpais and of San Francisco Bay from many of the homes and residences. For those residents who worked in San Francisco there was a narrow gauge steam commuter railroad that connected with the ferry boats in Sausalito. There was a small downtown business district with wooden sidewalks and unpaved streets that were dusty in summer and muddy in winter. The newly incorporated town started off with a host of problems, little money and dreams of the future.

We gratefully acknowledge the use of the extensive files of the Lucretia Little History Room of the Mill Valley Public Library as the main resource for this issue, and all photographs with permission from this source unless otherwise noted. We also give special thanks for information from Barry Spitz' book Mill Valley, The Early Years which contains a wealth of information about early Mill Valley.

— Stephanie Wickham Witt

President
The years 1900 to 1909 were formulative for Mill Valley. Incorporation in 1900; early environmentalists created the Outdoor Art Club in 1902; train service was electrified in 1903; in 1904 Mill Valley functioned as a community with its own patterns of service, cultural and recreational pursuits; the first Dipsea race in 1905 put Mill Valley on the map; the 1906 San Francisco earthquake proved that Mill Valley residents were generous in their efforts to console the victims; and in 1908 Tamalpais High School provided educational opportunities for students, as did Tamalpais Park School in 1909. — By Grace Lary

There were eleven (11) telephone subscribers in Mill Valley — local calls 45¢.

There were about 15 or 20 saloons in Mill Valley. Some citizens felt need for control (such as Jag Town at Doll Street) and urged incorporation; Citizens and Taxpayers Party was formed.

August 25 — An election was held to incorporate this village of about 900. The election was successful: 99 votes FOR — 63 AGAINST the incorporation (cast by male residents). Those FOR wanted control by elected reps., fewer saloons, liquor sales control and road improvements; those AGAINST worried about high taxes and the push to discourage tourism.

In order to delay arrival of the ferry from San Francisco on election day, Dan Slinkey was paid $50 and a flask of whiskey to jump off the ferry into the Bay in an attempt to delay the arrival of voters until after the polls closed.

Sunnyside Tract: 46 acres laid out.

The Census showed 225 Mill Valley children between ages 5-17. Dowd's ran a horse drawn vehicle up Cascade and down Throckmorton during stormy weather to bring children to and from school; parents paid for this first "school bus."

August 2 — a group of 34 earnest women assembled at Summit School and formed an organization to work for the preservation of outdoor beauty. This was the birth of the Outdoor Art Club.

Architect Bernard Maybeck was hired for a fee of $165.37. A parcel at Summit School and formed an organization to work for the preservation of outdoor beauty. This was the birth of the Outdoor Art Club.

August 2 — a group of 34 earnest women assembled at Summit School and formed an organization to work for the preservation of outdoor beauty. This was the birth of the Outdoor Art Club.

Sketch by A. W. Bush of Maybeck & White, Architects, 1904.

The Bank of Mill Valley, Throckmorton at Madrona, was built in 1907.

Jack Hansen, proprietor of the "Lounge" (East Blithedale at Grove) with his two brothers and son Ted. The Lounge was one of four saloons in that area known as Jagtown. (c. 1901)
First Annual Championship

Cross Country Run

Under the Auspices of the
DIPSE A INDIANS
OF THE OLYMPIC CLUB

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19th, 1905

Mill Valley to Dipsea by the Sea

OFFICERS OF THE DIPSEA INDIANS

Grand Chief: DIPSETTA
Chief Engineer: BOBBY BARTON
Assistant Engineer: JIM THOMPSON

Graduate Assistant Engineer: MATT HARRIS

Reserve Engineers: ROBERT MILLER CHIMNEY MACKIE

Navigating Officers: CHRIS CAMERON and WARRIOR

1905 Spring — the Outdoor Art Club responded vigorously to an outbreak of tent caterpillars threatening native Oaks; they offered any child 10¢ per quart of caterpillars and cocoons, or 5¢ apiece for crawling pests. This battle continued for years. (Mill Valley, The Early Years by Barry Spitz)

November 19 — The first Dipsea Race captured the imagination of the San Francisco sporting public as perhaps no other footrace before or since! All major San Francisco newspapers gave the race feature coverage. The Chronicle splashed a bold headline across the entire width of its sports page: "Great Cross-Country Run from Mill Valley to Dipsea.

There were 111 runners — double the estimates. The Examiner proclaimed the race: "The greatest cross-country run that was ever held in this or any other country.

As the men started off, the trail became thoroughly wet, those with smooth-soled shoes began to slip and fall; those who came after the first lot found the trail in a fearful condition — full of mud — it was hard to keep on the course. John Hassard, an Oakland teenager, won the race in 1 hour, 12 minutes, 30 seconds. He finished about the freshest of any of the 84 that went over the course and looked as if he was good for many more miles. (Dipsea, the Greatest Race by Barry Spitz)

A Mill Valley shoe store, July 4, 1901.

06 April 18; 5:12 a.m. — the California coast was shaken by a major earthquake of 8.3 seismic intensity. Mill Valley suffered minor damage and no casualties, but some remembered the house shaking violently, a chimney falling to the basement, a bureau rolling out into the middle of the floor; some thought Mt. Tam was erupting — in fact, it did rumble. The commute trains and ferries were operating on schedule. Alonzo Coffin, the mayor of Mill Valley followed his customary schedule to the City thinking he would tell his office staff all about the great Mill Valley earthquake. When he arrived he saw the real devastation and streets filled with rats that had escaped from the fallen buildings. Permanent residents opened their doors to relatives, friends and other refugees and hosted them as best they could; impromptu shelters, tents, and lean-tos sprung up in every available space. Public halls and warehouses were converted to dorms and nurseries. Mayor Coffin was responsible for organizing bread lines and establishing a system of rationing provisions to provide an equitable distribution of food and medicines. Stores stayed open and the community [year] commended for avoiding exploitation of the refugees; no prices were raised nor was a black market created. (Mill Valley Herald, Mill Valley Moments by Henry Bonny)

May 4 — 95% of Mill Valley's population flocked to points between Sausalito and Lime Point to witness the passage of the big fire, the Golden Gate — a spectacular — a wonderful sight.

07 March — Taxi set by Redwood Stable, Cascade Stables cost 25¢ until 7 p.m.; 50¢ from 7-9

June — Mill Valley Train Station re-opened after fire.

08 January — Homes and School opened, 60 pupils in five grades.

03 August 25 — North Pacific Coast train service, including the Mill Valley branch, was electrified.

04 August 25 — The newly built Masonic Hall on Corte Madera Avenue was finished.

03 The West Point Inn was built on the westernmost point of the Mt. Tam Railway.

The old hose cart was housed on the ground floor. The 25 active firefighters paid 90¢ for badge.

(Mill Valley, The Early Years by Barry Spitz)

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firehouse. The old hose cart was

housing on the ground floor. The 25 active firefighters paid 90¢ for badges.

(Mill Valley, The Early Years by Barry Spitz)

10 The Fire Department installed 118 fire hydrants on the hills; without these services the water pressure at the hydrants would have been insufficient to put out fires, and citizens were required to turn off faucets when the fire bell rang.

August 25 — Mill Valley Scout Troop 1 was established in 1904.

(Mill Valley, The Early Years by Barry Spitz)

(SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19th, 1905)
April 18, 5:12 a.m. — the California coast was shaken by a major earthquake of 8.5 seismic intensity. Mill Valley suffered minor damage and no casualties, but some felt the house shaking violently, with some falling to the basement, a rolling out into the middle of the room. They thought Mt. Tam was rumbling. The trains and city services were on schedule. Alonzo Coffin, the chief of Mill Valley, followed his customary daily routine, telling his office staff all about the Mill Valley earthquake.

He arrived he saw the real damage and streets filled with refuse that escaped from the fallen buildings. Permanent residents opened their doors to relatives, friends and other residents and hosted them as best they could by opening up in every available room. Public halls and warehouses were converted to dorms and nurseries.

Coffin was responsible for the post-earthquake boom brought many changes to Mill Valley during this decade. The growing popularity of the automobile resulted in portions of Mill Valley's main streets being paved. Services such as the Mill Valley Fire Department, the Electric Light and Telephone Companies were ready to serve the community. A newly constructed pipeline in Fern Canyon on Mt. Tam provided water for the town. The Tamalpais Park School was expanded to serve the increasing number of children.

By 1910 the population had reached 2,551. Most Mill Valleyites were now year-round residents. By the end of the decade the population would reach 3,974.

The Fire Department had installed 118 fire hydrants, but water pressure at the hydrants was low and citizens were required to turn off faucets when the fire bell sounded.

In the restaurant of the Mill Valley Hotel, which was in the O'Shaughnessy building, fresh Eastern oysters were available every day for 25 cents a dozen and California oysters at 50¢ for 100.

A swimming hole was created in Old Mill Park, big enough for 20 youngsters and for diving. An ordinance was passed making it a misdemeanor to throw rubbish in the water or to allow horses or dogs in it.

"The Hiker's Retreat" opened its doors on Madrona Avenue. It made showers, lockers and changing rooms available for weekend hikers.
From 1911 to 1920, the Hikers Retreat (Throckmorton at Madrona) offered checking facilities, lockers and showers to hikers and runners.

12 April 13 — Voters passed the referendum to form the Marin Municipal Water District.
13 The first Mountain Play was performed in the brand new Mountain Theater with around 1,200 people in attendance.
14 The Mountain Railway, nicknamed "The Crookedest Railroad in the World" carried 100,000 passengers.
15 The Hub Theater (pictured below) on the corner of Madrona and Throckmorton opened with a Charlie Chaplin film.
16 April 6 — 37 Mill Valley men were on the initial list for military draft after the United States declared war on Germany.
17 Lyttton Plummer Barber was the first WWI casualty from Mill Valley.
18 November 1 — With word of Germany's surrender, the town celebrated wildly with bells ringing, whistles blowing, and people cheering.
19 The Scout Hall on East Blithedale was donated to the Boy Scouts.
20 Mill Valley's population reached 3,974.

From 1920 to 1930, growing prosperity. The automobile, improved roads (1928), increased mobility to build Old Mill School.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church, founded 1893. A Spanish influenza epidemic in 1919 forced this mass to be held outdoors.

Quinn's, a local Mill Valley institution for over 46 years, operated as an ice-cream parlor. It was located on Throckmorton and Cortez Avenues, where today Mill Valley's Little Market sells wine and deli items (see photo at right). During prohibition, its legendary owner Jim Quinn sold ice cream and even sold bootleg whiskey in the back.
The 1920s thrust Mill Valley into a modern world of rapid change and growing prosperity. The decade saw the rise of easy credit, leisure time, radio broadcasting, and the speedy automobile. Improved roads and highways, such as Ridgecrest Boulevard (1925) and the Panoramic Highway (1928), increased mobility and the pace of change. The Sulphur Springs were paved over and homes relocated to build Old Mill School. Summit School stayed open longer than planned to accommodate high enrollment. In the mid-20s, 650 students attended the four Mill Valley schools. The decade saw Mill Valley real estate prices surge. Residents saved land adjacent to the old mill from developers by raising $4,500 through public subscription to purchase the property. This land was donated to the city in 1928 to supplement the existing six acres around the mill. The decade brought several devastating natural disasters to Mill Valley: in 1920 a flood swept away the Mill Valley Lumber Company office; the Tamalpais Tavern burned in 1925; severe rains and mudslides in 1925 demolished homes and flooded businesses; and the fire of July 1929 nearly burned down the town.

The stockmarket crash in October 1929 marked the end of the "Golden Twenties." The decade of growth and prosperity chugged to a close for Mill Valley with the last run of the Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Scenic Railway a few days after the crash. Mill Valley would regain its prosperity, but its beloved, world-renowned mountain railroad was gone forever.

By Marilyn Geary

Mill Valley's population reached 3,974.

January 16, Midnight — Prohibition went into effect under an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Quinn's, a local Mill Valley watering hole for over 46 years, opened as an ice-cream parlor. It was located at Throckmorton and Corte Madera Avenues, where today Mill Valley Market sells wine and deli specialties (see photo at right). During Prohibition, its legendary owner Jimmy Quinn sold ice cream and sweets in the front of the store on the street side and bootleg whiskey in the back, protected by Corte Madera Creek's thick foliage. At one time Quinn owned three bars in Mill Valley. Quinn's, The Old Mill, and The Office (now The Sweetwater).

During Prohibition the acrid smell of fermented grapes filled the air from the wine-making activities of the community's Italian settlers who were allowed to make their own wine for culinary and medicinal purposes. Esposit brothers Delermo and Ettore opened their popular soda fountain at 127 Throckmorton. (pictured at left, Delermo with his wife Kathleen in 1920.)

Old Mill School opened.
January 28 — Several feet of snow fell on Mt. Tam, covering it in a thick white blanket. Many visitors rode the Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Scenic Railway up the mountain to experience the winter wonderland firsthand and to dodge and throw a few icy snowballs. A snowplow preceded the train to clear the tracks, but it did not reach the Tamalpais Tavern for several days. Members of the Alpine Club were snowbound at the West Point Inn Saturday night and trudged back to Mill Valley on Sunday by way of the snow-covered Pipeline Trail.

March — The Mill Valley Hotel was raided when Town Marshal T. B. Thordike crashed through the front door and Deputy Marshall Albert O'Connor took the rear. They confiscated 24 bottles of liquor, some "hidden between bed mattresses." The hotel owner paid for his crime with 30 days in jail and a $500 fine.

April — Sulphur Springs were covered over to provide a playground at Old Mill School.

February 21 — The Sequoia Theatre opened with a gala vaudeville act on stage at the 7 and 9 p.m. shows. A big bagful of groceries was given away to the patron whose lucky ticket was selected in a drawing.

The new theatre was absolutely first class. Gertrude Lyon played the theatre's big Wurlitzer organ, while uniformed ushers aimed flashlights down the aisles to lead moviegoers to their plush seats in the darkened 1,200-seat theatre. The first movie shown was "The Kid's Clever," starring Glen Tryon. Other movies shown that day were Cecil B. de Mille's "Ring of Kings," Marie Dressler and Ralph Bellamy in "Mother Knows Best," and Janet Gaynor and George O'Brien in "Survival."

July 2 — A fire started somewhere above the Garden of Allah and raged down Middle Ridge to threaten Mill Valley. The fire burned within a few blocks of the railway depot and the telephone office. Fortunately the winds shifted as the fire reached downtown.

The Red Cross turned the Outdoor Art Club into an emergency hospital. Scout Hall and the train depot were also used as shelters. In all, over 100 homes were destroyed, and over 2,500 acres were burned. Evidence of the fire can still be seen in the charred bark of older redwoods on Mid Ridge and in Bithedale Canyon (Photo at right shows volunteer men as they battled the 1929 blaze). October 31 — The Mt. Tam and Muir Woods Scenic Railway down for the winter and never again. The 1929 fire had an adv impact on tourism, but more importantly, automobile touring was enhanced by a new highway from Mill Valley up the mountain. To Stock Market crash earlier that month was the final blow to the "Crookedest Railroad in the West."

"The noise — you could hear engine working two miles away Valley's so quiet now that if a de barks twice, they call the cops," Bill Provines, a railroad fireman

1930

The Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Scenic Railway applied to abandon all of its lines in Marin County.

November 22 — The new Richardson Bay Bridge...
back of older redwoods on Middle Ridge and in Bithedale Canyon. (Photo at right shows volunteer firemen as they battled the 1929 blaze.)

October 31 — The Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Scenic Railway shut down for the winter and never ran again. The 1929 fire had an adverse impact on tourism, but more importantly, automobile touring was enhanced by a new highway from Mill Valley up the mountain. The Stock Market crash earlier that month was the final blow to the "Crookedest Railroad in the World."

"The noise — you could hear that engine working two miles away, Mill Valley's so quiet now that if a dog barks twice, they call the cops," said Bill Providence, a railroad fireman.

The great economic depression dominated Mill Valley life in the 1930s as it did in most of the country. Employees were laid off by companies that were not making any profits or even covering their expenses. The Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Scenic Railway was losing money and did not resume operation in 1930 — the tracks and ties were torn up and sold for salvage and scrap. This was a sad time for Mill Valleyites who loved the mountain railroad and especially for the many railroad employees who lived in town. As employees were laid off, there was less money for families to spend in the stores and the merchants were hard pressed to sell enough to keep their stores open. Construction of new homes and buildings in town almost came to a halt until near the end of the decade when business began to improve.

Publicly funded construction provided some jobs in and around Mill Valley. A new City Hall was completed in 1936 mostly with federal WPA (Works Progress Administration) funds. Other WPA funded projects were the building of the Greek Theater at Tamalpais High School, road work on Montford and LaVerne Avenues in Homestead Valley and the widening of outer Lovell Avenue. The CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) had camps on Mt. Tam where young men lived and worked on projects such as trails, fire breaks, the Mountain Theater rock seating and the Gardner Fire Lookout. New buildings were built for an enlarged Park School. The wooden Richardson Bay Draw Bridge on Highway 101, built from 2 million board feet of redwood, was completed in 1931, ending the era of main highway traffic going through Mill Valley on Camino Alto and Almonte Avenue. And the biggest project of all was the building of the Golden Gate Bridge which took several years, with completion in 1937. The bridge spelled the end of the ferry boats and later the Northwestern Pacific electric commuter trains, and paved the way for future rapid population growth in Mill Valley. — By Chuck Crawford & Ron Olson

30 The Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Scenic Railway applied to abandon all of its lines in Marin County.
31 November 22 — The new Richardson Bay Bridge opened.
33 January 5 — Construction of the Golden Gate Bridge began.
34 Melvin Klyce was contractor for an addition to Tamalpais Park School, which still stands today as the annex.
35 March 15 — The Suey Kee Market opened in a new store next to the Sequoia Theatre.
36 The new combination City Hall Firehouse and Police Station opened at 26 Corte Madera Avenue.
May 28 — The Golden Gate Bridge opened and had a major effect on Mill Valley's traffic, tourism and settlement.

The WPA built a 5,300 seat amphitheater at Tamalpais High.

The new Alberts Department Store opened.

Handball and lighted tennis courts completed at Boyle Park.

Sam Chapman and Barry Schwartz, fresh out of Tamalpais High School led California's defeat of Alabama in the Rose Bowl.

School bonds were approved to build a new Tamalpais Park School.

The Mill Valley Golf Course was purchased for $25,000. It took 3 bond elections for approval.

Establishment of a submarine base in Richardson Bay was discussed by Mill Valley and Sausalito officials.

June 6 — The new Park School opened and Summit School closed.

Sunday, October 29 — This day was officially proclaimed "Mill Valley Day" at the Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island.

Photos at top: The opening of the Richardson Bay Bridge in 1937, and a view looking south taken in the 1940s. Center photo: City Hall, a WPA-funded Depression project, 1936. Photo at right: John and Bill Leshears, owners of Mill's Super Service Station, wore cowboy gear to celebrate the Golden Gate Bridge opening (Miller at Montford Avenue, 1937).
The completion of the Golden Gate Bridge brought increased automobile traffic to Marin County and spelled the end of the ferry system and passenger railroad service to Mill Valley. In August of 1940, 515 residents petitioned the City Council to start a municipal bus line "regardless of possible competition from Pacific Greyhound Lines." Greyhound did step in, however, and was given a lease by the railroad entitling it to use the Mill Valley railroad depot and yard, and began bus service from Mill Valley in October of 1940. The bus company charged a $9 annual commuter rate for the first year after the city voted to operate municipal buses at that rate. Mill Valley had not ordered buses for its proposed municipal service, which never took place.

September 30, 1940 marked the end of passenger service on the Almonte-Mill Valley branch of the railroad. Railroad losses had mounted due to private cars, and this was the first step in the complete abandonment of Marin interurban railroad and ferry passenger service. The last Northwestern Pacific passenger ferry from Sausalito to San Francisco ran in May of 1941.

Northwestern Pacific continued to use the Miller Avenue right-of-way for freight service until the 1950s. The railroad tracks were then paved over or removed and Sunnyvale Avenue was extended over the right-of-way to Miller Avenue. On November 25, 1971 the last NWP freight train ran from Greenbrae to Sausalito and all railroad service to Mill Valley ceased. — By William D. Devlin

Over 200 aliens registered under a new federal law.

Mill Valley's new post office at Sunnyvale and East Blithedale was completed at a cost of $52,000 and served the town for over 50 years (see photo at right).

December 23 — Mill Valley enacted a blackout law originally proposed by the California League of Cities in conjunction with Attorney General Earl Warren.

Mill Valley went to war. 43 citizens volunteered to be air raid wardens and in the first three months of the war, six air raid warnings were heard in town. The all-clear was sounded as soon as the planes were identified as friendly. Blackouts began in August, gas rationing started in December.

February — Recruited to stop fires in the event of an air raid, the first 56 volunteer firemen finished a five-week course in fire fighting, and another group began training.

July — A fundraising drive was started in Mill Valley to support the servicemen's club (USO) in Sausalito. Soldiers and sailors apparently liked it — two young soldiers who had been in four army camps drafted a letter to Thomas E. Dewey, the national USO head, and asked that no changes be made at their club. 200 other soldiers also signed the letter.

July — A fundraising drive was started in Mill Valley to support the servicemen's club (USO) in Sausalito. Soldiers and sailors apparently liked it — two young soldiers who had been in four army camps drafted a letter to Thomas E. Dewey, the national USO head, and asked that no changes be made at their club. 200 other soldiers also signed the letter.

Photo at left: The last train in October, 1940 as Greyhound buses took over.
November — War bonds were sold and speeches were made at an Armistice Day celebration.

In the early days of the war, probably the biggest inconvenience for the 1,600 Mill Valleyites was the rationing of gasoline, food, coffee, and some clothing. The Mill Valley Rotary Club organized a scrap metal drive. Victory gardens were common. People poured their cooking fat into tin cans to be taken to the local butcher to be made into explosives.

For three years during the war, the Sausalito shoreline was one of the county's major shipbuilding centers. Marinship was built to supply the war effort with Liberty ships, tankers, and oilers. More than 75,000 people worked at Marinship, and many Mill Valley families and others opened their homes to the workers. Housing was a problem for defense workers, and construction of new homes in Mill Valley started. The building of over 100 new “defense homes” was approved. By having this designation, the development had preferred priorities on materials. These were sited in Alto and towards the foot of Sycamore Avenue and were designed to sell for about $4,000 each.

At the height of the war, more than 400 Mill Valley residents were fighting in the war. The city government lost volunteers to the armed forces, as council members William Hamilton and Robert Russell went to war along with several members of city commissions.

The population of Mill Valley was 7,241. It was the fifth largest in the county, three grade schools, one junior high school, and six businesses opened, including the Outdoor Art Club, which featured Friday night dancing.


Construction of defense housing continued through the decade. It was estimated that by 1950 one person in 10 in Mill Valley lived in a Gopheen home. George C. Gopheen and his companies built 426 homes in the area between 1937 and 1950, including 251 in Mill Valley and 75 in Alto, with 140 more in Alto.

The United States of America War Ration Book One

**War Ration Book One**

**Warning**

1. This book may not be transferred. It must be held and used only by an individual whose name is on the Cover sheet and issued to him, and no part may be used by any other person.

2. This book must not be transferred. It must be held and used only by the person to whom it has been issued, and any unauthorized transfer of this book will be cause for its seizure and possible prosecution.

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**Office of Price Administration**

**The Outdoor Art Club**

became a serviceman's club and featured Friday night dancing.

11 children in Mill Valley contracted polio.

Homes on Blithedale and Old County Road were hit with debris from a road construction dynamite blast.

Peace was declared. New businesses opened, among them Vogue Cleaners and El Marin Florists.

A building boom followed the troops home. Sycamore Village and Alto experienced growth.

Lawson Dyer Pharmacy and Malugani Tire opened.

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Above photos: Throckmorton Avenue during the 1940s. Photo at left: Miller Avenue. (c. 1940)

Photo at right: Sycamore Avenue, the flood of 1955.
The Outdoor Art Club became a serviceman's club on Friday night dancing. 11 children in Mill Valley contracted polio.

In Mill Valley, construction sites on Blithedale and Old Road were hit with debris from construction dynamite blast.

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The Mill Valley Air Force Station was built on the west peak of Mt. Tam. Its purpose was to intercept and destroy enemy aircraft.

The population of Mill Valley was 7,241. It was home to three grade schools, one junior high school, one high school and six churches.

The Red Menace played at the Sequoia Theatre.

An infant in Sycamore Park died after a sudden fever. The cause of death was diagnosed as polio.

The Mill Valley Air Force Station was built on the west peak of Mt. Tam. Its purpose was to intercept and destroy enemy aircraft.

Safeway advertised large avocados at 22¢ each and ground beef at 65¢ per pound.

A two-year-old, three-bedroom house with "magnificent views" was available for $12,750.

1950s

Initially, the 50s in Mill Valley reflected the national mood of optimism. We hoped for a peaceful era after experiencing the hardships and losses of World War II. The silent menace of polio began to threaten the health and lives of our children, and the creeks that had been so much a part of the joy of growing up in Mill Valley, were suddenly forbidden fruit.

Conscious of our security after the "war to end all wars," the Mill Valley Air Force Station was erected on Mt. Tam to warn us of possible enemy aircraft. The Korean War absorbed more of our men, and the fear of losing our boyfriends, husbands, fathers and sons returned.

Our population of just over 7,000 consisted primarily of families, most of whom had stay-at-home moms. Housing was affordable, and many families purchased their first homes on the GI Bill. People in unprecedented numbers, who could not have imagined owning their own homes prior to World War II, were buying houses.

By the end of the decade Mill Valley's population had increased by more than 40%.

The freight service for the train which ran up Miller Avenue until 1952 was discontinued, much to the delight of one mother who reported her toddler woke each night when the train whistle blew. The train tracks were taken up three years later; but the remnants of the tracks can still be seen at the intersection of Park and Miller Avenues.

We were not immune to the "Red Scare." A resident of Mill Valley who taught in the Dixie School District was suspected of being a member of the Communist Party and lost his job as a result.

Until the late 50s, traffic ran in both directions on either side of Miller Avenue. It was convenient for those who lived on Miller Avenue to be able to turn directly into their driveways, but the decision to make Miller Avenue one-way on each side of the former railroad tracks enlarged our sense of being a small town.

We hadn't installed our first traffic light and were still a relatively quiet community. Most breadwinners commuted on the Greyhound Bus to and from San Francisco. The buses drove up Miller Avenue with Mt. Tam in full view. What a beautiful view it was to come home to. While more homes have advanced up the mountain and taller trees have obscured some views, Mt. Tam is still a constant in all of the past decades of our first 100 years. -- By Joan Murray

Photos: Throckmorton Avenue in the 1940s. Photo at left: Miller (c. 1940).
The Kiddie Matinee at the Sequoia Theatre played Francis the Talking Mule and Chapter 11 of The Lost Planet.

Gosser's Meat at the Miller Avenue Shopping Center (current site of Mill Valley's Whole Foods) advertised chuck roasts at 49¢ per pound.

The proposed 25¢ toll for the Golden Gate Bridge was reported to the Mill Valley Record as "extremely remote."

The week before Christmas of 1955, continuing into the New Year, torrential rains, higher than normal tides and strong easterly winds brought widespread flooding.

Locust Avenue businesses, as well as those on Corte Madera Avenue near City Hall experienced extensive flood damage. Residents on Edgewood, Lowell, Eldridge, Ralston and Tamalpais Avenues, as well as other streets, suffered from mudslides and streets required extensive repaving at the cost of $7,629,027.

Crews removed, or paved over, the railroad tracks that were laid up the center of Miller Avenue. This was viewed as a golden opportunity for the town since parking was now available up the center of Miller Ave. A photo in the Mill Valley Record showed a member of the Chamber of Commerce holding up two of the railroad spikes in a "V" for victory sign as a symbol of support for the removal of the railroad tracks.

Seeds of the first Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival were planted (see photo at right). Without a permanent location it alternated between the windows of downtown merchants, to the parking area which is now the Plaza, to Boyle Park and to Old Mill Park. The now permanent location in Old Mill Park has become lodged in the hearts of those who attend.

A sewer Richardson Bay Bridge opened, replacing the world's longest redwood drawbridge built in 1931.

Mill Valley's population was 10,500 (up 38% in 8 years).

The Ten Commandments played at the Sequoia Theatre.

You could buy a fryer for 58¢ per pound at Sonapa Farms; and for $22,000 you could buy a two-bedroom home on Middle Ridge.

June — the Chamber of Commerce heard a proposal to revive the Crookedest Railroad in the World on Mt. Tamalpais.

An increase of the tax rate for Tamalpais Union High School was approved, raising the rate an unprecedented amount from $1.05 per $100 to $1.90 per $100.

A top end home advertised as architecturally designed, situated on a half acre, with a view of Mt. Tam, was available for $29,950.

Larry Drink Movers, located at 433 Miller Avenue, advertised that the "Edsel Invades Low-Price Field."

Photos at top and left: Removing the train tracks near 189 Miller Avenue, 1955. Photo at bottom: The train depot serves as a Greyhound bus terminal and taxi stand.
Seeds of the first Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival were planted (see photo at right). Without a permanent location it alternated between the windows of downtown merchants, to the parking area which is now the Plaza, to Boyle Park and to Old Mill Park. The new permanent location in Old Mill Park has become lodged in the hearts of those who attend.

Mill Valley's population was 10,500 (up 38% in 8 years).

A newer Richardson Bay Bridge opened, replacing the world's longest redwood drawbridge built in 1931.

An increase of the tax rate for Tamalpais Union High School was approved, raising the rate an unprecedented amount from $1.05 per $100 to $1.90 per $100.

Larry Brink Motors, located at 433 Miller Avenue, advertised that the "Edsel Invades Low-Price Field."

Photos at top and left: Removing the train tracks near 189 Miller Avenue, 1955. Photo at bottom: The train depot serves as a Greyhound bus terminal and taxi stand.

1960s

The 60s became a time when Mill Valley was declaring its independent nature and wrestling with local as well as national issues.

Already Mill Valley enjoyed the distinction that it paid the highest taxes in the county, signaling its wealth. The development of land was a major issue in the early 60s. Some felt Mill Valley was a friendly place to live while others thought it was "full of snobs." Approximately 24% growth during the 60s put Mill Valley fourth in size in Marin with a population of 12,942. Mill Valley also had the highest percentage of homeownership, or owner occupied homes, at 60%. In 1961, a planning study referred to Mill Valley's "basic industry" as the "exportation of labor in high earning groups, principally to San Francisco." 1960-1970 saw a gradual change in the structure of retail. A large share of retail volume was in automotive sales activity. This trend continued until 1964 when automotive retailing shifted much of its focus to freeway oriented sales.

The Mill Valley Schools were crowded and experimenting with multi-age group classrooms, couch and rug reading groups, team teaching and self-contained classrooms.

Tam High coeds were going braless and long-haired boys were reminders that Mill Valley was not your conventional suburb. "Beatniks" and anti-war demonstrations were in the air and shaping much of the demographic landscape. — By Stephanie Wickham Witt
Southern Marin cities paid top taxes with Mill Valley the highest of nine cities in Marin.
- Fluoridation lost by only 84 votes.
- Mill Valley eyewore — a public dump across from Tam High — was brought to the attention of readers of The Record.
- Project 17 got a facelift. 1,500 yards of fill were brought to the recreation centers low-lying marshlands by 18 dump trucks.
- City Rec Program for children started (tennis, crafts, dance, music classes and day camps).
- Stolte Grove Mozart Festival was established.

July — Mill Valley strived to preserve its beloved trees and green slopes against rampant "progress." Its Planning Commission kept a wary eye on the reckless bulldozer. Its citizens kept an even warier eye on the Planning Commission. At the drop of a variance, they descended on City Hall to defend their trees with the stubborness of Chief Marin who had led the Miwoks' nine-year struggle against the Spanish invaders to preserve their green and pleasant homeland. Modern Mill Valleyites had much more success! (SF Town & Country)

The Mills took over the Mill Valley Record.

Mill Valley's first fulltime Planner hired — Harvey Bragdon, who stayed until 1970.
- A new city ordinance required undergrounding of utilities in all new subdivisions, which was subsequently done in Scott Highlands, Scott Valley and Bithdele Park.
- A basin was being dredged in Richardson Bay for a 127-berth boat harbor (where Bayfront Park is now).

However, the harbor was never built. The City also turned down a proposal by Marine World for siting its facilities on the Mill Valley waterfront.

Award-winning Mill Valley library opened near Old Mill Park at 375 Throckmorton, replacing the old Carnegie Library at Lowell and Madrona.

Choreographer Margot Jones brought an inter racial group to the stage of the Mountain Theater for the first time. Also, the Mill Valley Center for the Performing Arts (later known as the Marin Theatre Company) began its inaugural season.
- Civic (business) Beautification Project in 1967 — planned by Businessman's Committee and Community Consultants Ltd. Color-coordinated pastel painting of buildings won Mill Valley a Distinguished Achievement Award in 1968 for a national "clean-up" contest.

February — The City Council unanimously approved a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, making Mill Valley the first community in the United States to take this step.

The spire of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church rises 134 feet. (c. 1968)

\[ \text{Mill Valley resident and then President of S.F. State, S. I. Hayakawa became a national figure when he yanked wires from a campus protestor's bullhorn and called an immediate end to the student strikes.} \]

\[ \text{John Goddard, 25, purchased the Village Music record store. In the years to come, its large and eclectic selection would attract stars from around the world, including a memorable visit by Cab Calloway.} \]

\[ \text{The city expanded by about 1,500 acres in 41 separate annexations from 1925-1967 (but most — Alto, Homestead, Strawberry, Tamarack Valley — remained staunchly unincorporated).} \]

\[ \text{Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church completed. Contemporary design with tall spire by architect Fred Huweling provided new focal point for downtown Mill Valley.} \]

Tam graduate Pat Paulsen got his own network TV show. At the same time, Doris Day starred as a Mill Valley career woman on the "Doris Day Show."

- A city bicycle trail system with connection to neighboring cities and West Marin was adopted by the Mill Valley Planning Commission.
- A large crowd packed the Mill Valley Golf Clubhouse to hear the City Council discuss an "anti-hippie" law.
- September — 2,500 students were enrolled in Mill Valley schools.
- 700 persons marched through Mill Valley in steady rain on Moratorium Day to protest the Vietnam War.

A lifestyle controversy was pushed into the forefront: a proposed zoning amendment to abolish hippie communes was up for final vote before the City Council.

\[ \text{"Mill Valley, That's My Home" became a national hit song. A young teacher, Rita Abrahams and her Strawberry third grade class became an overnight sensation when they sang about a place "where people aren't afraid to smile / and step and talk with you awhile / and you can be as friendly as you want to be."} \]

\[ \text{"Mill Valley" went on to sell over 100,000 records without the help of an agent or promotional campaign. Rita Abrahams became distinguishable as the only artist to have appeared simultaneously in Rolling Stone and Mr. Weekly Reader.} \]

A lifestyle controversy was pushed into the forefront: a proposed zoning amendment to abolish hippie communes was up for final vote before the City Council.

\[ \text{The anti-commune law was sought. "Street People" came to Mill Valley, much to the chagrin of some} \]
In the 1970s Mill Valley, "bucolic redwood canyon community nestled in the lap of Mt. Tam" was considered by some to be the "Scarsdale of the West, the place San Franciscans go when they've made it." The median age was 33.1, and the town of approximately 13,000 was buying and selling homes in the $36,000 (1971) to $74,000 (1976) range. Navigating narrow, winding roads, a typical Mill Valleyite might have been wearing jeans and old sneakers and was relatively casual, friendly and individualistic.

Mill Valley people then, as well as now, had money, but few "bluebloods" lived here. Those few hid their pedigrees. Mill Valley was known as a community of strivers, movers, overachievers and seekers who paid their dues in San Francisco and came home to Mill Valley to rejuvenate. At the time, the area had one of the highest numbers of PhDs, Sierra Club members, and UFO sightings per capita. — By Stephanie Wickham Witt

**1970**

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Church rises 134 feet. (c. 1968)
and Pacific Railroad right-of-way which started by the Lions Club.

An end with heavy rains.

W.W. was replaced by a series of upscale restaurants; Lockwoods Pharmacy closed in 1981 after 86 years on Miller Avenue.

A federal grant for $855,000 helped buy the Northwestern and Pacific Railroad right-of-way which was then converted to a bike path.

Oscar Night — John Kerry of Mill Valley won for Best Documentary: "Who are the DeBohns? And Where did they get nineteen kids?"

NISG-shocked Marin with its "I Was It All New" documentary that depicted the county in general; Mill Valley especially, as being the "wanton home of psychohbabble, hot tubs, and peacock feather massages."

Prop. 15, the tax slashing initiative, passed by state voters grabbed most of the attention as it played havoc with the city's budget.

Banana Republic, a store that specializes in military surplus and safari clothing was launched and its first catalog published by Mel and Pat Zeigler. The Gap purchased it in 1983.

During the 1980s Mill Valley's business areas continued to change and evolve with the closing of several old and well-known businesses: Tamalpais Hardware closed in 1981; locally-owned Red Cart Market was replaced by chain-owned Long's Drugs; the Old Mill Tavern closed in 1981 and was replaced by a series of upscale restaurants; Lockwoods Pharmacy closed in 1981 after 86 years on Miller Avenue near Throckmorton; Dowd's Barn and the Curtis Gallery building on Throckmorton Avenue burned in a spectacular 1984 nighttime fire and the Dowd's space remains an unbuilt gap. Boutiques, upscale clothing shops, coffee shops and art galleries were the prominent new types of businesses in the downtown area.

Tremendous rains and high tide caused much flooding. Lower Miller Avenue became a virtual river impassable to cars and several homes and businesses suffered damage and severe losses. The city later improved drainage there.

Downtown Plaza rebuilt with brick surface, trees and benches as a pleasant gathering place. — By Ron Olson

Tamalpais Hardware closed after 60 years on Miller Ave.

The Old Mill Tavern at the corner of Barnard and Throckmorton closed its doors after several years of annoying the City Council with loud music and what the council liked to call "a questionable element." (April 1993 Mill Valley Magazine)

January — Tremendous rains and a high tide caused much flooding. Lower Miller Avenue became a virtual river impassable to cars and several homes and businesses suffered damage and severe losses. The city later improved drainage there.

Downtown Plaza rebuilt with brick surface, trees and benches as a pleasant gathering place. Depot Bookstore and Restaurant building (city-owned) was remodeled with outside tables. There was a design competition for a fountain, but many people were against it and it was not built.

A new enlarged Southern Marin Sewage Treatment Plant was built and a six-mile long outfall line was constructed out from Tiburon to Raccoon Straits to improve Richardson Bay water quality as required by environmental regulations.

Fire destroyed three downtown businesses on Throckmorton Ave., including one of Mill Valley's oldest — Dowd's Barn. The fire started in the Curtis Gallery next door and arson was suspected. The Mill Valley Inn was built, replacing one of the buildings. A gap remained where Dowd's Barn was the owner and the city were unable to agree on parking requirements for a proposed new office building.

Mill Valley voted for a $145/year Municipal Services parcel tax to repair and repave its 57 miles of deteriorating streets. Voters renewed the tax for another 10 years in 1997. The city reported in 1998 that 22 miles of its streets had been repaired. City plans to repair and repave 12 more miles of neighborhood streets in 1999/2000.

Chris Chater produced the award-winning documentary film "Steamillng Up Tamalpais" about Mt. Tamalpais and Marin Woods & Railroad which operated from 1895-1932.

Traffic became heavy, slow and frustrating. Drivers fuming at the town, especially on the weekends, when the amenities and the problems of the city grew dramatically over the previous several years in large part due to the significant increase in number of girls playing the sport.

City Council approved ordinance #1991 which required all unreinforced masonry commercial buildings (especially brick) to be structurally strengthened over a seven year period (after some San Francisco brick buildings collapsed in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake).

Wholesome Foods Market opened at Miller and Evergreen. Three extensively remodeled old Quonset buildings and was so popular it caused traffic jams. In response to complaints, Whole Foods officials worked with the city (and neighbors) and changed the entrance to its parking lot to ease congestion. The store added an extensive line of traditional grocery items with natural and organic products, employed 11 people and was named Mill Valley Business of the year for 1999 business of the year by the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber credited the store with helping to vitalize the business corridor along Throckmorton Ave.

Youth soccer and baseball grew dramatically over the previous several years in large part due to the significant increase in number of girls playing the sport.
13, the tax slashing initiative. State voters grabbed most of the tax money as it played havoc with the budget. Banana Republic, a store that specializes in military surplus clothing was launched and catalog published by Mel Zeigler. The Gap purchased 13.

1988 Chris Chater produced the award-winning documentary film "Steaming Up Tamalpais" about the Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Scenic Railway which operated from 1896 to 1938 from downtown Mill Valley to just below the east peak of Mt. Tam. She combined historical motion picture footage of the railway and gravity cars along with interviews from Mill Valley residents who described their memories of the railroad. The scenic railway was a world-famous tourist attraction which for many years brought crowds of visitors to Mill Valley. Eventually the increased popularity of automobiles and the construction of a toll road to the top of Mt. Tam caused losses and its closure.

1989 Lockwood's Pharmacy, which started in 1903 on Miller Ave. closed its doors.

1990s

Mill Valley's population was over 13,000 and few vacant buildable lots remained. According to the Chamber of Commerce in 1993 Mill Valley had 6,594 households, a median home sale price of $445,300 and a median income of $55,748. Affluent home buyers remodeled and greatly enlarged existing older homes, or even tore the older homes down to build new large houses. Residents asked if the small town character of older neighborhoods could survive a continuation of these changes.

Traffic became heavy, slow and more congested on East Blithedale in the mornings, at noon and in the evenings with many drivers fuming at the delays entering and leaving town. Parking places were harder to find downtown, especially on the weekends. Mill Valley was becoming a more mature, modern city with both the attendant amenities and the problems of too many cars on too few streets. — By Ron Olson

City Council approved ordinance #1991 which required unreinforced masonry commercial buildings (especially brick) to be seismically strengthened over a several year period (after some San Francisco brick buildings collapsed in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake).

Whole Foods Market opened at Miller and Evergreen in three extensively remodeled old Quonset buildings and was so popular it caused traffic jams. In response to complaints, Whole Foods officials later worked with the city (and neighbors) and changed the entrance to its parking lot to ease congestion. The store mixed traditional grocery items with natural and organic products, employed 175 people and was named Mill Valley's 1999 business of the year by the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber credited the store with helping to revitalize the business corridor along Miller Avenue. (Mill Valley Business)

Youth soccer and baseball grew dramatically over the previous several years in large part due to the significant increase in the number of girls playing the sport. The Soccer Club and the Little League programs each had nearly 900 Mill Valley youngsters playing on teams in their respective leagues. (Mill Valley Magazine by W. Muller)

City started tree and vegetation removal along streets near open space to reduce fire hazard.

Mill Valley’s much loved and well-used Public Library was expanded and strengthened.

Bayfront Dog Park reopened with recontoured grassy area, trees and improved drainage; soccer field fenced.

New $1 million Community Center building started with completion slated for September 2000. Funding was a controversial mix of tax money, donations and revenue bonds. The Center operation was designed to be self-sustaining with fees for pool, spa, fitness facility, rentals and classes. There would be no charges for the teen center or the senior center.

A big celebration is planned for September 2000 at the opening of the new Community Center as a culmination of Centennial Incorporation activities. Sketch below: The addition to the back of the library overlooks Old Mill Park, 1998.