

## HOW BLACKIE'S PASTURE BECAME A PARK

By Susan Cluff &amp; Dave Goltz



A portrait of Blackie by Anna Jean Cole (1964).

Long before it became a park, the grassy marshland on Tiburon Boulevard near Trestle Glen along Richardson Bay was Blackie's Pasture. Blackie had been an Army cavalry horse in the Presidio before Anthony Connell (1888-1968), a retired commercial clam and fish seller, bought him in 1938 and put him in his field. There the sway-backed horse standing guard along the main road into town became a familiar sight, accepting carrots and sugar cubes from local children while Tiburon grew up around him. "I could have sold that land a dozen times," Connell told visitors in 1962. "But I like watching him out there. He looks pretty good yet."

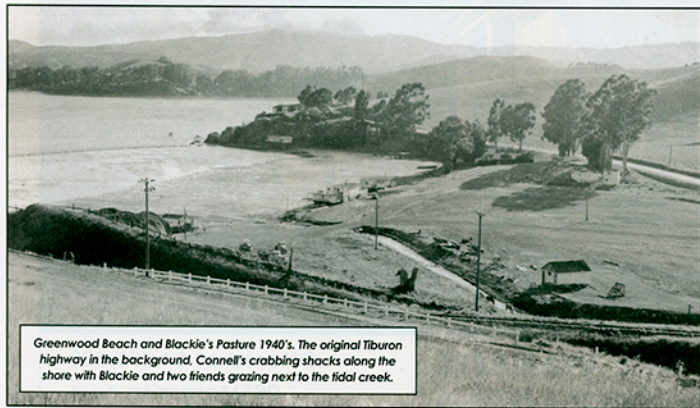
In 1966, 40-year-old Blackie died and was buried in the pasture. To remember him, local residents raised funds for a memorial made of local stone to be placed by his grave in a public ceremony. In 1968, the Northwestern Pacific Railway (NWP) demolished the trestle bridge and talks began at City Hall about rezoning the land there from agricultural to commercial. The best use, it was agreed, would be as a park or community center. The City then began negotiations to buy NWP's 11-acre strip from Mar West to the trestle mound where the Old Rail Trail ends today and the concept of a community waterfront park and multi-use path took shape.

In 1969, real estate developer and philanthropist Sam Shapero (1904-1973) founded the Tiburon Peninsula Foundation (TPF) to acquire and develop land and facilities for public use and preserve open space. He had already purchased a third of the land in an estate sale and offered to donate his piece of the property if the City could acquire the remaining Connell parcels. Working with TPF, the City finally closed the deal in 1975. Sam's significant contribution is commemorated with his picture on a plaque at the bridge over the tidal inlet to Blackie's Pasture.

The City commissioned a Master Plan for the new shoreline park that proposed putting sports courts and an auditorium near Blackie's grave. Like much of that plan, those features were never built. Very little on-site parking was installed by design, the idea was to stroll, walk or bike.

When the parking lot was expanded in 1981, residents complained it would only encourage more out-of-town visitors. In 1995, TPF raised funds to erect a life-size bronze statue of Blackie and to plant a native garden near the shoreline park entrance. Called "Harvey's Garden" for master gardener Harvey Rogers, a plaque there recognizes the role of civic-minded residents in developing and maintaining this much-loved park. "Blackie's Brigade," a group of gardening volunteers, come regularly to work in the garden and the Pasture.

The Landmarks Society is a community supported non-profit dedicated to preserving our local history and keeping it accessible for the community and visitors. Please join us - The Tradition Starts With You.



Greenwood Beach and Blackie's Pasture 1940's. The original Tiburon highway in the background. Connell's crabbing shacks along the shore with Blackie and two friends grazing next to the tidal creek.

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