

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Life At The Gaffney Ranch

by Doris Mann - 2008

When I visited the Bodega Bay Marine Lab for a history seminar some years ago, it was the first time I had been back to Horseshoe Cove since 1941, when my husband, Guy, and I and our then year-old daughter, Ina, lived and worked on the Gaffney Ranch. This visit to Horseshoe Cove stirred up a lot of memories of that time.

The Gaffney Ranch at that time was a most interesting place to live although it had serious inconveniences. There was, as yet, no electricity on Bodega Head. But, even more problematical, there was no road on the west side of Bodega Bay. It was necessary to go in and out by driving on the wet packed sand left by the receding tide. At high tide the only way in and out was by boat. Salt water and sand ruined brakes in a short time. Salt water caused vehicles to gradually rust away. Nevertheless, the year we spent there was a memorable time.

During the year we became well acquainted with Rose and Bill Gaffney. They were frequent visitors and sometimes came and stayed at a cabin that was near our house.

During one interval, Bill and Rose stayed in the cabin and Bill helped out by milking our cow while Guy was busy with farm work on the home ranch on Highway One. Bill died there on the ranch, while he was milking our cow. Guy came home and found and summoned Rose. The tide was coming when Guy and Rose went around the bay to get help. They returned while the tide was high, in the boat of a fisherman friend. As I remember it, it was Lloyd Woods. The next morning Rose built a bonfire in front of the bay and placed on it the old felt hat that had seemed almost a part of Bill.

Over twenty years later, when I was taking a short story class at Sonoma State, I wrote a short story based on Bill Gaffney's death. For purposes of the story I placed Rose and Bill in the Gaffney house where they had lived for so many years. I also made them the owners of the cow that Bill was milking and, of course, indulged in imaginative speculation as to what an old man was thinking and feeling. Otherwise, the story is true to the setting and the events are factual.

In later years, Rose Gaffney would become well known for her feisty personality because of her adamant and very vocal opposition to a proposed nuclear power plant on Bodega Head. Yet her role in this story of the wife in the background, solicitous for the needs and welfare of her aging husband, was also a part of her personality.

