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.

Lyford Tower • 1895

This round sandstone edifice erected by Dr. Benjamin Lyford as the gateway to “Lyford’s Hygeia,” a planned community. From here on is a view of Racoon Strait across to Angel Island, northwest to Berkeley and southward to the Golden Gate. “Raccoon Point” is named after the British sloop-of-war Raccoon that caressed on the beach for repairs in 1834, not the animal, so only one “c.”

1. Lyford Tower • 1895

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 waterfront 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 San Vella, an immigrant from Malta. The saloon was fully operational during Prohibition. Trap door in floor was built for access to boats bringing in whiskey. 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 orate false front, an example of Victorian embellishment.

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

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

7. 35 Main Street • Saloon • 1925

Another Main Street saloon, direct access to the bay for bringing in illegal spirits, safeguarded by concrete sidewalks. Upper story saloons 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. Sam Vella of San Francisco’s Cafe who made daily deposits of liquor to bank vault, a convenient locater 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 aggressive S.F. Centinel wrote in 1900, the craze for arks was waned. Some docked along the lagoon shoreline and were converted to permanent local homes. Part of the filled-in lagoon (1950s) became the parking lot behind the shops.

9. 72 Main Street • Fleming Rooming House • 1918

Mid-1880s structure affixed to pilling in early 1000s. Mrs. Fleming lived here in the 1910s as “The Donahue Depot,” for railroad workers, checking carefully “for their good character.” Outside spiral, gingerbread staircase was added in 1955.

10. 104 Main Street • Ark • 1895

Typical ark of four rooms and kitchen. Dwelling is 90% original with flat roof, head 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 entrance 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 columns. Visual remains of tar and planks indicate lower level was once also an ark.

13. 120 Main Street • Drakebridge Gatehouse • 1890s

Served as an artist’s 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. Saloon design added later.

15. 182 Main Street • Drakebridge Dwellings • 1880s

Several different drakewidges linked Tiburon’s Main Street to Belvedere’s Beach. 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’s lagoon. Later bought 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.

ARK ROW

The name “Tiburon” means shark in Spanish. In

July 1875, Lt. Juan Manuel de Ayala discovered the beach for repairs in 1814, not the animal, so only one “c.”

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

Bank Building

Lyford House

Tiburon Hotel above, destroyed in 1921 fire. Rebuilt from whole

Lyford Tower • 376 Greenwood Beach Road • 1876*

Vicotria’s residence build 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

_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”._