

Our History And Where We Are Today

"In 1908, the residents of Ross voted to incorporate; the vote was 96-0. They wasted no time choosing trustees and instituting a number of laws. For example, dogs had to be licensed and lights were required on bikes after dusk. The Townspeople also set an early standard of environmental advocacy by insisting that trees could not be cut down unless the Town granted permission. The Town purchased land across from the train depot for a park that eventually became Ross Commons."¹

How We Became A Town

For thousands of years prior to 1800, the Coast Miwok Indians lived and were sustained by the land that is now called Ross Valley. The Coast Miwok revered the land, plants and animals of the Ross Valley through tribal cultural beliefs and practices. European diseases eventually decimated the Indian population. The settlement in 1817 of Mission San Raphael, with its vast land holding, also resulted in further incursions into areas occupied by the Coast Miwok Indians.

After the Mexican Revolution of 1821, the "land grant" system of parceling out land gave rise to what we now know as Marin County. Ross was originally part of an 8,877-acre Mexican land grant to Juan B.R. Cooper in 1840 known as Ranch Punta de Quentin Canada de San Anselmo. The Town of Ross itself was named in honor of James Ross, who purchased the land in 1857 for \$50,000. Ross built his home on Redwood Drive and moved there with his wife and three children. When James Ross died in 1862 his wife, Annie Ross, was forced to sell a portion of James Ross' larger land holdings to pay each of their daughters \$10,000. The 297 acres she had remaining make up part of the Town of Ross today.

Once the Town was incorporated one of the first actions of the new Town Council was to make it illegal to cut down trees without Town approval. Soon the streets were paved, streetlights erected, concrete bridges built over the creek and a firehouse constructed. Thanks to the foresight of our early leaders, the Town today rests under a leafy canopy that is unique in Marin County.

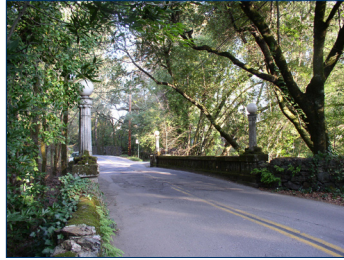
Part I



¹ Kristin Bartus, "Our Towns at the Turn of the Century — A look back," Pacific Sun

The History of Some of Our Important Places

The Town of Ross is a quiet residential community with tree-lined, shady streets. The wooded ravines, open grassy areas and long avenues of large shade trees provide an unmistakable sense that you have arrived in a unique and historic place. So, too, do the important landmarks in Town.²



Ross Bridges

In 1909, the newly incorporated Town of Ross contracted to build five reinforced concrete bridges in the Town, hiring the famous bridge designer John Buck Leonard. The bridges are eligible for landmark status and inclusion on the “National Register of Historic Places.”



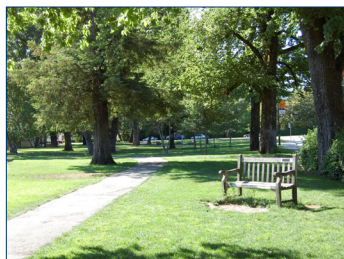
Lagunitas Country Club

The Lagunitas Country Club was founded in 1903 and is a small, private, members-only tennis and swim club located on Lagunitas and Upper Road.



St. Anselm Church

St. Anselm Church was dedicated in 1908. Archbishop Partick W. Riordan began his dedication address for the church that year with: “This beautiful edifice will be a great joy and lasting benefit not only to you who are now present, but to many yet to come within the parish.”



Ross Common

In 1911, Annie Ross Worn, the eldest daughter of John and Annie Ross, gave the Town of Ross the land for the Ross Common.



St. John's Episcopal Church

St. John's Episcopal Church was built on its present site in 1911, on land donated by Mrs. Sarah Coffin.

² Most dates and descriptions are from the Ross Historical Society website.

Ross School

Ross Grammar School was built in 1911 and then replaced in 1941. In 1991, Child Magazine named Ross Elementary School as one of the top ten schools in the nation. The academic ranking is in the 99th percentile, the highest any school can achieve.



The Branson School

In 1922, The Branson School moved to Ross from San Rafael. It offered grades one to eleven and was co-educational through the fourth grade. Today, it is a 320-student high school.



The Cedars of Marin

The Cedars of Marin began as a school for children with special needs in 1919. It has since evolved into a nationally recognized residential and day programming community for adults with developmental disabilities. Currently, the Ross campus houses half of its 100 residential clients.



Town Hall

In 1926, the Town of Ross voted to spend \$100,000 to buy the Shotwell estate upon which the present Ross Town Hall and Fire Station were built in 1927.



Ross Post Office

In 1958, the Ross Post Office was built on the site of the old North Pacific Coast Railroad Station.





Natalie Coffin Greene Park

In 1967, the family of Natalie Coffin Greene gave 25 acres of Phoenix Lake land for a park in her memory.



“Ross Bear”

When sculptor Beniamino Bufano’s compressed marble dust bear was donated to Ross by Jerome and Peggy Flax in 1971, it was placed in front of the Town Hall and soon became the symbol of the Town.



Marin Art & Garden Center

The Marin Art & Garden Center was founded in 1943 with the purchase of the property from A.J. Kittle, a member of the first Ross Town Council. It is also home to the Ross Valley Players, the state’s oldest repertory company.

The Marin Art & Garden Center is surrounded by an unusual serpentine brick wall built in memory of its founder, Caroline Livermore.



Who We Are Today . . . And Tomorrow

The Town of Ross is the second smallest of Marin’s communities, with 1.6 square miles and slightly more than 800 residential parcels. At last census count (2000), we had 2,310 residents.³ Between 1990 and 2005, the population grew by 214 people, which is about the same rate of growth as Marin County as a whole. Over the next 25 years, the population growth rate in Marin and Ross is expected to be even slower. In 2025, Ross is projected to have a population of 2,550 residents. The number of employed residents is projected to increase from 928 to 1,210 over this period.⁴

About 30% of Town residents are under the age of 17, and the resident average age is 42 years. The percentage of seniors living in Ross has remained relatively stable over the past decade at about 17% of the population, roughly comparable to Marin County as a whole. As the “baby boomers” hit their senior years, population demographics are expected to shift dramatically. According to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), almost 38% of the county’s population will be over 60 years of age by 2025. Thus, it is projected that by the year 2025 about one in three persons living in Ross will be 60 years of age or older.⁵

Located in the Ross Valley, the Town of Ross lies within the “City Centered Corridor” of Marin County, as defined by the Marin Countywide Plan, and is adjacent to the Town of San Anselmo, City of San Rafael, and the unincorporated Kentfield area in Marin County. The Town of Ross location is shown on the next page.



Annual Town Dinner

2007



2005

2000 Census

Where we are today:⁶

- **Land Area:** 1.59 square miles
- **Population:** 2,329
- **Housing Units:** 805
- **Households:** 717
- **Average Household Size:** 2.94 persons
- **Median Household Income:** \$102,015
- **Age of Residents:**
 - Under 17 — 703 (30.2%)
 - 18 to 64 — 1,338 (57.4%)
 - 65 and Over — 288 (12.4%)
 - Median Age — 42.5
- **Mean Travel Time to Work:** 34.5 minutes
- **Employed Persons:** 928
- **Primary Occupations:**
 - Management, Professional, and Related Occupations (70.5%)
 - Sales and Office Occupations (20.2%)
 - Other Occupations (9.3%)

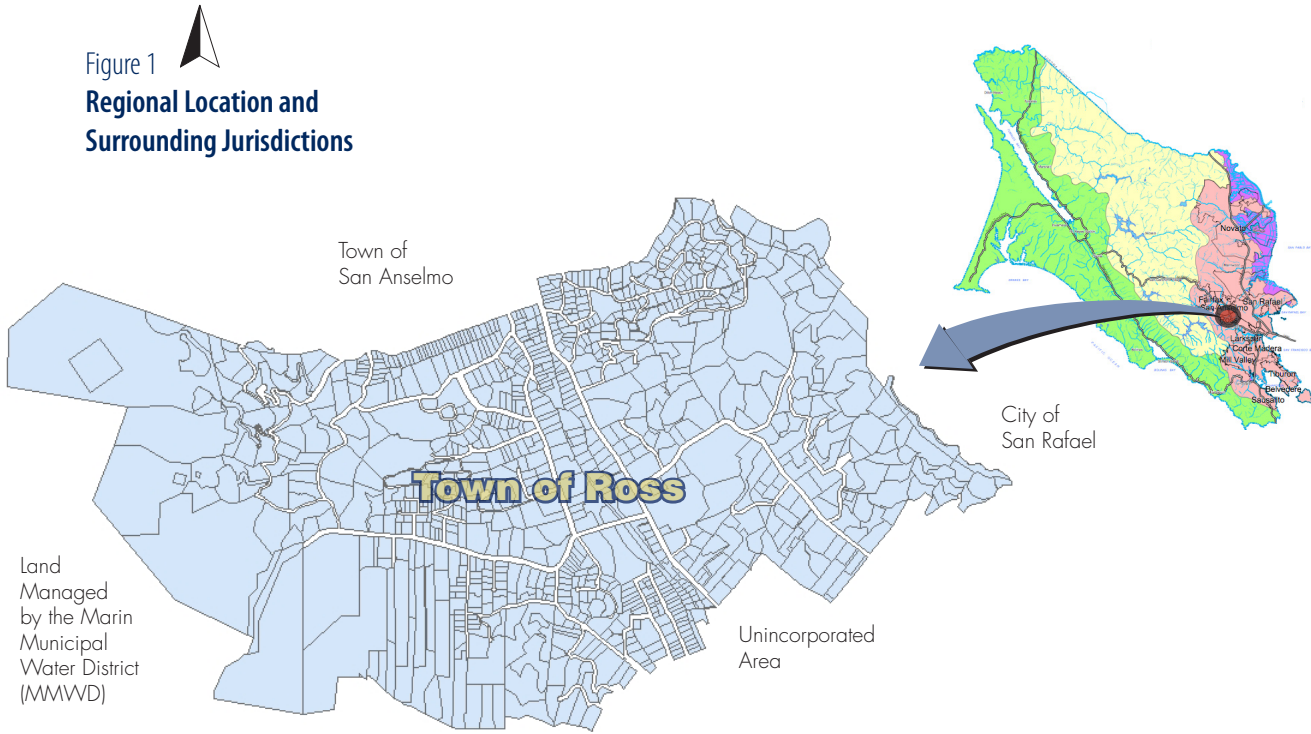
³ 2000 U.S. Census

⁴ Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) “Projections 2005”

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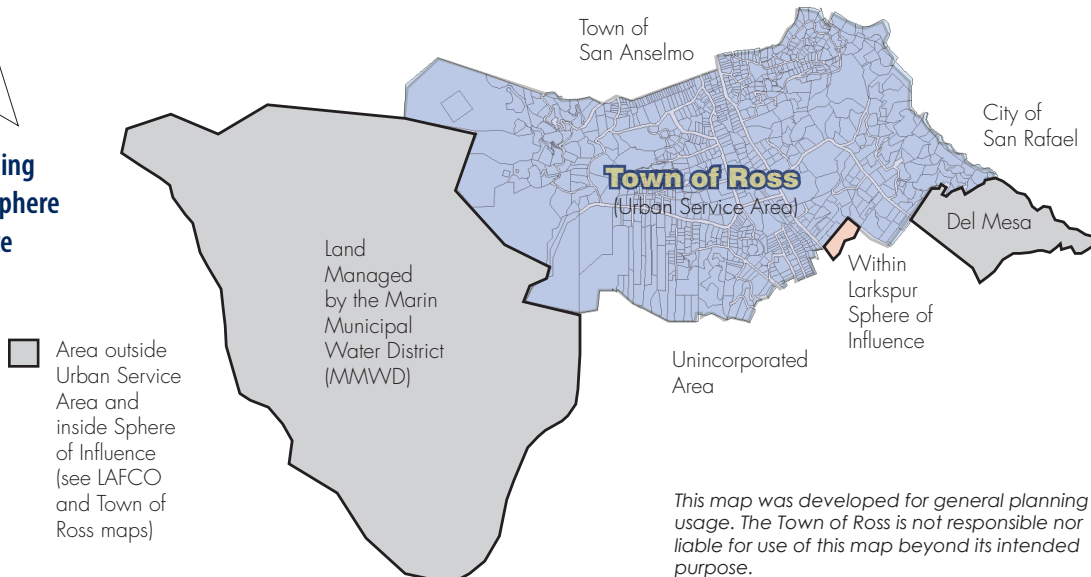
⁶ 2000 U.S. Census

Figure 1
Regional Location and Surrounding Jurisdictions



The Ross Planning Area covers the corporate limits of the Town of Ross, the Del Mesa area (an area under county jurisdiction and encompassing residential areas north and west of Laurel Grove Avenue, between Makin Grade and Wolfe Grade) and the area surrounding Phoenix Lake (administered by the Marin Municipal Water District). In addition to the services provided by the Town, there are a number of single-purpose public entities delivering specialized services such as sewer, water, solid waste pick-up, and schools.

Figure 2
Ross Planning Area and Sphere of Influence



This map was developed for general planning usage. The Town of Ross is not responsible nor liable for use of this map beyond its intended purpose.