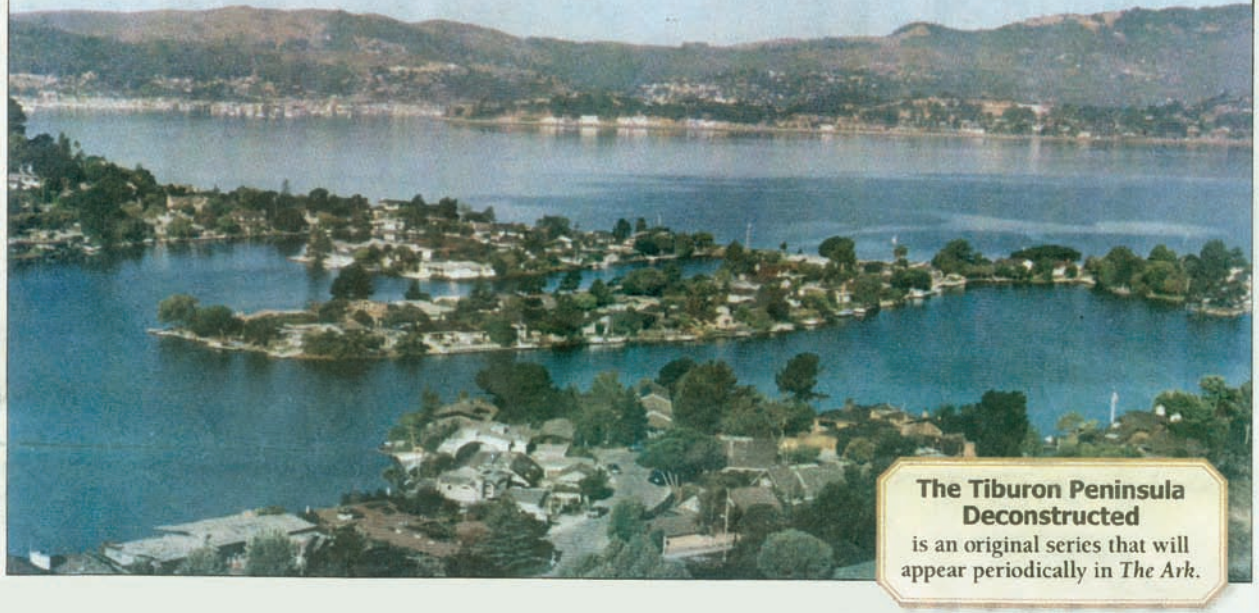




THE ARK



The Tiburon Peninsula Deconstructed — A Closer Look at the Communities 'Within' Our Community



The Tiburon Peninsula Deconstructed
is an original series that will appear periodically in *The Ark*.

BY SAMANTHA PARENT

Visitors to the Tiburon Peninsula typically describe the area as a beautiful waterfront community facing the San Francisco Bay.

With just under 10,000 residents combined, the towns of Tiburon and Belvedere boast a “village-like” atmosphere, with a quaint downtown, two yacht harbors, top rated public and private schools and an easy commute to San Francisco.

Hillside and hilltop views are plentiful, and there is no shortage of activity for the outdoors-minded – hiking along Ring Mountain Open Preserve, biking and walking along Blackie’s Pasture bike path, even windsurfing in Richardson Bay in the right season.

But to local residents, the Tiburon Peninsula is more than just a peaceful oasis six miles across the bay from San Francisco.

Tiburon and Belvedere are home to a number of distinct neighborhoods, each with its own character, lifestyle, landscape, and set of interests and concerns.

For this story, *The Ark* has decided to take a closer look at these neighborhoods. From the hilltops to the flats, from the backside of Paradise Drive to Old Tiburon, we have broken Tiburon and Belvedere into their smaller components to get a better sense of the communities *within our community* that make up this beautiful region that we call home.

The Areas We Are Profiling

To draw a clearer picture of the many neighborhoods that make up Tiburon and Belvedere, we have divided the Tiburon Peninsula into several regions – each of which will be profiled in this series of articles. The specific boundaries we have drawn are necessarily arbitrary, but we have tried to capture the unique “personality” of each neighborhood as embodied by the landscape and lifestyle of its residents.

About Belvedere...

We begin our series of neighborhood profiles with a closer look at Belvedere.

With a population of about 2,500, Belvedere is an exclusive community located on what used to be an island and the adjoining lagoon. It was originally populated in the late 1800s as a summer refuge for San Francisco’s wealthy. Today, Belvedere is considered to be one of the most desirable addresses in the Bay Area.

Besides its bayside location, Belvedere boasts gorgeous views of the Bay, San Francisco and surrounding headlands, the oldest yacht club in the Bay Area (The San Francisco Yacht Club) and some of the finest homes in the Bay Area.

There are only 1,037 homes in the Belvedere market, with home values ranging from \$1 million upward to a reported \$65 million. A significant segment of homes falls within the \$3-5 million range.

Although small to begin with, we have broken Belvedere into three main regions – the Lagoon, Belvedere Island and the half of Corinthian Island that falls within Belvedere city limits (the other half is in Tiburon).

Living Is Easy On The Belvedere Lagoon

For those not familiar with the Belvedere Lagoon, the Lagoon is actually private property surrounded by 232 private residences, 28 duplexes and the Belvedere Lagoon Property Owners' Association boatyard. Use of the Lagoon is restricted to members of the Property Owners' Association, their tenants and guests, and to members of the Belvedere Sailing Society during its functions.

The Lagoon covers approximately 66 acres, at an average depth of 4-6 feet. There is no public access to the water, and no boat access between the Lagoon and the Bay. Residents are grateful that motorized watercraft are not allowed on the Lagoon with the exception of the maintenance boats.

The Belvedere Lagoon is unique in that it constitutes a neighborhood that is centered around water. Since the water level is monitored, there is no tidal action, and the water temperature is considerably warmer than that of the Bay. Many residents actually swim in the lagoon on a regular basis and boating takes place year round.

According to long-time Belvedere resident and former council member John Pearson, "The water orientation of the Lagoon, as well as the physical proximity of the houses, helps promote a neighborhood feel."

Pearson, who has lived on the Lagoon for 14 years, explains that there are many events and activities that take place on the Lagoon year round which bring the community together.

"Opening day on the Lagoon is unique", says Pearson. "It usually takes place a week or two after Opening Day on the Bay, in early May. We (our family) used to always have a party. The Belvedere Sailing Society, which has a clubhouse down on the Lagoon, also has an opening night party. Many Lagoon residents have boats and kayaks, and there are a number of races during the summertime."

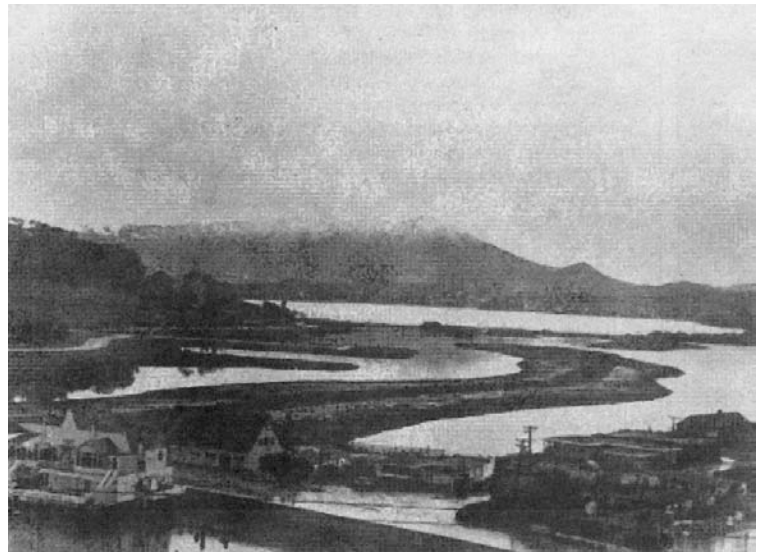
Belvedere celebrated its Centennial this past Labor Day (2003) with a town-wide Block Party. There were about 15 block parties all around Belvedere, with about 5 of these taking place around the Lagoon. While this is not an annual event, Pearson guesses the Block Party will be recurring due to the enthusiasm it generated.

According to Lagoon locals, the population on the Lagoon is very family-oriented. A number of residents are original homeowners from the 1950s, who actually built their houses on the available lots.

Jim and Emily Levorsen have lived on the Lagoon for a long time. According to Emily, their house was built before the Lagoon even existed.

"Our house was here before the Lagoon," says Levorsen. "It was a swamp area back then, as I remember. The land company made the lagoon area sometime after we moved here."

Levorsen adds that, despite small changes over the years, the Belvedere Lagoon has always maintained its quaint, residential quality.



Belvedere Lagoon 1948

Photo courtesy of the Landmark Society

"The Lagoon is a lot like all of Belvedere," explains Levorsen. "When we first moved here, there were a lot of young families. The population got older, but then a new influx of young families moved in. I believe that the Lagoon area will continue to be the lovely residential area that it always has been. Everybody who lives here seems to be happy to be here and wishes to stay."

Other long-time Lagoon residents agree that life on the Lagoon is idyllic. Ed Still and his wife, Janice, have lived on the Lagoon since 1974.

"We love it here," says Mr. Still. "It is a unique place to live. People are surprised when they come into our house, how inviting the water is. We sail all the time, and the Belvedere Sailing Society hosts several parties throughout the year."

The only significant change that Mr. Still has seen on the Lagoon in recent years is an influx of younger, upwardly mobile families moving into the neighborhood.

"It's great," says Mr. Still, "but I don't know how they can afford it. We bought our house in 1976 for \$121,000." Things have gotten a lot more expensive since then.

Another long-time homeowner, Joanne Cook, moved here 32 years ago and raised three children on the Lagoon. She was living in Cleveland, Ohio, at the time and read about the Belvedere Lagoon in a magazine. She put the article on her refrigerator and told her husband, "This is where we are going to live." Her husband changed law firms soon after and worked as partner for a firm in San Francisco.

"Living here (on the Lagoon) is like being on vacation full-time," claims Cook.

When asked about issues or concerns, most homeowners on the Lagoon had no complaints. A few mentioned the issue of overbuilding since houses are so close together. But according to most, the planning commission is doing a good job keeping home improvements in line.

Says Pearson, who also has served on the planning commission, "99 percent of what's being done today on the Lagoon are vast improvements."

Next installment: *Belvedere and Corinthian Island*