

Scott Valley Voice

August 1, 2001

Newsletter of Scott Valley

Vol. I, Num. 1

Welcome to the first issue of the revival of the Scott Valley Homeowners' Association newsletter, the **Scott Valley Voice**, published by the Association to keep you, the residents of Scott Valley, informed and aware of the issues that are happening in our immediate community.

Our goal is to unite Scott Valley by providing its residents with important and helpful information that will affect us directly, as well as to be a venue for youth, teens and residents to post ads, articles and other information in the Community Bulletin Board that may be of interest to all of us. as the *Voice* evolves.

BECOME A SVHA MEMBER

Presently, 87 of the 180 households in Scott Valley have become members of the Scott Valley Homeowners' Association. For \$40 a year in dues, your new board is working on your behalf to keep you informed and to represent the interests of Scott Valley. We need both your community and financial support.

As you know, even mailings like this become expensive. In order for us to keep you up-to-date on important issues, we ask that everyone pay their membership dues! Please send your check to: Scott Valley Homeowners' Association, P.O. Box 392, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES AT WORK

Steps at Azalea to be Repaired

The steps located at Azalea are sorely due for repair. We are pleased to say that your dues will now allow the steps at Azalea to be repaired. We are approaching the Mill Valley City Council to see if they will help fund a portion of the project. If they do not, your dues will help to cover the costs of the repair. We thank everyone who is a SVHA member for making it possible to improve our community, and we will keep you posted on the progress!

AN ALTO TUNNEL PRIMER

by John Palmer

This is the first in a series of articles written for the benefit of Scott Valley, Alto-Sutton Manor, and Chapman Meadows homeowners to provide background for evaluation of the proposal to re-construct the Alto Tunnel.

PART I: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ALTO TUNNEL

There was a time in the not-so-distant past when trains, both passenger and freight, played a significant part in the daily life of Mill Valley. From 1896 to 1929, the Mountain Railway brought passengers from downtown up the steep slopes of Mt. Tamalpais, and the North Pacific Coast Railroad, later renamed the Northwestern Pacific Railroad, ran both passenger and freight trains north from Sausalito, through Mill Valley to Corte Madera, along what is now the multi-use path which passes behind the Community Center. The heavy work to build these rail lines was done by hundreds of Chinese laborers, who lived in a tent city just north of the plaza now known as Lytton Square, working under Irish foremen.

A joint venture of the Southern Pacific (SP) and the Santa Fe Railroads, the Northwestern Pacific and its lands became the property of the SP when it bought out the Santa Fe's interest in 1929. The last link in the line between Mill Valley and Corte Madera was the 2,179 foot long Alto Tunnel, bored through Corte Madera Hill, which was completed in 1884. Although the area around the entrance of the tunnel on the Mill Valley side is completely overgrown, it's possible to get a general idea of its location by following the dirt path leading from the multi-use path (behind Edna Maguire school) north, after it crosses Vasco Court, along the back side of the lots on the east side of Underhill. On the Corte Madera side, the tunnel's entrance can be reached by following Tunnel Lane south from Willow Avenue, then walking on the path through the brush which is the remnant of the right-of-way.

The Corte Madera-Sausalito line closed to passenger rail traffic in 1940, a casualty of the growing popularity of automobiles and the completion of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. Although usage continued to decline, freight trains still ran through the tunnel during the late 50's and early 60's; the last of them rolled through the Sausalito end of the line from another spur in 1971.

The demise of rail service from Corte Madera to Sausalito opened up Scott Valley (and land on the Corte Madera side of the tunnel as well) for residential development, which began in the late 1960's. In fact, since the rail line fell into disuse, several homes have been built on or near the top of the tunnel entrance on the Corte Madera side; on the Mill Valley side, one home sits nearly atop the entrance and others, including at least two with pools, are situated above and within 60 lateral feet of the tunnel. Additionally, many more homes in both Mill Valley and Corte Madera sit on lots adjacent to the rights-of-way leading to the tunnel's openings.

• ALTO TUNNEL FACTS •

THE ALTO TUNNEL IS:

- a) 2179 feet long
- b) 16 feet wide
- c) 20 feet high

THE TUNNEL'S MV OPENING
IS AT THE END OF THE MULTI-USE
PATH AFTER IT CROSSES
VASCO COURT

In 1973, the Golden Gate Transit District attempted to purchase the railroad's right-of-way, including the Alto Tunnel, for use as a commuter rail line. Not surprisingly, the new owners of lots and homes in Scott Valley were opposed to the idea, as were the Mill Valley City Council and other community groups. At that time, local schoolchildren would cross the railroad tracks to get to Edna McGuire and Alto schools.

In the late 70's, the County of Marin sought and obtained a \$643,000 grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior under an early version of the Rails To Trails program, which released funds to counties wishing to convert abandoned

rail property to bicycle or multi-use paths, to purchase the right-of-way from SP. Finally, in 1981, with financial help from the County, the support of such prominent politicians as Michael Wornum and Alan Cranston, and the backing of the Scott Valley, Alto-Sutton Manor, and Enchanted Knolls Homeowners' Associations, the right-of-way was developed into a multi-use path.

During negotiations for the purchase of the right-of-way, SP tried to convince the County to take the Alto Tunnel, as the railroad did not want to spend the money to maintain it. In 1981, the County hired the firm of Copple Foreaker Associates to study the tunnel for possible purchase from Southern Pacific. The Foreaker Study, as it came to be known, described the tunnel as in an advanced state of decay as a result of moisture and neglect.

*Stay tuned for Part II of The Alto Tunnel Primer
– The Collapse of the Tunnel.*

SV COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

Now **you** have an opportunity to post information you would like other SVHA members to read! We would like to include a variety of contributions from those within Scott Valley. Your contribution can include a variety of things, including: offering a service, baby-sitting, house sitting, dog walking, recipes, etc.; or perhaps an article for consideration to be published in the *Scott Valley Voice* – maybe a human interest story that pertains to Scott Valley or contribute some historical information about Scott Valley that many would not know. Or, if you wish to make a recommendation of a company from whom you have received superior service and would like others to know about, please send that information to:
ScottValleyVoice@promptconsulting.com .
We hope to hear from you!

YOUTH CORNER

Kids, Teens and Young Adults – Do you have a service you would like to provide to those in the Scott Valley area? Baby-sitting? Dog walking? Need a place to advertise for free? Your ad will display in the next issue of the Scott Valley Voice! Submit your ad, 30 words or less for consideration to:
ScottValleyVoice@promptconsulting.com

ITEMS FOR SALE

If you have items you would like to sell, give away or if you are planning to have a garage sale and would like to advertise in the next issue of the *Scott Valley Voice*, please submit your ad, including your name, phone number, brief description of the item and the amount you are asking to:
ScottValleyVoice@promptconsulting.com

Scott Valley Voice

This is a collaborative effort of the
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