

LIBRARIES IN BELVEDERE AND TIBURON

By Susan Cluff

In Tiburon and Belvedere, the first free public library was in an abandoned side-wheel steamship named the Flora Temple. The old ship was anchored at the lagoon end of Beach Road and used as a social hall, meeting place and horse stable. In 1896, a free public library opened onboard with donated books.

After 1906, many residents joined Sausalito's public library that opened on the second floor of the Ferry Company building on Bridgeway, then later, upstairs at City Hall. In "Growing Up in Tiburon" George, Bonnie and Edna May recall rummaging through the stacks there for pirate books like Treasure Island and The Trade Winds and reading them on the ferries crossing the bay.

In 1926, the Marin County Free Library opened its first branch in the Courthouse basement in San Rafael. In 1929, it added a small one-room library in the brick bank building at the end of Main St with Ellen Weldin, the first librarian. Perhaps because of its location close to Tiburon's rowdy bars, Belvedere opened its own library in the Belvedere Land Company building in 1931. Hours were two nights a week with children's story hour every Friday afternoon. The first Belvedere librarian was artist Selden Gile who was often found outside painting colorful views of the Bay and hills. Later librarians were Tobe Porteous and Artelle Farley.

In 1950, when the owner of the Tiburon bank building decided to convert it into offices, Sam Vella of Sam's Anchor Café offered a renovated old ark grounded on the edge of the lagoon at the entrance of today's Main Street parking lot. The Tiburon ark library

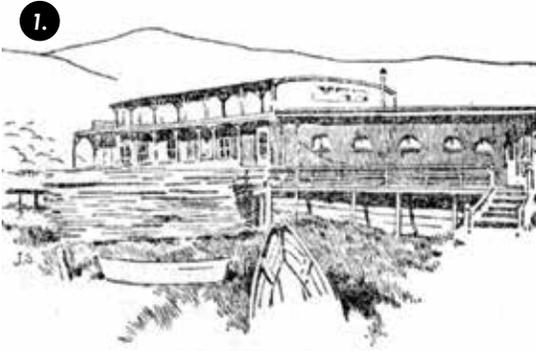
served local readers in these slightly soggy quarters under the management of Ellene Weldin and Nikki Lamott. In 1953, Belvedere and Tiburon decided to again form a joint library and look for new quarters with a three-person-staff that now included Betty McKegney. When the new Boardwalk Shopping Center was built in 1955, the library moved in adjacent to R & S gas station and in 1965 briefly to a space above shops in the courtyard. In 1966, it moved across Beach Road, next door to the post office.

In 1984, meetings began to discuss ways and means to improve the joint library. In 1990 the Zelinsky family donated land at Mar West and Tiburon Boulevard to the Town of Tiburon. In 1995, the Town Council agreed to convey a portion of the property without payment in memory of Rex Fink, one of the early organizers.

A fundraising drive was then launched for the current library on Tiburon Boulevard and Belvedere-Tiburon withdrew from the Marin County Free Library system in favor of an independent library district and formed a seven-member board. In 1995 voters approved a \$1.6 million bond measure, construction began, and the building opened in 1997.

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1. The abandoned Flora Temple, seen here in a sketch from S. F. Examiner 1893, became first free library in 1896.
2. In 1955, the Belvedere-Tiburon library opened in the new Boardwalk annex building next to R & S service station.
3. Betty McKegney was town Librarian for 27 years. She knew almost everyone by name and library card number.

All photos: Landmarks History Collections

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