

Bulletin

T o m a l e s R e g i o n a l H i s t o r y C e n t e r



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Above: Part of TRHC's collection, this hand-held STOP – BLACKOUT sign was used by local Civil Defense volunteers during WWII when there was great concern about Japanese submarines and war planes approaching the west coast. Blackout alerts were frequently called, for inside and outside buildings and for drivers. The sign, designed to be held horizontally as cars passed with headlamps on, has an oval reflector at the bottom.

Cover: At Tomales, as in many — probably even most — American coastal towns along the Pacific's shore, there was a watchtower. Volunteer-manned (or "woman-ed" as was more often the case at Tomales, at least), the watchers scanned the sky for enemy planes, or lights at sea. These volunteer Civil Defense groups were common during the Second World War, and are distantly related to our local volunteer emergency response teams of today, standing by and ready with plans for emergency situations. This tower stood in Tomales, near the Elementary School on John Street.

Bulletin

**Ginny Magan, Editor
Suzanne M Lang, Design Editor**



T O M A L E S R E G I O N A L H I S T O R Y C E N T E R
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EDITORIAL

CHANGE, RECOVERY, AND ADAPTATION

This New Year issue of the *Bulletin* has some relevance to — and certainly inspiration from — the immediate aftermath of the recent fires in Sonoma and Napa Counties. Tomales and other areas of west Marin became acquainted with many refugees that terrible Monday morning. Some had friends and family here, and some probably just instinctively fled west toward the ocean.

A friend, neighbor, and colleague suggested, with thought of the fires, this *Bulletin*'s theme of Recovery. I added the concept of Change because it is such a universal element of life, and is what usually *necessitates* recovery. Recovery inevitably rolls toward Adaptation, and there, on scales small, medium, and large, is much of the stuff of life and history.

At our November Open House, Georgia Marino looked back at TRHC 2017 highlights, and forward to this new year. I especially add my appreciation to Georgia's for Loren Poncia and Joe Pozzi, who each visited the Center last year to speak from experience about the Renaissance of Local Agriculture. This is an important and dynamic subject that also fits into this issue's theme of cycles of Change and Adaptation. How *fortunate* we in the Shoreline Region are to have these and many other young, enthusiastic leaders involved in our local agricultural scene. Thank you Loren and Joe! (I have lost track of the number of people who told me how welcome and important your words were.)

2018 promises much. We are anticipating (though some of the details are not worked out yet) two new and significant additions to our collection in 2018. Also on the close horizon: the retrospective of local amateur photographer Ella Jorgensen's work, an updated and improved website, and recognition of the History Center's 40th anniversary. And our new (mostly) native plant garden continues to thrive amid the winter-green hills.

Happy New Year to us all. As Walter Earle of Tomales once said to me optimistically on a dull winter's day, "Spring is just around the corner." And he's right of course — it is.

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The mission of the Tomales Regional History Center is to inspire interest in the region's history through collection, exhibition, and interpretation, and to develop an awareness of the role we all play on the greater continuum of that history.



A sewing bee to aid in recovery of 1906 Earthquake victims, held at the Tomales Town Hall. The note at bottom says "Refugee Sewing Bees" (not "Refugees Serving Beer" as more than one person has read Ella's note!). (photo by Ella Jorgensen)

CHANGE, RECOVERY, ADAPTATION

Change is, on some level, one of life's inevitabilities — and probably necessities. On all scales it occurs, natural or manmade, often unnoticeable, seemingly uneventful. It usually comes to us benignly, but occasionally it is cataclysmic. And depending on its severity, change can involve recovery and adaptation.

Exploration and settlement

Hundreds of years ago a huge change, slow to begin but with unending results, came to much of coastal California in the form of European explorers. We all know the general story — the eventual enormous impact on the lives of the land and the native people, the largest results of which came a few centuries later with the various waves of settlers.

Surely many of these settlers came for adventure, but the majority arrived in reaction to their *own* local changes, seeking recovery and following their instincts to adapt. We in the Shoreline region still live and work among visible marks of these people who came hoping to improve their lives. The buildings they built, the lands that they tilled and their animals grazed, are now significant parts of *our* lives. Seekers of better ways of life continue to come of course, *and* to go (ask longtime residents of Oregon), as economies and lifestyles change.

A recent, local focus on recovery

Last October's unprecedented wildfires in our close-by counties of Sonoma and Napa aimed a spotlight on the cycle of change and its recovery. Many evacuees instinctively fled toward the



Volunteer fire companies too are part of the disaster recovery plans of many Shoreline region communities, and respond to medical aid calls, trees down, and other road blockages and emergencies as well as fires. This is early Tomales Volunteer Firefighter Giocondo Cerini, who, it is said, built the garage at his Tomales-Petaluma Road home to house the volunteers' truck. (Joan and Leroy Cerini Family Collection)

coast, heading to western Marin and Sonoma Counties. The roads leading south and west were in some places lined with cars that Monday morning, their stunned passengers standing outside, wrapped in blankets, probably discussing what to do and where to go. For these people, an unimaginable and very personal change had come in little more than an hour.

This was, of course, a complete surprise to most of us locals that early morning — even to the volunteers involved in local disaster councils, formed after the floods of late 1982 and the 1995 Mount Vision fire. As Lynn Axelrod of the Point Reyes Disaster Council said, the group “was prepared to be a Disaster Zone ... not an Evacuation Zone.”

These and more recently organized disaster councils at the north end of Tomales Bay — Dillon Beach Emergency Response Team

(DBERT), and Tomales's even newer group, Tomales Emergency Response Network (TERN) — learned and improvised that morning. The impact of refugees was sudden and, as Axelrod implied, unexpected. These local emergency response groups are connected — in spirit if not organizationally — with our local volunteer firefighters and, more distantly, with the volunteer Civil Defense groups formed during World War II.

After the fires, the Tomales group saw the event as a potential learning experience and met for a post-incident review. A member of the group reported that "...our activities might not have been very visible, but we were alert and active, working in the background." This is, of course, welcome news for us all.

Without doubt, our communities rose to the sad occasion during those intense October days. Local churches immediately and spontaneously opened their doors to make coffee and provide rudimentary breakfasts, along with conversation, empathy and compassion. Local restaurants joined in with specially cooked meals. Tomales High School opened the gym for free showers, as did Inverness's St. Columba's Episcopal Church. At Dillon Beach, Lawson's Landing welcomed campers without charge. Temporary shelter was found at the Marconi Conference Center in Marshall, a site previously planned for such use by local disaster recovery groups. But the Dance Palace in Point Reyes Station spontaneously scrambled to provide food, mats, and overnight shelter, as did the Tomales Bay Resort in Inverness and other places, including individuals in their own homes.

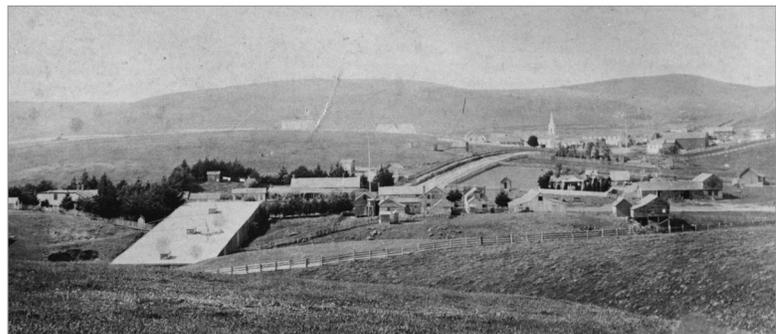
Hal Russek, an employee of the Marconi Conference Center who acted as a liaison between the center and the volunteers, spoke with gratitude of this widespread local response. "Marconi is glad to help, but this has been a community response, a community effort all the way."

In the midst of those chaotic first few hours — when change was all anyone could perceive, and recovery must have been impossible to imagine — tiny, human-scaled moments occurred. Strangers talked and listened, names and contact information were exchanged, beloved pets were comforted. There was even an impromptu birthday party for two evacuees at the Marconi Center. A sixteen year-old girl and another woman who previously had not known each other shared birthday cake and blew out candles.

Change is, of course, forever surrounding and impacting us. It can be positive as well as negative, but over the years, every Shoreline community has experienced the kinds of upheavals — fires, floods, earthquakes — that require personal *and* communal recovery and adaptation. Technological advances have caused changes that required subtle recovery. Cultural changes slowly occur, constantly and everywhere. And tourism — related in some ways to cultural change, encouraged by some residents, disdained by others — is altering the demographics of many communities, causing its own kinds of change and adaptation.

How change, recovery, and adaptation shaped Tomales

The layout of the village of Tomales is a result of the Change-Recovery-Adaptation cycle. The community began and was sustained because of its ocean-accessible port, established by John Keys in 1850, and grandly named Keys Embarcadero. The tiny settlement began to evolve into a town as its port hummed with activity. But cultivation of surrounding lands caused the once easily navigable waterway to become shallow with silt. By 1870, ocean-going schooners could no longer reach the docks lined with warehouses and commercial establishments. Attempts to secure funding for dredging failed.



An early image (view NW) of Lower Town, Tomales, with a warehouse at water level (its large roof visible below center-left), and several other commercial buildings at the port. The 1860 Assumption Church, still with its steeple, is visible right of center.

(Continued on page 5)



This image illustrates two big, very different changes in Tomales. In the foreground are the ruins of the huge fire of 1920 that destroyed sixteen commercial buildings and at least two houses—a change that surely required long term recovery and adaptation. In the background of the photo is the Tomales Garage, the first automobile repair shop in town. (photo by Ella Joregensen)



Holland's General Store, built of stone in the late 1850s by Warren Dutton, was demolished by the 1906 earthquake, along with four other Tomales masonry buildings. In one of these—a stone house on today's Sartori Ranch—two children were killed, and one died several years later of her injuries. In some cases, the concept of “recovery” is only relative. (photo by Ella Jorgensen)



Even though the train depots were still busy in this circa 1920 image, the automobiles meeting the train were a portent of approaching change. (photo by Ella Jorgensen)

(Continued from page 3)

Luckily for Tomales, just as the port was failing, a railroad was being planned to connect the boom town of San Francisco with the redwood forests and lumber mills to the north. Several routes were considered. In the end, with partial thanks to Warren Dutton — a short-term business partner of John Keys — the railroad was routed toward the coast and north along Tomales Bay through Tomales, Valley Ford, and Freestone on its way toward Russian River sawmills. The Tomales depot and railroad yard were established, north of the Lower Town port, on Dutton's land, and the community gradually and naturally moved to this new center of transportation. And here, with the railroad, it grew.

This was not necessarily a consciously planned adaptation, though Warren Dutton surely had an entrepreneurial instinct that led him to invest in the railroad. But it was certainly one that served to mitigate the negative change and improve the outlook for the fledgling town. What now became known as Upper Town prospered. Despite three more significant changes — the 1906 earthquake, a large fire in 1920 that claimed most of the village's commercial buildings, and the ten-years-later end of the railroad that resulted in an evident slump in the town's vibrancy — Upper Town remains the center of Tomales today.

This example of one community's evolution seems simple, though of course it is an abstraction, a time-blurred perspective of countless, myriad changes and recoveries. The cycles continue, echoed, on various scales of size and complexity, in hundreds of guises, in every community and collection of life on earth. And here is the essence of history — the sometimes trivial and sometimes imposing quality of the events that a historical perspective gives us, not the least of which is the hopeful anticipation of recovery.

Sources include:

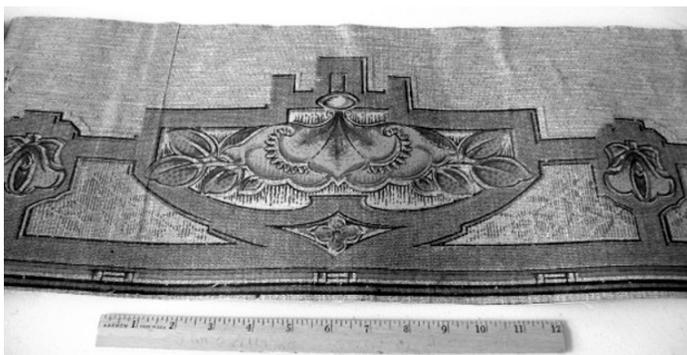
"Community response, resilience, and compassion," Tolly Canon, *Point Reyes Light*, 19 October 2017.

"Emergency systems shift in response to North Bay fires," Anna Guth, *ibid.*
getreadydb.com
 informal conversations with Lynn Axelrod, and Laura Trippi
pointreyesdisastercouncil.org

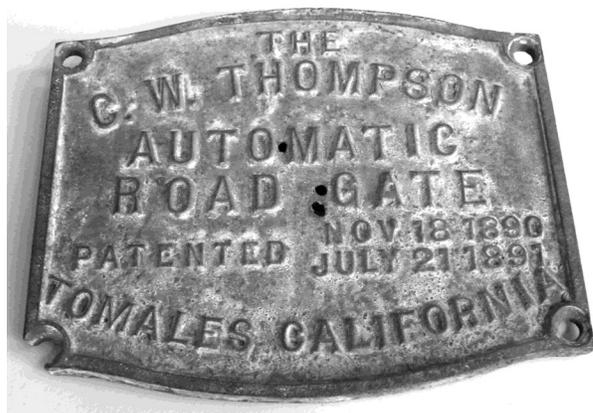
**FROM THE CURATOR:
NEWLY CATALOGED ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION**



This iron goat cart toy, with wheels that still turn, was unearthed in Tomales



A nicely intact remnant of a wallpaper border discovered in the Dickinson House on Maine Street.



Above left: C. W. Thompson, who owned what is now Diekmann's General Store in the early 1940s, invented and held an 1890 patent on a type of automatic gate opener — functionally a nineteenth century version of the digital devices of today. This is the patent label of his invention, presumably to be mounted on the gate. When many roads were private and gated, Thompson's must have been a welcome amenity.



Above right: This white marble interior-wall decoration (approximately 7" across at the base) was recovered from the 1906 earthquake ruins of the stone Assumption Church at Tomales.

An ongoing, all-important job of our Collection Management process is cataloging. This includes considering, researching, measuring, and photographing each individual item as it is entered into our digital catalog, then designating its permanent place in the archive room. The process is a tedious-but-interesting one, satisfying in its necessity for a close look at each object, and the sometimes-obscure, sometimes-obscure messages it gives us about the region's history.

The large majority of our artifacts is waiting this final important step — though we are slowly making headway. With a collection that has been growing for forty years without being cataloged in any way, there are many mysteries to untangle! But the History Center's early organizers set up the simple and logical accession protocol that we use today, so we have clues and methods to solve even the occasional confounding mystery.

THE BENCH PORTRAITS OF ELLA JORGENSEN

Ella Jorgensen (1864–1945), a local amateur photographer, chronicled much of everyday life in early 20th century Tomales. She regularly posed subjects—often with an appropriate prop—on a bench in front of a redwood tree in her garden. This regular Bulletin feature explores and celebrates these portraits on Ella’s bench.

Frances Fairbanks — all grown up

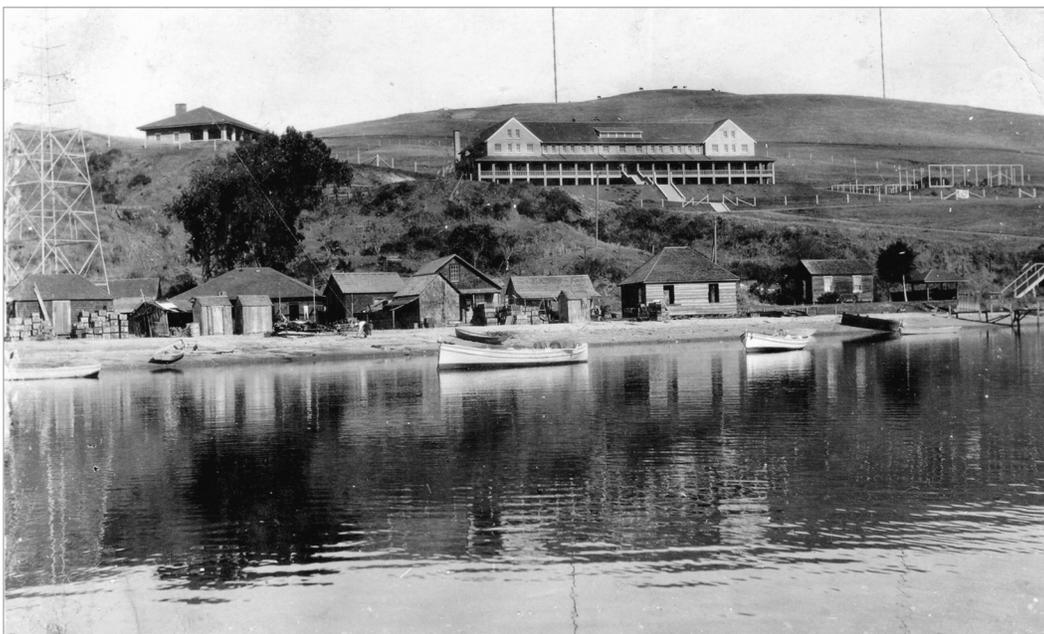
Ella Jorgensen’s nieces and nephew appear often in her work; their names were regularly in the enigmatic notes on the photo postcards she printed and sent to the Fairbanks family after they moved to San Francisco. It is easy to imagine her as the special, beloved aunt she must have been — perhaps a bit indulgent, but sensible when it counted. (The editor admits that these are her own completely unsupported, though strong, perceptions!)

This view of her youngest niece, Frances Fairbanks, with her back to the photographer to show off her long curls, is one of Jorgensen’s most interesting and stylish shots. Frances appears again in the accompanying, more conventional image, this time as a young woman (now Mrs. Frances Gass) with a little, curly-haired girl of her own, named Elizabeth Louise whom everyone called Bette, posing next to her on the bench.



Here are the grown up Frances Fairbanks Gass with her daughter, Bette, holding a stuffed horse, circa early 1940s. Mother and daughter pose on the same bench — in front of the same redwood tree in Ella’s garden — where Frances was captured showing off her curls in about 1920. (photo by Ella Jorgensen)

CHANGE, RECOVERY, ADAPTATION



Above: Few images so eloquently epitomize the changes wrought by technology as does this view of the Miwok village of Fisherman's at Marshall, with the recently erected towers and buildings of the Marconi Wireless Receiving Station in the background. (ca. 1915)

Below: Even gradual, cultural changes result in adaptations, though they often avoid the difficult Recovery stage. When Tomales High School was built, the area's families had realized that secondary education was of increasing importance. They joined together to make sure there was a local high school for their children to attend, and in 1912, the two-room Tomales High School was built. This image clearly illustrates the attention to distinctive design details on the little building that marked a milestone of education in the area. (photo by Ella Jorgensen)



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Welcome to new members

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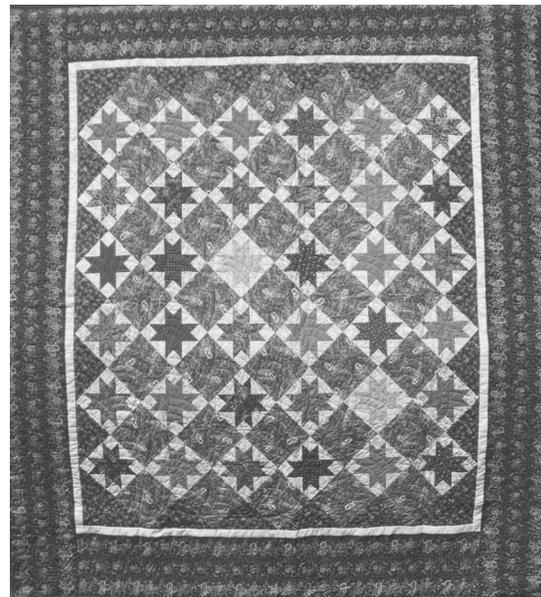
FROM THE FUNDRAISING CHAIRMAN: QUILT WINNER AND SPECIAL THANKS

Jackie Kenilvort is our winner this year of the beautiful quilt. She is a member, once a volunteer, lives in Santa Rosa, and winning the quilt was a happy surprise after living safely through the horrific fires. Congratulations Jackie!

With our sincere gratitude to our members and friends for your support in ticket sales and generous donations, Also a special thanks to Belinda Miller and Connie Hammerman for the beautiful quilt. And to Jeff Lyons of Adobe Funeral Home for printing the tickets. Thanks to everyone.

Best wishes throughout the new year.

Kathleen Sartori





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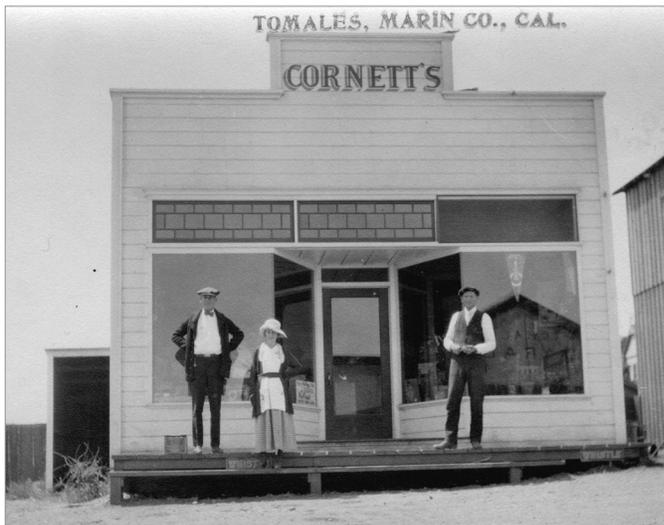
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Closed on major holidays.

A victim of the 1920 Tomales fire, Cornett's Store, originally on Maine Street, was rebuilt around the corner on Dillon's Beach Road. The new store is nearing completion in this photo. Today the remodeled building houses a dentist's office. (photo by Ella Jorgensen)



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