The geographical area now occupied by Mill Valley began its development as a part of John Reed's Rancho Corte Madera, a land grant from the Mexican government. It consisted largely of open grassland suitable for cattle grazing except for the fertile bottomland of the area known as Millwood which was developed as a truck garden. The hillsides were first divided into large tracts that operated as dairy farms. By 1890, the town was further divided into lots and real estate entrepreneurs bought up large areas for speculation. The Tamalpais Park area was the first of these "subdivisions" available to the public. It was a part of the larger "Amelita" tract in the area of Millwood and was developed in 1904. Tamalpais Park was so attractive and popular that by the time of the second World War the lots were almost completely sold.

About This Issue

The Mill Valley Historical Society
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market operated by Gus Oppenheimer stood on the site of the Chevron station, 103 East Blithedale; it may have been the "flatiron" building referred to in early newspaper accounts. After it burned to the ground in 1924, the cement steps still stood at the corner and led up to a vacant lot until the service station was build. The Bedecarrax family operated a laundry in what is now Scout Hall. The laundry site is now occupied by Organic Hair Care. A candy store was located at 160 East Blithedale for many years before it was converted to real estate offices.

The era between the two world wars witnesses many changes in the Mill Valley ambience caused primarily by the intrusion of the automobile, the accessibility to town occasioned by the building of the Golden Gate Bridge and the introduction of real estate sales as a principal industry.

Changes occurred also in architectural styles. The stucco bungalow replaced the brown shingle exteriors. Rooms were smaller and the style structurally strong and more massive with heavy open porches. Garages were incorporated into the building plan but only for a single car.

The Eveready Garage became a Buick dealership with an entrance at 1 Throckmorton Avenue, now Accurate TV. Later remodeling put the salesroom on Blithedale (now the Runners Shop) and a grocery store operated by J. Clyde Strauss and Oliver occupied the corner by 1931. The private home at 25 East Blithedale (now Small World Travel) was used as a women's clothing store called the "Marigold Dress Shop". It was operated by Mrs. William Muller. A Ford agency and garage was built by Mel Klyce for Walter Allen at 78 East Blithedale, and the ramps for moving the cars between levels are still existent in the "Artisans" and Banana Republic shops.

Five service stations were built along East Blithedale. The first Shell Station was at 85 - 89 E. Blithedale (now Lando's). The site of the office of Mill Valley travel housed a Signal Oil Company station on land still owned by Jack Creighton. An Associated station, later Phillips, operated at 44 View of marsh below Locust Avenue, located near where Sycamore Village is now (1977). Photo taken around 1930.
The Tamalpais Park Subdivision enjoyed a period of active growth during the 20's and 30's. Mel Klyce built a comfortable New England style home for George and Honor Grant at 22 Sycamore. Mrs. Grant was from New England and introduced the architecture and eastern gardening to the area. More typical of the fashionable homes of the time are the houses at 26 Sycamore built for the Cleveggers, 34 Sycamore built for James McGee, and 38 Sycamore. Very few changes have been made to the corner house at 57 Park. The beautiful condition of the building attests to the solidity of the original construction as well as the care it has received from the families that have occupied it over the years; the Kent Seymours, Dr. Rodney Hartman and, at present, the John Nicholas family. The home at 51 Catalpa, belonging to the Wenderings, is a fine example of a larger, more pretentious house of the 1920's, stylistically related to the bungalow but deriving elements from the Spanish-Mediterranean.

By 1909 a school building was constructed at Catalpa and East Blithedale to house the overflow of students from Homestead and Summit schools. It was called the Tamalpais Park School and has only recently dropped the "Tamalpais" from its name and is generally known as Park School. It began with four classrooms and a kindergarten. It was greatly expanded in the late 30's to accommodate the closing of the Summit School and was furnished with an auditorium and separate library. The original building has been torn down to make way for a play yard. Additional land had to be purchased to provide a parking lot off Elm street for staff and visitors.

Boyle Park baseball diamond in 1912.

The original subdivision has remained relatively stable since World War II as most of the properties had been developed by the late forties. Blithedale Avenue has had more alteration because of the changing demands and interests for commercial property. It is now largely dominated by offices and small apartments and must accommodate an unbelievable amount of traffic at all times, particularly during commute hours. Children can no longer enjoy the luxury of playing baseball along the level roadway or staging Olympic games that used Blithedale and the side streets as a track. Material prosperity and exploitation have replaced the peaceful serenity and pleasant leisure of a less mobile population and time.
When the town was developed by the Tamalpais Land and Water Company, in 1890, it was stipulated that no saloons be allowed within a quarter mile of the railroad depot. Jack Brady was permitted to operate the Sequoia "Tavern" across Miller, but only for a license fee of $1000, a staggering sum in 1890. The ease of access to Blithedale Avenue soon made the area outside this dry zone attractive for saloon sites. By 1904, although these saloons had almost entirely disappeared, there had been possibly four along Blithedale. Starting with Hansen's, "The Louvre" on the corner of Blithedale and Grove (now 170 East Blithedale), and going east to the Watson saloon at Dell Lane, the area became known as "Jagtown". Other saloons whose exact locations are unknown, were operated by the McGinnis, McDonald and Dougherty families at various times. These saloons were family enterprises and provided much of the recreation for patrons of the time. The Hansen Saloon boasted a trough for watering patrons' horses, which otherwise would find their way home. Mr. Hansen's mother provided entertainment by playing the piano and leading the singing. The family lodgings were at the rear of the saloon. The Watson Saloon, now apartments at 231-233 East Blithedale, is one of the oldest buildings in Mill Valley. The Watsons lived on the second floor of the "tavern". A large beer sign on the wall of the building advertising beer for a nickel long survived the enterprise itself.
By 1904 there were several homes along East Blithedale. The permanent residents were largely merchants and people with commercial interests in the town. The McDonald family had a small house at 110 East Blithedale which has since been replaced. A small summer house was built at the site of 124 East Blithedale by Phillip Kraussegg who later enlarged it as a permanent home. His son, Walter, was a popular band leader in Larkspur and San Francisco. Phil Harris was one of his musicians. Number 160 East Blithedale was a residence from 1890 to 1900, later serving as a candy store, and more recently, as real estate offices. The Young house occupied a large site at 203 East Blithedale. Rita Byrne's garage owner in town. The cottage at 263 E. Blithedale was called "Eastland" for twelve years. The cottage at 274 E. Blithedale was built by manual Cardoza and was the home of his granddaughter, Kate Budar, a long time employee at the Mill Valley Golf Clubhouse until her death in 1969. The cottage at 263 E. Blithedale was built by a Mr. Machado on land purchased from the Varney family. The house at 236 E. Blithedale was replaced by the Weisler family. The cottage at 236 E. Blithedale was a garage funnel with the trees after which they are named. The land was open grassland not conducive to forestation except in the hollows along the creek, the survival of the trees is probably due to care and maintenance provided by the Outdoor Art Club, founded about the same time, with the goal of maintaining the natural beauty of Mill Valley. The design of the subdivision resembles an area of Lexington, Kentucky, which may have served as a model to convince the city fathers to follow Mrs. Sollom's plan.

The area, called "Millwood" in the early maps, was named the "Tamalpais Park Subdivision," and by 1906, lots were offered for sale in the San Francisco newspapers by the firm of Lyon & Ho.

Schoools and churches

The public schools are the best, and you can send your child to school, and, owing to the class of people living in Mill Valley, you may do so without fear that he or her schoolmates are not fit companions. Three churches—Catholic, Episcopal, and Congregational.

Tamalpais Park

To looking at our property you will at once become aware of some of its many advantages. You will undoubtedly love the sun, the cool breeze, the view, the water and the sanitary condition of the place.
two days does it look the same. Each change in the weather or in the clouds affects the light and shade of
in. On either side of you are other mountains which while not so high are nevertheless grand and most beau-
tiful. In front of you live a portion of the Bay of San Francisco, affording a most pleasing marine view.
Pondings but enhance the natural beauty of the valley itself. Thousands upon thousands of beautiful trees,
and much to make charming this beautiful spot. Not the least of the attractions near pure mountain water that flow down the rugged sides of Tamalpais. On the banks of one of these
are things that are necessary to have to make a desirable homesite. There are other factors, which,
neatly necessary, add much to its enjoyment and worth. We sincerely believe that Mill Valley possesses
the surroundings but enhance the natural beauty of the valley itself. Thousands upon thousands of
beautiful trees, nearly every lot abso lutely necessary, add much to its enjoyment and worth. We sincerely believe that Mill Valley possesses
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SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

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TAMALPAIS PARK

In looking at our property you will at once become aware of some of its many advantages. You will
doubtless note at once its superior location, lying as it does in the center of the valley

INVESTMENT

The value of residence property in San Francisco has risen so

sake of your child, as the sale of this large tract with the building operations which must

the sewer system is excellent.

promotional brochure published to advertise the subdivision. It was opened on land purchased from Fred W. Bagshaw

the model houses illustrated on the brochure were all in the fashionable brown shingle finish and surrounded by redwood trees which were not

and the bay from every lot.

The events of the year 1906 mark another historical landmark in the
development of the area. The great earthquake and fire in San Francisco created a demand for shelters, summer

carpenter labor of lumber that was much more substantial than necessary for the one story house, as they had no

carpeted by all those who have to use the cars frequently. Besides being near the depot, it is near all the stores, school, church by etc. The

This view is naturally original and has not been retouched or altered on the film or in the studio.
Abel M. Costa and Antonio V. Costa in front of Costa Creamery at East Blithedale and Sunnyvale. The 1918 milk wagon was from the Silverira Ranch which was then at Strawberry Point.

The large, handsome house at 35 Sycamore was built by George Roux. One of his daughters, Lorraine, is now Mrs. Tom Goddard. Around 1911 another comfortable brown shingle house was built next door to the Roux's at 37 Sycamore, by Peter O'Brien for his sister, Mrs. Manning. The third of these prominent houses was built at 45 Sycamore by the Fred Bennetts. California redwood also graced the interiors of these homes as paneling or as facing for ceiling beams. Electric lighting was coming into general use, as was the telephone. The horse barns were gradually being replaced by single detached garages or were being converted into garages, but the streets were not paved until the middle 20's.

Several families of Italian origin settled along Blithedale in the early 1900's and the community was enriched with the cultural contribution of the Lambrettis, Ferrarios, Cavallis, Leonis, Zaros, Tambourinis, Macchis, Filippis and Varneys. In the fall those families with Old World heritage would pool their resources and buy grape tonnage from Sonoma vineyards to make their own wine. The aroma of fermentation was strong and unmistakable. On Saturday nights the voices of Amos and Andy drifted from every living room radio.

Several commercial establishments flourished along what is now East Blithedale. One of the most prominent was Costa's Creamery on the corner of Sunnyvale and East Blithedale, now the Bank of Marin parking lot. Costa's also furnished wood, coal and ice, the common necessities before gas, electric and oil ranges and refrigerators were in use. The Paloma Market operated at the corner of Blithedale and Throckmorton in the old Eveready Building which is still standing and now houses Accurate TV. Another

Mill Valley owes much of its charm to its isolation from through traffic, anyone who uses public transportation will testify. To this day there are only two access roads around the marshland of Richardson's Bay; Miller Avenue from the south and Blithedale Avenue from the north and east. The latter, above the floodplain, was the road that John Reed must have used to survey his holdings in Corte Madera and the Tiburon Peninsula. On the early map it is labeled "Old County Road" and believed to have been called "Canyon Road", until the 1870's. By that time Dr. Cushing had homesteaded in Corte Madera Canyon and given his new property the name of "Blythedale", after Hawthorne's novel "A Blythedale Romance". By 1875, the North Pacific Railroad had extended its line from San Rafael to Sausalito with a station...
Tamalpais Park: The First Subdivision

by

Henri M. Boussey

Mill Valley owes much of its charm to its isolation from through traffic, as anyone who uses public transportation will testify. To this day there are only two access roads around the marshlands of Richardson’s Bay; Miller Avenue from the south and Blithedale Avenue from the north and east. The latter, above the floodplain, was the road that John Reed must have used to survey his holdings in Corte Madera and the Tiburon Peninsula. On the early maps it is labeled “Old Country Road” and is believed to have been called “Canyon Road”, until the 1870’s. By that time Dr. Cushing had homesteaded in Corte Madera Canyon and given his new property the name of “Blythedale”, after Hawthorne’s novel “A Blythedale Romance”. By 1875, the North Pacific Railroad had extended its line from San Rafael to Sausalito with a station at Collins Summit, a spot on the far side of the freeway at the Tiburon Wye. It was there that the surrey from the “Blythedale Hotel” met hotel guests and the road gradually became known as the road to Blythedale. In 1889, the trestle across the marshes was built from Almonte to Lomita and the Alto station became a closer railroad stop serving the needs of “Blythedale”, as the resort development was known. When a spur railroad was extended into the square at Mill Valley, in 1890, Blythedale Avenue lost its importance as the main access to the new town. Originally Blythedale Avenue ended at its intersection with Buena Vista and Throckmorton. Corte Madera Avenue was the main road into the canyon. West of the Outdoor Art Club the current West Blythedale was called “West Cottage.” When the Cushing holdings were subdivided and annexed to the city, around 1925, Blythedale was paved and extended as West Blythedale. The old access road became the present East Blithedale. At some time the spelling was changed from the more poetic “Blythedale” with a “y” to the present “Blithedale” with an “i”.

Being on the immediate periphery of the town proper, the original Blithedale Avenue was developed early as suburban property, and commercial activities gradually radiated out from central Mill Valley. The area’s earliest home was built by Hugh Boyle, and crowned a choice knoll on land inherited by his wife, Carmelita Garcia
Hilario Sanchez Garcia, 1813-1868, married John Thomas Reed in 1836 and bore him three children. After Reed's death she married Bernardino Garcia and had one more child, Carmelita, who married Hugh Alyusus Boyle. Photo taken about 1863.

Boyle, which she, in turn, had inherited from her mother, Hilario Sanchez Reed Garcia, John Reed's widow. Many early properties can be identified by plantings of Cypress hedges presumably as windbreaks; the Boyle property was no exception. "Cypress Knoll" is still occupied, at Manor Terrace off Elm Avenue.

The early properties in this area enjoyed relatively level or gently sloping terrain. Lots were generous and allowed for gardens, orchards, pastures for horses and barns for buggies in the age before automobiles. The Reiman's property at the site of the old post office had a barn and the one on Fred Bagshaw's property at Sycamore and Blithedale was converted to a dwelling for Mr. Bagshaw's brother when he came here from Wales. The entire corner now occupied by the Sycamore Shopping Center (Lawson-Dyer, etc.) was once fenced in as a pasture for grocer'sman Gus Oppenheimer's delivery horses. The Hansen's Saloon at East Blithedale and Grove Street had a pasture at the rear of the building for tethering patrons' horses. The barn of the Young family at East Blithedale and Dell Street was later incorporated into the house as a kitchen as the family grew. The Tony Varnays cultivated a vineyard at the site of 255 East Blithedale, until recently when it was pulled out for the construction of a small apartment building.

Hugh Boyle, 1843-1891, built early home across Blithedale Avenue from Tamalpais Subdivision. Boyle was a Marin Supervisor in 1885.

Carmelita Natividad Garcia Boyle, Hugh's wife at age 34.

The Boyle House, known as Cypress Knoll, stands alone.

Hugh Boyle, 1843-1891, built early home across Blithedale Avenue from Tamalpais Subdivision. Boyle was a Marin Supervisor in 1885.

Carmelita Natividad Garcia Boyle, Hugh's wife at age 34.
Ducks and Hens Licensed to Roam Mill Valley's Streets

New Ordinance Grants Them the Privileges of the Town When They Are Properly Tagged.

MILL VALLEY, Sept. 25.—Mill Valley's Board of Town Trustees last night passed a novel ordinance. All heads of the field and fowl of the air that now infest the town will be so at their peril, unless they have a licensed tag attached to their persons. A tag costing 50 cents per annum attached to the animal is required. The humble citizen that should grasshopper and cast his lines, without hoping for their return, upon the winding streets of the town will henceforth wear upon his left, landing a large brass tag bearing the owner's name and the date of issuance. The erratic turkey and the pensive fowl must girdle themselves with metal tags showing their right to wander on the public thoroughfares.

It is rumored that a committee of ducks will walk upon Clerk Jones and request that their tags be made of aluminum, so as not to interfere with their aquatic sports. Each member of the goose family will also pay the 50 cents a year. The style of tags to be worn by the geese has not yet been passed upon. Ducks favor the necklace, where the insignia and a few false red feathers with illegible license numbers will be the proper thing. It is rumored that they are now out of the Mill Valley pound and so luxurious is the table there provided that $2 a day (or $1 a meal) will be charged as long as they remain there.

Clerk Jones tried to have his salary raised from $50 to $75 per month. It is believed that the extra labor occasioned by the unique feather license forced him to make the attempt.