in Mill Valley Historical Review
FROM Mt. Tamalpais EXCURSION Each Evening during the Month of May Via SAUSALITO FERRY

Leaving SAN FRANCISCO 4:45 P.M. Leaving MT. TAMALPAIS 9:50 P.M. DINNERS AT TAVERN OF TAMALPAIS

Mt. Tamalpais was the ONLY POINT from which the Comet was visible on Monday evening. Situated half a mile high it is usually above the tops of San Francisco hills. From now on the conditions will be better than they have been. The moon is getting out of the way, rising later each evening, and one of the men who made the trip on last Monday evening and they will tell you!

DO NOT FAIL TO MAKE THE TRIP

Two Days for $10
Any Day Except Saturdays and Days Before Holidays

Including:
A steamer trip on San Francisco bay.
Scenic ride in open sightseeing cars.
Over the crookedest railroad in the world 281 curves 281 views.
Big appetites and lunch at Tamalpais Tavern.
Views from summit of Mt. Tamalpais.
Sunset on Pacific Ocean.
Big appetites and dinner at Tamalpais Tavern.
A night on Mt. Tamalpais.
Complete rest. Tonic for mind and body.
Complete change of scene.
Sunrise.
Big appetites and breakfast at Tavern.
Eight mile gravity ride to MUir WOODS.
A day among the BIG TREES.
Giant ferns, wild flowers, madrones, bay.
A hundred weird unique wonders.
Big appetites and dinner at Muir Woods.
Sunset on the bay returning to San Francisco.

All for Ten Dollars Including Your Tax
See How We Stretch Your Ten

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About This Issue... This year our 20th issue Review is devoted entirely to the Mill Valley & Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railroad. Although the Mountain Railroad was in operation for only 34 years, we hope this abbreviated account will help it to live on in hearts and minds through the years to come.

The Crookedest Railroad in the World by Ted Wurm with Al Graves has been a treasure house of information. A new edition is due out shortly and is highly recommended for fascinating accounts of every phase of our Railroad. As with every issue, the Mill Valley Public Library has once again been so very generous in lending photographs from the collection of the Lucetta Little History Room for reproduction here. Thank you so much Joyce Crewd.

To commemorate the century mark of the Railroad's last spike driven on August 18, 1886, the Mt. Tamalpais Interregional Association, in conjunction with Mt. Tamalpais State Park has planned a celebration at East Peak on August 17 & 18, 1996. A full scale gravity car is being reconstructed and will be on display along with other memorabilia. Be sure to check the newspapers for further information as the centennial date approaches.

The first six months of 1896 were widely emotional times in the young town of Mill Valley. While civic pride swelled in the hearts of most, tempers exploded in many. Dollar signs danced in the eyes of speculators. Guns were drawn! And such a clatter echoed up every canyon finger as the dust and soot swirled and settled on all below.

The Mill Valley & Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway was about to traverse and climb the beloved mountain. The first phase would cover 8.19 miles with 281 sharp and twisting curves to make the 2,200 foot ascent. The original plans however were of a much grander scale. It was first proposed as an electric trolley line with Bolinas Beach the final destination. The powerhouse would be erected on the grounds of the Blithedale Hotel owned by Sidney Cushing, who was the newly elected president of the mountain railway. An earlier attempt to connect Bolinas Beach by the San Francisco, Tamalpais & Bolinas Railroad had only reached Mill Valley when the company sold out to the North Pacific Coast Railroad in 1889. Their initial tracks remained only a narrow-gauge branch line connecting Mill Valley to the steamer ferry berths in Sausalito. The
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The estimated construction costs of the electric trolley to Bolinas by the Mill Valley & Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway were around $100,000, compared to over one million for the previously proposed steam rail line. Those plans would change in several significant ways.

Work began on February 5, 1896. Suddenly there were over 200 laborers packed into shanties and tents across from the station right in the middle of town! Some were soon stationed up on the ridge to work the upper five miles but many more were arriving. Quite a change this influx created on the small-town character of Mill Valley. Although eager for their trolley, the townfolk were less than thrilled with all this commotion. But the workers themselves were justly appalled with their own situation. Many walked off the job on February 26. The next day The San Francisco Call reported their plight. Pay was $1.75 for a ten hour day with $5.25 deducted for board weekly. Sunday meals cost extra. All their purchases had to be made at the company store and most men garnered less than a dollar at weeks end. One of the workers described to a reporter how they had to get out of bed at five o'clock and walk two miles to work after breakfast; then they were allowed one hour for the four mile trek to lunch and back, including the time spent eating "stuff that is vile."

The locals commiserated with the workers’ plight. They were excited about the electric trolley and recognized the temporary inconvenience they must endure but they regarded the construction company with some contempt for its employment policies. One incident was reported in the local newspaper and summed up by Ted Wurm in his fascinating chronicle, The Crookedest Railroad in the World. He relates, "The volunteer fire department in Mill Valley owned a large iron triangle, which hung over the entrance of their hall and had been used to give the alarm in case of fire in years gone by. One of the timekeepers for the railroad, knowing that the triangle was not in use, carried it away to call the men to supper at the camp."

"An infuriated citizen spotted this unfortunate timekeeper in the course of his crime and immediately informed the chief of the fire department. This precipitated a council of war at the firehouse. Finally, a warrant was sworn out for the man's arrest on a petty larceny charge. Deputy Constable E. E. Gray took..."
his search warrant, scoured the camp and found the triangle. Both the culprit and the triangle were brought before Justice of the Peace Tom Postell, who imposed a stiff fine, a stern warning, and allowed the representative of the unpopular construction company to depart.23

In spite of the ongoing labor disputes the work went on. A much larger snag would soon shut the job down almost entirely. But first came one of the most exciting days in the history of Mill Valley. On March 4 the first engine arrived.

The standard-gauge steam locomotive rode into town aboard a flatcar on the N.P.C. line. Nearly the entire population turned out for such an event it was! They watched as it was unloaded onto a temporary rail just near the station. Most were surprised as they surveyed this 20-ton, Shay geared steam engine, remembering the proposed electric trolley. The press was quick to allay their bewilderment. The engine, numbered 498, was on loan from the Dollar Lumber Company on the Russian River. It was to be a workhorse and also on standby in the event of capacity crowds. The electric coaches were still promised.

J. H. McInnes was one of the valley's most affluent property owners on Corté Madera Avenue. The railroad had determined it most feasible to run the tracks up one side of the road thereby passing less than two feet from the sidewalk in front of the McInnes land and causing the removal of several trees. The smaller of those were already felled. As the crew approached a grandfather tree, McInnes appeared with six-shooter drawn and threatened to kill any man who touched it. His wife joined the stand-off and single-handedly overturned a six-team plow that was about to excavate their driveway. The workers made a quick retreat as McInnes barricaded the road and his property with old wagons and anything at hand, then positioned "an armed band of men" to protect his property throughout the night.

The noisy and dirty locomotives were nothing like the promised electric trolleys. Tamalpais Land & Water Company claimed sole power over the right-of-way and was siding with the Railway. The citizens suddenly were alarmed about the future of their rapidly changing town. The Mill Valley Property Owners' Association was hastily formed at a meeting held in the San Francisco offices of M. M. O'Shaughnessy, the civil engineer...
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aimed sole power over the life and was siding with the citizens suddenly were at the future of their rapidly.

The Mill Valley Property association was hastily formed and held in the San Francisco
M. O'Shaughnessy, the civil

At left: The first locomotive, No. 498, at the original Mill Valley Station across from the North Pacific Coast depot, August 1896.
Below left: The first day of regular operation. Master mechanic Bill Thomas front and center with Mr. & Mrs. Frederic August Meyer seated in front. In the back row a passenger holds the dipper from which all drank mountain spring water, August 27, 1896. Bottom photo: On grand opening day, Engine No. 498 pulls two open-bench coaches with press and dignitaries aboard to the summit, August 26, 1896. Below: Railroad advertising.

MT. TAMALPAIS AND MUIR WOODS
(CALIFORNIA'S BIG TREES)

HOW TO SEE CALIFORNIA IN A DAY
engineer who was largely responsible for laying out the streets and plots in Mill Valley.

The next day an injunction was served on the Railroad banning any track-laying on Corte Madera or Blededale Avenues; it alleged further construction as planned would impede other use of the roadway and generally diminish the property values.

As the battle raged towards the March 22 court date in San Rafael, work continued on railway stretches not involved in the dispute.

"Materials for the construction were piling up everywhere. On the North Pacific Coast Railroad sidetracks in Sausalito were to be seen many cars of rails and ties, which commuters from Mill Valley gloated over on their way to and from work in 'the City.' There was no place in Mill Valley where the cars could be stored, so it was impossible for the scenic railroad builders to haul the material to men at work up on the mountainside. One thousand ties were unloaded at Sausalito railroad wharf on March 19th from the steamer Progress; there they had to sit, and the accumulation was assuming the proportions of a monument to the determination of the people. The company complained that they were losing $200 a day by the slowing up on the project."

...continued page 8
At left: The sharpest curve on the railroad; about 2 miles up Bithedale Canyon from the Mill Valley Station. The curve was 90 degrees with a 70 foot radius.

Below: Passengers and crew survey a derailment, March 3, 1901.

Facing page, top: Engineer Chester Thomas in the first Fieseler geared locomotive, No. 2. Built in June 1906, it was named the "Joseph G. Eastland" but was called "The Bull".

Facing page, bottom: Engineer Jake Johnson with Engine No. 3. The locomotives pushed the coaches ahead of them to provide smokeless comfort and an unobstructed view.
"Mount Tamalpais & Muir Woods Railway"

"The Original Muir Woods Inn"

"The Mill Valley Station"
Concurrently McInnes sold two lots to the Railway along with a right-of-way on Throckmorton near the station. Partial payment was in stock, making McInnes part owner of the Railroad and thereby reversing his interests.

After two days of hot testimony at the hearing, Judge Angelotti ruled in favor of the Railroad.

"A few minutes after the decision was announced in Mill Valley the roadway was alive with workmen. An extra force had been secured in anticipation of a favorable result. In order that the rails might be laid across Throckmorton and Cortez Madera Avenues before other injunctions could be obtained, the Scenic Railway Co. determined to push construction as rapidly as possible. The track had to cross Throckmorton, pass through the McInnes property and out on Cortez Madera to the powerhouse site, a distance of about 800 feet, then on for a total of one and a half miles in such a fashion as to permit the running of a construction train to the front.

"Ties and spikes and rails were shortly being thrown around in a grand spectacle of speed, the 300 tracklayers being full of enthusiasm for their project. On through the late afternoon the men sweated furiously under direction of Superintendent Graves. Ties were laid out exactly 22 inches apart; then came hearty laborers with rails, followed by six sturdy spikedrivers. The metallic clank and bang of their sledgehammers made even accompaniment to their song, joined into by the thongs of enthusiastic onlookers from all over the county.

"On after nightfall the work continued, big bonfires adding their light to the moon's glow to lend dramatic effect to the situation and giving the townspeople a real show in compensation for their loss in court. About 10 in the evening a car was run over part of the line and the track was still lengthening out; when it was discovered that the supply of spikes would not be sufficient to complete the necessary work. In this case the obstacle only served to accelerate the progress, for the superintendent gave orders to spike only into every third tie. The last required rail was laid just before midnight and the fear of being further restrained was over. The company provided a big supper for their men and granted them a half-day's extra pay for the thrilling night's labors. It was reported that in the various construction camps the merrymaking went on until morning.

"The following day was another momentous one for the new railway. Their borrowed locomotive, No. 408, was steamed up, run out of her temporary shed by engineer Chester Thomas and fireman Kirner under the watchful eyes of a large crowd, and pushed the first carload of material as far as the bridge on the Cushing property. The Shay's shrill whistle saluted the softness of the previous night's trackwork, and then everyone cheered, including McInnes, perched atop the car." Incredibly the last spike on the first stretch to East Peak was driven by Superintendent L. R. Graves on August 18, 1896. The very first run to the top was for the townsfolk on August 22.

The lavish grand opening celebration for the press and various dignitaries (about 75) was held at Throckmorton on August 26, 1896. Ted Wurm crafted a marvelous souvenir image of the occasion in his aforementioned book.

"Out under the trees at Throckmorton the scene was set. Two long tables were stretched out, laden with all the fine delicacies of the '90s. In a natural amphitheatre the guests were seated, with tall trees and blue skies overhead, and then drank to the prosperity and long life of the Tamalpais Railway and to the health and wealth of all important personages. A railroad enthusiast would have noted in the setting the gentle sound of the waiting locomotive, the air pumps keeping brakes steady, the fireman keeping

At left: Engine No. 5 with Fireman Ray Graves front and Engineer Jake Johnson at the cab. Another Shay, No. 4, waits with its crew. A short hike up the peak is an observation tower called the "Marine Exchange". 1907. Below: Agent Thorp J. "Pinky" D'asasa and conductor Frank Thomey at the summit ticket booth. At right: Gravity Car No. 11 awaits passengers near The Mule Woods Inn.
The lavish grand opening celebration for the press and various dignitaries (about 75) was held at Blithedale on August 26, 1896. Ted Wurm crafted a marvellous souvenir image of the occasion in his aforementioned book.

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"In the grand tradition champagne flowed like water, and the popping of corks added further delight to the pleasures of the setting. Waiters had been charged not to let the glasses get empty, and they were most faithful in carrying out this duty. Various speakers praised the management, the construction work, and the marvelous railroad to the clouds..."

"Then Mr. Cushiging was called and in a few words invited his guests to come with him to the summit of Tamalpais by railroad and see for themselves the glories in store for travelers on the new scenic railway. The party jumped up with a ringing cheer and hurried to the train. Seats were excitedly chosen, the engine's whistle shrieked its challenge to the mountain, and the ride to the summit commenced.

"In and out among the mammoth trees around the new railroad, over Blithedale Dam, past the Hotel Eastland, where the ladies waved their handkerchiefs and the gentlemen on the train responded by lifting their hats. The ascent was a gradual one, no grade being steeper than seven percent and the average climb only five percent, while the train twisted and turned around 281 curves from base to summit..."

"Now Mr. Dodge, in charge of construction, handed out a few statistics of interest to the newspapermen. He told them that the railroad, to reach an
altitude of half a mile, was eight and a quarter miles in length, 90 percent of it built in solid rock. The builders had used 22 trestles, but only two through cuts—an advantage for sightseers. The grade contour had been followed, making the 281 curves mentioned, the sharpest having a radius of 72 feet and all taken together adding up to 42 complete circles. The entire route was laid with 57-pound steel rails on redwood ties.

Longest stretch of straight track was 413 feet right in the center of the crookedest portion—the double back-knot. "Fifty-five thousand dollars had been spent in actual construction of the railway, for grading, trestle work and tracklaying, and an additional $80,000 for equipping the line. Rolling stock now consisted of two fine steam engines, the 20-ton Shay No. 498, which had eventually been purchased from the Dollar Lumber Co., and a 30-ton Heisler No. 2, named John G. Eastland and called by everyone The Bull. There were six open, canopy-top observation cars, one half-closed passenger car (formerly a San Francisco cable car from the Omnibus line) and two flatcars."

By the end of 1896 Summit Tavern (aka East Peak Tavern) was completed.
providing meals and lodging. It was so popular with the locals and tourists that several years later a full second floor was added along with an archway bridge over the tracks that connected a new dance pavilion. It was renamed the Tavern of Tamalpais.

In 1904 the Railroad constructed the West Point Inn, aptly named for its location at the line's westernmost point. It had dormitory style sleeping rooms for "boys" and "girls", several cottages and a restaurant which served dinner for $1.25 and breakfast for 75¢.

There was still no electric trolley and in the Spring of 1905 a gasoline railcar was constructed from an open Thomas Flyer with seats for six. It was called Black Maria. The following summer General Richard H. Warfield, the current lessee and manager of the Tavern, was killed in the car when he demanded the driver...
speed up to beat the returning local train. It was the end of Black Maria as well. Fortunately the Railroad had just ordered a tiny four-wheel saddleback steam engine for the Lee Street Local service. This locomotive, No. 6, was the only non-gearred steam engine on the line and was known as the "dinky." It seems to have truly been the favorite of all the locals as it shuttled them in open bench cars into town to shop or meet the connecting trains bound for Sausalito.

As the economy worsened in 1912, it became apparent the electric trolley would forever remain a dream. The much loved dinky was sold in 1915 and replaced with the 1916 Kissel Kar built in San Francisco. This No. 3 motor was luxurious and state-of-the-art, capable of 12 miles per hour up hill. In addition to the local run it was sometimes used for special parties to the summit. But it could never replace the No. 6 in the hearts of all the locals who had known it.

The Railroad was re-incorporated in 1913 as the Mt. Tamalpais & Muir Woods Railway. In 1907 they had added a branch line to Muir Woods and opened the Muir Woods Inn on 192 acres of land purchased from William Kent. In downtown Mill Valley, the new corporation built a fine new engine house and shop with indoor tracks and pits. They also added water tanks, a sand house and a motor car shed with indoor turntable. They purchased new equipment as well, including gravity cars that were designed in part by the Railroad's master mechanic Bill Thomas. These new gravity cars coasted in relative silence except for the click of the rails down to Muir Woods or Mill Valley from the summit. The small open cars carried thirty passengers on wooden seats running across the car in five rows. The brakeman or "gravity man" in control of each car was not to exceed 12 miles per hour but by every account the ride was a top thrill.

As the number of automobiles grew more rapidly and roads were built, the railroads popularity waned. In 1930 the tracks were removed by the scrap crews. Engineer Jake Johnson who had arrived with the original engine in 1896 drove the last locomotive, No. 8, up onto a flatcar and the glorious days of the Mountain Railroad were only memories.

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2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.

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Tamalpais gravity car leaving the Tavern in 1916. Passengers on the "Crookedest Railroad" had a choice of coasting back to Mill Valley or Muir Woods by gravity car or of returning by the regular mountain train.
12 miles per hour but by every account the ride was a top thrill.

As the number of automobiles grew more rapidly and roads were built, the railways' popularity waned. In 1930 the tracks were removed by the scrapping crews. Engineer Jake Johnson who had arrived with the original engine in 1896 drove the last locomotive, No. 8, up onto a flatcar and the glorious days of the Mountain Railroad were only memories.

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2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.

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Chronology

1896
- January 16: Mill Valley & Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway incorporated.
- February 1: First meeting. Election of officers. Plans laid out for financing, construction and operation.
- February 5: Construction begins.
- March 4: Arrival of first engine, No. 498, a 20-ton Shay geared locomotive.
- March 18: Injunction filed against California Construction Company by Mill Valley Property Owners' Association to prevent track laying on Corte Madera and Bithedale Avenues.
- August 18: Superintendent Graves drives the last spike.
- August 22: First passenger train to the summit for the townfolk of Mill Valley.
- August 26: Official grand opening for about 75 dignitaries and members of the press.
- August 27: Regular passenger service begins. Round trip $1.00 from Mill Valley, $1.40 from San Francisco.

End of 1896
- Tavern near summit of East Peak completed.

1902
- July 17: First dividend declared; $1 per $100 share.

1904
- West Point Inn constructed. Bolinas Stage connection.

1905
- Spring: Lee Street Local, Black Maria.

1906
- Engine No. 6 (the "dinky") service to Lee Street Station, 5c.

1907
- Spring: Branch line to Muir Woods and Muir Woods Inn opened.

1913
- Tavern damaged by forest fire. Muir Woods Inn destroyed.

1914
- Muir Wood Inn rebuilt somewhat farther down valley.

1915
- Ten new gravity cars added at $230 each.

1916
- Kissel Kar arrives for local Bithedale service.

1917
- Daily runs suspended from November - March except the Lee Street Local. (Bithedale Service)

1920
- One daily train reinstated.

December
- 36-ton Heisler, No. 9, the last and most powerful locomotive was ordered for $16,000.

1921
- Railroad deeds portion of their Muir Woods land to government.

1923
- Tavern of Tamalpais destroyed by fire originating in kitchen. Rebuilt in stucco and tile.

1929
- Fire ended railroad operations to Muir Woods.

1930
- Summer: The scrapping train dismantles the Mountain Railroad.