

# THE JAILBIRDS BULLETIN

## Half Moon Bay History Association Jail Museum

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Celebrating the One Year Re-opening of the jail as a small history museum
- Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the building of the jail

### THE OLD TOWN JAIL

#### ~ A Brief Timeline

**1911** – A building which was later used as a jail was constructed by John Higgins. He purchased the land on which it was built from the estate of Thomas Johnston. Johnston built a barn on the property which housed horses and wagons for a fast freight line.

**1919** – John Higgins sold his property to San Mateo County. Contractors Wightman & Savage began work to create a county jail with two small cells. Estimated cost of completion was \$3,000.

**1960s** – The jail served as a Sheriff's sub-station. Prisoners were held overnight, then transferred to the Redwood City Jail. Local citizens also used the cells to sleep off binges from the local saloon.

**1970s** – The structure served as the San Mateo County's Mental Health Services office. Staff moved to larger quarters in 1977.

**1989** – San Mateo County turned the building over to the City of Half Moon Bay. The site was leased to the Spanishtown Historical Society.

**2018** – The city leased the jail to the Half Moon Bay History Association. After painting, preparing historical exhibits, and training docents, the organization opened the jail as a small museum in June.

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Over the past year, people from the Coastside and from around the world have visited our jail. They're always amazed with the amount of interesting artifacts and information packed into our little museum.

Docents are available Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to discuss exhibits and answer questions about our colorful local history. The Jail Museum is located at 505 Johnston Street in Half Moon Bay.

Thank you to all the "Jailbirds" who made this museum possible. If you'd like to join our team as a docent or a volunteer, please contact us at:  
[info@halfmoonbayhistory.org](mailto:info@halfmoonbayhistory.org)



**“MUG SHOT” – The Grand Old Man of the Coast**

John E. Pitcher served Half Moon Bay as Justice of the Peace for over 40 years. Born in Indiana, he grew up learning building and bricklaying skills. Pitcher made a perilous journey across the plains to California about 1849, joining hordes of other Gold Rush fortune seekers.



After toiling in mining camps, Pitcher worked in the construction business in San Francisco. In 1861, he settled in Half Moon Bay (then known as Spanishtown) with his wife, Louise Bray. They lived on a 200 acre farm which bordered Tunitas Creek, growing oats and vegetables and raising cattle for milk and cheese. He established the Tunitas school district to allow his children to attend classes near their home.

Described as a pleasant and highly respected man, Pitcher was elected Justice of the Peace in 1879. He continued to serve until 1922 when he was defeated by C.W Borden who was 60 years his junior. Pitcher died at the age of 96 in 1924. The town’s business offices and schools closed to honor their “Grand Old Man of the Coast.”

<b>FEES OF CONSTABLE</b>	
Political Code Sec. 4300d	
To be posted in a conspicuous place in the office of the justice of the peace he serves.	
<small>Political Code, Sec. 4185</small>	
<small>(The following fees are general as to all counties, except where the county government act or Political Code section applicable to some particular county provides otherwise.)</small>	
For serving summons and complaint, for each defendant served.....	\$ 50
For each copy of summons for service, when made by him.....	25
For levying writ of attachment or execution, or executing order of arrest or for the delivery of personal property.....	1 00
For serving writ of attachment or execution on any ship, boat or vessel.....	3 00
For keeping personal property, such sum as the court may order; but no more than per day shall be allowed for a keeper when necessarily employed.....	3 00
For taking bond or undertaking.....	50
For copies of writs and other papers, except summons, complaint and subpoenas, per folio.....	10
provided, that when correct copies are furnished him for use, no charge shall be made for such copies.	
For serving any writ, notice, or order, except summons, complaint, or subpoenas, for each person served.....	50
For writing and posting each notice of sale of property.....	25
For furnishing notice for publication.....	25
For serving subpoenas, each witness, including copy.....	25
For collecting money on execution.....	1 ½%
For executing and delivering certificate of sale.....	50
For executing and delivering constable's deed.....	1 50
For each mile actually traveled within his township in the service of any writ, order or paper, except a warrant of arrest, in going only, per mile.....	25
provided, that in townships which consist in whole or in part of cities of the first and one-half class, the constable or marshal shall receive in lieu of said mileage, his actual traveling expenses going and returning from place of service.	
For traveling outside of his township to serve such writ, order, or paper, in going only, provided, that a constable shall not be required to travel outside of his township to serve any civil process, order or paper. No constructive mileage allowed.....	15
For each mile necessarily traveled within his county in executing a warrant of arrest, both in going and returning from place of arrest.....	15
For each mile traveled out of his county, both going and returning from place of arrest.....	05
provided, that for traveling in the performance of two or more official services at the same time, including the service of civil process or criminal warrants, or transportation of persons charged or convicted of a criminal offense, but one mileage shall be charged.	
For executing a search warrant, such fees and mileage as may be allowed for executing warrant of arrest.....	
For arresting prisoner and bringing him into court, or jail.....	1 00
For summoning a jury (including mileage).....	2 00
For transporting prisoners to and from the county jail, the actual cost of such transportation.....	
<small>Pol. C.—Sections 4300d, 4319, 4187-4189, 4157-4171, except the 4th and 6th subdivisions of Section 4157 govern the powers and duty of constables. Additional constables, Section 4014. As fireman, Section 3345. As auctioneer, Section 3291. As poundmaster, Section 4187.</small>	

~ THE POSSE ~

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**JAIL TALES**

\* In early years, it was the custom for elected Justices of the Peace to supply their own courtrooms and jail cells. Many were local businessmen who owned buildings. The county paid owners a monthly rent of \$5 to \$10 for the facilities.

\* In 1875, William Pringle, a Justice of the Peace and harness-maker, set up a jail on the corner of Main Street and Miramontes Street. This was also the location of the Pringle Harness-Making Shop and several offices.

\* Sometime prior to 1884, a town jail of some sort was constructed. It was built by Henry E. Lea who arrived in the area in the early 1860s. He was also a Justice of the Peace from 1867 to 1869. It was located a block south of the current jail structure.