

RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

“The Birds” Premiered 50 years Ago on March 28, 1963

by Susan Teel - 2013

Alfred Hitchcock’s film, "The Birds", was filmed in and around the towns of Bodega Bay and Bodega beginning in 1961. Bodega Bay with its quiet fishing harbor was chosen for the bleak treeless hills surrounding it and its many days of fog. Scenes were also filmed of the old Potter School behind St. Theresa’s Church in Bodega, five miles south of Bodega Bay. The film was based on a short story by Daphne DuMaurier and originally took place in an English seashore village where murderous birds attacked the local villagers. The film became the first horror/fantasy film and used special effects, including mechanical birds, live and wild birds on strings, and optically altered film overlays of birds in flight.

Alfred Hitchcock had the exterior of Potter School, which was vacant at the time, completely repaired and it was used in several scenes. Today, it is a private residence. The shots of the children running from the schoolhouse were done on Taylor Street in Bodega Bay above Diekmann’s Bay Store with the original two story store visible at the bay’s edge. Close ups of the running scenes were set up at Universal Studios with the children running on a treadmill.

Several restaurant scenes, portions of the gas station fire, and the boat dock scenes were filmed at the old Tides Wharf and Restaurant. The actual fire was lighted in a parking lot at Universal Studios with a mock up of Highway One and the Tides Wharf and superimposed on a painting of a fishing village. The Tides Wharf was completely rebuilt in the 1990’s.

The ranch house on Westshore Road was located on part of the Gaffney ranch on Bodega Head for nearly 100 years. The exterior of the house, like Potter school, was repaired by the film crew and was used for several scenes of the Brenner House. The house has been demolished, but the ancient cedar trees surrounding the house look very much the same as they appeared in the film.

Michael Fahmie purchased the Bodega Country Store in Bodega four years ago. Since customers frequently asked questions about "The Birds" movie, Michael decided to honor Alfred Hitchcock and began collecting and displaying memorabilia. His first item was an autographed picture of Tippi Hedren, the female lead in "The Birds". He has collected many authentic items that include a mask that was used as a VIP back stage pass for the movie premier in March 1963, a Tippi Hedren Barbie doll, and original items on loan that local Bodega residents acquired during the filming.



Tippi Hedren drops by the Store from time to time, and Michael hopes that she will be able to attend and be the focal point of this special event. The Store often carries wine that Ms. Hedren sells to help fund her wild cat refuge, Shambala.