



Source: HSMB. Background: Many thanks to Nancy Farrell and Betsy Bertrando of Cultural Resource Management Services for research done for the owners in 2017.

Nadine Richard's Little Red House

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To see the little red house, drive south on the Embarcadero in Morro Bay to the Tidelands boat launch area and look inland. You will see the red house Nadine Richards built just inside a chain link fence next to the parking lot.

Nadine was born in 1906 and moved to Morro Bay at 285 Main Street with her parents Charles and Irlene in the mid-1930s when the population of the Morro Bay was probably under 400 people. In 1939, she acquired the deed to a narrow strip of land along the bluff at what was then 683 Embarcadero. She had completed college and was working as an interior decorator and artist in Morro Bay by the time of the 1940 Census when she was 34 years old.

Before the war started, Nadine built the top half of the little red house to live in on her mother's land at 285 Main. She did all the work herself, including making pieces of lumber for framing, siding and installing windows. During the war she moved to the Bay area to work in an aircraft factory, but she returned to the little house when the war ended.

Because the Navy had built the Embarcadero in 1942 and 1943, Nadine was able to construct an art studio on her small parcel on the bluff while she continued to live in the little red house on Main. In about 1952/1953 she built a sledge and with the help of a bulldozer moved the little house to the studio location and (somehow!) got it on top of the studio, creating the two-story shape it now has.

The little house is fully functional with a tiny kitchen, a bathroom and a larger living area. It has bright light from its windows and a high-pitched ceiling, making a cozy spot to live. The studio below is connected to the house above through a trap door Nadine cut into the corner of the living area.

Nadine lived in the little house, working as an artist and poet, for many years. She was an active part of the Morro Bay artist colony, part of a group that included pre-war residents like Aaron Kilpatrick, Charles Robinson, Harold Knott, and Charlotte Skinner, and weaver Miles Castle (who plumbed the house to make it more comfortable), as well as lots of later members of the colony in the 1950s.

In 1996, when Nadine had grown old and frail and needed money for her care, she sold the house and lot to the current owners, ending her long residence on the Embarcadero. The owners are planning to build a new home and there isn't room to keep the little red house. Finding a way to keep the house safe is a major project of the Historical Society.