



a view from the
WEST POINT INN

The Newsletter for the West Point Inn Association and Friends

March 2023 • Issue 53

Mission Statement:

The West Point Inn Association exists to preserve, maintain, operate and educate the public about the significance of the historic West Point Inn.

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The newsletter is published with funds provided in memory of Lifetime Member, Ernest E. Emig, and Honorary Member, Harold Allen Atkinson.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Alyssa Jorgensen

Greetings West Point Inn Members!

I am honored to have been elected by the Board of Directors to be the Association's President for this year. My husband, Rye and I became members in 2009. I have served on the Board of Directors since 2020, when I took over for Wayne Koide. This is my fourth year on the Board and the final year of my elected term. I consider it a privilege to be able to serve you and hope to see many of you at the Spring Member's Meeting on April 23rd!

I'd like to thank Nancy Fox and Michael Jefferies who completed their Board terms in January. They have both held different roles over the years and will continue to serve as Committee Chairs. They both deserve a hefty amount of thanks for their past and future service.

I'd especially like to acknowledge my predecessor, Don Keeley, who served as a Board Member for three years and as President for 2021 and 2022. Don did an incredible job steering us out of the "COVID Years" and led the reopening of the Inn to 100% capacity last year. He has been instrumental during lease negotiations with MMWD and by authorizing a comprehensive 30-year study of the Inn's buildings and systems. The Association is overall in great shape thanks to Don.

Congratulations to Patti Schmidt who has been elected Vice President, and to Craig Hill, Melanie Leavitt-Cantarutti, and Jim Hill who joined the Board in January. Mark Northcross and Joss Hanna will continue as Treasurer and Secretary, respectively. The Association can be confident that it is being led by a capable, compassionate, and competent Board of Directors who will listen and strive to make the best decisions possible for the Inn and its members. [Please read more about our three newest Board members in this issue of the newsletter]

During 2022 the Board was focused on reviving a robust schedule of events, negotiating an expiring 25 year lease with MMWD, developing a capital fundraising plan, and tackling some of the site and building improvements identified in the 30-year study. For the most part, our goals were met. The Inn fully reopened to guests in February of last year, 4,500 plates of pancakes were served at six Pancake Breakfasts led by

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Pancake Chair Lin Johanson, 1000+ volunteer hours were logged at 11 Work Parties led by Work Party Co-Chairs Joanne Deveraux and Donald Delave, and the Association is within weeks of finalizing the new lease agreement with MMWD thanks to the Lease Negotiation Committee members Joss Hanna, Mark Northcross, and Don Keeley. Overnight use fees are at an all time high, and cash reserves are \$100,000 over prior year. To say that the WPIA Board, Committee Chairs, Innkeepers, Reservationists, and 600 members have been busy... is an understatement!

The plans laid last year will continue through 2023 with the addition of a few more initiatives. Once the lease is secure, the Development Committee led by Board Member Pete Karlen, will launch the first phase of a multi-level capital campaign. Our Building & Grounds Committee, led by Michael Jefferies, will continue to work on fixing leaks, replacing and upgrading appliances, enhancing the solar system, reorganizing storage areas, and executing various small construction projects. He is currently readying the Inn for the 2023 Pancake season with multiple tasks underway. Other goals for 2023 include updating HR and Employee files, reviewing Operations and Pancake Manuals, and tackling a few of the larger site improvements identified in the 30-year study.

As always, a special note of gratitude to our beloved Innkeepers: Bob, David, Janice, Jim, John, Karl, Pat, & Rosanna. We truly appreciate all the work that you do to keep the Inn healthy and sparkling. The incredibly warm and welcoming experience that you create at the Inn is unmatched.

Finally, a bit about me. I was born in Kansas City, Kansas and lived there until I left to study engineering at the University of Missouri-Columbia. After graduation in December 2001, and unable to find a job due to the post September 11th economy, I embarked on a cross-country road trip where I found myself in the middle of the desert near Escalante, Utah. This is where I met my husband Rye, who was rehabilitating from a ski accident and needing to leave Tahoe behind. After returning home and dating long distance for a year, I moved to San Rafael so that we could be together. I began working for Peet's Coffee & Tea, opening stores in Marin & Sonoma Counties. In total, I worked at Peet's for close to 10 years. Rye and I were married and took time off to go on an extended honeymoon. We traveled to Southeast Asia, China, Mongolia, Russia, Europe, Mexico, Canada, and many of the United States, including Alaska over the span of 1 ½ years.

We became members of the WPIA in 2009 after stumbling upon a Work Party when trying to check-out of our cabin the next morning. At that time, the Association was looking for new members and only one Work Party was needed to apply. The volunteers were very persuasive and friendly, who could say no! In 2011, our daughter Wren was born. That same year we started Jorgensen Engineering, a structural engineering consulting firm, based in Marin. Our son Cyrus was born in 2012 and suddenly our 1,000 sqft apartment began to feel a bit cramped. In 2014, we bought a two acre property in West Petaluma and have called it home for more than eight years.

I adore the West Point Inn and take every opportunity to sing its praises. It is a place to treasure. It has been so many things to me. At times it can be immersive and romantic, at others boisterous and busy, but with each visit the Inn offers me a new experience that is singular and special. I assure you that I will do everything I can to make sure the Inn continues to thrive. Please reach out anytime with ideas, suggestions, or just to say hello by emailing me at president@westpointinn.com.

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS FILLED

Alyssa Jorgensen

Member Susan Aronovsky has been appointed as the Elections Committee Chair, stepping in for Chris Marcuse and Lin Johanson, who have expertly ran our elections for the last 16 years. I'd also like to recognize long-time member Nanette Zavala who has volunteered to send thank you notes to our generous donors. Thank you Susan & Nanette!

WPIA HIRES PART-TIME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Alyssa Jorgensen

The Board began discussing the possibility of hiring an Executive Director (ED) during the latter part of 2022 based on the fact that the President's scope of work was becoming too broad. At the time, we had identified \$1.8M in capital improvement projects, were in the midst of negotiating a new lease, Pancake Breakfasts were drawing larger-than-ever crowds, press coverage and social media exposure were expanding, and expenses to protect the Inn from fire, water, & drought were growing. In addition, the President was managing 20 Committee Chairs, 9 employees, 600 members, and responding to a multitude of guest experiences.

With so much to attend to, the Board decided that another position was necessary to handle day-to-day operations. The role of ED would free up the President to be concentrated on strategy, policy, and long term planning instead of decision making at the granular level. We studied similar organizations with an ED and learned about WPIA's own history of bringing on an ED. After careful deliberation, it was decided that it made sense to move forward only if we found a candidate who had extensive experience in leadership positions with WPIA and possessed deep alignment with its mission and values.

The Board led a targeted search and identified former Presidents, VPs, and highly active Committee Chairs as potential applicants. The scope of work and interest were discussed with each candidate. After a thorough hiring process, including working with an HR consultant, a job offer was extended.

I'm pleased to announce that the Board has unanimously hired Don Keeley as Executive Director! We believe Don's cumulative six years in WPIA leadership roles make him the ideal person to take on this new job. Don's first day as ED was February 6th and he can be contacted at executivedirector@westpointinn.com. [It should be noted that while Don was part of the decision to create the position, he was not part of the hiring process]

The ED position is half-time in nature, and while it will increase our annual operating expenses, WPIA has robust cash reserves (for a nonprofit organization). The Board believes the role of ED will also help attract philanthropic capital vital to securing the future and sustainability of our organization. We hope that the membership is pleased with the Board's decision. Please feel free to contact us with any comments, questions, or concerns at board@westpointinn.com.

RESERVATIONS

Jennifer Greene

All reservations and availability are found online at westpointinn.com. Members may book 120 days in advance.

Members receive 50% off one room or cabin per night they reserve. Members also may book the whole inn Tuesday - Thursday for \$1000, Friday the cost is \$1400. Saturdays and Sundays whole inn bookings are not allowed. Sundays are currently open to whomever books, but is limited to 50% capacity.

There is a promo code to book using our website, which links to the booking engine. Do not share the promo code with anyone.

The promo code is `nora2021`

To make a reservation, go to our website: westpointinn.com

Click on STAY from the menu bar, MAKE A RESERVATION, then enter the promo code NORA2021 to see member rates and open the 30-day advance booking window.

SNOW ON THE MOUNTAIN

Bob Thomson, Innkeeper

In the dark hours before dawn of Friday, it was obvious something was different about Mount Tam that morning. I could feel it in the air. Then with the dawn's early light the difference was revealed: Snow!

The previous day the inn had received about ¼ inch of snow, but even that amount was notable. (Well, perhaps not so much if you're from New England or have lived in the mountain west.) Friday morning, though, was a veritable winter wonderland. Medium-sized snow flakes floating lazily down with no wind at all to direct them. Trees already starting to turn white. Bikers leaving tracks in the snow on the road. A few early hikers working on [small] snow figures. Within a couple of hours, there was about an inch and a half of snow accumulated on the railings of the deck and the table tops in the picnic area. Bikers who had been to the top of East Peak were reporting 2-3 times as much snow up there, but people around the inn were delighted to see as much white covering as we had here. After all, we had enough snow for a few good-natured snowball 'fights' and a momentary return to our childhoods.

But the impression that still remains in my mind was the sense of utter peace and quiet. All was well on the mountain and at the inn for a few hours before the sun returned and the snow bid us adieu.

MEMBERSHIP

Talia Friedman

The membership dues collection period is officially over - collecting just over \$46,000 in dues! Many thanks to all our renewing members.

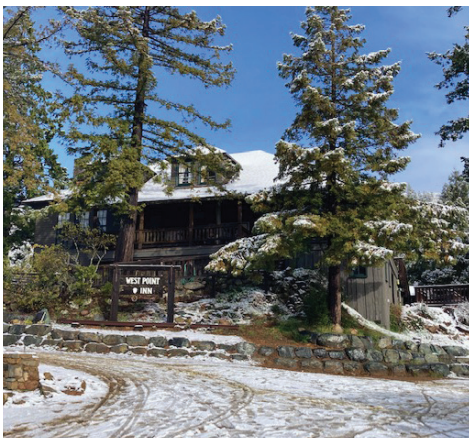
We've had a bit of turnover and have been able to admit our entire waitlist - welcoming 24 new members since October 2022. Our total membership is now 592, leaving us a few vacancies (capacity is 600) so it's a great time to apply. If you have family, friends, or neighbors interested in becoming a member of the West Point Inn Association, please ask them to reach out to membership@westpointinn.com and we will send them an application.

To our Lifetime members, we'd love to hear from you too. If you haven't responded to our recent outreach (per email and physical letter), kindly take a moment now to jot us a line at membership@westpointinn.com to say "Hi! We love the West Point Inn."

ACCESS TO MEMBER'S WEBSITE

Alyssa Jorgensen

Use password "MEMBER" to access the Member page on our website. The Member page is a great resource for Newsletters, Board Agendas, Meeting Minutes, Bylaws, Policies, & Committee Contacts. Please do not share the password with non-members.



WPI WELCOMES THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2023

Alyssa Jorgensen

Big congratulations and gratitude to Craig Hill, James Hill, & Melanie Leavitt-Cantarutti for joining the Board of Directors! Their three-year term will go through January, 2026. Let's learn a little bit about them:

Craig Hill has lived in Marin since 1989 and has spent 30 years hiking and biking the trails of Marin & Sonoma County; he has always especially enjoyed Mt. Tam.

Craig and his wife, a native of Novato, have two daughters and two sons, all of whom have spent multiple nights at the Inn helping with Pancake Breakfasts and other volunteer events over the last 25 years. His volunteer experience includes leading youth organizations and sport leagues, being the Treasurer for a local foundation, and sitting on the board of directors for a national consulting firm. 25+ years of working with volunteers has taught him that there are many rewards to gain from participating with great organizations.

James (Jim) Hill grew up in LA and has lived in San Francisco for many years. He has driven, biked, hiked, and swum up and down the Pacific Coast from Vancouver to Baja. He attended two UC's. Jim is a licensed architect primarily involved in the renovation of older homes, Victorians, and bungalows of the Bay Area. He considers working with historical buildings a privilege and has great respect for old things. He has spent many years hiking on Mt Tam and has fond memories of the Inn: conversations in the kitchen, warm bread around the fireplace, quiet times, noisy times, getting snowed in, and learning about WPI early history. He enjoys watching the fog roll in from the deck and how that experience puts "a lot of things into a simple and powerful perspective".

Melanie Leavitt-Cantarutti was born and raised in Oakland, CA. She currently works at UC Berkeley as the Chief of Staff for a Scientific Institute. Melanie has a BA in Anthropology and an MS in Information Science. Her background is in operations and project management. In her spare time she likes to hike, run, read, and row with the Marin Rowing Association. Melanie and her husband, a native of San Rafael, have been members for 5 years and upgraded to a Lifetime Membership last year. The first time she hiked up to the Inn, she was invited to join an overnight guest on the deck who offered to share his oysters and beer! Since that very first day, she feels lucky each time she is able to spend time at the Inn, whether it's sweeping cabins, playing board games or waking up to the amazing views and smells on Mt. Tam.

WPI SWAG STICKERS, BUTTONS, KEYCHAINS & HATS!

Alyssa Jorgensen

Newly designed WPI swag is coming soon! WPI Swag Shop will be open at Pancake Breakfast and Member Events in 2023.

Logo stickers and buttons will go on sale March 18th. Patch hats and leather keychains are on order and will be available for purchase in early May.

Prices are as follows:

\$2 Buttons

\$3 Stickers

\$12 Keychains

\$32 Patch Hats



WPI Stickers, Buttons, & Keychains

WPI Patch Hats



HOUSEKEEPING

Fran Rondeau

Thanks to the volunteers at the monthly work party and our diligent innkeepers the Inn has never looked better. Bonnie and I welcome suggestions so please contact one of us directly for any donations or ideas. And, by the way, we are always looking for a small industrial strength whistling teapot.

If you have anything you would like to donate to the Inn please please contact us. You may have noticed a new/old addition to the hiker's lounge. Look for a lovely description of this item on page 8 of this newsletter.

INNKEEPER UPDATE

Fran Rondeau

A shout out to our wonderful innkeepers as they continue to make our guests feel welcome and safe, manage all the details of keeping the Inn up and running and free of mud despite the heavy rains last month. A successful full day CPR class took place in January led by Karl Jurgenson and Terry Fitzsimmons, career SF firefighter and EMT.



SPRING PANCAKE REPORT

Lin Johanson

Hi, all! We had a tremendous pancake season last year and we're currently gearing up for the next one. This year we're serving our delicious pancakes with a spectacular view on May 14, June 18, July 19, August 13, September 10 and October 8.

A BIG thank you to our 2023 breakfast hosts:

May: Scott & Lisa Halsted, training Eric & Lisa Magnuson

June: Fran Rondeau & Alyssa Jorgensen, training Renato & Debra Kahn

July: Alyssa & Rye Jorgensen, Nancy Fox and Cassandra Benjamin, training Monty & Caroline Stephens

August: Colleen & Pat Williams

September: Renato & Debra Kahn and Monty & Caroline Stephens

October: Lin Johanson & Chris Marcuse

We're still looking for cleanup hosts. If you're interested in becoming more involved with the Inn, this is a fantastic opportunity. You lead a team of about a dozen in a few hours of cleanup and then you get to stay overnight on a Sunday. The Inn has a special, intimate feel when there are so few taking advantage of the whole place. Please write us at pancakes@westpointinn.com if you would like to take on this leadership role.

We are also, of course, looking for volunteers for the breakfast and cleanup squads. We have heard from some of you, but are always looking for more. Contact us and we will pass along your info to the hosts for each event. They are then responsible for determining the final makeup of their crews. We want to thank Heather McFadden, who is joining us as volunteer & host coordinator. We also want to thank Patti Schmidt, who is our outstanding media liaison. And gratitude to Nancy Fox, Bonnie Jones, Alyssa Jorgensen and Fran Rondeau for all their assistance in prepping and planning for the new season.

Lastly, if you can't work one of these dates, please come on up and join us for a great breakfast. See you at the Inn!

SPRING MEMBERS MEETING, APRIL 23RD

Patti Schmidt & Nancy Fox

Please join us at the Inn for the Spring Members Meeting on Sunday, April 23rd. Coffee will be flowing at 10am, the meeting will start promptly at 11a, and lunch will be served at 12:30p. A limited number of accommodations are available the night before; priority will be given to volunteers who can help with the event. Please email events@west-pointinn.com to RSVP and/or sign up to volunteer. Emailed flyer to follow.

OLD-TIMERS EVENT, JUNE 24TH

**Olene Sparks-Toby, Marilyn Skaff,
Patti Schmidt, Nancy Fox,
Fran Rondeau**

For over a decade, the Inn has hosted a wonderful evening called "The Old-Timers Event". Members of 20 years or more gather to reminisce about the Inn and share their stories and personal memories. This is a great chance for members to meet and interact with the Old Timers. There will be an hors d'oeuvres hour, musicians, an early dinner, and breakfast the next morning.

This event is scheduled for Saturday, June 24th. It is free and open to both new and old members. Please contact Olene Sparks-Toby at olenes@aol.com to reserve your space at dinner and/or book a room for the night. Emailed flyer to follow.

LEMON POLENTA CAKE

Fran Rondeau

This is a lovely slightly spongy cake with lots of texture from the raw polenta. This is my version but it comes originally from the Food network created by Shanna Masters honoring San Francisco's top chefs. Substituting canola oil for the butter changes the texture from buttery and rich to moist and more dense.

Ingredients: 1/2 cup cornmeal, 1 cup flour, 1/2 t baking soda, 1/2 t salt, 3 eggs, 1 1/2 cups sugar, 1 stick of butter, 1 T grated lemon zest, 6T lemon juice, 2 T evaporated milk or cream

Take 1 stick of salted butter out of the fridge the night before.

Preheat oven to 350.

Butter and flour a loaf pan or single layer cake pan. I like to line the bottom of the pan with parchment for easy removal after cooled.

1. Whip 3 egg whites till frothy- set aside for folding in later.
2. Mix dry ingredients: 1 cup flour, 1/2 cup polenta, 1/2 t baking soda and 1/2t salt
3. Cream 1 1/2 cups sugar with softened butter-and 3 egg yolks
4. Add dry ingredients to butter alternately with 2 T evaporated milk and 6T fresh lemon juice
5. Sprinkle lemon peel over batter and fold in egg whites
6. 1 hour in the oven, maybe more depending on your oven

Bon appétit!



A MOMENT IN HISTORY

Fred Runner

Sew What?

On Saturday, September 3, 1904, on a treeless ridge of Mt. Tamalpais, the West Point Inn first opened its doors. Built by a scenic railway, leased by Wallace Sayers' stagecoach company and run by a Swiss couple, the West Point was a place where steam trains met a stagecoach. Instantly the Inn became an outpost of hospitality and shelter, enjoyed by both hikers and passengers.

Each morning the stagecoach climbed up the mountain from the beach. Each afternoon a jangling four-horse team led the stagecoach down the stage road from West Point to Willow Camp (Stinson Beach) or to McKinnon's Landing where a launch could take people across the Bolinas Lagoon to the Bolinas Wharf and the town of Bolinas. If successful, the railroad would lay tracks to the beach.

It's astonishing that the 119-year old West Point Inn still exists, a vestige of a long lost era. Today it is more popular than ever with rooms and cabins filled with twenty-first century people admiring a stunning view and a rustic taste of history, a rare experience of nights lit by gaslight and friends gathered around a wood fire crackling in an old stone fireplace. It's an experience that is unique to the West Point Inn.

Most people don't know why the Inn is there. "Is this someone's home?"

The links to those early days are elusive. It is fun to know that the Inn was born in a Wild West setting with steam trains and a stagecoach and that there was a masked gunman who attempted to hold up the stage a few months before the Inn opened. (He was unsuccessful. Stage driver Harry Ashe, whipped the horses and charged on through to Willow Camp, unharmed.)

One of the few things that survives from the early days is a piece of furniture, a New Home treadle-powered sewing machine, a symbol of the early days when the only power at the Inn came from humans. Innkeepers did the repairs, cooked the meals, mended their clothes (clothing was less disposable than today) and welcomed guests 24/7.

Our New Home sewing machine is an example of those times, a clue about the early days at the Inn.

Sewing machines were a laborsaving device. Imagine being able to quickly sew up a torn seam and not do it by hand.

Former WPIA President, Dr. Ruth Rubin, who led the fundraising for the Inn's important "Earthquake Retrofit", fortifying the Inn's foundation in 2006, also gathered a group of quilters, the Double Bow Knot Quilters, who sewed quilts for the Inn on that sewing machine before she became President. (The Double Bow Knot was a famous engineering feature at the midpoint of Mt. Tamalpais' Crookedest Railroad.)

New Home sewing machines were made in Orange, Massachusetts between 1877 and 1930 when the company moved to Rockford, Illinois as part of the Free Sewing Machine Company.

Our New Home sewing machine may seem like an irrelevant piece of furniture to twenty-first century visitors but it gives the Inn context. It's part of why we are drawn to the Inn, this historic enigma that makes us want to know more and care for it. That context gets lost far too easily.

It's important to remember — we're caretakers of history, not just an Inn.

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The West Point Inn Association exists to preserve, maintain, operate and educate the public about the significance of the historic West Point Inn.



CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR EMAIL?

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO

BY SENDING AN EMAIL TO:

MEMBERUPDATE@WESTPOINTINN.COM

WANT TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE?

PLEASE SEND SUBMISSIONS

AND PHOTOS TO

EDITOR@WESTPOINTINN.COM