



Marin history: The serenity and beauty of Chicken Point

Courtesy of Marin History Museum

Mount Tamalpais seen from "Chicken Point" in 1899.

By [Scott Fletcher](#) | Marin History Museum

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Chicken Point

A picture can be worth 1,000 words or sometimes leave us speechless. This lovely and serene image taken at sunset from Chicken Point, now Bayside Acres off San Pedro Road in San Rafael, is such a photograph. It was composed and photographed by one of the earliest female pioneer photographers, J.W. Carey. She had established herself

in the daguerreotype and ambrotype business with another female photographer, Amanda Genung, in Stockton in the 1850s and San Jose in the 1860s.

Chicken Point, according to a 1914 Marin County Tocsin article, was so named as the area's chief industry was "poultry raising." One of the first homes in the area, built by John McNear and his son Erskine in 1906 still stands at 121 Knight Drive. The McNears commissioned well-known Sonoma County architect Brainerd Jones to design the 10,000-square-foot home on a knoll overlooking what was then the family dairy.

A few years later Chicken Point was developed for homes and was renamed Bayside Acres. In the first decade of the 19th century, San Rafael resident W.T Ortman recalled renting a boat for 10 young couples on a moonlit night and beaching the launch at Chicken Point, where they were serenaded by one of their party signing from the cliff above. The boat then, "crossed the bay to Winehaven on the Contra Costa Shores of the East Bay, where we would wake up the caretaker of the winery and, sing and play music ... feasting and dancing until the sun came up."

Though San Pedro Road was paved in 1934, the Point and Bayside Acres remained relatively undeveloped through the 1930s and 1940s with the area being popular with locals for duck hunting and striped bass fishing. The large housing developments at Loch Lomond, Bayside Acres and Glenwood began to be built in the 1950s, and much of the land in the surrounding area was annexed to the City of San Rafael in 1955.

Homes were advertised from as low as \$16,500 for three bedrooms and two baths up to \$39,500 for four bedrooms and three baths. The first San Pedro School, built by the MNnear Brickyard in 1904 for families working the brickyard and dairy, closed in 1950 and students were bussed to San Rafael.

Several years later the present-day San Pedro School opened just east of Townes Hill. Further development in the area surrounding Chicken Point has continued, unabated, to the present day. We cannot return to the past but Carey's photograph allows us to pause for a moment and marvel at the beauty and tranquility that has attracted so many of us to call Marin County our home.