A history of the Marin County Historical Society was previously prepared by Mrs. Dorothy Walsh, the society's historian, who was a loyal and enthusiastic member of the society. Her work therefore became the basis of this updated history by William M. Vanderbilt.
For the roots of the Marin County Historical Society it is necessary to go back in history to December 2, 1910, when thirty-eight pioneers assembled at the Kentfield Stadium to hold the first "Old Settlers Day". The meeting was held under the auspices of the Tamalpais Center Club with Congressman William Kent presiding. Mr. Kent spoke with regret of the passing of the old California hospitality and pleaded that the pioneers keep this hospitality alive.

Among the assembled guests was Stephen Richardson, grandson of the Spanish Commander, Don Ignacio Martinez. Mr. Richardson was the oldest Native Son of California, having come to Marin County in 1841.

The Tamalpais Center Club continued the "Old Settlers Day" and as time went on Miss Belle Brown, historian and Landmarks Chairman of the State of California, told of a County Museum being established in the basement of the San Rafael Library. This apparently sparked action because on June 6, 1935 Major Newell Vanderbilt presided as chairman at an organizational meeting called to form the Marin County Historical Society. A temporary constitution and slate of officers were approved and the society was declared to have been duly organized. The first annual meeting was held September 5, 1935 at which time Miss Belle Brown was elected President. The President then announced the following appointments: Vice Presidents - Capt. W.T. Dillon, Sausalito; Casper Gardner, Mill Valley; Henry S. Foote, Corte Madera; Robert H. Menzies, San Rafael; Mrs. Mercedes Boeken, Ignacio; Louis Peter, San Rafael; Fred Dickson, Woodacre. Secretary-Treasurer - Florence G. Donnelly, San Rafael. Executive Committee - Major Newell F. Vanderbilt, San Rafael; Mrs. Jas. Gericke, Fallon; Mrs. Robert H.
Menzies, San Rafael; Mrs. George Boyd, San Rafael; Miss Minnie Keyes, Tomales; Mrs. James B. Burdell, Novato; Charles A Redding, San Rafael; George H. Harlan, Sausalito; Miss Marion Angelloli, San Francisco; John Murray, Kentfield; Thos. T. Kent, Kentfield; Mrs. Henrietta Sweetser, Novato; Dr. Joseph Hawkins, San Rafael; Irving Furlong, San Rafael; Mrs. Sidney H. Mosher, Larkspur; Frank S. Holland, San Rafael.

The constitution was approved. Charter membership was authorized to consist of those persons who signed the charter roll prior to September 9, 1935. 89 charter members were recorded, representing every locality in Marin County. (Note: As of Sept. 1, 1994 there were 484 members of the Society, including 2 charter members).

The Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State of California on November 27, 1935 and show that the Marin County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation formed for educational, recreational and social purposes; specifically to promote the study and research into the history of Marin County and to perpetuate the relics, records and authentic references to the early discoveries, settlement and organization of Marin County. An amendment to the articles filed in 1972 sets forth that "the specific and primary purposes are to engage in historical research and education".

During the World War II period, Marinites continued to collect articles of historic value. These were housed in the Museum room at the San Rafael High School. From 1950 to 1958 our Museum was at Saint Raphael's Mission. Because of crowded conditions and the growing collection of artifacts, the Museum was moved in 1959 to the Gate House at the entrance to Boyd Park, where since then the Victorian house has been rented from the City of San Rafael. This historic
house was built for Ira Cook in 1879. Mr. Cook was the great grandfather of Louise Boyd.

The "Pastimer", a newsletter was first issued in 1943. This interesting bulletin became a powerful factor in holding the membership together, especially during World War II, when, because of gas rationing, it became difficult for members to travel from all parts of the county. Meetings were discontinued for a time.

In September of 1967 the first Marin County Historical Society Bulletin was published. At the present time it is the intention of the Society to publish at least one Magazine, two or more Bulletins and quarterly News Letters each year. (A Magazine normally covers one subject, a Bulletin three or more articles, while the News Letter covers current events and plans.)

Many discussions were held regarding compiling a Marin County History. The last published history of Marin County was published in 1880. The County Board of Supervisors authorized Jack Mason and Helen Van Cleave Park to write an authoritative history. The Marin County Historical Society cooperated in the publication and the first of two volumes appeared in 1971.

Dr. Leo L. Stanley, a retired medical doctor, a local history devotee and writer of several articles and books, graciously volunteered to be chairman of another project. To arouse interest in the Marin County Historical Society, as well as to raise money for the organization, a profile of Marin people was agreed upon by the Board of Directors. The title of the book was to be "Marin People".

On March 30, 1971 the Marin County Historical Society invited the public to a Book Presentation and Wine Tasting Party where the book
was presented. Dr. Stanley autographed all copies of Marin People, Volume I purchased that day. On June 19, 1973, Volume II was presented and in 1980 Volume III was released.

For quite some time plans to restore the building, or at least to paint it, were considered but delayed for several reasons until 1974 when, on September 20th, the Society vacated the museum while the City restored and painted the building. All artifacts were placed in storage. In April 1975 the repairs, remodeling and painting were completed. After the decorators had finished replacing the artifacts, the Museum was reopened on May 31, 1975. A reception was held for the County Supervisors, City Officials and Members of the Society.

In 1968 the Society proposed the preservation of the old Court House built in 1872, as a building of great historic value. Unfortunately the building was destroyed by fire in 1971 before any action was taken.

San Rafael celebrated 100 years as an incorporated city in 1974 and staged a Centennial Celebration. The Society took part in furnishing historical data and receiving many visitors at the museum. In 1989 a Building Fund was established to which members can designate memorial gifts.

In late 1993 painting of the Gate House commenced. A plea was made to the membership for help to supplement what the Society had already appropriated. The response was most gratifying, showing the concern and interest the membership has in and for the Society.

Through the kindness of a local architect and two contractors the historic ship's bell from the James Donohue steamer was installed in a permanent frame at the entrance to the Museum.
The Marin County Historical Society has, for many years, assisted in the investigation of requests to designate a building or an area, for State or National recognition as historic landmarks. The Society was involved in the plans to build a replica of the Mission San Rafael and in the preservation of the Dollar Mansion "Falkirk". The Society investigated and recommended favorably the designation of the San Rafael Improvement Club as an historic building for the National Registry, as well as our own Gate House and Falkirk. A committee worked with the County and State to preserve Olompali where the only real battle of the "Bear Flag Revolt" was fought. It was also instrumental in having Ayala Cove on Angel Island declared a State Landmark (#529). In 1964 the last pear tree planted over 150 years ago at the Mission San Rafael became the victim of the bulldozer but through the efforts of the Society a local nurseryman made 7 grafts of the tree and today one is thriving on the grounds of the Marin Art and Garden Center in Ross while others are in private gardens. The Society assisted in placing a time capsule at the Doughboy statue at the Civic Center.

Among the many historic items owned by the Society which are too large to display in the present quarters are:

1. A large tallow pot presently on loan to the State of California for display at Olompali State Park.

2. A very large mural of the Landing of Sir Francis Drake in Marin County which is on loan to Sir Francis Drake High School in San Anselmo.

3. A 1904 Oldsmobile presently being stored by a member.

4. A baby grand piano presently being stored by a friend.
The Society has long been aware of the need for a fireproof building to house its invaluable artifacts and historic documents (Newspapers dating from 1860). Plans are in process to raise funds to provide the proper facilities.

In 1994 the S. H. Cowell Foundation established the William P. Murray, Jr. Fund, to be administered by the Marin Community Foundation, for the benefit of the Marin County Historic Society, which will provide 5 annual grants to the Society to engage the services of a Museum Development Director.
Marin County Historical Society Charter Members

Jacob Albert
Mrs. Harry B. Allen
Mrs. F. C. Angelotti
Gail Apperson
Elizabeth Kent Arnold
Mrs. F. W. Avery
Mrs. William Babcock
Mrs. Mabel Bently
Mrs. Mercedes Pacheco Boeken
Mrs. George Boyd
Jean Boyd
Rose Briones
Miss Belle C. Brown
Mrs. James Black Burdell
Rev. J. J. Canoles
Mrs. Margaret Elliot Coit
May Cummings
Mrs. S. B. Cushing
Mr. & Mrs. A. B. Dewing
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Dickson
Florence Donnelly
Dr. Charles H. DuBois
Mrs. Mary Eastman
Mrs. Caroline L. Esberg
Milton Esberg, Jr.
Bryce B. Florence
R. A. Garcia
Casper Gardner
Mrs. John B. Garrett
Mrs. John R. Gericke
Mr. Russell Gettany
Mrs. E. M. Goddard
Eugenia Watson Grady
Mrs. George Graham
Mrs. Salvatore Grandi
Mr. Crawford A. Green
Henry E. Greer
Mrs. George W. Hind
Mrs. Alice E. Holland
Mrs. F. P. Howard
Mrs. W. S. Hutchison
Marie Peter Irwin
Mrs. Harry D. Johnson
Miss Lena Jones
Mrs. Lena Jones
Mrs. Victor Jones
Mrs. Thomas Kent
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Keuckler
Miss Ada Legna
Mr. August Legna
Mrs. Harry Lichtenstein
Miss Ethel Lilly
Miss Margaret MacDonald
Mrs. John MacPhail
Mrs. W. B. McNamara
Miss Alice C. Magee
J. Ward Mailliard
George Mellen
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Menzies
Ethel M. Moore
Mrs. Sydney B. Mosher
Mr. Edward Mundt & Mother
Mrs. Robert Murgetroyd
Mr. William P. Murray
Rev. Daniel O'Brien
Mr. J. C. Oglesby
A. C. Olney
Miss Loreta Pacheco
Mrs. H. J. Pederson
Mrs. Lewis G. Pepper
Mr. Thomas Peryam
Mr. Lewis Peter
Mrs. Somers Peterson
Miss Edith Pooley
Dr. L. L. Robinson
Dr. Fred E. Sawyer
Mrs. Carl Schuster
Mrs. William F. Sharp
Mrs. Mary Spellman
Dr. L. L. Stanley
Mr. Meriam Stetson
Miss Emily Taylor
Miss Katherine Timony
Mr. & Mrs. Philip Tompkins
Mr. William Murray Vanderbilt
Major & Mrs. Newell Vanderbilt
Mrs. Frank Williams
Mrs. G. A. Zeil
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<tr>
<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>1935 - 1936</td>
<td>Miss Belle Brown</td>
<td>Larkspur</td>
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<td>1936 - 1937</td>
<td>Mr. Fred Dickson</td>
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<td>Capt. W. T. Dillon</td>
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<td>Mr. Henry Foote</td>
<td>Corte Madera</td>
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<td>1940 - 1946</td>
<td>Mr. George Harlan, Sr.</td>
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<td>1947 - 1949</td>
<td>Mr. John McPhail</td>
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<td>1953 - 1956</td>
<td>Mr. George Harlan, Jr.</td>
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<td>1956 - 1958</td>
<td>Mr. Bray Dickinson</td>
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<td>1958 - 1962</td>
<td>Mr. Thomas Peryam</td>
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<td>1962 - 1965</td>
<td>Mr. Alton Larch</td>
<td>Novato</td>
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<td>1965 - 1967</td>
<td>Mr. Parker Wood</td>
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<td>1967 - 1973</td>
<td>Mr. Frank Galli</td>
<td>Ignacio &amp; Novato</td>
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<td>1973 - 1983</td>
<td>Mrs. Elsie Mazzini</td>
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<td>Mr. Ted Iverson</td>
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<td>Mrs. Fran Warner</td>
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<td>1985 - 1987</td>
<td>Mr. Ken Brown</td>
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<td>Mr. William Vanderbilt</td>
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<td>1989 - 1991</td>
<td>Mr. Warren Redding</td>
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<td>1991 - 1992</td>
<td>Dr. Thomas Snead</td>
<td>San Anselmo</td>
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<td>1992 - 1993</td>
<td>Mrs. Eileen Strachen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993 - 1995</td>
<td>Mr. Lionel Ashcroft</td>
<td>San Rafael</td>
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Secretaries of the Marin County Historical Society

Mrs. Florence Donnelly
Mrs. Robert Murgatroyd
Mrs. Thomas Harris
Mrs. Richard Keating
Mrs. Eli Dalmon
Mrs. John Machado
Mrs. Phillip Coady
Mrs. Catharine Robson
Mrs. Fran Warner
Mrs. Catherine Knopf
Mrs. Eileen Strachen