

Remembering the Waymans

By Fran Cappelletti

A few years ago, the old arbor at the entrance to Ross Common was removed. In a state of disrepair, there was no question that it had to go. Attached to the arbor was a plaque honoring Rose and Willard Wayman. The reason for this honor was a mystery. Perhaps for that deteriorated arbor? Or something much more.



In fact, there was a local effort in 1965 to improve the Town Common. Early on, the town received a letter from Mrs. Wayman, enthusiastically supporting the cause and donating 300 shares of Standard Oil of California, today's Chevron, worth nearly \$21,000 at the time. This would easily surpass 100,000 of today's dollars. Many local families, merchants and organizations also contributed to the cause, but there is no doubt that the early and significant involvement of Mrs. Wayman inspired others to act.

Local histories do not mention the Waymans, but they led an active and productive life in the Bay Area for decades. Willard worked in the insurance industry in San Francisco from the 1890's to the 1940's. This was an important time for San Francisco as the city grew, suffered the great earthquake and fires of 1906 and rose again. He also spent time in Marin County, living at least part of the time in Belvedere, where he was involved in the famous Nights in Venice celebrations of 1894 and 1895. He was one of many who signed the 1896 petition to incorporate that community. That same year he married Rosette Faull, a native San Franciscan. She attended Mills College, graduating in 1893. Despite intentions to stay in Belvedere, the Waymans were living in San Francisco by 1897. Yet their brief stay in Marin County must have left a positive impression as they would return for a very long time.



*Rose Faull Wayman
Graduation Photo, 1893,
Courtesy of Mills College*



*Willard Wayman, from
Men Who Made San
Francisco, 1912*

By 1912 the Waymans lived in Ross at 38 Fernhill, across from today's Branson School. After Willard passed away in 1954, Rose continued to live in Ross until the mid-1960's before moving to San Francisco. One of her most significant contributions was to leave her house and property to The Branson School. At the time, Branson was in great need, and the sale of the property did much to maintain and improve the school. With just a few owners since that time, the house and grounds eventually sold for several million dollars and a new home replaced the old.

Even in their early years, they made many contributions to the community. In 1915, Willard served on the Board of Directors of the Marin County Humane Society. They were close friends with Ethel Tompkins, the founder. He later served on the Ross Town Council in the 1940's, dealing with issues from problematic bus stops to World War II civil defense preparations. Rose was active in many charitable activities. She was president of the Pioneer Kindergarten Society in 1913, volunteered at a fund raiser for the Marin County Red Cross in 1917, and hosted a benefit for St. Johns Church in 1920. She served on the Mills College Board of Trustees from 1927 through 1933, making significant contributions to the Art Museum and building funds. She and many of her close relatives attended and served Mills with distinction. Her father, John Faull, was a mining engineer from England who made his fortune in mining in Amador County.

After Willard's death, Rose donated a treasured ball gown worn by his grandmother, Margaret Ormsby Wayman, to the Nevada State Museum. The Ormsby and Wayman families played important roles as settlers in early Nevada, with timely investments in real estate and mining interests in and around the Comstock Lode. To this day, the gown is considered one of finest surviving specimens of 1860's clothing, a priceless artifact.

Despite all their contributions, the one thing they did not leave was children, so no direct descendants remain. What does remain is a plaque without a home. Perhaps it can return to the Common to honor their lasting contributions to Ross and the Bay Area.

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