



**The Early History of Bolinas**  
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Although the name Bolinas is somewhat lost in history, most historians attribute its origin to a similar sounding name given to the land by the Coast Miwok tribes who lived in the area. During the Mexican land-grant era, much of what is now the Olema Valley was part of a large ranch given to Rafael Garcia, a soldier at Mission San Rafael. Garcia moved a few miles north establishing Rancho Tomales y Baulines and gave Rancho Las Baulines to his brother-in-law, Gregorio Briones. Within a few years both ranches were grazing thousands of heads of cattle and hundreds of horses.

After the Mexican-American War and Bear Flag Revolt of 1846-47, many of the land-grant ranches were broken up and passed to newly empowered American settlers through both legal and nefarious means. When the Gold Rush of 1849 brought thousands of Americans to San Francisco, Marin became the primary source of timber and raw materials supplying the City. Vast tracts of redwood and fir were forested along the coast and the town of Bolinas became the main port for shipping goods to San Francisco. In the early 1850s, the Bolinas township had over half of Marin's population. At the same time many Swiss and Portuguese immigrants began operating dairies in Marin that shipped dairy products to the City from the ports of both Tomales and Bolinas. By the 1880s, Bolinas had a ship-building yard and as many as fifteen ships a day were plying trade between the town and San Francisco. There were a number of hotels and saloons built to serve the thirsty, hard-working crews and dock workers of which the Del Mar and Flagstaff hotels were most prominent. One of the taverns, the Schooner Saloon still survives today as Smiley's in downtown Bolinas. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, increasing siltation into the Bolinas lagoon from logging and cattle

grazing along with the completion of the stage route over the Bolinas Ridge effectively ended the shipping and transport economy of the town.

At the same time, Marin was fast becoming the vacation and camping playground for the greater Bay Area and the towns of Bolinas and Willow Camp (Stinson Beach) were two of the more popular destinations. When the photograph above was taken in 1900, newspaper accounts of notable individuals and families traveling to Bolinas were almost a daily occurrence, with many staying for the entire summer. In February the schooner, Nettie Lowe, foundered in a storm off the lagoon and was lost, though all crew members made it to shore unharmed. In the spring of the year, a short-lived oil-boom and rush for mineral rights began on the nearby Gargoli ranch and Bolinas lagoon tidelands. In June, the Bay City Wheelman bicycle club sponsored a race from San Rafael to Bolinas. The year ended in style for Bolinas with a Christmas celebration and Dance at Druid's Hall, with everyone enjoying the fine music of Professor Dan Smith's Orchestra.

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