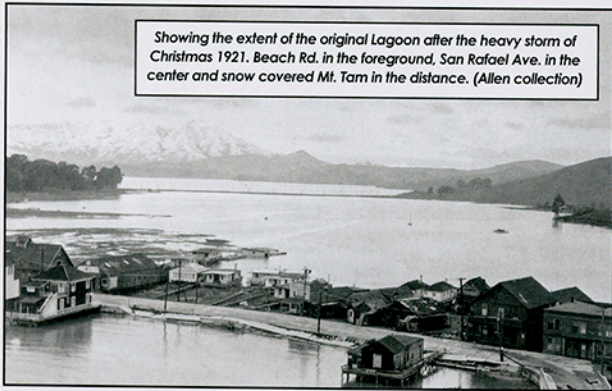


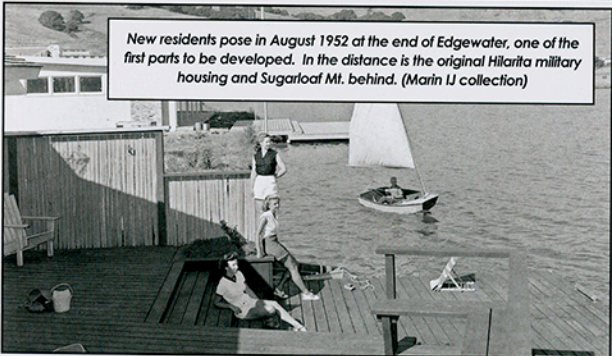
### BELVEDERE LAGOON HOMES WITH BACKYARDS FOR BOATS

By Susan Cluff

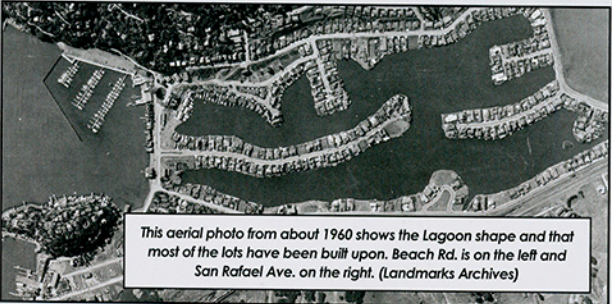
Showing the extent of the original Lagoon after the heavy storm of Christmas 1921. Beach Rd. in the foreground, San Rafael Ave. in the center and snow covered Mt. Tam in the distance. (Allen collection)



New residents pose in August 1952 at the end of Edgewater, one of the first parts to be developed. In the distance is the original Hilarita military housing and Sugarloaf Mt. behind. (Marin IJ collection)



This aerial photo from about 1960 shows the Lagoon shape and that most of the lots have been built upon. Beach Rd. is on the left and San Rafael Ave. on the right. (Landmarks Archives)



Belvedere Lagoon with its waterside homes and townhouses was the vision of one man, Harry B. Allen. He saw possibilities where others saw problems. With the dredging of the Belvedere and Tiburon coves in the 1920's and the completion of Tiburon Boulevard in 1930, the once large natural lagoon had become a swampy salt marsh.

Allen started dredging the lagoon in 1936 soon after he purchased the Belvedere Land Company (BLC), continuing after World War II, and ran a large conduit under San Rafael Avenue changing the lagoon's natural inlet from under the drawbridge at Belvedere Cove to the Richardson Bay side. Using earth from Red Hill in Tiburon and a large knoll from the defunct Belvedere Golf Course, he formed new peninsulas of land so almost every parcel had water access.

His plan was innovative, a combination of 243 single family home sites and 30 rental duplexes on 68 acres of tranquil water – still land-locked but fed by the tides. Offering the first lots at \$5,000, sales were slow to take off. By 1950, however, lagoon parcels were selling for up to \$50,000. The first owners had BLC build their new homes or designed them themselves, adding more rooms as their families grew. Others hired new modern architects like Joseph Esherick, A. Quincy Jones, George Rockrise, or Harold Wolfand, building in a style we now called Mid-century Modern with open floor plans, floor to ceiling windows, and large decks and patios, bringing the outside in.

The waters of Belvedere Lagoon are owned jointly by the Belvedere Lagoon Property Owners Association which is responsible for operation and maintenance. As water levels vary with the seasons, a series of weirs and pumps were installed to raise and lower the levels so they don't overflow. Those weirs and pumps were updated and automated monitors and controls installed after the big storm of 1983 when tides swept over San Rafael Avenue and several homes flooded.

Most lagoon residents own small boats - sailboats, paddleboats, sculls, canoes, and kayaks. Harking back to the days of arks and houseboats, the first Lagoon Regatta Days were held in 1953, featuring a parade of decorated boats and costumed dock-to-dock dinners. Today, the Belvedere Sailing Society continues the tradition for 'Opening Day,' sponsoring Lido and Laser races on summer weekends.

Swimming season is from spring through fall and water treated to assure proper health standards. Since the lagoon is about eight feet at its deepest point, water temperatures are about 10-15 degrees warmer than the Bay. Belvedere Lagoon is also a haven for fish, river otters, and a host of sea birds. Located on the Pacific Coast Flyway, it's a regular stop-off for migratory ducks, cormorants and terns. A variety of gulls, egrets, pelicans, night herons and land birds live on the lagoon year-round. Like their human neighbors, they like being on the water or right next to it.

Please help the Landmarks Society to preserve our local history and keep it accessible to the community; visit our website at [www.landmarksociety.com](http://www.landmarksociety.com) or call 415-435-1853.

RAILROAD & FERRY  
DEPOT MUSEUM

CHINA CABIN

OLD ST. HILARY'S

ART & GARDEN  
CENTER

HISTORY  
COLLECTIONS