

# THE MAIN STREET BANK BUILDING

By Dave Gotz

Hard against the base of Corinthian Island at the end of Main Street is a singular building, unique because it's brick unlike the mostly wooden structures that line both sides of the street. It is usually referred to as the "bank building" because it was built for that purpose in 1925; however it only served as a bank on three different occasions for a total of 27 years.

The Sausalito News announced the plans for a bank in Tiburon in 1924 saying that "The development of Tiburon and Belvedere has arrived at about that point where Sausalito was when the Bank of Sausalito was established here." Built in less than a year the Tiburon-Belvedere Branch of the Sausalito Bank was opened in October 1925. The American Trust Company bought the Bank of Sausalito in 1927. The building itself was bought by bar owner and reputed bootlegger Sam Vella in 1929 and it was rumored that he used the vault for liquor storage. Perhaps due to the economic depression, the bank closed in 1937.

For the next 14 years a variety of businesses occupied the building and the second floor was built out as apartments. Also during this time a 15 foot addition was added to the western side of the building. The most notable tenant for these years was the Marin County Free Library which used a small part of the downstairs from 1929 until 1950 when the First National Bank of San Rafael opened a local branch. That bank moved to the Boardwalk Shopping Center in 1955 and the building again returned to mixed use.

In March 1963 local financier and property developer Charles Tjerina announced the creation of Tiburon National Bank and began a complete restoration of the building. Opening ceremonies on August 29th included the arrival of four riders on horseback carrying flags, gold coins and scissors to cut the ceremonial opening ribbon. The riders were the last in a relay of five teams that started from Healdsburg on the 25th, stopping at Santa Rosa, Novato, Rancho Nicasio and Corte Madera. The interior of the bank was described as more like a Wall Street investment house, with plush carpeting, upholstered chairs, crystal and brass chandeliers, walnut paneling and a fireplace. Outside there was a striped awning and four gas lights.

After expanding to five branches including one at the far end of Tiburon Blvd. near Highway 101 (now a Citi Bank), Tiburon National sold to Sierra National Bank of Petaluma in 1967. Sierra continued to operate the Main Street office until 1974. Since then 55 Main Street has had several owners and many tenants, but has not been a bank again. In 2010 the building was purchased by the Ron Goldman Law Firm which has its offices there.



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1. Bank Building circa 1925 2. Riders arriving at National Bank of Tiburon 3. Tiburon National Bank interior (1963)



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