

UNDER THE GABLES

Volume XXV, Number 1

Spring 2023



FACES AND FRIENDS **West Marin Children in the 1930s**

A new exhibit on display through July 2023

JACK MASON MUSEUM OF WEST MARIN HISTORY

Inverness Way at Park Avenue, Inverness Phone 415-669-1099 www.jackmasonmuseum.org

NEW EXHIBIT:

FOLLOWING A LONG RUN of the exhibit about the 52-year-old Dance Palace Community and Cultural Center, we now present a heartwarming view of children of the 1930s as seen in school group portraits. By selecting individuals and small groups in the portraits and isolating the images for more focused impact, we can look into their faces and feel a sense of the life of a child ninety years ago. See the article starting on the next page, and the other interesting stories on the pages that follow.

The next exhibit will be presented by the Inverness Public Utility District, celebrating its fiftieth year serving the town. It will run from August through October of 2023. We look forward to hosting IPUD's history on our walls and learning more about their important service.

In other news, Dewey Livingston's long-awaited book on the history of the Point Reyes Peninsula, Tomales Bay and the towns therein is approaching completion and should be to the printer by the end of spring. Look for announcements of book release and programs!

The Museum Committee of the Inverness Foundation welcomes Courtney Linn to our group, which steers the museum and archive's many activities. Courtney and his wife Sarah live in Second Valley and Sacramento, where Courtney is the general counsel of a credit union. He has jumped into action, researching and writing about Inverness architecture (see page 8) and its ties to important Berkeley design movements, a subject destined for a book. Welcome, Courtney!

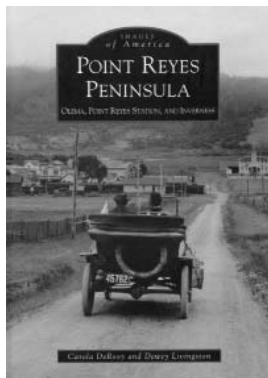
Do you have old pictures or documents to share with the Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History? All subjects and periods are welcome, especially those from the 1960s on. Your photos will be carefully preserved and you will receive nice sharp copies in exchange. As an alternative, we would be happy to scan your photos and return them safely.

RESEARCH IN THE MUSEUM ARCHIVES

Email research questions to research@jackmasonmuseum.org.

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP UP TO DATE?

If you are not sure whether you are up to date, please leave a message on the Archives phone 415-669-1099. You can renew on our website or by mailing your check to Box 94 Inverness, CA 94937.



"POINT REYES PENINSULA"

Copies signed by the authors, Carola DeRooy and Dewey Livingston are available at Museum Open Houses and from the Archives for only \$20.00. The proceeds benefit the Museum.

ON THE COVER:

Two friends at Inverness School in the 1930s, from the new exhibit at the museum.

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This edition of
Under the Gables
is written by Dewey Livingston,
Courtney Linn, Daniella
Thompson and Meg Linden,
and designed by
Dewey Livingston.

Inquiries:
415-669-1099

FACES AND FRIENDS

West Marin Children in the 1930s

SCHOOLCHILDREN are our future. Schoolchildren are our past, too—these are the kids who grew up in West Marin and became teachers, truck drivers, housewives, ranchers, merchants, realtors and so much else. Are they different from our children of today? Yes and no. Look at the clothes and hairstyles for differences, but look at the faces and postures and personalities and they are familiar. These children grew up in a different West Marin: dozens of dairy ranches provided for the local economy; general stores provided bulk goods and fresh produce from local gardens; kids learned their ABCs in one- or two-room schoolhouses staffed by a teacher or two.

These class photographs show some of our local elementary school pupils as they were in the 1930s at Black School in Point Reyes Station, Inverness School and Marshall School. The photographs are clear and sharp and the faces pop out at the viewer. I chose to isolate groups and individuals to give a closer, and less cluttered look at their faces and relationships. Look into their eyes and maybe you will see

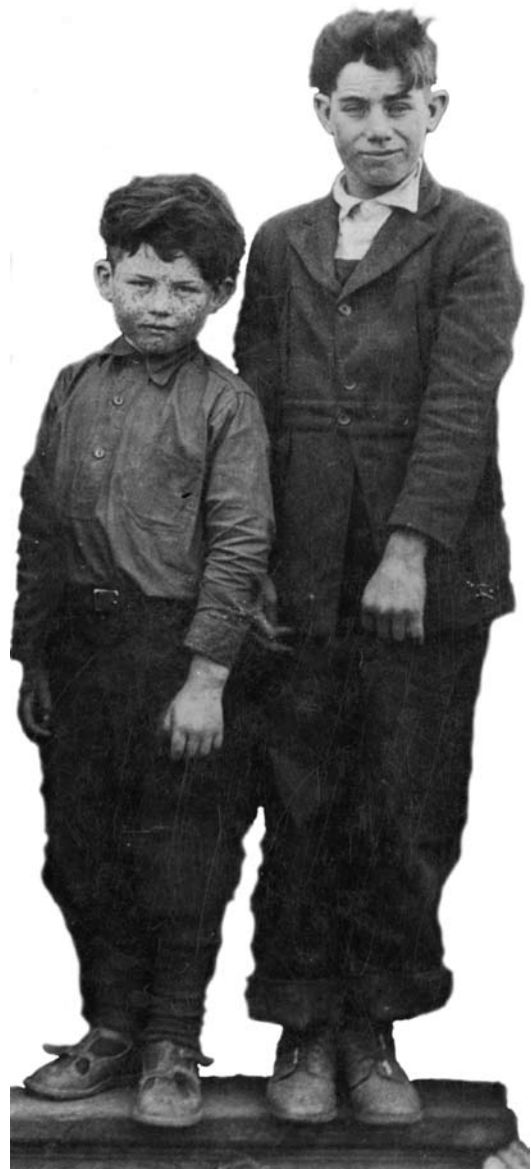


their future, their past, their home life. Many of the girls' clothes were homemade, and the prevalence of denim overalls shows the rural life of boys who probably milked cows before arriving at school—and had more to milk when they got home.

The original school photos were recently donated to the Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History by the Velloza family. Four generations have lived and worked—and gone to school—in West Marin. Richard Velloza Sr. ran the RCA dairy ranch in the 1930s, and his wife Lenore Armanino Velloza worked as a switchboard operator.

Their son Dick, who is pictured here a few times, worked for years delivering fuel to homes and ranches. Dick married May Bordessa, who grew up on a ranch south of Marshall. May and Dick raised two sons, Mike and Bob, in Point Reyes Station. The Inverness Post Office is named in honor of Bob and Susan's son Jake, who lost his life in Iraq. Their family roots run deep, and these photographs show the depth in the faces of our residents of the past.

—Dewey Livingston



Above, Elaine Burke, Lorraine Frease, Cedra Elgin, Bessie McCloud and Dula Elgin at Marshall School in 1936. Right, unidentified boys at Black School in the 1920s. Bottom, Inverness School kids in the 1930s.





Left, Richard "Dick" Velloza at Inverness School in the 1930s. Top. Cecil Sanchez, May Bordessa (who later married Dick Velloza) and Fernando Sanchez at Marshall School in 1936. Below, Vivian Hall, later Vivian Horick, at Inverness School.



Constance Lake Collier, Inverness School Teacher

By Meg Linden

Constance Mary Lake taught at the Inverness School starting in 1923. In June 1929 she married radio technician Eben Richard Collier, whom she met at a dance hall in Inverness Park. After two years of time off (1931-32 and 1933-34) giving birth to sons Richard and Ronald she returned to teaching as the only teacher in the school which covered eight grades until 1941 when Freda Ludy Mulvaney joined the staff to handle the younger students.



Mrs. Collier and some of her students in the 1930s. Below, a class list from 1943.

Once there was a second teacher Mrs. Collier was designated also as principal. Mrs. Collier retired in June 1962, spending her last years at the consolidated West Marin Elementary School which handled all the higher grades in Point Reyes, Inverness and Olema, where she taught fifth grade.

Constance Lake was born in Oakland on March 10, 1897 and her family lived on Linden Street, the same street on which Inverness's Christian Schreiber family lived. She claimed to Jack Mason that she first came to Inverness as the guest of Brock Schreiber's sister. She would have been six years old that year and the youngest Schreiber daughter, Grace would have been 25 or so. She also was well acquainted with the Father Irving Spencer family and says she spent time with them in their Inverness home during the summers. After she qualified as a teacher she ended up working at a tiny schoolhouse in Honey Valley in Plumas County. She then moved to teach at the Phoenix Lake Power Plant settlement in Tuolumne County and then taught at Mr. Horton's private school in Piedmont for three years before coming to Inverness when she was 26.

In addition to teaching, she and her husband were active in St. Columba's Episcopal Church. For example, she was on the Bishop's committee in 1951 when the church bought the Frick Mansion and moved the church there from a small building on Cameron Street. Also, she was com-

mended for helping the Vicar's wife, Mrs. Shrewsbury improve the garden at the church. Her husband Eben worked for RCA Communications and retired in November 1962; sometime after that they moved to Rossmoor. After he died she moved back to Marin County to live near her elder son and his family. The veteran Inverness teacher, who educated two generations of students, died on January 10, 1981.

Inverness Name of School *15 June* Date *178* Month

Number of days school was open during year

GRADE	NAME	AGE July 1 1943	Days
5	Marian Turchesi	10	
5	Ronald Collier	9	
5	Gordon Mery	9	
5	Recil Sanchez	14	
5	Siane Shaw	9	
5	Rudolph Simondi	10	
5	William Snyder	11	
6	Robert Conover	10	
6	Richard Giambastiani	11	
6	Donald Harris	10	
6	Gerald Harris	12	
6	Lotus Horn	10	
6	Carol McClure	11	
6	Ronald Patrick	10	
6	Arden Sciallo	10	
7	Richard Collier	11	
7	George Ludy	11	
7	Beverly Shaw	11	
8	Yvonne Pkey	11	
8	Yern Clark	13	
8	Janet Weavers	12	
	Ronald Giambastiani	13	
	Jenny Horn	13	
	Hollis Sciallo	13	
	Betty Reid	14	

Constance Collier Teacher

Recent Donations to the Jack Mason Museum

Thank You!



Donor Bonny Sydnor of Frederick, Maryland donated five extraordinary photographic prints mounted on cabinet cards, faded but sharp, all but one dated 1896. Four of the images depict scenes around Inverness. These scenes are rare and depict an early phase in Inverness development. Ms. Sydnor wrote: "Please accept them as a donation from the Hesselmeyer, Wilson and Sydnor families. This generation is so pleased that they will be preserved and enjoyed." Reproduced above is a very rare image showing what would become downtown Inverness with only a beach bathhouse showing on the left and before the store or any commercial buildings were built. The photographer was standing on the porch of the landmark C. F. Marwedel House, which was later moved one lot west and still stands; today this would be the view from the roof of the old coffee house, now an office.



The Velloza family of Point Reyes Station donated a selection of school photographs from Black, Inverness and Marshall Schools. Their late parents, Richard and May Velloza, attended local schools, Richard at Inverness and May at Marshall. Both of them grew up on dairy ranches and remained in the community their entire lives. The Inverness Post Office was dedicated to their grandson Jake, who lost his life in Iraq. The photo of Marshall School (seen at left) in 1936 is especially interesting, with a great number of Coast Miwok descendants in attendance. The current museum exhibit is based on these excellent photographs.

Inverness By Design

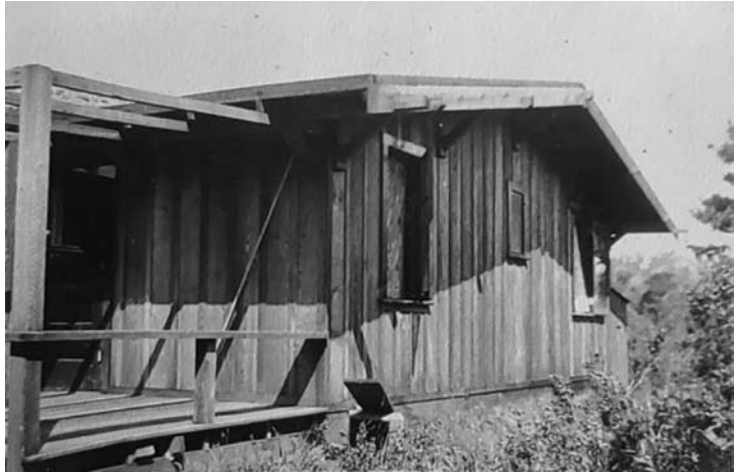
Courtney Linn & Daniella Thompson

The Colbys in Inverness

SECOND ONLY TO JOHN MUIR, William (“Will”) E. Colby can be said to have been the most influential person in the early history of the Sierra Club. He served as the club’s secretary for 46 years and contributed substantially to the winning efforts that led to the creation of Kings Canyon and Olympic National Parks and to the expansion of Sequoia National Park, as well as to the ultimately unsuccessful campaign to preserve Hetch Hetchy Valley. Beginning in 1901, and for the following 28 years, he led the Sierra Club’s first large group outings into the Sierra Nevada. This High Trips program may have been Colby’s most significant contribution to the club—it increased membership, spread awareness, and introduced influential people to the club’s mission. Ansel Adams was his friend and admirer. He wrote of Will Colby, “You knew who he was without inquiry—he comes with him a deep humanity, and the mood of rivers and forests and clean white stone.”

In 1911, Will Colby and his first wife, Rachel, purchased a large lot on Perth Way in Inverness, California. Over the next two summers, the Colbys constructed a simple board-and-batten house, clad in ten-inch old-growth redwood. The house survives today, virtually unaltered, and remains in the family of Will and Rachel’s great-granddaughter, Dr. Elizabeth Leslie Black. In a 1978 letter to Sierra, Dr. Black’s mother, Anne Colby Black, recorded that the Inverness house was not the only dwelling that Will Colby built with his own hands. Another was built in Big Sur, where, beginnings in the 1940s, Will and Rachel would spend much of their time.

It was Rachel Colby who discovered Inverness as a summer place—one to which generations of Colby descendants have returned for more a century. As Dr. Black relates it, Rachel was invited in



William & Rachel Colby House on Kenneth Way in Inverness. Top photo courtesy of Dr. Elizabeth Leslie Black; bottom courtesy of Joseph N. LeConte Collection, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

1911 to a friend’s Inverness house party. The guests played bridge and admired the natural beauty of Point Reyes and Tomales Bay. Rachel returned to the family’s Berkeley home raving about Inverness and urged Will to take a day-long excursion, so he could see the place with his own eyes. Will made the trek a few months later and was infected with Rachel’s enthusiasm. Prior to the completion of their cabin, the Colbys stayed at Mary Burriss’s Highland Lodge or at Hotel Inverness.

After the house was completed, Rachel and the couple’s two sons, Henry and Gilbert, usually spent the entire summer season in Inverness, and Will joined them on weekends. As we shall see further on, travel between Berkeley and Inverness in the early 20th century was a complicated, multi-

stage affair. In those days, West Marin County offered few amenities, requiring the Colbys to pack up household necessities for the entire summer. Among other provisions, a flock of egg-laying chickens made the trip from Berkeley to Marin. An old family anecdote related by Dr. Black recalls those hens, which escaped one day upon arrival at the Point Reyes railroad station, scattering every which way on the platform. The story goes that “the ruckus that ensued encouraged passengers and employees alike to help [Mrs. Colby] gather the hens.”

During the school year, the entire family spent weekends in Inverness. Will Colby’s 1953 oral history at the University of California’s Bancroft Library records that Rachel, Henry, and Gilbert came up from Berkeley on Friday afternoons, while Will followed them on Saturday afternoons. Monday morning’s return trip depended on every means of surface transportation except the automobile. Will Colby described the journey:

We’d start down Monday morning, getting up around four o’clock, taking the horse stage over to Point Reyes Station, the narrow-gauge train down to the Manor, then the broad-gauge train down to Sausalito, and the ferry across, and then I went up to my office [in San Francisco] and [Rachel] continued on the ferry across the Bay to Berkeley, the train, and then installed the boys in school there. And when the teacher complained that either one or the other boys went to sleep during the daytime on Monday, my wife had a ready explanation. But we enjoyed the stay at Inverness because it took us outdoors.

At that time, circa 1915, Henry Colby (born in 1905) and his brother Gilbert (born in 1907), attended Emerson Elementary School, the nearest public school to their Channing Way home. From the Key System ferry terminal in Oakland, they and their mother would have been transported by streetcar to College Avenue, a block away from the school.

By the time the Colbys made Inverness their summer home, they formed something of a second wave of Sierrans who had discovered the area’s natural beauty. In 1900, Emma Shafter Howard, one of seven women among the 182 charter members of the Sierra Club, exchanged letters with John Muir in which she called his attention to the threat posed to the redwoods near Mount Tamalpais. Ms. Howard built an Inverness summer cabin in 1904, when the Shafter side of her family owned most of the Point Reyes Peninsula.

Ben and Mattie Morgan of Berkeley moved to Inverness in the late 1890s. They were friendly with Sierra Club pioneers Professor Joseph Le Conte and his family, whom they entertained in their cabin, known as Crow’s Nest. The Joseph N. LeConte Collection at the Bancroft Library in

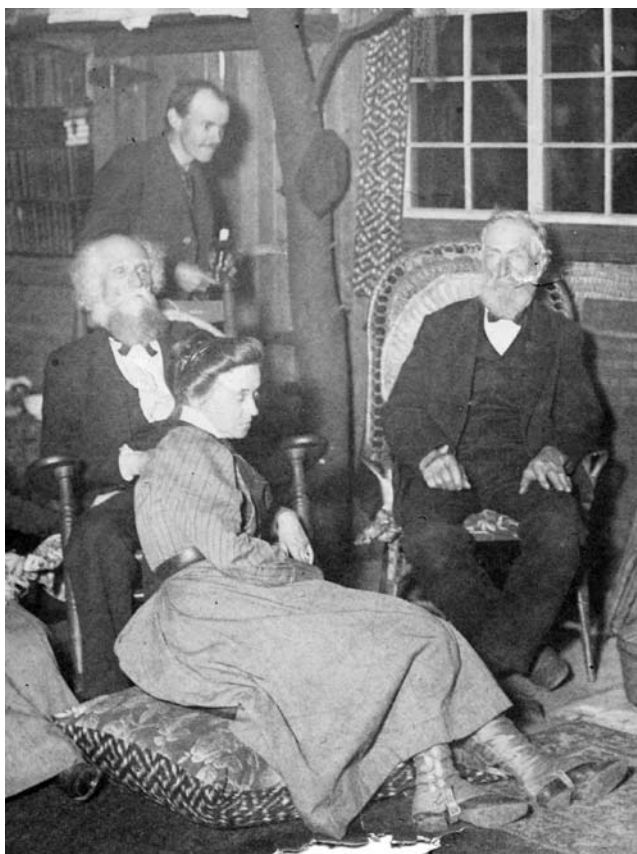


Crow’s Nest, Ben & Mattie Morgan’s house in Inverness, c. 1900. Joseph N. LeConte Collection, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

Berkeley includes a photograph of such a visit.

In the photo on the next page, Mattie Morgan appears to be wearing leather gaiters buckled over her boots, suggesting that the party had returned to Crow’s Nest after a hike.

The Sierra Club began leading walks in the Inverness area as early as 1911. The “Sierra Club Local Walks” 1911 Summer Schedule lists an Inverness-to-Bear Valley trip. The trip included an overnight stay at the Inverness Hotel and a Sunday walk along the Inverness Ridge, with views overlooking Drake’s Bay.



Crow's Nest, Inverness, circa 1900. Standing is Joseph Nisbet LeConte ("Little Joe"). Seated from left to right: Professor Joseph Le Conte, Mattie Morgan, and an individual who is likely either John Muir or the Inverness postmaster, Alexander Baily. Photo courtesy of the Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History.

Will Colby would later lead at least one Sierra Club outing in Inverness. On Saturday, July 1, 1922, a large party of Sierrans under his leadership left on a trip that included a night spent in Inverness, followed by a hike to Mount Vision. This trip was announced by outdoors enthusiast and Sierra Club veteran Harold French in a column devoted to Bay Area hiking, published in the San Francisco Call on June 29, 1922. French described the upcoming hike as "An exploration of Mt. Vision and its dense forests of Douglass [sic] spruce and coast pines [...] The *Pinus Muricata* [sic] is a stately tree, closely related to the Monterey, or radiator [sic] species." (Thirteen years earlier, the eminent botanist and Sierra Club co-founder Willis Linn Jepson described *Pinus muricata* (Bishop Pine)

in his book *The Trees of California*, remarking, "Groves of various ages, each area showing great uniformity, may be studied to advantage about Inverness.")

The July, 1922 hiking party likely followed Will Colby's customary route up the steep eastern slope of Mount Vision. In her oral history for the Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History, Will's daughter-in-law, Ruth Colby, related that Will was in the habit of walking to the top of Mount Vision (elevation 1,282 feet) before breakfast, to get in shape for the High Sierra hikes. His co-leader on the July, 1922 Inverness trip was Charles R. Holton, an early Sierra Club member who had led a 1905 club outing to Mount Shasta and Mount Rainier. He later donated photographs from that outing to the Bancroft Library. The photograph depicting a group of hikers atop Mount Vision may have been taken by Holton during the July, 1922 hike. The view is to the west, with the Pacific Ocean in the distant background.

The Colbys maintained a boathouse on Tomales Bay. From the end of this boathouse, Will and his sons used to net-fish for steelhead, Will having roused the boys at 4:00 am, much to the consternation of his wife. Abalone were abundant and easily obtainable at McClure's Beach during low tide. Will also fished alone on Tomales Bay late at night. On one such occasion, his boat capsized. In the surrounding darkness (Inverness did not have electric power until 1927), he could not see the shoreline. Hesitant to abandon the capsized



A group of Sierrans atop Mt. Vision, Inverness, California, possibly c. 1922. Will Colby is seated on the right. Joseph N. LeConte Collection, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

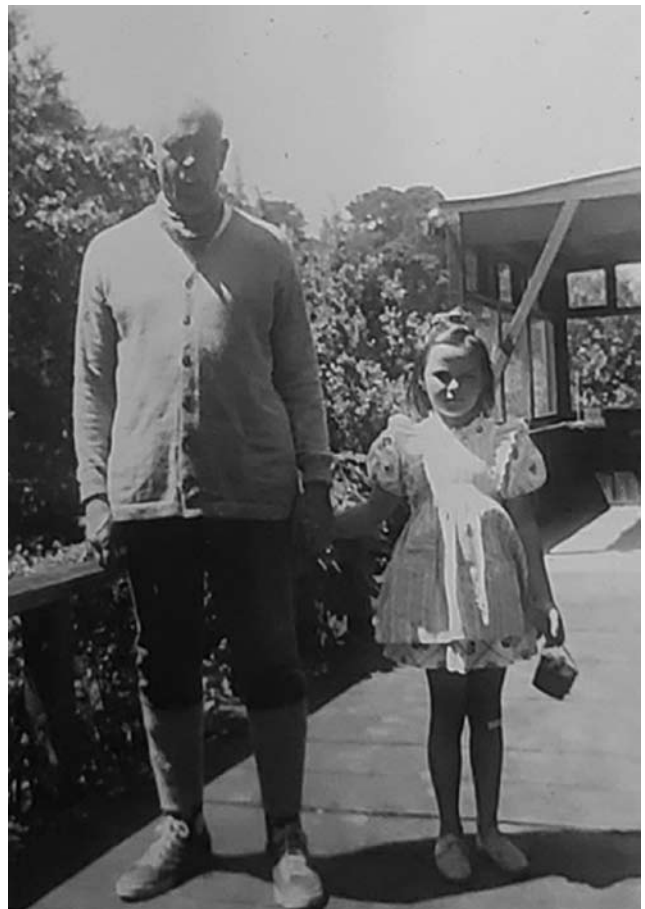
boat and swim without direction, he floated alone in complete darkness until dawn, when there was finally enough light to orient himself and swim to shore.

As formidable a figure as Will Colby was, so was Rachel (her daughter-in-law, Ruth, confessed to having been “kind of scared of her”). In her 1978 letter to *Sierra* magazine, Anne Colby Black paid tribute to her grandmother, shining a light on her individual accomplishments.

Rachel Vrooman Colby (1874–1948) was the daughter of Henry Vrooman, a California State Senator and one of the original trustees of Stanford University. Like her father and husband, Rachel Colby was an attorney. Having obtained her undergraduate degree from the University of California in 1895, she was one of three women to graduate in the 1898 class of Hastings College of Law. She met William Colby at Hastings, and they married in 1902. When William later joined the law faculty at Boalt Hall (now Berkeley Law), his work for the Sierra Club often took him away to Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. Rachel covered her husband’s law lectures and seminars when he was away. During the struggle to save the Hetch Hetchy Valley from being dammed, Rachel served as treasurer of the California Branch of the Society for the Preservation of National Parks, founded by John Muir and other prominent conservationists. She was also active in society and politics, serving as a district president in the California Federation of Women’s Clubs.

In the mid-1930s, the Colbys turned over their Inverness house to their sons, who were now married and raising families of their own. This arrangement did not work out well, so Henry and Ruth purchased Edwin Dreer’s former property at 12 Forres Way, which included a rustic house and a tennis court. When it came time to enlarge the house, the couple believed that the job was beneath their Berkeley architect, William Wurster, and called in John Dinwiddie, “because we knew that he needed the money.”

Will and Rachel began spending more time at a house they had built in the Coastlands area of Big Sur, near Nepenthe (then owned by Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth). They were active members of the Big Sur community before Rachel passed away. Will Colby subsequently remarried. Ansel



William Colby and his granddaughter Anne on the porch of the Colbys’ house in Inverness circa 1947. Photo courtesy of Dr. Elizabeth Leslie Black.

Adams, who photographed many of the Big Sur residents during that era, captured Will and Helen Colby circa 1955 in his famous photograph *Big Sur* (Mr. and Mrs. William E. Colby, Coastlands, Monterey County Coast).

William Colby passed away in Big Sur in 1964 at the age of 89. He was lucid until the end, living long enough to rejoice when, in September 1962, President Kennedy signed the legislation that created the Point National Reyes National Seashore.

Courtney Linn is the general counsel of a Sacramento-based credit union. Daniella Thompson is a Berkeley-based historian. The authors thank Joanna Black (archivist) and Therese Dunn (librarian) of the Sierra Club for their research assistance. Special thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Leslie Black for sharing photos and stories about her family.

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