

## Agnes Cappelmann

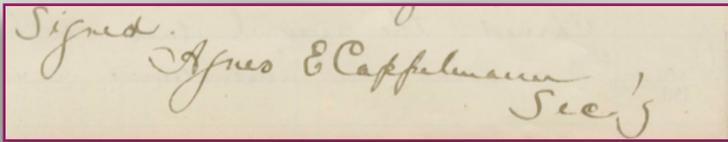
(Mrs. O.C. Cappelmann)

(1868 – 1939)

Anna Agnes Broger Cappelmann was for many years an important member of the Mill Valley community and an influential, active member of The Outdoor Art Club. Beginning in 1902, she was the first Recording Secretary, part of the Executive Committee that would meet weekly until the Club was "fully organized." Her florid cursive documented the minutes of these early meetings and remains a treasure in our archives.

It is in Agnes' penmanship, written with a pen needing to be dipped often in ink, that the following words explain their reasons for a women's club: *"Ever since we were deprived of the beautiful redwood and oak trees that helped make the approach to and from the station more attractive, the question arose among the Ladies of Mill Valley, would it not be wise to form a Club where we might have a word to say in such a*

*matter and consequently a few Ladies met one afternoon in July 1902 at the home of Mrs. Lovell White to discuss the advisability of forming an association or Club."*



Signed.  
Agnes Cappelmann,  
Sec'y

Beginning in August 1902, the Executive Committee met five times, and Agnes recorded their doings, as well as recorded the general meetings of The Outdoor Art Club where sometimes as many as 45 women were present. Using the procedures of Roberts Rules of Order, they wrestled, with the necessary tasks of electing officers and directors, deciding to form three "departments, Civics, Forestry & Botanical, Social & Literary," and also writing a purpose, constitution & bylaws. They also planned for the logistics of *"an entertainment ... with a musical programme, followed by dancing, ice cream to be served as refreshment with no extra charge."* It was also voted *"that it be brought to the attention of the Ladies that they may contribute cake for entertainment if they so desire. This is to be entirely voluntary."*

Agnes Broger was born in 1868 in Santa Cruz where her father owned a drug store. She spent her childhood there, but after her father died and her mother remarried, the family moved to San Francisco. In 1894, she married her good friend and Santa Cruz schoolmate, Oscar Cornelius Cappelmann.

Barry Spitz's book says, *"Shortly before the auction, there were fewer than ten homes scattered across all of today's Mill Valley."* After the 1890 auction, things changed. At some point before 1902, the extended Cappelmann family moved to Mill Valley. Census records show a Cappelmann family, headed by Oscar C. and also consisting of Agnes, her half-brother and sister, plus her mother Agnes Hug, also an OAC Founder, all living together in a house on Summit Avenue. Agnes not only had extended family in her home but also nearby. Her cousins, sisters Emma Doud and Charlotte Ankers lived not far away. They were also OAC Founders, as was Louise Coffin, Agnes' next-door neighbor. It is easy to imagine these women, in 1902 full time residents living around the area of lower Summit Avenue, Cornelia and Throckmorton Avenues, all looking to their influential neighbor up the hill when they



*“were deprived of the beautiful redwood and oak trees that helped make the approach to and from the station more attractive”. We can imagine some of their conversations, finally deciding it would “be wise to form a Club where we might have a word to say in such a matter.”*

Agnes and Oscar Cappelmann were married nearly fifty years and we assume happily so, as her obituary says *“at the time of her death they were inseparable.”* Agnes and Oscar had only one child, a son, Oscar Broger Cappelmann. That boy’s father, Oscar C., was mayor of Mill Valley at one time. And we know his mother, our Agnes, was active in The Outdoor Art Club as well as other civic activities. We can imagine that the boy Oscar must have been somewhat a child of the village. The Mill Valley Record of September 1907 reported under *“local brevities and personal items”* that *“the small son of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Cappelmann is quite sick.”* That boy did recover, and in the summer of 1918 Oscar Broger enlisted in the army and was sent to Camp Kearney in San Diego for training. However after being there only three months and just days before the end of World War I, Oscar Broger Cappelmann died of either flu or pneumonia, records differ. The very day the armistice ending World War I was signed, November 11, 1918, a piece about Oscar’s funeral in the Santa Cruz Sentinel, stated, *“The young man was a frequent visitor from Mill Valley to his relatives in Santa Cruz and had many friends there. He was of a happy, cheery nature and wherever he was, there was brightness and cheer. He was taken ill at the camp, but was able to be up, but was taken with a relapse. His father and mother responded to a telegram and were with him when he died.”* It is poignant to realize that adolescent affection for our Mt. Tamalpais is not new. Barry Spitz’s book says that before going to military training in San Diego, Oscar B. spent his last night in Mill Valley camping on Mt. Tam. He was buried in Santa Cruz.

Over the years Agnes continued to be an active member of The Outdoor Art Club. The only picture we have of her is lifted from a 1916 photo taken of the cast of an original play *“Shakespeare Redivivus,”* where 18 OAC members each took the part of a female character in one of Shakespeare’s plays. Agnes played the part of Rosalind from *As You Like It*. In that play, Rosalind is described as being one of Shakespeare’s most delightful heroines, independent minded, strong-willed, good-hearted and terribly clever. We like to think Agnes Cappelmann was given that role because it fit her character.

Agnes was elected our eleventh OAC President, serving two terms from 1916 to 1918, the very years of World War I. Her thoughts as a mother and citizen are revealed in something she wrote at the time: *“This terrible, chaotic state through which we are passing today makes women want to play a part in that which is ‘self-sacrifice.’ How they can best serve their fellow man is through the medium of the Red Cross and War Relief work.”* During Agnes’ Presidency, club members established a “War Service Section” to sew or render what service was needed. They assembled *“comfort kits and filled them with necessary articles. Dozens of layettes were made for expectant Belgian mothers . . . tobacco was sent to the base hospitals in France . . . The Club purchased \$115 worth of Savings Stamps, \$100 Liberty Bonds as well as contributing \$73 to the War Victory Commission.”*

After the end of the war and the death of their son, Agnes and Oscar continued to live their lives, even traveling to Europe. Official passenger lists of ocean liners record that they were passengers on the steamboat *S.S. Resolute* that arrived in New York City from Hamburg, Germany on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1926. Agnes died thirteen years later in Mill Valley on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1939, age 71. She was buried in Santa Cruz alongside her son.

In the next installment of the OSC Serial, **“The 35 Ladies Project”**, you will read about a plucky lady whose family were Mill Valley residents from the very beginning of the town and who became prominent leaders of the town.