

WHEN THE TOWN OF ROSS WAS A CITY OF INDUSTRY?

While you won't find any major industry in Ross today, there was once a factory here, just off Winding Way. No trace remains today, but C.A. Meussdorffer, one of the original Town trustees, and his son opened a factory in 1924. Not just any factory, but one to make sirens, from those attached to trucks to large air raid sirens. It shouldn't be surprising that it didn't take long for the neighbors to notice. As the San Francisco Chronicle reported on July 19, 1924, "Noise Factory Roils Marin, Ross Folk Sue Auto Siren Plant Owners, Trial Honks Held Nuisance". A neighbor, Mrs. Ruggles, took the Meussdorffers to Court, suing for \$5,000 personal damages. She also noted a sharp drop in her home's value.

Months later, in November of 1924, the headline was "Portia Outdone by Decision", comparing the judgment to the 'pound of flesh' dilemma from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. The factory could continue production and would not have to pay damages to Mrs. Ruggles, but there was a confounding condition attached to this decision. They were not to disturb the neighbors and could only operate if the testing of their sirens made no noise. If it was a backhanded way to shut them down, it didn't work. I recently spoke to Louie Soldavini, a 101 year old resident of San Rafael who once worked at the factory. Their solution was to press the equipment against their bodies to muffle the sound and take the larger sirens to McNear's brickyard near the Bay for testing. The company was eventually sold and production moved elsewhere. The site of the factory is now occupied by two residences on Winding Way, near Laurel Grove.

Visit the Moya Library on the grounds of the Marin Art and Garden Center to see our siren and nozzle from that historic factory. For more information visit www.moya-rhs.org.

San Francisco Chronicle - July 19, 1924, Page 15

San Francisco Chronicle, November 11, 1924, Page 3