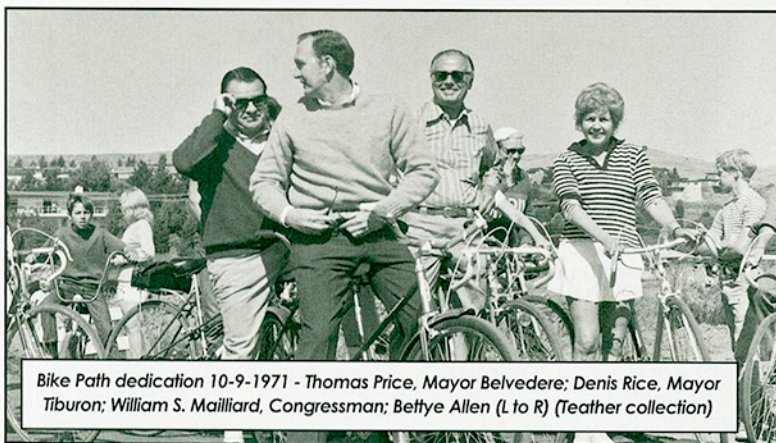


THE RICHARDSON BAY LINEAL PARK

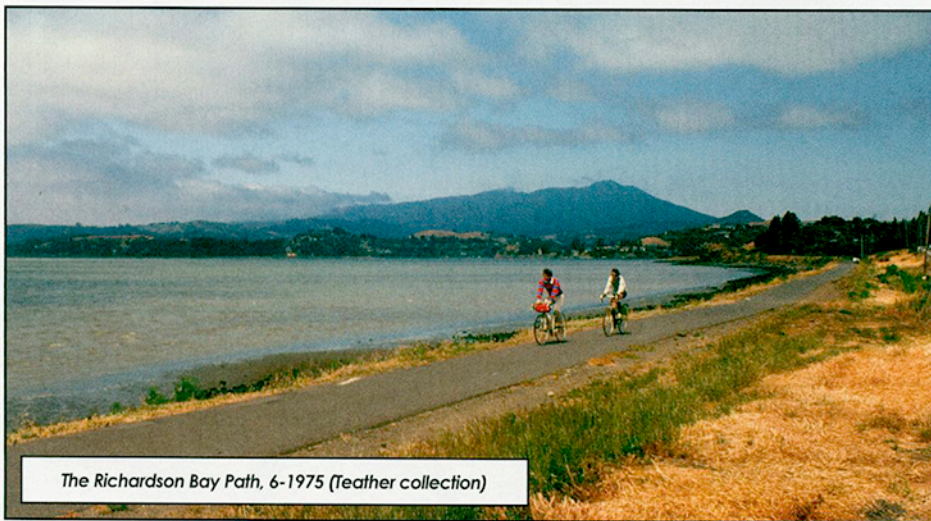
By Dave Gotz



The abandoned rail right-of way circa 1970
(Fanning collection)



Bike Path dedication 10-9-1971 - Thomas Price, Mayor Belvedere; Denis Rice, Mayor Tiburon; William S. Mailliard, Congressman; Bettye Allen (L to R) (Teather collection)



The Richardson Bay Path, 6-1975 (Teather collection)

As far back as the mid-1950's local planners envisioned the Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWP) right-of-way as a bike path, just as many other communities had as railroad lines were eliminated. By 1968 the City of Tiburon (re-named "Town" in April 1979) had incorporated and the NWP had taken up the tracks on the peninsula. Unfortunately it was not a simple transaction to acquire the right-of-way. It was discovered that a local developer had purchased the property rights to the railway path because the NWP did not own it outright. While the City was negotiating with the owners (and trying to get a Federal grant to help pay for the path), the NWP bought it, ostensibly to sell it to the City at a profit. After two years of negotiations, including an attempt by the City to condemn the property, a deal was made with NWP in December 1970 to acquire the right-of-way from Mar West to the trestle mound, a total of almost 11 acres. Although it is most commonly known as the Tiburon Bike Path or Multi-use Path, upon its dedication on October 9, 1971 the path's official name was The Richardson Bay Path and later The Richardson Bay Lineal Path. On May 1, 2013 the Tiburon Town Council voted to rename the path The Old Rail Trail; a name which better evokes the path's history and current use.

The path is actually part of The Richardson Bay Lineal Park (RBLP) which was first conceived in early 1972 to expand upon the narrow strip to include adjacent land. The City hired a landscape architect to create a master plan for the park. Due to a number of factors, this elaborate plan was never implemented, but the City did acquire the properties along the path to include in the RBLP. In 1975, using funds from the 1972 voter approved bond, the Richardson Bay shoreline including the present day South of Knoll Park, the Knoll and McKegney Green a total of 46.7 acres was acquired from Caltrans. (The map of the RBLP master plan and why Caltrans owned so much land are included in my video about Tiburon Blvd. see: <https://vimeo.com/220094067>).

(Other than the Old Rail Trail, the most prominent part of the RBLP is of course Blackie's Pasture, which was acquired in 1975 through the efforts of the Tiburon Peninsula Foundation (TPF). The story behind that acquisition is tied to the founding of the TPF in 1969 – and will have to wait until next month's column).

Over the years since those acquisitions, the Town of Tiburon – through the dedicated volunteers in the Parks and Recreation Commission – with the help of local, State and Federal grants, along with local non-profits have continued to develop the RBLP. McKegney Green was officially dedicated in February 1977; full landscaping and running paths added in the 1990's; The Tiburon Historical Walking Trail plaques, a joint project by the TPF and the Landmarks Society, were dedicated in October 2001. A playground, restrooms, picnic tables and the new Trestle Trail are a few of the improvements made in the past 20 years that have made the RBLP a lasting treasure enjoyed by our community and visitors from around the world.

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