

# The Novato Historian

The Quarterly Publication of the Novato Historical Guild, the Novato History Museum, and the Hamilton Field History Museum



## Preserving Novato's History Feature Section

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## Novato's 4-H Club Rooms

by Mike Read



*Gertrude Lane founded the Novato 4-H Club in 1927. Miss Lane taught all grades in the one-room Burdell School for many years. The school was located*

*where Stafford Lake is today. Miss Lane's home was on McClay Road.*



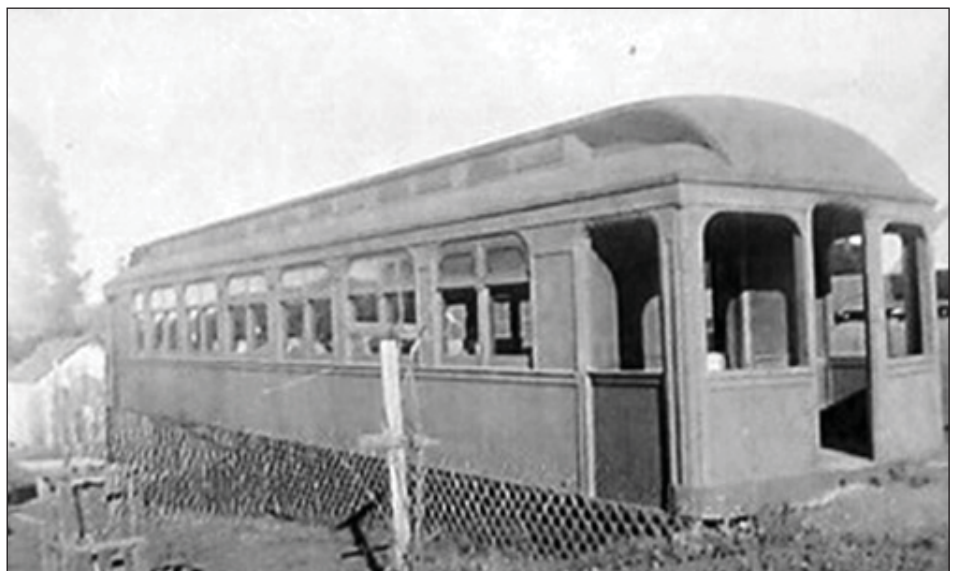
4H club car and the Presbyterian Church, just before Trevitt Hall was built, in 1950. on DeLong Avenue, circa 1946

### Gertrude Lane 4H Newsletter

July 1933

About four years ago our Novato 4-H club found itself very much in need of a club room. Up to that time we had been using the school auditorium as a meeting place and it had served the purpose admirably. This need of a room of our own came with the organizing of a clothing group in connection with the club. The acquisition of sewing machines and other equipment complicated matters in using the school.

So we began looking about for available quarters to be used rent free. A place was found above one of the grocery stores; just a section partitioned off from the rest of the floor space by an eight foot wall and rather poorly lighted. However, having secured this space through the good will of the renter, we proceeded to make it more habitable.



4H clubhouse railroad car which was saved from the Tiburon railroad yards.

## Novato's 4-H Club Rooms

A second window, donated by the local lumber yard and installed by a club father, gave us the necessary light for sewing. Plenty of green and white paint on walls, tables and chairs freshened up the interior. We were very proud of the result, and happy to have a place in which to keep our equipment and to hold meetings of the project groups. General meeting of the entire club were held in the school auditorium as before, and still are at the present time.

It was in this room that our first Achievement Day was held, a very simple affair, just our own little group participating.

For nearly two years this was our headquarters. Then we were given a more comfortable, attractive room on the ground floor in the rear of the telephone building. Here we worked happily for more than a year. Then we began to feel a need for more space. The increased membership in the clothing group had created a problem.

To solve it we looked to house one section of the group. A vacant store across the way was secured, cleaned up, two of the machines moved across and everything going beautifully when the store was rented! So we moved back again to the crowded club room.



Enroute along Grant Avenue - 1933

Another vacant store was found whose owner was willing that we use it until it rented. Again we set to work and tidied this up, but as the curtains were being hung, word came that this place had been rented. So we gave up the idea of using a vacant store and settled down to watchful waiting.

Then one day in discussing the problem, one of our clothing club leaders remarked, "If we just had some place of our own, even it were only an old car, or a shack of some sort." From this chance remark, scarcely heeded at the time, came the inspiration of our present Club House.

In later deliberations this idea of getting a car was taken up seriously. Our County Farm Advisor, Mr. Boissevain, was consulted and he not only liked the idea but offered to write



February 19, 1933, at the Novato train station.

to Mr. Maggard, president of the N.W.P. in regard to it.

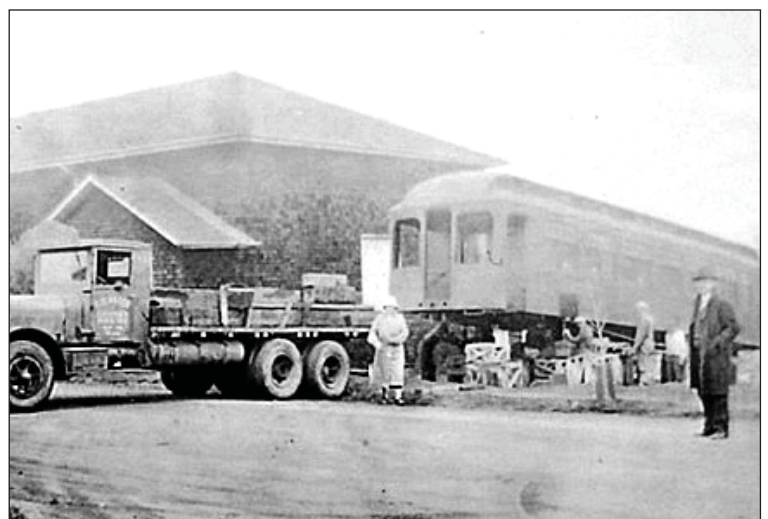
Immediately another problem presented itself. Where could we put the car in case we should get it? It needed to be centrally located, but where to get a lot, and who would be willing to let us use it?

Then another inspiration! Novato has a Community House situated on its own lot. At the rear was an unoccupied space sufficiently large to accommodate our hoped-for Club Car.

At once Rev. Chas. Christensen, president of the Community Council, and never-failing helper in all worthwhile undertakings, was presented with the big idea. It appealed to him immediately and we had his assurance that we might have the space we coveted.

Then came Mr. Boissevain with the much-looked for letter from Mr. Maggard granting our request for a car, and telling us to go to the Tiburon yards and make our own selection of a passenger coach. It would be delivered to us at Novato free of charge.

This was good news! No time was lost in getting there, gave us a free hand along "condemned row" and we selected or present club home.



Arrival at destination. Rev. Christensen at right side of picture.



The next problem was to get this car, huge, unwieldy, weighting seventeen tons, to its final destination on the Community House lot four blocks from the railroad. This might have proved our Waterloo but for Mr. Christensen again, and the Novato Chamber of Commerce which included the expense of moving our car with that of two others obtained for the itinerant camp.

It was a great day for the 4-H Club when this leviathan of a car moved slowly along the main street of town to its present location. We held our breath as it was jacked up and lowered on its foundation. But, joy of joys, everything worked perfectly and the deed was done.

Work days followed, in which by volunteer labor, the outside was repainted a dark ivy green, the wicker seats removed from on entire side to make room for sewing machines and cutting table, and every other seat removed on the opposite side. After all had been thoroughly scrubbed, the floor was freshly painted in soft buckskin as was the ironwork of the seats. The rear platform has been enclosed to make a storeroom. As the car stands on a slight slope, lattice work was constructed to conceal the space beneath and so to improve the appearance.

With the abundance of light and ventilation, the shades to draw against too bright sunlight and the comfortable seats, it makes an ideal club room, and more spacious than one might imagine.



Enroute along Grant Avenue

Our club members are enthusiastic over it. It is their own, and the pride of possession has added greatly to the morale of the club.

There is much to be done to improve the grounds and to partially conceal the bulk of the car itself. But in another year we hope our Club House will be considered an attractive, interesting addition to the community.

**March 1959 - A group of mariners are in the process of tearing down the old electric street car behind Trevitt Hall and offering its remains as firewood. The old relic was once donated to the Rev. Charles Christensen by the Northwestern Pacific Railroad and was first used as a 4-H Club meeting place and later as a Sunday School classroom. The souvenir car was built in St. Louis and seated 66 passengers. It used to run on the first electric line operated by a third rail in California between San Rafael and Sausalito. The electrified North State Railroad was later controlled by the NWP. The 'juice' (electric) cars disappeared about in 1941 when the gasoline age took over.**







June McClure, former Marin County Home Advisor, talking with club members.



Moving in day to new 4H club car



1935 4H club group picture



4H meeting at club car



4H club car cleaning crew



Final coat of paint is applied and first attempt at beautifying 4H club car.