

DROPPING ANCHOR AT PARADISE CAY

By Susan Cluff

The waterfront community known as Paradise Cay on the east side of Tiburon peninsula is in the zip code 94920 but part of unincorporated Marin County. For many it's known as "Moseleyville," having been developed by industrialist and yachtsman Tim Moseley (1902-1997) who made his fortune inventing radar and communication devices before purchasing 75 acres at Ring Point in 1956. After blasting out a rocky knoll that stood in his way, Moseley began digging out lagoon canals like those he'd seen in Southern California and Florida. It was one of the last landfills permitted in San Francisco Bay.

The prominent knoll and tide lots were part of the Reed and Cooper land grants purchased by news publisher and businessman Benjamin Buckelew in 1850 who envisioned a new town called California City with a deep-water port for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's ocean-going steamers. But when Benicia was selected as the port instead, Buckelew moved his establishment over to Punta San Quentin, selling some of his land there to the State of California as a prison site in 1852.

By the 1880s, California City was a ship scrapyards where old schooners, sloops, steamers and barges were dismantled and recycled for parts and then burned, the metal fittings and fixtures collected from the beach at low tide. In 1901, the road now called Paradise Drive was built to connect San Rafael to Point Tiburon, passing through the mostly empty ranch lands of Supervisor George E. Ring, past the Navy Coaling Station (later the Navy Net Depot and Romberg Center) to the gates of Lyford's Hygeia.

In 1958, Moseley, who'd been a partner in developing the Pullman heiress' estate Carolands in Atherton, began leveling the rocky knoll, pushing three million cubic yards of rock and fill into the bay with earth-movers to create six solid finger-like strips of land, a yacht harbor and marina. Appalled at the high cost of leasing construction and dredging equipment, he bought his own and operated them through his son Tom's construction company. It took more than four years but in 1963 the first lots sold for \$9,000-\$20,000 with finished houses from \$40,000-\$70,000.

Along the community's north end, Moseley built the Paradise Yacht Club (now Tiburon Yacht Club) hosting community social events and Friday night boat races. But like much of San Francisco Bay, silting off the yacht harbor soon became a problem, requiring frequent dredging. Hoping for some extra income, the Moseley family proposed a larger marina, fishing and boat rental operation that got turned down by the County as "too commercial." Still, the 230-home development was a success. There's just something special about a house where you can see your boat from your living room.



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1. The side-wheel steamer Capital being broken up at California City in 1896. On the right is the edge of Ring Point, with the slope of Ring Mt. in the background.
2. The knoll which was once Ring Point is now almost level and the fingers of land are taking shape. Paradise Drive snakes along the bottom of this photo from November 1959.

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