



Marin history: The Highway 101 commute of years past

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Traffic, traffic, traffic! Those of us who have battled the north/south commute on Highway 101 know the frustration of clogged freeways and lines of cars on frontage roads. If you were driving the same road back in 1930, your commute would look more like that of the motorists in the photo.

This stretch of road is in what is now Corte Madera looking to the south toward Christmas Tree Hill on the right and the Tiburon Hills on the left. The large complex of white buildings in the background is the old Meadowsweet Dairy owned by Frank Keever at the time this photograph was taken. It would be sold to Borden's Dairy of San Rafael two years later.

Corte Madera, which means "chopped wood" in Spanish, supplied much of the timber to build the Presidio and other buildings in the early days of San Francisco. After the North Pacific Railroad laid tracks in 1875 and built a station near present-day Menke Park, families began building summer homes and permanent residences there. By 1930 the town had incorporated, established a volunteer fire department, featured a couple

of fine hotels and restaurants, and was a getaway haven for many San Francisco and East Bay families.

Much of the surrounding land was still Bay wetlands dotted with small islands east of the road and dairy ranches running west toward Mt. Tam. The old state highway was transformed over time from the dusty trail in the photograph to its present eight-lane configuration after completion of the Golden Gate Bridge and the increased development of Marin in the 1950s through the 1970s.

Though the north/south commute is no picnic, we are blessed while driving with views of the Marin hills and the wetlands of San Francisco Bay. And thanks to a 1935 County ordinance championed by Sepha Evers, cofounder of today's Marin Conservation League, that requires County approval of all signs within 500 feet of the roadway, our views are unimpeded by those annoying and distracting billboards that plague highways throughout the country.