

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## DID YOU KNOW?

For a long time Highway 101 ran through downtown Petaluma, but in 1937, after the Golden Gate Bridge was built, the California Highway Commission wanted to build a bypass around the town. Most of the residents were in favor of the bypass, but learned that the proposed route went through 120 chicken farms. Ignoring the locals, Colonel John Skeggs, the chief highway engineer, gerrymandered his way through the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, and got his proposed route approved.



Enter Max Kortum, a Petaluma chicken farmer. Max led a bitter two year battle against Colonel Skeggs. The Highway Commission scheduled a hearing in Sacramento, and 500 Sonoma County residents went up to protest the route. Governor Earl Warren ordered the route changed to avoid the chicken farms and Colonel Skeggs disappeared into the shadows of bureaucracy.

## **The Kunstkamera Collection**

**October 20th, 2018 by Robin Joy Wellman**

The California Collection at Peter the Great Museum in St. Petersburg Russia was the subject presented by Robin Joy Wellman at a special event hosted by the Rancho Bodega Historical Society in October. Her presentation was meant to highlight the remarkable work that people across the Russian lands and seas with those of Californian regions accomplished with a common goal of working together to better understand a historic collection that represents the history of people and their daily lives.

She offered an overview of the Russian History in the Pacific Northwest, Fort Ross, and the California connection to Russia, the two trips with tribal members and partners, the project, and the outcomes. She shared the work done over the course of 6 years, as well as shared pictures approved by the Kunstkamera of objects not yet seen by the majority of academics. She shared approved insights by the Native tribes and their members.



The over 300 catalogued items were collected by Russian explorers in the 1800s and are now housed in a Russian museum. She has traveled twice with local tribal members to view the collection.

The Russian American Company (1799-1867) established settlements throughout Alaska, the Sonoma Coast and Hawaii as hunting bases for sea otters, fur seals and trade centers with the local Native tribes (Coastal Miwok, Kashaya & Pomo). In the early 1800s they first sailed into California coastal waters to establish a food supply with the Spanish Missions and in 1811, established a base in Bodega Bay. The California Collection soon began with gifts by the Coastal Miwok chief named Valeniia who lived in the Bodega Bay (Port Rumiantsev). “The chief brought gifts consisting of various parts of their outfits, arrows and home appliances”.

In 1840, Ilya Voznesenskii spent 13 months in California collecting under the employ of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He sent 15 cases of natural and cultural collection materials back St. Petersburg, with documented provenance, which allowed the curators to learn more about the people who created the object and use of objects. ●

## THE FACES OF BODEGA BAY

### Lira Marie Filippini

Bodega Bay smiled large on the day that Lira chose to reside here. Originally from the Sierra Foothills, that day was in 2011 when Lira discovered the rugged Sonoma Coast “teeming with life” and fresh air. Envisioning a “hermit-like existence” Lira was amazed to discover so many like-minded people.

Brimming with positive energy and a vividly creative mind, Lira quickly became an important component of the local community. She jumped into action with an upbeat, open-minded approach.

She was instrumental in the worthy response to the October 2017 Wildfires. As President of the Bodega Bay Area Chamber of Commerce she founded the beautiful new Sonoma Coast Visitor Center. As co-founder of Waves of Compassion (a Bodega Bay nonprofit), she feeds hungry fishermen and families at our local Food Pantry.

Her sparkling brown eyes and giant smile bring sunshine even on the foggiest day. Her volunteer work on behalf of the community is a priority for Lira, who feels deeply for all living things.

In addition to all this, she co-owns, with her brother, a dietary supplement company, Nutri-Thrive LLC, that specializes in laboratory-tested natural extracts and compounds.

Lira is fundamentally a creative soul, who draws on her innate connection with nature to fuel her prodigious art projects, including large-scale murals, metal sculpture, jewelry design and production, interior decoration and painting ... to list a few.

In 2008 she received a substantial grant from Burning Man to build Lepidodgera, a giant steel-framed butterfly with a 55-foot wingspan, supported on the bed of a Dodge truck.

Two years earlier (2006) she graduated with Honors from UC Santa Cruz with a BA in Sociology. Her studies included coursework in philosophy and epistemology (the study of knowledge and justified belief) which strongly captured her interest.



Lepidodgera

## THE FACES OF BODEGA BAY



While Lira comes across as outgoing, she considers herself a home body who enjoys the peaceful beauty of the Sonoma Coast. Walking out of her house through the dunes to the beach brings her spiritual renewal.

She is very close to her parents and hopes someday to be a mother herself, with several children. One imagines she'll be the perfect parent as the first thing on her dream/wish list is a tree house! This makes sense knowing how passionately connected she is with nature in general and plants in particular. A visit to her home reveals potted indoor plants that are so enormous and thriving that they remind one of a previous epoch where giant plants dominated the landscape and all things on earth were real. ●

A regular appearance in our quarterly newsletter, *The Faces of Bodega Bay* is a photojournalistic record of the people of our town: school kids, surfers, shop owners, fishermen, restaurant workers; the whole gamut of people who live and work in Bodega Bay and make it the wonderful community that it is. These “environmental portraits” portray the subjects in their natural environment, capturing their character and telling their story through their surroundings.

*The Faces of Bodega Bay Project by:*

**John Hershey, photographer**  
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**Robin Rudderow, archivist**  
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## FROM THE ARCHIVES by Robin Rudderow

### Who Named "Joy Road" ... and Why?

**Who named "Joy Road"** and why? Driving past, I wondered, "Were they really happy when they named that road?" Then I learned that buried in the little graveyard in Bodega Harbour were several young children with the last name "Joy" from the 1850's I realized the road is named for a Rancho Bodega pioneer family.



JOY RD

Benjamin Joy was born in Leeds, England on January 4, 1821. His wife, Elizabeth Machell Joy, was born in Brentford England on May 28, 1824. They came first to Wisconsin in approximately 1845, then to California in the early 1850's.

When the Joys moved to California, they must have lived at or near Bodega Bay, because their first three children died between 1852 and 1856 and were buried in the Seaman's Cemetery (in the Harbour) at Bodega Bay, as was their last child, who died in 1868. The Joys' first child, James William, was born at Provo City, Utah Territory in August 1851, and he died on December 7, 1852. Alice Ann was born August 14, 1853 and Phylis Charlotte was born on August 27, 1855. Alice Ann died on January 11, 1856 and Phylis Charlotte died on November 10, 1856. How sad!

In 1857 the Joys purchased a house and lot in Bodega Bay from Donald McDonald. Later that year Tyler Curtis sued Ben Joy and other Rancho Bodega settlers, claiming that they were squatting on the land that rightfully belonged to Curtis' wife, Manuela, and the children from her marriage to the deceased Captain Stephen Smith.

Fortune smiled on Ben and Elizabeth Joy, when Thomas Benjamin was born on July 2, 1858, and Ann Maria, on June 24, 1861, and they lived and thrived to old age. Ben died in 1938 and Annie died in 1940.

**In 1864, Ben Joy purchased the mill that had been built in 1855 on the northwestern corner of Rancho Estero Americano** by three brothers named Thurston. The Joy family moved to the property, where Minerva Mercy was born later that year. Minnie, as she was called, also thrived, but the last child, Elizabeth Emily was born June 29, 1867 and died September 8, 1868.

The 8,849 acre Rancho Estero Americano had been granted to Edward Manuel McIntosh in 1839. In 1849, it was sold to Jasper O'Farrell, who then sold it in 1864 to San Francisco banker Benjamin Belloc, who subdivided it into 50 tracts, each approximately 20 acres. What Belloc broke apart, the Joys put back together, first purchasing in 1865 the four tracts of Rancho Estero Americano land that surrounded the mill, a total of 89.25 acres, then they purchased another 37 tracts of 740 acres in 1871. They purchased 2 more tracts in 1868 and 1871.

With his California holdings well established, Benjamin Joy traveled to England in 1876 on business matters when he became ill there and died. Thomas Benjamin was 18, Annie 16 and Minnie 12. Elizabeth and her children continued to operate the mill on the original site until 1885. They made improvements to the mill and increased its output to 12,000 feet of lumber per day. During this period, much of the timber on the eastern edge of the property was cut and some of the land disposed of. When the most accessible timber on the eastern side of the property was cut, they moved to the western edge of the tract on Tannery Creek. In 1885 they built a home, workers quarters and a new mill. The new mill increased capacity to 20,000 feet.

Later, additions to the RBHS archives give us a broader picture of the Joy family. The Rancho Bodega pioneers from England, Ben and Elizabeth Joy, had three children, Thomas Benjamin (also known as Ben), Annie and Minnie. Ben and Annie never married. They stayed in Bodega and ran the lumber mill with their uncle, James Swan.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES by Robin Rudderow

**Minnie was a teacher at Watson School from 1887-1888.** She also taught at Potter and Joy Schools. One of her students was Howard McCaughey. In 1893 Minnie married Alfred Laton. Al worked for the Joy family lumber business in his early years, and later went to work for other lumber companies, and became the mayor of Sebastopol. Minnie and Al had a daughter, Anita, and two sons, Joy and Burle. Anita inherited Joy Woods when Ben died. RBHS received the following remembrance, written by Anita Laton, about her family's gathering for **New Year's Eve 1899 at the Joy family home on Tannery Creek.**

"There were six gathered in the Little Sitting Room at what we now call the Mill House in Joy Woods. Outside the hills and redwood trees stood close around a little clearing where a creek ran past the saw mill, the house, a few cabins, a horse barn, an ox barn and carriage house at the upper end, lumber yard, office and bark shed below the mill.

Usually we did not spend New Year's Eve at the Mill but this year was special. My father Alfred, had brought Minnie, his wife, almost-five Anita and almost-three Joy from Sebastopol that afternoon. We came the twelve miles in a buggy drawn by Johnnie our horse, who, with Brownie, my dog were real member of the family. Dad drove, Mother held Joy, and I sat on a little wooden salt box in front of the dashboard with Brownie beside me.

The quiet center of everything is my grandmother, Elizabeth, a little old lady, 77 at the time, dressed in a high-necked, long-sleeved dark dress, a gold brooch pinning a little lace collar at her throat, a woolen shawl about her shoulders. She sits very straight in a low rocking chair, probably the one Mrs. Curtis, Captain Stephen Smith's widow, had given her. Even to my childhood eyes, she seemed tiny, and fragile, kindly but in a world even more remote than that of ordinary grown-ups.

She sat in a little room six thousand miles, half around the world from England, the place she still sometimes referred to as 'home'. She had worked

in the farthest frontier of America for almost half a century, had been a widow for half that time, had run a saw mill successfully, and sat tonight in the redwood country with her three middle-aged children about her, the center of a home and a life largely of her own making.

In point of years, Uncle James Swan shared seniority that New Year's Eve with my grandmother. He was the husband of her long-dead sister Charlotte, her only link with her childhood home and family.

Ben was 42 in 1900. He had worked hard all his life, wordlessly devoted to his mother and sisters. Annie was 40. She was slender, energetic, hardworking, managed the household and kept in touch with all the happenings in the woods and the mill. I can remember times in later years when she and Uncle Ben and Uncle James 'got steam up' in the mill and 'ran out' an order all by themselves, she as active and knowledgeable as the two men. She possessed a zest for living and made a life rich in friendship and activity.

The room was lit by three kerosene lamps. Usually there would be one or at most two lamps in a room but Al liked rooms to be well lighted and when he came by grandmother always asked Annie to light three lamps. One hangs on the wall, with a concave reflector behind it throwing brighter light on sewing or newspapers or account books. One has a tall stand of blue glass, another is of clear glass.

A small iron stove stands out from one corner, a cheerful wood fire crackling and popping within it. Upstairs, the chimney of that stove went through my grandmother's bedroom, to our childish minds a most ingenious arrangement for warming the room.

A comfortable, lived-in room; the only touch of formality was a large framed picture of Minnie as a young woman. A calendar is tacked up by the door; Annie has pinned notes and newspaper clippings and pictures here and there as reminders. Cream colored lace curtains hang over the dark blinds at the two windows.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES by Robin Rudderow

Al produces a bottle of port he has brought for my grandmother and fills glasses for her, Uncle James and himself, remarking that it is “medicinal” and will “improve their health” in the new year. Annie retorts that pure water is healthier and brings some from the always-dripping tap in the dark kitchen for Ben and Minnie and herself. They had joined the Good Templars in their teens and remained true to its principles of abstaining from alcohol throughout their lives. Then, as the clock strikes twelve they toast the New Year and each other, Annie sings softly “Should old acquaintance be forgot” and Minnie takes the alto part as she has done so many, many times, while Al hums an accompaniment almost below his breath, and probably slightly out of tune.”

The Joys’ raised goats to eat the brush, and had a problem with eagles killing the baby goats. The birds were captured and sent to zoos. We recently obtained a photo of an eagle chained by the leg in the Joys’ barn yard and photos of the Joys’ mill in 1907.

**What happened to the Joys’ land?** In 1928 and 1940 Joy Woods was considered for a State Park. In September 1951 Howard McCaughey gave a speech at the dedication of Joy Woods as a tree farm, and it seemed at that time that everyone agreed with the value of preserving the history and integrity of the vast Joy Woods holdings. But in 1959, Anita Laton sold all but 20 acres and the land was subdivided and sold off over time. A big chunk of trees were taken out for a vineyard.

One large stand of mainly second growth redwood, which hasn’t been logged in over 100 years, is on Fitzpatrick Lane, just off Joy Road. In this grove, the Joy family and the Bodega Corners community enjoyed many picnics and celebrations. The neighborhood that grew up around the grove came to treasure it for its beauty, peacefulness, and connection to the early days of Bodega Corners.

In 1994, a timber harvest plan was approved to selectively cut 20 to 25 percent of the trees in the grove over five feet in diameter. Realizing the grave risk to the grove, a group of neighbors formed



“Friends of the Old Trees” and sued the Department of Forestry to stop the timber harvest plan. The Sonoma County Superior Court issued a writ of mandate to stop the logging, and in 1997 the California Court of Appeal affirmed the lower court’s decision. The Court of Appeal found that the State had failed to consider the impact of removing the trees on the surrounding water table, including the phenomenon of “fog drip,” the process in which trees capture moisture from fog, which then drips to the forest floor and adds to the water table below the trees.

The landowner submitted another timber plan, and this time the neighbors approached **LandPaths**, which purchased the 28 acre grove for \$2,000,000 in 2000; \$1.25 million of the purchase price came from the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. Additional contributions were from Save The Redwood League, California Coast Conservancy and private donors. In 2013 a bequest of five acres brought the “Grove of the Old Trees” to a total of 33 acres.

Now the *Grove of the Old Trees* is protected from future development and is preserved for the generations ahead of us. You can visit the Grove and appreciate its beauty. It is located at 17400 Fitzpatrick Lane, just off Joy Road in Occidental. There is a small gravel parking area at the entrance of the to the Grove.

The remembrance by Anita Laton is truly a treasure, and Rancho Bodega Historical Society (RBHS) thanks Janet and Walter Drucker of Occidental for this donation. ●

## ROBIN RUDDEROW

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**IN THIS ISSUE**

**JOY RD**

**Lira Filippini**

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**WINTER EVENTS**

**Wednesday - Sunday, 11am - 4 pm, #1 Air Museum Way at the Charles M Schulz - Sonoma County Airport, off Airport Blvd. "PACIFIC COAST AIR MUSEUM"** Have you ever dreamed of flying an F-15 Eagle? How about a P-51 Mustang or a Sopwith Camel? The Pacific Coast Air Museum can provide the next best thing. Their flight simulator lets you get into the cockpit, take the controls, and fly a 3D virtual reality simulation of these and other planes. Price is \$10.00 for 20 minutes, in addition to Museum entrance fees. <<http://pacificcoastairmuseum.org>>

**FACES OF BODEGA BAY** The Rancho Bodega Historical Society and photographer, John Hershey, are undertaking the project, "Faces of Bodega Bay", a photojournalistic study of the people who work and live in their beautiful town on the California coast. Please check out the link to their Go Fund Me page, below, where you can watch the wonderful video prepared for us by the amazing videographer, Jason Windsor.

<[www.gofundme.com/faces-of-bodega-bay](http://www.gofundme.com/faces-of-bodega-bay)>

**RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Recruiting a New President*** to the The Rancho Bodega Historical Society Board of Directors. This is a dream job for someone who cares deeply about the stretch of land on the Sonoma Coast between the Russian River and the watery Estero Americano. In earlier times, this land was called Rancho Bodega. Our history is rich with tales of Native Americans, fisherman, loggers, saw mills and cattle ranchers and the most colorful bunch of residents/cast of characters I have ever heard about! This is an honorable position and well suited to any age, young or old. To indicate your interest, or to nominate a candidate, please email Robin at [RBHS@bodegamoon.net](mailto:RBHS@bodegamoon.net).

*For more local events, visit our website. [www.RanchoBodega.org/events.html](http://www.RanchoBodega.org/events.html)*