

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Vanishing Landmark (or Watermark?) Brought to Life



In the 1950's Bodega Bay was a popular harbor with anchored boats. The fish were jumping and locals were busy processing fish for the post-war high-protein food demands. An old ferry boat from the Sacramento Delta was a perfect place to store ice and shark nets. But then, a major storm in 1959 washed the old SS Marin onto shore. A few years later, PG & E built Westshore Road & Whaleship Road leaving the big old boat high and dry, where it has stood ever since. The boat is an outstanding, popular subject for artists, revealing the history and character of Bodega Harbor. But now, it's vanishing to the elements. Thanks to long-time Bodega Bay residents Joan Poulos and David Lewis, the SS Marin is being preserved in art once more.

## Preserved for RBHS and Our Contributors

Joan Poulos and David Lewis commissioned Salmon Creek artist Patty Pieropan Dong to paint the SS Marin in situ, anchored in Bodega Harbor. A beautiful, colorful scene shows the hills in Springtime and tells the story of our harbor's wildlife and beaches.

David and Joan have generously offered prints of their original painting, as a "thank you" gift to contributors of the Rancho Bodega Historical Society. Your donation of \$100 or more to the RBHS Building Repair Fund secures your 14"x 18" archival print, matted for conservation and ready for framing. This gift brings a fine art piece of Bodega Bay's history into your home.



## Preserving Memories

We need your help to fund recent major repairs to the RBHS Building that includes new siding, windows and repainting. Keeping our archives clean, dry and cool is a priority for the Historical Society and we keep careful watch. Please help us maintain our history with your contribution. Thank you!



web site: <http://www.ranchobodega.org/marin.pdf>

GoFundMe: <https://gofundme.com/f/rancho-bodega-building-repairs>

PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/2038727>

Or mail your check to

RBHS, PO Box 1027, Bodega Bay, CA 94923

\*be sure to include your name and a mailing address

For more information, contact [RBHS@bodegamoon.net](mailto:RBHS@bodegamoon.net)

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### What is the Story of the SS Marin?

By Mag Dimond

American towns and villages are rich with stories, these tales can come from old well-preserved houses, from broken down bridges and lakes and indigenous wildlife. And the stories come also from boats – vessels used for transporting, storing, fishing, and leisure. Bodega Bay is home to a mysterious story-laden boat called the *SS Marin*, who may be close to 100 years old, surviving a sketchy and mysterious past.

Some historical legends that we encounter are false and some are true. Described by some as storing the region's Bodega Red Potatoes, the *SS Marin* was in fact a Delta ferry boat, reportedly built in Antioch in 1928. In the 40's she was brought to Bodega Bay by the *Meredith Fish Company* to be a delivery boat, serving as a place to store the bounty brought in by the fishing fleets. At that point she was parked in the bay by Porto Bodega. The fishing business changed and for a limited time she became a floating storeroom housing unused shark nets – that is until the market for shark liver died out...



**“Storm Damage High to Bodega Bay Docks – Forty Boats Sunk or Heavily Damaged”  
cried the January 5, 1959 Press Democrat headline**



En the early 1960's PG&E built a shoreline road to the proposed site of its nuclear power plant on Bodega Head. Despite ardent resistance, a local longshoreman turned conservationist with a wooden leg, road construction prevailed, and he gave up the fight for both his own property and the *Marin*. The *SS Marin* would then become definitively cut off from the bay waters.

In time, the *SS Marin* would wither and age as do so many buildings by the sea, ultimately becoming what some people might describe as a pile of wood.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES



The storm crashed ashore and shoved the SS Marin to her present resting place adjacent to Bay Flat Road.



The chapter that followed involved the inevitable conflict between locals, some who wanted to preserve the little piece of marine history, and others who felt it should be incinerated because it was an eyesore. This humble boat has been photographed and painted, and maritime historians from San Francisco have been sketching and studying it. It remains an object of the public's curiosity...

The disintegrated Marin carries many stories: of the harsh conditions of life working on the water in northern California and those personalities who stayed the course, of the political clout of power companies who often devastate landscapes in favor of "progress," of the local citizens arguing incessantly about maintaining their community, and of those dedicated to honoring history and tradition by preserving such wonders as character-filled boats in various states of decay that remind us of a time when hard work amidst the elements was truly valued.

Yes, the Marin has a meaningful and rich legacy. It offers us a whisper of a story about this quirky and beautiful landscape.