



The Tunstead Building at Tunstead and San Anselmo Avenues, 1909. Moved to 339 San Anselmo Avenue in 1925.

## *The Only Hotel in Town*

By Judy Coy

Vacationers had several hotels to choose from when visiting San Anselmo at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was Hotel Rossi, located where the Cheda Building now stands, the Linda Vista at Pine Street in a natural park of 20 acres, Villa Cazeaux in the 600 block of San Anselmo Avenue, and the Ancha Vista Hotel on the eastern slope of Red Hill behind Chapel of the Hills. By 1920, all had closed except the Ancha Vista.

In 1925, Robert Carey, a local real estate developer, purchased a building constructed in 1908 by James Tunstead and located where the Wells Fargo Bank building is now at Tunstead and San Anselmo Avenues. Croker moved the building to a vacant lot down the street which he had purchased from the James Tunstead estate. The building at the Tunstead site had had numerous tenants; the primary one was Hund's Poppy Drug Store and early photographs also picture the San Anselmo Chop House and Oyster Depot and a billiards parlor. It was common in those

days to move buildings rather than demolish and rebuild.

The *San Anselmo Herald* reported that Carey planned to remodel the building on its new site. In December 1925, a furniture store moved into the lower storefront, and in 1926 Hotel Anselmo opened on the upper floor. It offered sunny rooms with hot and cold running water for \$1-1.50 per day or \$4-5 per week. When the Ancha Vista closed in the early 1930s, Hotel Anselmo was the only hotel in town.

**HOTEL ANSELMO**

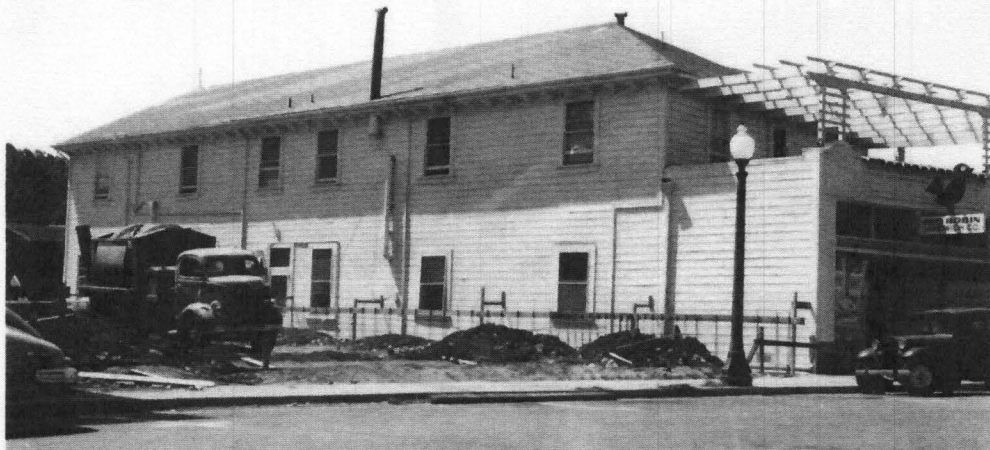
QUIET  
COMFORTABLE  
REASONABLE

339 San Anselmo Avenue  
Telephone S. A. 3805

(Continued on next page)

It has operated continuously at 339 San Anselmo Avenue as Hotel Anselmo, then San Anselmo Hotel and now as the San Anselmo Inn. It remains the only hotel in town.

During the 1930s, Hotel Anselmo accommodated travelers passing through, and home-cooked meals were served family-style to the guests. In 1940, Mr. & Mrs. Edward Shepard took over management and added a roof garden; the hotel was "said to be well-filled with a fine class of people." During the housing shortage of the war years, the Shepards turned away



San Anselmo Hotel with roof garden, 1947. Courtesy Marin History Museum.

many people seeking temporary or permanent shelter and some slept in their cars in the parking lot next to the hotel.

In 1947, the hotel was purchased by Lester and Nina Robinson who operated it until the early 1970s as a residential hotel "for nice people with free parking and free television." The Robinsons renamed it San Anselmo Hotel.

Remodeling and landscaping gave the hotel a new look in 1973 (photo right). The long-term residents were described as "many retired people who have relatives in the area but who do not want to live with their in-laws."

It is evident from a visual inspection of the building that there have been additions to both the front and the back. The hotel seems to have gone from shabby to nice as it underwent remodeling and upgrades when ownership changed over the years. It must have been a bit rundown when current San Anselmo resident Jaccy Gouly first came to town and stayed at the San Anselmo Hotel while looking for a place to live. Her diary entry on September 11,

1984 reads, "Moved to San Anselmo Hotel – a real dump! Feel I must be watching a movie – I can't really be living in this hot, dirty room. Started looking for an apartment." Then on September 17, she wrote, "Moved out of the San Anselmo Hotel, with pleasure."

The hotel continued to cater to monthly tenants until the mid-1990s when the Wettsteins, the owners at the time, recognized that the demographics and character of the town had changed. They remodeled, creating the San Anselmo Inn, a boutique hotel welcoming tourists to the area. It has remained this way under the ownership of Julie and Peter McNair and now that of Benedetto Cico. The 15-room inn attracts many foreign visitors and friends and relatives of town residents. Recent renovations have revealed some of the original redwood studs and siding and remnants of the old knot-and-tube electrical wiring. The wainscoting in the hallways has been repaired and refinished.

While the hotel operated on the second floor, the first-floor storefronts were leased to many different tenants over the years. Red Robin Sandwich Co. was located there in the 1940s making sandwiches and distributing



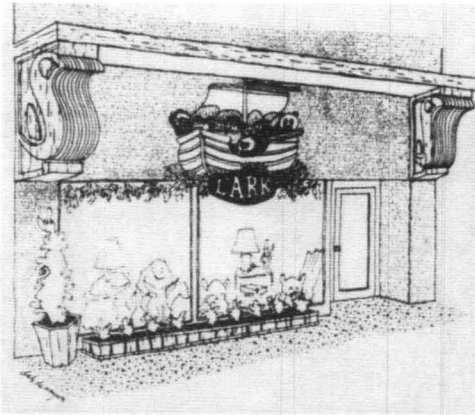
San Anselmo Hotel, ca. 1973.

(Continued on next page)



them to drugstores, fountains and bars. Red Robin moved to Kentfield in the late 1940s, then to Larkspur in 1965 where it remained until closing in 2017.

When Red Robin left, a laundromat took its place and operated there until 1973. Many San Anselmo residents will remember the French restaurant, La Chaumière, that followed. First under the ownership of Georges and DeeDee Lebugle and then Rene Hechinger, the restaurant was noted for its classic French cuisine and its interior décor with floral-print fabric covering the walls and rising to a tented ceiling. In the storefront to the right



L'Ark advertisement, 1974

of La Chaumière was L'Ark, specializing in gifts for animal lovers.

A succession of restaurants followed La Chaumière: Anselmo's, Comforts in 1986 (before moving into the building next door), the short-lived Tre Fratelli and then Cucina Jackson Fillmore in December 1998. When Cucina Jackson Fillmore moved down and across the street in 2003, the McNairs used the restaurant space in several different ways, including as a breakfast room for the Inn's guests. Since 2014, the space

has been leased to Valenti & Co., a popular Northern Italian restaurant and wine bar.

Thank you San Anselmo Inn for drawing visitors and welcoming them to our town!♦

## Red Hill Trail Completed

By Brian Crawford

After five years of effort, a new trail has been completed in San Anselmo, providing an easy walk to the top of our landmark Red Hill. The trail starts behind the Edo Grill and Walgreen's and climbs 350 feet in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile – a relatively easy half-hour walk each way.

Originally known as Sugarloaf, Red Hill formed the common corner of three large Mexican ranchos. The summit provides spectacular views of the Ross Valley, San Rafael, and even San Francisco. The old road still visible on the west side was built around 1892 by Chinese laborers to provide access to Mount Tamalpais Cemetery.

The top of Red Hill was once an integral part of the San Anselmo community. The hill was a favorite hiking and picnic spot. From 1929 to 1953, people gathered there for Easter sunrise services. But the lower portion of the road was destroyed by landslides and the rest was covered with invasive broom. For more than sixty years, the summit has been nearly inaccessible. That has now changed.

In 2013, volunteer Brian Crawford proposed to the San Anselmo Open Space Committee (OSC) that a trail be built up Red Hill. The OSC agreed and Town Council approved pursuing the project. Funding came from the OSC and donors with Supervisor Katie Rice provided some County funds. Some of the land was

already Town property, but to bypass the landslide area, the trail needed to go onto the lands of Sunny Hills Services, who very generously offered a 50-year lease on their land at no cost. Volunteers determined the route and cut a preliminary trail. Environmental, cultural, archaeological, and soil studies were done. After a series of public meetings, the Town Council gave final approval to the project in August 2017.

The Historical Commission researched and documented the history of the lands, and volunteers installed interpretive signs with scannable QR codes to informational web sites. In October 2017, the OSC began a series of weekly work parties to start building the final trail. By February, the trail work was complete, though the work parties continued pulling broom. A contractor built a railing at a steep cross-slope and poured a slab for an information kiosk at the trailhead. A grand opening is planned around the end of March or early April, but the trail is now open for use.

The trail is out-and-back, with no connections to streets or other trails. Dogs are permitted off leash but should be under voice control. Please pick up after your dog, carry out your trash and pick up any litter you encounter. No water is available on the trail. Because the trail is too narrow to pass and contains many sharp turns, no bicycles are allowed. No smoking, camping, or fires permitted.♦