

HISTORY WATCH



Ross Garage was a cornerstone of the downtown Ross business district. COURTESY OF MARIN HISTORY MUSEUM

A look at Ross Garage

In the early 20th century, William and Isabella Meagor's Ross Garage was a cornerstone of the downtown Ross business district. It was also a symbol of the changing times as motorized vehicles were beginning to replace horse-drawn conveyances. In December 1911, the Meagors purchased the Jones Stables in Ross and converted it into a garage to serve the fast-growing automobile industry. The photograph has written on the back, "With love, Will and Isabella."

William Meagor emigrated from England in 1894 at age 14 and married Isabella Parsons,

also an immigrant from England, in 1911. The young couple opened the garage the next year, establishing themselves as leading citizens of the recently incorporated town of Ross. Later that year, the garage became the polling place for Ross residents to vote in county and state elections and it would continue to do so over the next three decades.

Business was booming for the Meagors when tragedy struck in July 1914. An early morning fire started in the line of buildings that included the garage, a shoemaker's shop, Fred Croker's grocery store and the Dale Livery Stables. Newspaper articles from the time differ as to exactly where the fire started, but all agree that the entire line of buildings burned to the ground and the residents were forced to flee for their lives.

William Meagor is described, heroically, as carrying his wife, Isabella, through the smoke and flames from their apartment in the rear of the garage out to the street. Stable owner Edgar Dale rushed to his disabled daughter's bedside and also carried her to safety.

Dale's son, Walter, managed to free the 24 horses at the stable but suffered burns around the hands and face. Within weeks, a benefit, consisting of a dinner and dance, was done to assist the Meagors in rebuilding their business by the Golden Star Rebekah Lodge, a women's auxiliary group associated with the Odd Fellows fraternal organization. The following year, the Meagors rebuilt what was called "a fireproof building" with living quarters on the second floor above the garage, which still stands today.

Isabella Meagor's brother, John Parsons, came to live and work at the garage and was eventually joined by his wife, Rosine, and young son, Denis, who was a long-time resident in Ross. Denis Parsons, interviewed by the Ross Historical Society, recalled living above the garage with his family during the 1920s and '30s while his father worked as a mechanic and drove a taxi operated by the garage. William Meagor added an electrical supply business to his garage, became an engineer for the Ross Fire Department and was elected to the Ross City Council.

By 1940, the Meagors had sold the garage to Ernest Ford while William Meagor continued his work in the electrical supplies business. Eventually, the couple moved to Bayside Acres in San Rafael and built their house out of redwood timber taken from the demolition of the original North Pacific Coast Railroad station in Ross. William Meagor died in 1957 and Isabella Meagor in 1972. Both are buried together at San Rafael's Mt. Tamalpais Cemetery.

History Watch is written by Scott Fletcher, a volunteer at the Marin History Museum, marinhistory.org. Images included in History Watch are available for purchase by calling 415-382-1182 or by email at info@marinhistory.org.