

RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Honoring the Women of Rancho Bodega

by Susan Teel - 2013

There have been many women residing in Rancho Bodega who have had a positive and vital impact on the culture and life of this area. I have selected four of these women in honor of Women's History month, March 2013.

At the young age of 77 years old, **Annie Murphy Springer** resides in the lovely town of Bodega. She was chief of the Bodega Volunteer Fire Department from 1979-1986; one of three female fire chiefs in the Nation. She was instrumental in organizing the Big Event which has become an annual fund raiser for the Fire Department. Since her husband's death in 2005, Annie's passion has been painting her beautiful water colors that are also available in card form, and teaching art.



Donna Cook Freeman, who passed away in 2009, lived in Bodega Bay for 50 years. She was a maven of west county politics, and the picturesque Compass Rose Garden that she owned with her husband, served as a center of political fund-raisers and countless community celebrations and memorials. She diligently worked to block the building of the PG&E nuclear power plant on Bodega Head in the early 1960s, served on the California Coastal Commission's advisory board on the Local Coastal Plan, and was the founding chairwoman of the annual Bodega Bay Fisherman's Festival. Ms. Freeman said of herself, "I don't lean, I push."



Bodega Bay would not be the same without the vibrant Rose Gaffney. Rose and her second husband, Bill Gaffney, worked the relatively isolated 462 acre Gaffney Ranch in and around Bodega Head from about 1917 to 1933. They then "retired" to their cottage in the nearby village of Salmon Creek and leased out the ranch. Bill passed away in 1941. In the early 1960s, Rose became known as, "the thorn in the side of PG&E", and the, "Mother of Ecology" when she went head to head with PG&E over their building a nuclear power plant near Campbell Cove. Rose ran officers off her land, rallied forces, wrote letters and spoke to whoever would listen to her.

Ruth McCaughey Burke, a native of Bodega passed away at the age of 93 in 2010. She was a member of the McCaughey family who for decades operated the McCaughey Bros. general store. Ruth was an avid gardener, and she loved to travel and go trout fishing. Ruth is best known for writing the two-volume book, "An Intimate History of Bodega Country and The McCaughey Family", that includes pioneer diaries, family correspondence, public records, newspaper articles, and 19 pages of photographs from Ms. Burke's collection. The project covers Native American life in the area, the fur trade and fishing.

