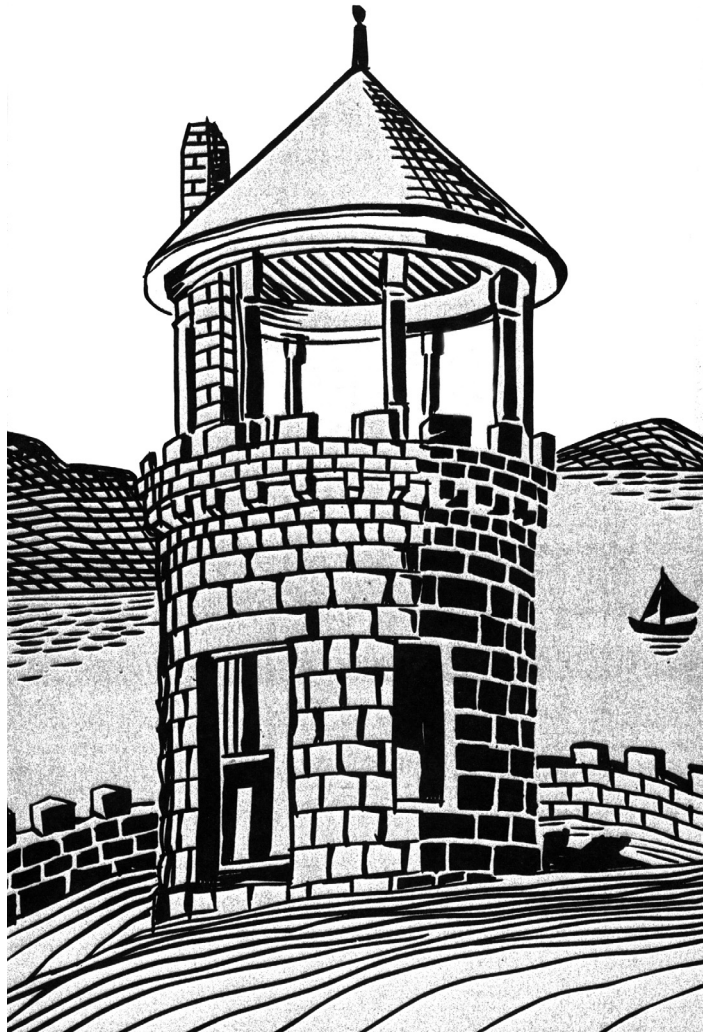


WALKING GUIDE TO HISTORIC TIBURON



Lyford Tower by Jesper Strandgaard

The name “Tiburon” means shark in Spanish. In August 1775, Lt. Juan Manuel de Ayala discovered San Francisco Bay and anchored his ship *San Carlos* in a cove at (what is now) Angel Island. He explored the mainland and saw numerous sharks off shore, naming this land “Shark Point”.

TIBURON, in the late 1880s until the 1930s, was a bustling, rowdy railroad town. Original buildings served railroad workers, shopkeepers and their families plus residents of the nearby dairy ranches. Changes and rebuilding followed three devastating Main Street fires in 1890, 1909 and 1921. The 1906 earthquake and fire led to many local changes when people moved here after losing their San Francisco homes.

NOTABLE BUILDINGS POINTS OF INTEREST

1. Lyford Tower • 1889

This round sandstone edifice erected by Dr. Benjamin Lyford as the gateway to “Lyford’s Hygeia,” a planned community. From here is a view of Raccoon Strait across to Angel Island, northeast to Berkeley and southwest to the Golden Gate. (“Raccoon Strait” is named after the British sloop-of-war *Raccoon* that careened on the beach for repairs in 1814, not the animal, so only one “c”.)

2. Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum • 1885

Passenger and freight depot of the San Francisco & North Pacific Railroad, later the Northwestern Pacific. It was later named “The Donahue Depot” for the railroad’s founder. Built of redwood and Douglas fir with board and batten, tongue-and-groove siding and Victorian style window trim. The Museum is operated by the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society; open 1-4 p.m., Wednesdays and weekends, April through October.

3. 15 Main Street • McDonogh/McNeil Building • 1886

First structure on waterside of the street built by Sam McDonogh (rebuilt after the 1909 fire). Saloon-pool hall, boat leasing and apartments. Renamed when James McNeil married Sam’s widow. Compass rose decoration added to upper facade during town’s weekend “paint-up” in 1955.

4. 27 Main Street • Sam’s Anchor Cafe • 1920s

Oldest continuous use restaurant in Tiburon. Original owner was Sam Vella, an immigrant from Malta. The saloon was fully operational during Prohibition. Trap door in floor was built for access to boats bringing in whisky. Remodeled in 1930s.

5. 32 Main Street • Anderson Meat Market • 1921

First butcher shop erected 1891 by Victor Beyries. Purchased by H.D. Anderson, a New Yorker, in 1898. Store survived until it burned to the ground in the 1921 fire. It was re-erected and then renovated in the 1960s with ornate false front, an example of Victorian embellishment.

6. 34 Main Street • Beyries General Store/Hotel • 1921

Original 1900s two-story structure with grocery on first floor and Tiburon Hotel above, destroyed in 1921 fire. Rebuilt from whole sections saved from the fire. Food market operated until 1955. Upstairs lodging with separate stairs, reportedly once a bordello.

7. 35 Main Street • Saloon • 1925

Another Main Street saloon with basement access to the bay for bringing in illegal spirits, safeguarded by concrete sidewalls. Upper story railings were salvaged from author Jack London’s Wolf House in Sonoma..

8. 55 Main Street • Bank Building • 1925

Brick structure was originally a branch of Bank of Sausalito, closed in 1935. Bought by Sam Vella of Sam’s Cafe who made daily deposits of liquor to bank vault, a convenient locker for his nearby bar.

“ARK ROW”

The remainder of Main Street is known as “Ark Row” because of the 1890s recreational houseboat lifestyle enjoyed in Belvedere Cove by sea captains, Bohemian artists and summer residents. In winter, the arks anchored in the Tiburon lagoon. After 1900, the craze for arks waned. Some docked along the lagoon shoreline and were converted to permanent local housing. Part of the filled-in lagoon (1930s) became the parking lot behind the shops.

9. 72 Main Street • Fleming Rooming House • 1918

Mid-1880s structure affixed to pilings in early 1900s. Mrs. Fleming lived in a first floor apartment and rented rooms to railroad workers, checking carefully “for their good character.” Outside spiral, gingerbread staircase was added in 1957.

10. 104 Main Street • Ark • 1895

Typical ark of four rooms and kitchen. Dwelling is 90% original with flat roof, bead and reel molding and slender Corinthian columns. Two arks are stacked one on top of the other (104A & 104B).

11. 112 Main Street • Cottage • 1890

Secret staircase led to hidden cupboard between floors for safekeeping of illicit liquor. To escape revenuers, the rum runner could exit by the back door to a boat waiting on the lagoon.

12. 116 Main Street • 1895

Here are two arks, one on top of the other, 116 and 116A Main Street. This “double ark,” has an unusual arched roof and four fine Corinthian capitals. Visual remains of tar and planks indicate lower level was once also an ark.

13. 120 Main Street • Drawbridge Gatehouse • 1890s

Served as an artists’ studio for the “Society of Six”, renowned early California painters. Moved from its original location at 130 Main Street in the 1960’s.

14. 122 Main Street • Ranch Building • 1870s

Oldest building on Ark Row, a former shed on a Tiburon Peninsula ranch. U.S. Centennial (1876) wallpaper uncovered on basement ceiling during remodeling. Saltbox design added later.

15. Main Street Drawbridge Site • 1880s

Several different drawbridges linked Tiburon’s Main Street to Belvedere’s Beach Road until 1930s on this site. The raising of the drawbridge for arks and boats to go from winter harbor on the Lagoon to summer fun on the Cove began the tradition of “Opening Day on the Bay,” a spring parade of ships.

16. 52 Beach Road • China Cabin • 1867

Victorian social hall from the passenger and cargo side-wheel steamer *S.S. China* that plied between San Francisco, Japan and China. Salvaged when the ship was burned for scrap metal in Tiburon Cove in 1886, the “China Cabin” was barged to Belvedere Cove beach. A residence for 90 years, then restored by Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society and is now a maritime landmark. Open 1-4 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays, April through October.

A. Elephant Rock Children's Fishing Pier

Natural landmark just offshore in downtown Tiburon. When viewed from water at low tide, it looks like an elephant. A favorite fishing spot, officially designated for youngsters.

B. Railroad Depot Palm • 1923

The NWPRR was noted for gardens and palm trees around its main buildings and passenger depots. Marker placed by Heritage & Arts Commission in 1988 to show location of railroad yard.

C. “Coming About” Fountain and Plaza • 2006

Commissioned by the Town of Tiburon, designed and constructed by Reed Madden Designs.

D. Corinthian Yacht Club • 1912

The white frame building is the second clubhouse. A wall remains from the original 1887 structure, which was damaged by fire circa 1910. One of three private yacht clubs on the peninsula.

E. Old St. Hilary's Landmark • 1888

One of the few Carpenter Gothic churches to survive in its original setting. The area around it is home to many rare wildflowers. Owned by the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society. Open Sundays, 1-4 p.m., April through October.

F. Tiburon Town Hall • 1997

G. Belvedere-Tiburon Library • 1997

H. Gallows Wheels Monument

The wheels in front of the library are from a gallows frame which is a mechanical device that adjusts wharf tracks to the same level as the tracks on a barge, allowing transfer of railroad cars despite changes in level due to the tides. The device operated at the center of the Tiburon waterfront and was dismantled in 1974.

Angel Island*

State park with spectacular vistas, hiking and biking trails and historic sites. Can be reached by the Angel Island Ferry, now operated by the third generation of the McDonogh Family (see 15 Main Street).

Lyford House • 376 Greenwood Beach Road • 1876*

Victorian residence built by Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Lyford on Strawberry Point. House was barged to present location in 1957 when National Audubon Society acquired the house and adjacent property. The 2.8 mile Historic Walking Trail from downtown to the Lyford House traces the former railroad track bed along Richardson Bay, past Landmarks Art & Garden Center, Blackie’s Pasture and onto Greenwood Beach Road. (map available at Town Hall).

*Beyond the central walking tour

Editors – Victoria Arnett, Janet Braff and the Heritage & Arts Commission 2005/2012.

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