

UNDER THE GABLES

Volume XXIV, Number 1

Spring 2020



Bear Valley Ranch

A New Exhibit at the Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History
March 8 through June, 2020

JACK MASON MUSEUM OF WEST MARIN HISTORY

Inverness Way at Park Avenue, Inverness Phone 415-669-1099 www.jackmasonmuseum.org

NEW EXHIBIT AT THE JACK MASON MUSEUM

A Brief History of the Bear Valley Ranch

The museum committee hosts an opening reception on Sunday, March 8 from 1-3 p.m. for this new exhibit, which will run through mid-June. The exhibit covers the history of the vast Bear Valley Ranch, a beautiful central section of Point Reyes National Seashore which includes the headquarters (formally called W Ranch) as well as satellite ranches U, Y, and Z, which operated as small leased dairies until the 1920s. These were then incorporated into a single property known as Bear Valley Ranch. The story and exhibit concentrates on the time the ranch left the Shafter-Howard ownership until it was taken over by the National Park Service, with the ranch headquarters now serving as park administrative offices.



Point Reyes Station Historical Walking Tours

Look for regularly scheduled tours starting in June.

Special group tours available for 8 – 12 people.

Email info@jackmasonmuseum.org or leave message at 415-669-1099 to arrange a walk for your group.

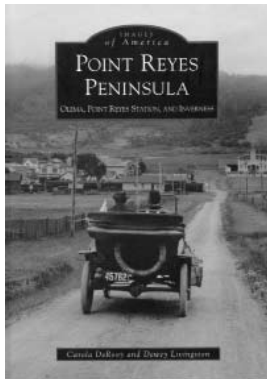
RESEARCH IN THE MUSEUM ARCHIVES

An appointment is needed to do research at the museum.

Please call 415-669-1099 to set up a visit.

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP UP TO DATE?

If you are not sure whether your dues (museum dues are separate from Inverness Foundation dues) are up to date, please leave a message on the Archives phone number 415-669-1099. We will check and get back to you. Dues and other contributions to the Museum are tax-deductible. You can renew your membership with a secure transaction on our website www.jackmasonmuseum.org. or by mailing your check to Box 94 Inverness, CA 94937.



“POINT REYES PENINSULA”

Copies signed by the authors, Carola DeRooy and Dewey Livingston are available at Museum Open Houses and from the Archives for only \$20.00. The proceeds benefit the Museum.

ON THE COVER:

Bear Valley Ranch cowboys line up for a portrait during a roundup at the coastal Y Ranch site, above today's Kelham Beach.

JACK MASON MUSEUM COMMITTEE OF THE INVERNESS FOUNDATION

Dewey Livingston and
Meg Linden, Chairs
Gray Brechin
Andrew Buckingham
Loretta Farley
Mike Parkinson

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Carola DeRooy
Gyanne Enquist
Mary Kroninger
Vivian Mazur
Jenefer Merrill
Connie Morse

HONORARY MEMBER

Barbara Mason McClellan

THE JACK MASON MUSEUM OF WEST MARIN HISTORY IS AN AFFILIATE OF THE INVERNESS FOUNDATION

Under the Gables
is written by
Meg Linden,
edited and designed
by Dewey Livingston.

Inquiries:

415-669-1099

info@jackmasonmuseum.org
www.jackmasonmuseum.org

THE BEAR VALLEY RANCH

by Meg Linden



Bear Valley Ranch, the former “W Ranch” of the Shafter-Howard dairies system. Photograph by Seth Wood, circa 1948.

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN about the Bear Valley Ranch (also known as W Ranch and including U, Y and Z ranches) and this story in no way can cover everything. It will outline the general history of the Ranch in four separate parts and focus on some of the stories that have not yet been fully covered elsewhere.

I - EARLY YEARS

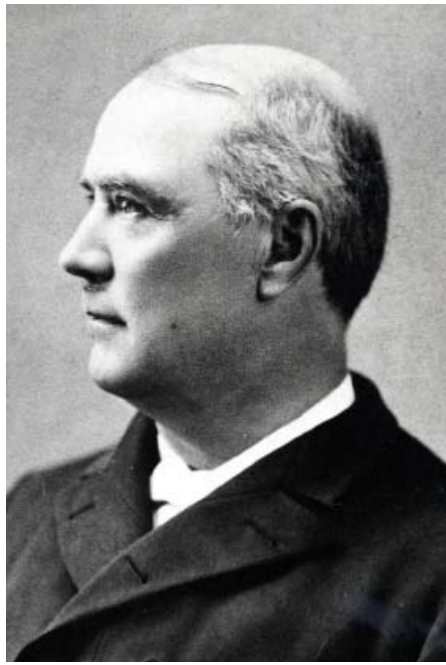
The law firm of Shafter, Shafter, Park and Heydenfeldt came to own a good portion of Point Reyes peninsula by 1857 including what became Bear Valley Ranch. The final result of the litigation over the Rafael Garcia title ended up with his adobe rancho on the side of the creek awarded to the Shafter firm, detached from the remaining Garcia Lands. It is virtually certain that the Garcia adobe was located near the site of the current “Red Barn” at the entrance to the Point Reyes National Seashore. In 1865 both Heydenfeldt and Park sold out their shares to Oscar Shafter’s son-in-law Charles Webb Howard (July 17, 1831-July 17, 1908) with financial help from his father-in-law, according to Howard’s wife. Howard was active in setting up the alphabet system under which what became Bear Valley Ranch was designated as U, W, Y and Z ranches. He appointed managers who resided at the ranch to manage both his lands and those of his father-in-law.



Rafael Garcia, first non-Indian owner of the Bear Valley Ranch.

II – BEAR VALLEY RANCH

Eventually the two Shafter Brothers and Howard decided to partition the ranches so each owned two sections, on the Point Reyes peninsula stretching east to the Olema Valley. In 1869-70 these negotiations were complete and Howard's Olema Valley portion comprised the "spectacular" Bear Valley ranch containing U, W, Y and Z Ranches. Due to Oscar Shafter's death in January 1873, Howard was virtually managing two-thirds of the total land. However, he never lived full time on Point Reyes. He turned the W Ranch into a showcase dairy and hired expert managers to run it and to select tenants for the remaining ranches. One of these managers was William H Abbott who lived at W Ranch from 1877 to 1899 and was a leader in adopting new processes to improve the operations of the dairy. In 1883 the name Bear Valley Ranch appears for the first time. After Abbott left, Howard's next to youngest son, Frederick "Fred" Paxson Howard (8 October 1871 – 5 April 1942) lived on the W Ranch as a "gentleman farmer." However, when his mother, Emma Shafter Howard died in 1916 the other children, led by his only sister, Maud, sued to divide the Howard properties among all four surviving children (Maud, Fred, Shafter and Harold). Disagreements on how this should be done opened an opportunity for John G. Rapp (1872 – 18 November 1943), a wealthy man from San Francisco, through his agent August Lang, to deal with each heir separately. According to Jerome B. White, who represented Maud in the original transaction, in a 1968 letter to Jack Mason, the agent had signed up the lessors of all the other ranches on the Point (except the four Bear Valley ranches) to buy the property they were leasing at a considerable mark-up over the assessed value. "The net result of it all – the heirs got cash in varying amounts [\$90,000 to \$125,000]. Lang got a fat commission. Rapp got a handsome profit in cash PLUS the (Bear Valley) W Ranch free and clear."



Charles Webb Howard

III – A MODERN DAIRY

In 1919 Rapp got full possession of Bear Valley Ranch. Rapp and his wife had four young children, Claribel (12), Gladys (10), Joan (5) and John W. (new-born) and spent most of each summer at the ranch enjoying such amenities as boating and swimming in a pond especially created for recreation, horse-back riding, and fishing. Mr. Rapp also enjoyed hunting with members of the posh Country Club at Divide Meadow, whose hunting and fishing lease on the land he renewed. According to his daughter Claribel Rapp Berckemeyer, he also built "a new sanitary milking barn, two silos, corrals, irrigation dam, cottages for the milkers, and greatly improved the dairy cattle. His milk had the highest certification possible. He had contracts to sell his fine milk to San Francisco hospitals and restaurants, including Gene Compton's cafes." Rapp's resident manager during this time was John Watson. In 1923 he built a new residence up on the hill costing \$12,000. He allowed friends to camp around the new house, including Robert Menzies who eventually built a cabin along the Bear Valley road to the ocean, where the botanist planted a dawn redwood and a dogwood that grew into a colorful annual display. In contrast to the Howards, he charged a small fee for strangers to access the property.

On September 1, 1925 Rapp traded the ranch for valuable shares in Dunham, Carrigan and Hayden Company, a San Francisco wholesale hardware dealer, to Colonel Jesse R. Langdon (6 August 1878 – 30 December 1950). Langdon's wife was the former Ruth Dunham. The Langdon family moved from Berkeley to the ranch full time. The Colonel ran the ranch with the military precision he was used to in a long career in the Army. He closed down the dairies on the small coastside ranches (U, Y and Z) and stocked them with beef. Initially he kept up the quality of the dairy, maintained the certification, and even made a few improvements creating a herd of 500 tuberculosis-free Holstein



The Rapp Years —1920s

The old Howard ranch house, dating from the 1870s, stood where the Point Reyes National Seashore administrative offices are today. The historic house, which survived the 1906 earthquake despite sitting a mere feet away from the fault line, was removed by Gene Compton during World War II.



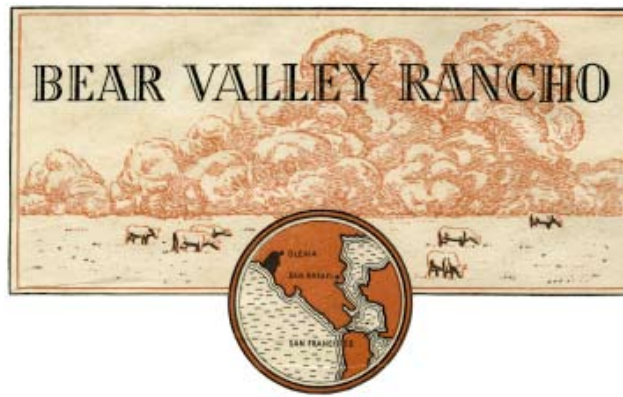
Around 1920 new owner John Rapp, a wealthy San Francisco brewery owner, built a rustic vacation house away from the main dairy ranch for family and friends to gather. Today—after remodeling by Compton—it serves as the offices of the Point Reyes National Seashore Association.



The Rapps built a dam on Bear Valley Creek to provide a small recreation lake. Today's Earthquake Trail passes the site.

Photographs courtesy of Joan Rapp Mayhew.

cows. In 1928 he was shipping 700 gallons of milk daily to San Francisco. However, as a result of the Depression Langdon lost much of his capital and also lost the dairy certification and valuable hospital contracts. He tried to sell the ranch to Lee Murphy for \$90,000, but



Artwork depicting the ranch in a sales brochure.

Murphy was also strapped for cash. In an effort to protect his property he declared bankruptcy in November 1935. He claimed liabilities of \$157,677 but says the valuation of his property is \$350,000 for the ranch and its buildings \$35,000 for the herd of dairy cattle and \$12,000 for the Olema water system whereby springs on his land provide water to Olema. In October 1938 the Bank of San Rafael foreclosed on the property. At that point the indebtedness amounted to \$212,000 including a \$100,000 loan from the bank. The bank bought it for \$125,000. In November 1939 at the sheriff's orders of eviction, the personal property of the Langdon's was moved from the ranch to a new residence in Inverness. The newspaper notes that it required four moving vans to remove the property from the ranch. The bank continued to own the ranch until 1943.

On April 21, 1943 the bank sold the ranch to Gene Compton's Corporation for \$120,000. Eugene (Gene) Charles Compton (3 January 1892 – 1 June 1959) owned a chain of cafeterias in Nevada and northern California. He paid \$120,000. He made major improvements to the barns and housing stock on the ranch, including a new house for his manager Charlie Schramm. He must have known the "right people" to get so much construction material during and soon after World War II. The Comptons did not live full time at the ranch but when they were there good times prevailed. One of the most memorable things, at least to locals, was the series of rodeos he put on in 1946-1948. He built an arena, bleachers, refreshment stands and rest-rooms and the profits from the rodeos benefited Sacred Heart Church, at that time in Point Reyes Station (The Dance Palace Church Space now.) and the Widows and Orphans Fund of the Olema Vol-

unteer Fire Department. On February 11, 1949 he unexpectedly sold the ranch to Grace and Bruce Kelham. His time owning the ranch was not considered important enough to mention in his obituary.

Grace (17 December 1907 – 4 December 1977) and Bruce Kelham (17

December 1906 – 14 December 1963) bought the ranch for "well in excess of \$500,000." The sale price included the stock and equipment. However, they were not interested in dairying and within a year sold off the dairy herd and tore down the dairy buildings and auctioned off the equipment. The ranch became a large beef cattle operation under the management of Ralph Beatty, the ranch foreman. Again the Kelhams had a life in San Francisco and the Peninsula and treated the ranch as a vacation place. On October 1, 1963 they sold Bear Valley Ranch to the National Park Service for \$5,725,000.

IV – JEWEL OF THE FEDERAL PARK

The ranch was involved in the establishment of the National Seashore for almost a year before the actual sale. The National Park Service rented a building from the Kelhams to operate their land office to purchase various properties for the seashore. The government obtained a tiny parcel of the ranch on the coast for the grave of Clem Miller, who was the U.S. House of Representatives sponsor of the legislation creating the park and was killed in a plane crash shortly after its creation. This was the very first land parcel obtained for the National Seashore. Immediately after the sale the National Park Service occupied many of the ranch buildings for administrative uses. A bunkhouse became the superintendent's office, another the ranger headquarters, and the horse barn and shop was transformed into park utility shops. The ranch manager's house, and the Rapp house up the hill became park residences. Today, the rustic Rapp house, remodeled into a more suburban form by Compton, houses the Point Reyes National Seashore Association's office.



The Compton Years —1940s

Wealthy owner Eugene Compton hosted a popular rodeo for three years during the late 1940s. Extensive rodeo grounds, including a large arena and grandstands, were located adjacent to today's Bear Valley Trailhead.



Bear Valley Ranch included three "satellite" ranches, once dairies but used since the 1920s as roundup grounds. This view shows the remaining barns at the Y Ranch, above today's Kelham Beach.

Photographs by Seth Wood.

Dewey's Book Report: The teacher said, "You have real potential, Dewey, and your work is excellent, but you are TARDY!" And the pupil replied, "Yes, Miss Aberdeen, but the cat keeps eating my homework!" So, here's a very brief excerpt and a promise of LATER THIS YEAR!

ITALIAN FARMERS on the Point Reyes Peninsula were quickly placed in a very awkward position at the outbreak of World War II. On February 13, 1942, placards were posted barring aliens—Japanese, Germans and Italians—from the Marin County coastline, including Tomales Bay and Point Reyes Peninsula. The Italians, because the U. S. was at war with Italy in Europe, were banned from crossing west of Highway 1 for security reasons.

Unfortunately, the Italians' farms were located west of the highway. Sis Arndt recalled how she and her husband Lefty trudged out to the Point and harvested the results of their friend's hard work.

The Dellepere family of Olema found themselves in a predicament: their bar and restaurant was on Highway 1, but the wrong side. The parents were aliens, but the children had been born in Olema. "If you were on that side of the white line, and they were aliens, we had to move," recalled Edna Dellepere Petroni, "because you couldn't get caught on this side of the road... kind of crazy." The family had to close the business and move to San Rafael. "My mother could not leave the house before eight o'clock in the morning and she had to be back in the house by eight o'clock at night," said Mrs. Petroni. "That was kind of hard times."

Teddy & Co. in Bear Valley

by Jack Mason
Point Reyes Historian
Fall 1976



□ For forty years the Country Club in Bear Valley saw the rich and famous come and go.

It was conceived and built in the early 1890's by sports-minded members of the Pacific Union Club on San Francisco's Nob Hill.

Pacific Union members were not ipso facto members of the Country Club. The relationship was close but unofficial. There were 75 founders, and three years later the memberships— at \$750 apiece— totaled 125, with a waiting list.

For years I have heard tell that Teddy Roosevelt frequented the Country Club, and this is borne out by Edward H. Clark, 53-year Pacific Union member and unofficial historian. "Roosevelt was a non-resident Pacific Union member bound to have hunted in Bear Valley," he writes.

Probably Teddy's visits occurred after his Presidency ended in 1904. Probably he came the usual way, by ferry and train. The picture of America's hero of the period, the man who conquered San Juan Hill and sent the Great White Fleet around the world, riding into Point Reyes Station aboard the doughty little narrow gauge, is one that sets the imagination singing.

Roosevelt's lion hunting forays in the African forests "where death broods in the dark and silent depths" were hardly to be matched in the Bear Valley woods. Still there were California lions to be shot at; and the Presidential trigger no doubt brought down its share of quail and deer. (See "African Game Trails", by Theodore Roosevelt, Scribner's, 1926).

A long-distance telephone was available to T. R., as to all club regulars with pressing interests in the city. The Marin Journal in its August 6, 1891, issue reported "a very fine long distance telephone has been placed in the clubhouse. Conversation can be carried on with ease and facility to San Francisco." The line went from Olema to Bolinas, then over the ridge via Samuel Liberty's roadhouse to San Rafael.

The question of where to locate the club was much on everybody's mind when the sportsmen held their first annual outing on July 26, 1890, at Hotel Del Monte in Monterey. The choice of Marin reflects the prestige our county enjoyed among San Franciscans of that day. Men of substance like Hall McAllister, Jonathan Kittle and Albert Dibblee lived there.

Others like James McMillan Shafter, Edward Bosqui and Charles Webb Howard owned large tracts of Marin.

There were other reasons for locating in Bear Valley. Tomales Bay and its tributary streams were already well-known fishing holes. Point Reyes had been a hunter's paradise since Indian times.

Alexander (Jack) Hamilton, a Pacific Union member, had married into the Shafter family, and was able to deliver the hunting leases. The clubhouse, kennels and stable were built in short order a mile and a half up Bear Valley in the heathery swale the Seashore now uses as a picnic area.

The San Franciscans came north in style, on the elegant side-wheeler ferryboats and modernized cars of the North Pacific Coast Railroad. In those days the Pullman coaches were painted a deep yellow with wicker seats, each with its own window, and steam heat. ("Narrow Gauge to the Redwoods," by Bray Dickinson, Trans-Anglo Books, 1967).

A club employe met the train in horse and carriage and drove the members up the valley through a forest "haunted by every variety of feathered life at which a true sportsman delights to pull a trigger." (Marin Journal, December 1, 1893).

In their relaxed company were many of San Francisco's nobility of the times: William Randolph Hearst, millionaire James V. Coleman; railroad pioneer Arthur W. Foster, banker Louis Parrott, hotelman Baron J.H. Von Schroeder and Robert B. Woodward, owner of the fabled Woodward's Gardens in the city. (Woodward, incident-

ally, was the pigeon-shooting champ in that founding summer of 1890.

The club could sleep 35, with bedrooms looking over a wide verandah onto lawn and flower beds. The Marin Journal's is one of the few written descriptions we have. "Though not pretentious, it is superior to anything of its kind in the East. The lounges are soft and wide, the fireplaces are cheerful caverns. In the social hall the head of a great bull moose (imported, surely—ed.) lifts its huge antlers and looks its blessings on the tired hunters. . . Deer heads are everywhere, fur rugs, stuffed geese, swans. . . ducks artistically mounted. . . the cuisine is excellent, prepared and served by skillful chefs and servants. . . A telephone runs from the club so the dutiful member can assure his wife in San Francisco that he has secured a bag of game that day and is safe and well. The bathrooms are especially worthy of praise, and they are duly appreciated by the tired sportsman who returns fatigued from a hard day's toil in marsh or hills." Not that one had to go far to find game. Deer boldly nibbled the flowers and vegetable greens on the clubhouse premises.

As for ducks, the scribe goes on to say, "every variety flocks here in great numbers. In two hours a couple of good shots can bring down game enough to fill a wagon, and when a dozen men return from a day's shooting, the game room presents a sight seldom seen in any place outside of a well-stocked game market."

There were three lakes to fish in—one stocked with bass, one with New Hampshire trout, one with land-locked salmon from Maine. The State of California,

possibly persuaded by the club, moved its eastern brook trout hatchery onto Bear Valley Creek from Tahoe in 1893, planting 226,000 eggs in January of that year. The members' own efforts to plant lobsters in the ocean were less successful. The lobster babies came west by freightcar, claws corked to keep them from tearing themselves to pieces. Eagerly the club caretaker met the train, took the precious Maine cargo into his wagon, and drove to the ocean, depositing the creatures in the rocks. A year later, savoring the lobster feast in store, the members went to the scene—only to find a few empty shells. In his haste, the caretaker had forgotten to remove the corks, and every lobster had starved! ("Earthquake Bay," North Shore Books, 1976).

First president of the Country Club was Frederick R. Webster, as fine a shot as Woodward: 172 pigeons shot at, 140 killed in 1890. Vice-president was Austin Tubbs; secretary-treasurer J.M.Quay. In their little book, "Rules for the Government of the Country Club of San Francisco," published in September, 1890 (in Louise Watt's Shafter Collection), they remind fellow members of their obligation to the Shafters: "It is to be carefully borne in mind that the club in its leases has become responsible to the owners for any negligence of its members; therefore the greatest care should be exercised. . . to prevent fires, to see that no harm or injury is done, of any kind, to the property; not to break or tear down fences, and to always when passing through gates to close same."

Trouble with the Shafters arose anyway. Judge Shafter died (1892), the hunting leases expired (1895),

and daughter Julia Hamilton, executrix of the judge's estate, refused to renew them. Her husband, a club member given as much to billiards and brandy as the hunting trail, threatened to sue her and she all but disowned him. ("Point Reyes—the Solemn Land," North Shore Books, 1970). Brother Payne Shafter stepped in to make the peace, selling the club 110 acres of his own property in July of 1895, including the meadow the clubhouse stood on. (Book 36 of Deeds, page 143). The Country Club carried on for 35 more years.

The little book of club rules reveals the rigid protocol of the sportsman's world. State and county game laws were scrupulously observed. "Killing of wild turkeys, prairie chickens, bob white quail, pheasants, grouse or skylarks prohibited until January 1, 1895. Killing of blue and white cranes, at any time, prohibited." A field captain patrolled each shoot, imposing fines up to \$5 where necessary. Each day's score was delivered by the captain to the secretary.

Each member was limited to two bucks and 300 quail a season, club guests to one buck and 50 quail. Permits signed by the president and secretary were to be carried at all times and "shown to any of the game keepers or patrolmen when called upon." In 1893 three game keepers were on duty, keeping an eye out for poachers and at the same time posting members on where the game was.

Ladies were allowed in the club for breakfast and lunch, and on the preserve during the closed season. Not all were complimentary. After a visit to Bear Valley in 1905, Helen Bingham ("In Tamal Land," Calkins, 1906), wrote



The exclusive Country Club at Point Reyes was located adjacent to the Bear Valley Ranch property at what we today call Divide Meadow on the Bear Valley Trail. The derelict buildings were removed around 1951.



Excursions were very popular at Bear Valley, drawing visitors from around the state. This turn-of-the-century carriage-full paused for a picture south of Divide Meadow.

that she was distressed by the baying of the hounds. "Even in nature's heart man's inherent primitiveness asserts itself."

The Country Club flourished through the early 1920's. Members lingering over afternoon drinks until too late to catch the down train hired Ben Pedranti for \$5 to bus them to the electric cars at Manor. If too late there, another \$7 got them to the ferry in Sausalito. Pedranti was to recall later how generous his fares were with tips. ("Ben's Auto Stage," 1967).

The Country Club hoped to build a more pretentious club-

house with billiard room, ballroom for Saturday night dances, and a 100-foot-long plunge under glass. But it was not to be. The club died after the Great Crash, which found its stock broker and banker members especially vulnerable.

The clubhouse stood until the early 1950's, when Bear Valley owner Bruce Kelham had it torn down to get rid of squatters and rats. In our day, the Park Service has installed picnic tables in the meadow. Clusters of pink amaryllis thrusting through the grass every summer are all that is left of the lovely garden of long ago.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History
P. O. Box 94
Inverness, CA 94937

www.jackmasonmuseum.org

An affiliate of the Inverness Foundation

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 5
Inverness, CA
94937

Also see the Inverness Foundation's website, and be sure to join if you are not a member! The IF is the Jack Mason Museum's parent organization.
www.invernessassociation.org

Follow the Jack Mason Museum at www.jackmasonmuseum.org and on Facebook!



Bear Valley Ranch

A new exhibit opens March 8
through June 2020
during Inverness Library hours

Join us for an open house reception
on March 8, 1 to 3 pm.