

Tiburon History – Source [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiburon,\\_California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiburon,_California)

Earliest human habitation of the local area was by [Native American](#) people, who have left rock carvings on [Ring Mountain](#).

The first post office in Tiburon opened in 1884. Tiburon incorporated in 1964.<sup>[4]</sup>

Tiburon has a Town Historian, Branwell Fanning. Much of the modern history material below is drawn from his "Brief History of Tiburon", published in the Town of Tiburon's General Plan.<sup>[5]</sup>

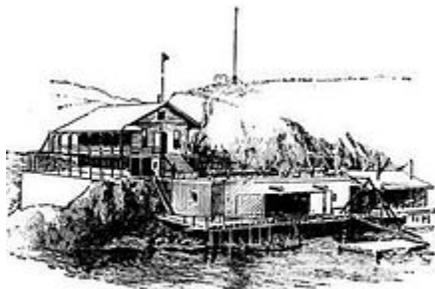
## 1775–1882

*Tiburón* means "shark" in [Spanish](#). Whether Lt. [Juan Manuel de Ayala](#) saw a number of sharks near where he anchored the San Carlos in August 1775, off what is now [Angel Island](#), or whether the tree-covered [Tiburon Peninsula](#) looked like a shark we may never know. He named the land Punta del Tiburon, or Shark Point. The [Coast Miwok](#) Indians had lived here for thousands of years, but there is no clear concept of what they called the [peninsula](#).

[John Reed](#), from Dublin, received a provisional grant for much of Southern Marin, including the Tiburon Peninsula, from the [Mexican](#) authorities in 1831, and was formally granted the [Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio](#) in 1834. Reed married Hilaria Sanchez, daughter of the *commandante* of the San Francisco Presidio in 1836. The Reed name is preserved on streets, subdivisions, and the local school district. Various forms of Hilaria's name, and that of her granddaughter Hilarita Reed, are found on streets, a housing development, and the Catholic Church.

Hilarita married Dr. [Benjamin Lyford](#), who became the first land developer with his Lyford's Hygeia, now Old Tiburon. The [Benjamin and Hilarita Lyford House](#), formerly located on their [dairy farm](#) on [Strawberry Point](#), is now a feature of the Audubon Society's Western Headquarters and Sanctuary on Greenwood Beach Road.

## Tiburon's industrial era



CORINTHIAN YACHT CLUB HOUSE.  
STATION—TIBURON, MARION CO., CAL.



Corinthian Yacht Club House c 1894 Tiburon, California



Corinthian Yacht Club Tiburon



The former railroad grade now forms part of the [San Francisco Bay Trail](#), used by hikers and cyclists.

Life changed little in the 40 years between the death of John Reed in 1842 and the arrival of Peter Donahue in 1882. Donahue brought with him the [San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad](#) (later the [Northwestern Pacific Railroad](#)). He made a deal with the Reed family for a right-of-way, blasted out the rock at Point Tiburon, and built a railroad terminal to connect with [ferries of San Francisco Bay](#). The passenger ferries took commuters and automobiles to San Francisco and Sausalito, while [barges](#) carried loaded freight cars to San Francisco and Richmond.

Wildflowers surround [Old St. Hilary's](#), Tiburon's iconic hillside landmark, which was originally a mission church named for St. Hilaire, Bishop of Poitiers. The heirs of John Reed—who held title to El Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio, the Mexican land grant that included the Tiburon Peninsula—deeded the one-quarter acre site for \$2.00 to the [Archdiocese of San Francisco](#), which built the church as a place of worship for local railroad workers in 1888. The church was deconsecrated to make way for a new, [larger](#)

[one](#) and was headed for destruction until several individuals intent on preserving local history established the [Landmarks Society](#) and purchased the site and building in 1959. It has served as a schoolroom and town meeting hall and is now a popular setting for weddings, concerts and other memorable events.

The last railroad operated passenger [ferry](#) left Tiburon in 1941, but the passenger and freight trains ran until 1967. Passenger ferry service was resumed in the 1960s when Harbor Carriers utilized sightseeing boats in the early morning and evening hours. In the 1970s the railroad tore up the tracks, plugged the tunnels, removed the trestle over Trestle Glen, and demolished the railroad ferry pier. The railroad right-of-way was purchased by the City of Tiburon and is now the waterfront Multi-Use Path. After years of hearings and studies, the former railroad yards became the Point Tiburon housing and commercial project.

During its heyday the railroad-ferry service brought many other industries to Tiburon. Codfish canneries sprouted along the bay shore to can fish brought down from Alaska. Ship dismantlers broke up many obsolete ocean-going vessels. In 1904, the Navy established a huge coaling station on the east shore of the peninsula on the site of one of the old fish canneries. Brick kilns were built and several powder plants opened, and oyster beds developed in the shallow waters of the bay. The rail yards were fully equipped to not only repair and service trains but to build passenger and freight cars and locomotives.

Several of the largest [San Francisco Bay](#) ferries were built in the Tiburon yards. The Navy coaling station has played a prominent part in the history of both Tiburon and Bay Area at large. [Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet](#) was refueled there on its famous round-the-world cruise. Coaling service ended in 1931 and the [California Maritime Academy](#) moved in to train officers for the merchant fleet. Because the large cranes left over from the coaling operations were still operational, the company spinning the cables for the [Golden Gate Bridge](#) set up shop.

## **World War II**

As [World War II](#) loomed, the coaling station site was transformed into the [United States Navy Net Depot Tiburon](#).<sup>[6]</sup> This wartime facility was used for the manufacture and service of huge [nets](#) to stop enemy torpedoes and submarines from entering San Francisco Bay. Later, the [U.S. Bureau of Mines](#) and the [U.S. Bureau of Fisheries](#) established research facilities on the site and the [Coast Guard](#)'s icebreakers made this their summer home. It is now the [Romberg Tiburon Center for Environmental Studies](#)<sup>[7]</sup> operated by [San Francisco State University](#).

With all the seamen, sailors, railroad workers, cannery employees, and local dairymen in Tiburon, the taverns and other attractions of Main Street were very popular on Saturday night. Prohibition did not interrupt Main Street activities as the railroad workers were able to signal the Tiburon depot as soon as any revenue men boarded a train or ferry headed for town. By the time they got to Tiburon, prayer meetings were being held in the taverns. The volunteer fire department organized highly spirited baseball games, and the Corinthian Yacht Club was in full swing, so Main Street was not the only activity center.

[World War II](#) brought more people to Tiburon as the Navy built housing for NetDepot workers on the site of the present Hilarita Housing, for sailors from submarines at an annex to the Net Depot (now Paradise Beach County Park). Real estate development did not get under way in any meaningful form until after the end of the war. The descendants of the Reed family still controlled most of the land that was used for cattle ranching. Small areas of filled land were sold off to create the Bel Aire and Belveron Gardens subdivisions. The Little Reed Ranch was sold and Hawthorne Terrace, Del Mar, and Reed Heights subdivisions were well under way by the time the County finally began preparing a Master Plan for the Tiburon Peninsula.

After several years of public hearings and discussions with the primary landowners a Master Plan was finally completed in 1956. It had something for everyone: freeways on both sides of the peninsula, a four lane "ridge route" down the center of the peninsula (with a high-level bridge over Trestle Glen Boulevard), a shopping center on the crest of Ring Mountain, and a bridge to [San Francisco](#) (via [Angel Island](#) and [Alcatraz](#)) off the end. A land-use density of two homes to the acre, plus areas zoned for apartments and duplexes, would have permitted 50,000 to 60,000 people to live in Tiburon.

### **City incorporation and growth**



Within the Tiburon town limits, the trail on the former railroad right of way passes through [Richardson Bay Park](#) and next to the Audubon Society's Richardson Bay Sanctuary.

There had been numerous attempts to incorporate a City of Tiburon over the years, but they had all failed to come to a vote due to the opposition of the large land owners. The only semblance of local land use input came from the Tiburon Peninsula Coordinating Council (TPCC). This was made up of representatives of each of the home owners associations; the school, fire and sanitary districts; and the City of Belvedere. In 1963, after a number of adverse rulings by County planners regarding development

on the Tiburon Peninsula, the leaders of the TPCC decided that another attempt to incorporate was justified. A separate incorporation committee was established and work began. The main issues were: revision of the 1956 Master Plan, improved police services, opposition to the bridge to San Francisco, preservation of open space, and a desire for responsive local government.

One of the first challenges to be decided was just what properties were to be included in the incorporated area. The mapping committee started with the Tiburon Fire Protection District map as a base. The properties of large land owners who had been able to frustrate previous attempts were eliminated from the map. Certain areas, such as the Reedlands and part of Belveron Gardens, which were outside the Tiburon Fire District, but which wanted to be in the new city, were added. Angel Island, also outside the fire district boundary, was more controversial. Most did not see any value to having it within the city limits, as it was a state park. The counter argument was that it was "there", and we wanted a say in whatever future development might be planned. The County Boundary Commission (later Marin Local Agency Formation Commission, or LAFCO), at the time made up of the members of the Board of Supervisors, wanted it out of the new city because of potential sales tax revenues.

They finally yielded to arguments put forth by the incorporation committee, and let it remain within the new city limits. In March 1964 an election was held to create the Town of Tiburon, and on June 23, 1964, the incorporation was final and a Town Council seated, and mayor elected.

A city manager was hired and a contract for police services was made with the county sheriff. A Planning Commission was established and commissioners appointed. Offices at 80 Main Street were rented. To help plan for the future the Tiburon Advisory Committee was appointed, consisting of citizens who had been active in community affairs. Their report, issued in 1965, outlined goals in land use, recreation, traffic, and "image".

In 1966, at the first election after incorporation, three of the incumbents were replaced. Over the next several years, the new City Council strengthened the Planning Commission and divided it further into Boards of Design Review and Adjustments. They completed a new Master Plan and General Plan for the peninsula and new zoning ordinances to implement the plans. They also created a parks and recreation commission. Special ordinances to protect trees and to protect views were created. Property values were rising faster than funds could be accumulated, so bonds were issued and several hundred acres of open space were acquired. Several hundred additional acres were purchased by the Nature Conservancy to permanently protect the ridgelines, and the City purchased additional land from the Navy. The railroad right-of-way, almost 2.5 miles (4.0 km) of frontage on Richardson Bay, was acquired for a bicycle path.

One of the most difficult decisions involved [traffic planning](#). After numerous public hearings it was finally decided that [Tiburon Boulevard](#) would remain a two-lane road east of Trestle Glen Blvd. Stop lights and turnouts were scheduled east of that point and eventually built. The four-lane bypass section from [Highway 101](#) to Blackie's Pasture (the old Tiburon Boulevard became Greenwood Beach Road) was completed in 1966. The [California Department of Transportation](#) (Caltrans) had anticipated extending the four lanes downtown, so the fill created during this project was placed in the Bay east of Blackie's

Pasture, and after the City did some land swapping with Caltrans, became McKegney Green and the park South of the Knoll Park. Blackie's Pasture property was also acquired and became part of the series of waterfront parks and paths known as the Richardson Bay Lineal Park.

LAFCO determined that Tiburon's sphere of influence would extend to Highway 101. Annexation of the rest of the peninsula was attempted but never successful due to opposition in [Strawberry](#). Eventually, those areas that wished to be within the city limits were annexed, and the city grew westward to include the Reedland Woods, Bel Aire, Tiburon Crest and Cypress Hollow subdivisions.

### **After 1997**

The completion of the Point Tiburon development in the former railroad yards in 1985 signaled a change in the population mix and needs of the area. In 1997 a new Town Hall was opened with a new [Belvedere-Tiburon Library](#) next door. A new police station followed in 2000.

Following a large and successful Millennium Party the Town has pursued a policy to revitalize Main Street and the rest of downtown Tiburon. Main Street was reconstructed to make it and the shops and restaurants handicapped accessible without ruining its quaint charm. The Allan Thompson Walkway along the water side of Main Street was completely rebuilt. In the summer of 2004 a series of "Friday Nights on Main Street" community parties was inaugurated. Main Street was closed to automobile traffic on Friday nights during the summer and the restaurants created special menus for the occasion. Tables in the street in front of each restaurant added to the festivities. As of 2009, the festival continues.

In November 2006, a commissioned fountain with a nautically-themed sculpture titled "Coming About" was at the entrance to Main Street was formally dedicated. About half of the \$500,000 cost of the sculpture was donated by the Zelinsky family, longtime owners of many commercial properties in Tiburon. The sculpture was designed by Jeffery Reed and Jennifer Madden.

### **Development**



Aerial view of the Tiburon peninsula

Controversies surrounding development are a significant public policy issues facing the Town; this condition has endured for at least three decades. [\[8\]](#)

At the lowest level, any new construction or exterior renovation, commercial or residential, must be approved by the Design Review Board, which often applies stringent criteria to avoid "eyesores" and preserve neighbors' views.<sup>[9]</sup>

More significantly, there remain several large tracts of undeveloped land, virtually all of which have owners who desire to build multiple residences on these properties. Many of these properties, while located on the Tiburon Peninsula, are outside of town boundaries. However, under a LAFCO policy, any urbanization of these lands would result in their being annexed by the Town, since it is the Town that would provide needed services. Hence it is the town planning commission and ultimately the Town Council that determines the extent that these lands can be developed.<sup>[10][11]</sup> Major tracts of land currently in various stages of planning or permitting include the Martha Property, Easton Point and Tiburon Glen. The permitting processes in all cases are lengthy and contentious, pitting developers against active and organized residents seeking to preserve the open space and quasi-rural character of the area and avoid the kind of traffic seen by other Bay Area communities. Particularly active in opposing development is the Tiburon Last Chance Committee. No development has yet begun on any of these open tracts.

The Martha Property and Easton Point, the largest of the undeveloped lands, are particularly contested issues, with court battles dating back to 1975.<sup>[12]</sup> Historically the [Ring Mountain](#) property was an area of contest, especially due to the high [biodiversity](#) and presence of [rare](#) and [endangered species](#).

In 2002 residents in a referendum narrowly defeated a proposed rule that would have prohibited much of the development on open tracts of land by, among other things, banning development near ridgelines.<sup>[13]</sup> Among the arguments against this proposal were that it would subject the town to costly lawsuits by developers claiming their economic rights had been unjustly impaired.

A 2006 controversy concerned the expansion plans of the [Kol Shofar Synagogue](#). These were opposed by a number of neighbors, principally over the size of a new multi-purpose room and the traffic and noise impact of a proposed 27 additional events with up to 250 persons. The Tiburon Planning Commission in the summer of 2006 rejected the expansion plans, claiming that Kol Shofar refused to engage in compromise discussions. This brought the issue to the Tiburon Town Council. In October 2006, the dispute took on broader significance when Kol Shofar proponents raised issues of religious freedom. Specifically, they claimed that the federal [Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act](#) (RLUIPA), which prohibits "substantial burdens" on the exercise of religion by government regulations, would be violated if the Town prohibited their expansion plans. The synagogue retained [The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty](#) which threatened litigation depending on the outcome.<sup>[14]</sup> The Tiburon City Council attempted to resolve the issue late in the 2006 by permitting a somewhat reduced expansion with restrictions on event sizes and hours and provisions to mitigate the parking, noise and traffic impacts. However a group of neighbors sued both the town and the synagogue in March, 2007, alleging environmental and land-use violations.<sup>[15]</sup> In 2008, a Marin Superior Court judge ruled in favor of the expansion, and the Coalition filed an appeal with the 1st District Court of Appeal.<sup>[16]</sup> The appeal was ultimately dropped later that same year, and Kol Shofar was able to proceed, agreeing not to seek repayment of court costs.<sup>[17]</sup> Kol Shofar's new space opened on August 29, 2010.

## Geography and environment



View of Tiburon from Beach Road

Tiburon is located at [37°52′25″N 122°27′24″W](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

According to the [United States Census Bureau](#), the town has a total area of 13.2 square miles (34 km<sup>2</sup>). 4.4 square miles (11 km<sup>2</sup>) of it is land and 8.7 square miles (23 km<sup>2</sup>) of it (66.27%) is water, much in the form of Richardson Bay.

The [serpentine soils](#) of [Ring Mountain](#) and the Tiburon Hills are host to a unique [plant community](#), including several [endemic](#) or near-endemic species, notably, the [Tiburon mariposa lily](#), the [Tiburon indian paintbrush](#), and the [Tiburon jewelflower](#), as well as a number of other [rare](#) and [endangered species](#).<sup>[18]</sup> Ring Mountain is also a significant location of [Native American](#) prehistoric sites, notably [rock carvings](#).<sup>[19]</sup>

## Climate

Tiburon experiences a [Mediterranean climate](#) ([Köppen climate classification](#) *Csb*).