

THE ROSS SEMPERVIREN

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TOWN OF ROSS CENTENNIAL NEWSLETTER VOLUME 1 2008



Photo courtesy of the Ken Fineman collection.

Centennial Update

WE CELEBRATE LIKE THIS JUST ONCE IN A HUNDRED YEARS!

The Town of Ross will be celebrating its 100th Anniversary **September 20, 2008**, with a huge parade and picnic. Please join us for a truly memorable day. A “grown-up” town dinner will take place on Ross Common the night before.



100 YEARS OF COMMUNITY

All are welcome on the Centennial Committee—a lively and fun group!

If you have not yet signed up on the Town's email list, please do so to stay in the Centennial loop. Contact Linda Lopez at llopez@townofross.org or call her at 415-453-1453 x105.

Naming of the Town of Ross

by Gary Scales

Most Ross residents are aware that the Town is named for James Ross, a Scottish immigrant who made his way to San Francisco as a Gold Rush pioneer. Ross staked his savings on selling mercantile goods and liquor to miners. He prospered, and soon sent for his wife, Ann, and their three children who had remained in Australia. Ross expanded his ventures into real estate and purchased the 8,887-acre Rancho Punta de Quentin in 1852. He leased large portions of the Rancho to dairy and timber interests and concentrated his efforts on a shipping wharf he called "Ross Landing" on the Corte Madera Creek, near present day College of Marin.

Ross needed substantial operating capital and borrowed heavily from his business partner, George A. Worn, pledging the Rancho as security for the loan. In less than five years Ross was in failing health and died at the age of 50. His family inherited extensive real estate holdings but little income. George Worn married Ross' oldest daughter, Annie, and they selected a 20 plus-acre site on which to build their family home. Seventy-five years later a portion of this property would become the Marin Art & Garden Center. When the estate was completed in 1865,

the Worns christened it "Sunnyside." It became such a prominent landmark that the North Pacific Coast Railroad soon named the train stop between Ross Landing and San Anselmo "The Sunnyside Station."

Worn assumed responsibility for managing the financial affairs of Ross' widow Ann, but was forced to liquidate large portions of the Rancho to satisfy certain codicils of the will and to meet living expenses. Ann Ross lived in the family home on Redwood Drive for a number of years and then moved into a smaller home near the Common. When she died in 1901, all of the Rancho land had been sold, except for approximately four acres.

In the decade following the Gold Rush, San Francisco emerged as the West's financial and mercantile center, and the North Bay witnessed steady growth in both permanent residents and visitors. Many San Franciscans maintained substantial summerhouses and on weekends rode ferries across the Bay to Sausalito. There they boarded trains, which carried them northward to their country homes. Guests came for the



James Ross
(1812-1862)



Daughter Annie Ross
(1843-1927)

weekend, welcomed by large staffs of cooks, gardeners and housemaids.

The North Pacific Coast Railroad sought to expand the Sunnyside Station and add a full time stationmaster to handle the increasing patronage. The Ross family had previously granted right-of-way easements for most of the tracks. In 1882 Ann Ross agreed to sell an acre and a quarter parcel of land to the railroad to build a larger, permanent depot. Her one condition of the sale was that the name of the station be changed from "Sunnyside Station" to "Ross Station" in honor of the Ross family. Historians have marked this occasion as the "birthday" of the Town of Ross, as the new name of the depot began to establish the surrounding area as a community. That same year, Jonathan G. Kittle and his wife Harriet (DeWitt Allen) purchased "Sunnyside" from George and Annie Worn for \$12,000, and Kittle descendents remained there for the next fifty years.

Ross Remember

"A stage coach robbery took place maybe a mile or two on the road west of Phoenix Lake in 1898. The robber was named Victor Coldwell and was captured the same day by Sheriff Hansen and a posse of five people. The fellow wore a black slash hat and a Prince Albert coat, and he had an old red handkerchief tied around his face, leaving only his eyes and part of his forehead exposed. He had enlisted in the cavalry, but was rejected. When they took him to Ross station, they found he had stolen 30 dollars plus five cents cash, and two gold watches from the passengers."

— by Marin County park ranger Gordon Hasler, resident of the ranger's house at Phoenix Lake for 33 years

The Morning After

(Posted September 3, 1908)

The Board of Trustees of the Town of Ross held its first meeting on Wednesday evening September 2, 1908 at 8:00 p.m. upstairs in the old Ross firehouse.

- Elected:
- Henry Scott, President
 - Allen I. Kittle, Willis M. Brown, Conrad A. Meussdorfer, Edward G. Schmiedell, Trustees
 - John Clute, Clerk to the Board

The Clerk read a letter from the Secretary of the State of California directed to said Clerk, informing Clerk to the effect that the resolution theretofore passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin, declaring the territory comprising the Town of Ross duly incorporated (as of the 21st day of August, 1908) as a municipal corporation of the sixth class, had been filed in the office of the Secretary of State. The Chairman there upon declared that the matter of the incorporation of the Town of Ross was completed.



The Trustees introduced the first ordinances for discussion:

- Pertaining to the tacking of signs
- Relating to the licensing of peddlers, solicitors, and other agents
- Providing for the protection of trees
- Limiting the speed at which locomotives may cross the street
- Prohibiting the running of carriages and bicycles at night without lights
- Allowing the impounding of dogs

The Board expressed concern over inadequate water supplies and water shortages, therefore encouraging County construction of new lakes.



- 1 The log cabin at Phoenix Lake was built for the foreman of which area ranch?
 (A) Patronus (B) Porteous (C) Poplar (D) Pumpkin Ridge
- 2 The site of the Lagunitas Country Club was once home to:
 (A) The Pink Saloon (B) A Native American shell mound (C) Both A and B
 (D) Neither A nor B
- 3 In which year was the “new” Ross grammar school erected?
 (A) 1979 (B) 1962 (C) 1959 (D) 1941
- 4 In 1905, a speeder was nabbed at the approach to the Ross Valley Bridge. How fast was he going?
 (A) > 4 mph (B) >16 mph (C) > 28 mph (D) > 40 mph
- 5 In 1971 the Jerome Flax family gave the Town of Ross a memorable gift. What was it?
 (A) The Norwood bridge (B) A sculpture of a bear
 (C) Grounds for the Marin Art and Garden Center (D) The “new” post office

1. B. The log cabin at Phoenix Lake was built around 1893 for Martin Grant, coachmen and foreman of the Porteous Ranch.
2. C. The Lagunitas Country Club, founded in 1903 under the direction of Mrs. E.G. Schmiedell and Mr. Seward McNear, was built around the old “Pink Saloon” with tennis courts over a Native American shell mound.
3. D. The current Ross elementary school was built in 1941.
4. A. In August 1905, Col. Herbert Choyanski, a prominent San Francisco lawyer, was arrested for driving his car at “a rate exceeding 4 miles per hour” at the approach to the Ross Valley Bridge.
5. B. The distinctive bear sculpture created by Beniamino Benvenuto Bufano has become the well-loved symbol of the Town of Ross.

Sources: Jose Moya del Pino Library and Ross Historical Society of The Marin Art and Garden Center (www.moya-rhs.org/) The Marin Independent-Journal, December 31, 1999/Ross History: A Collection of Remembrances as told by the Residents of Ross, written by the 1983 Ross School Fourth Grade.