

Next Program... Everyone Invited!

HMB History Association proudly presents . . .

“Prohibition on the San Mateo County Coast”

Half Moon Bay History Association MEETING - Tuesday, April 26

Americans were drinking alcoholic beverages at home and at bars and nightclubs before Prohibition came 1920. For the years it lasted, consumption continued - - but new economies and new businesses sprung up around the country. However, the difference it made for those thirteen years on business-life in the San Mateo Coastside was certainly greater than most places.



Before and after Prohibition, the Coastside was a lightly populated, sleepy farming community. Almost everyone was a farmer or in a business that supported farmers. But for the time that Prohibition was in effect, the changes in the business activities of many residents enjoyed a major change of pace. There was a new excitement. New jobs to do, and many new kinds of visitors to San Mateo's coast.

Every part of the Prohibition experience came here. There was smuggling (“bootlegging” and “rum-running”). There was production (“Moonshining”). And there were new bars and roadhouses (“Speakeasies”). And when Prohibition ended, the Coastside quickly and quietly returned to its rural nature. The memories of those times lived long. The old residents’ grand children are still retelling tales of things that happened then.

In the 1930s, mobster Sam Termini called San Mateo County the most corrupt county in the state. With rumrunners landing Canadian whiskey on isolated beaches, moonshiners operating in homes and a multitude of speakeasies, the county earned a reputation as one of the “wettest” in the state during Prohibition. Carmen Blair, Deputy Director of the San Mateo County Historical Association, will share Prohibition stories during an illustrated presentation.

Among her responsibilities, Carmen Blair is involved with school programs, public programs for adults and children, exhibit design and publications. She received her B.A. in Honors History from Gustavus Adolphus College and her M.A. in Museum Studies from San Francisco State University.

Topic: “Prohibition on the San Mateo County Coast”

Presenter: Carmen Blair

Place 724 Kelly Street, HMB, “Portuguese Cultural Center”

Date: Tuesday, April 26

Time: 5:30 Doors open – finger snacks and refreshments

Public welcome – No charge

Meeting begins: 6:00



The Hotel San Pedro, located at the Sanchez Adobe, was one of the many nearby speakeasies during prohibition.

Photo: San Mateo County Historical Association.

MEMORIES OF GALEN WOLF

By JoAnn Semones

Few artists capture the lure and lore of the Coastside as uniquely as Galen Wolf. His colorful stories and paintings made him a local legend. The Matheny family, who lived next door to Wolf for several years, recently shared their experiences with me.

Robert Matheny, who owned a medical practice in Half Moon Bay, was Galen Wolf's personal physician. In 1963, Robert and his wife Ann leased land from Galen. They raised chickens, cattle, sheep and three children in what was called "Wolf Canyon" (Frenchman's Creek).

According to Robert (Bob) Matheny, Jr., "Galen lived in a knocked together cabin which overlooked a flat area and went down to the creek. There was next to no electricity and very little running water. The outhouse door always remained open because a tree was growing through it."

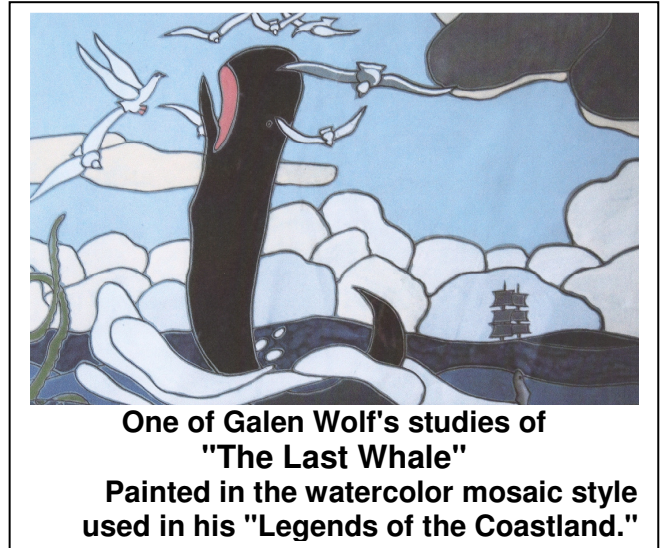
Until 1967, Galen's brother Fred lived nearby in another cabin. Since Fred's abode had electricity, Galen would often join Fred at night to watch television. During the day, Fred wrote Western pulp fiction while Galen worked on his art. Galen painted in several different styles and always had numerous works in progress.

"Galen looked like grandpa. He wore baggy pants and smelled vaguely of sage. He'd wander out, mom would give him something to eat, and he lit up," Bob revealed. "He was never angry, but sometimes he'd fuss and grump if we kids made too much noise playing. He was a really nice guy who didn't bother you a lot."

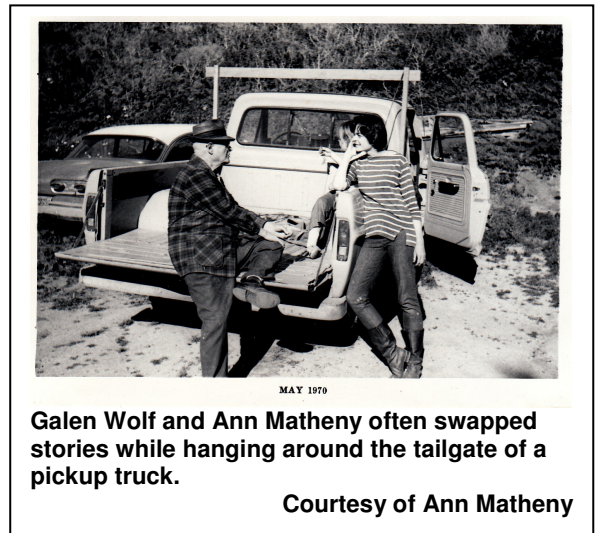
The Matheny's property contained a pond and a blackberry bush. Wildlife roamed about, including a bobcat, but none of the animals posed a threat to the family. Galen visited often, usually sitting on the tailgate of a pickup truck, sharing family history and swapping childhood stories.

Ann noted that, "Galen was not a tidy housekeeper or much of a cook. His breakfast usually consisted of burnt toast. I'd bake him sweets and treats and an occasional dinner. He was enthralled with anything sweet. It was just as easy for me to bake two pies as one."

Every time Ann took anything to Galen, he'd make certain that she chose a piece of artwork in return. "We have stacks of paintings and sketches from him," Ann explained. "Everyone in our family has his art work prominently displayed in their homes."



One of Galen Wolf's studies of "The Last Whale" Painted in the watercolor mosaic style used in his "Legends of the Coastland."



Galen Wolf and Ann Matheny often swapped stories while hanging around the tailgate of a pickup truck.

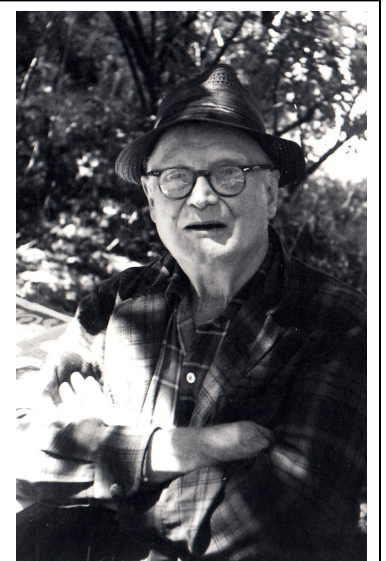
Courtesy of Ann Matheny



**The Matheny family
(Bobby, Robert, Shawn, Ann,
David) pose with Coastside artist
Galen Wolf in 1968.
Courtesy of Ann Matheny**

Ann also typed up stories for Galen's "Legends of the Coastland." Although both fact and fancy are incorporated into the stories, they offer a rare portal into early coastal history. They were written to accompany paintings. Depicted in watercolor mosaic, more than half the pieces focus on maritime subjects. Shipwrecks, whalers, fishermen, and even sea monsters appear.

"One time when we were talking, Galen asked me to help with his legends. That was the first time I saw them or the paintings," Ann recalled. "He gave me hand written notes and I'd type them up. This was done on a manual typewriter, of course. He'd correct, add, and change things and hand them back to me. Then, we'd repeat the process, sometimes several times."



Galen Wolf's stories and paintings made him a Coastside legend. He died in 1976.

Courtesy of Ann Matheny

The Mathenys left the Coastside for Kentucky in 1970, just six years before Galen Wolf passed away. "We never forgot our special time on the coast," Ann sighed. "Galen gave us some magical memories."

(Editor's Note: JoAnn Semones is a maritime author and historian. For books and stories about Coastside history, visit her website at www.GullCottageBooks.com)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Keeping history alive gets to be fun sometimes...

... Like the friendly voice on the phone. She wondered if we would help preserve what MIGHT be a valuable Coastside artifact. The neighbor who called is Kim Dailey.

Some years ago she had bought an antique loom – the machine that early Americans used to make blankets and other woven fabrics. In their day, looms were a valuable tool found in only a few homes. Now, weaving is considered more of a recreational art.

Of course, the history association just loves to gather old reminders of our Coastside past. When we actually have a museum to display them, such items will be wonderfully educational, maybe entertaining, and certainly interesting. All that said, we don't try to collect things that are not somehow tied to the Coastside's history. The special treasures are those that tie into our old families, or that connect to major turning points.

That brings us to the question. Is there someone in our group of friends and readers who would recognize this loom as an artifact? Can we say, "YES, please let us help preserve this piece of typical Coastside history."

Here is what Kim Dailey knows about the loom: It belonged to a woman named Robin (no last name remembered). Robin lived on Kelly avenue, HMB. She enjoyed weaving. She mentioned that she was told that the loom had "... come around the Horn." Now, if it came around the Horn (The southern tip of south America), that could bring it to California anytime between about the late 1850s until the completion of the Panama Canal (1914), when consumer cargo started taking the Panama shortcut. That would make it old. And that would make it a California artifact.

Perhaps an expert could look at some pictures and determine the age of the loom. Maybe somebody might recognize the person named Robin. She sold the loom about 25 years ago, after using it as a hobbyist. It was sold to Kim Daily at the El Granada Thrift Store. Robin was about 65 years old at that time. By the numbers, her mother or grandmother could have been an original owner.

The loom is 26 inches wide. It is 30 inches deep and 44 inches high. (We have more pictures...)

So, friends and experts... What do you think? Should the history association take possession of this loom as being a likely part of Coastside history?

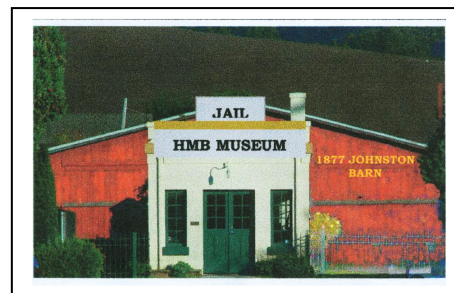


Looking forward to looking back,

Dave Cresson
President

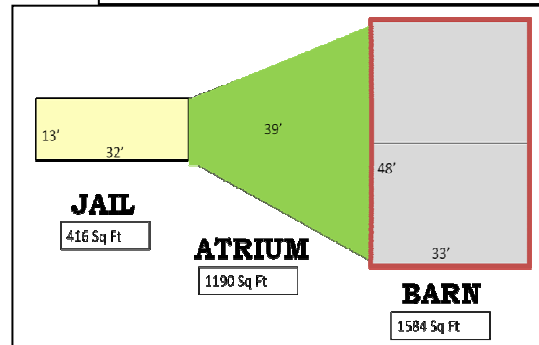
City Hall - (History Museum Progress Report)

One and a half years ago, the association went to City Hall to ask for permission to enter the historic 1877 Johnston Barn to learn if it could be made into a local history museum. The inspection by an architectural expert would take less than an hour of time. It would produce a Go/No-go conclusion. The Museum Founders Group thought that the combination of the Barn and the 1911 Jail would be an ideal arrangement of structures for a museum.



We learned that we would not be allowed in. We were told that the barn was used for two days annually as a fund raising concession by a youth group. (It is a Pumpkin Festival "Haunted House" attraction). The lease was given orally to the youth group by a City Council member. She said the lease would expire in 2018. We have been appealing for access to inspect since then. We have been also asking the City to consider us as a possible 365 day tenant.

This month the council member told us that our expert would be allowed to enter. She also declared that the lease to the youth group was extended by another two years – to 2020. We were also told that we could use part of the barn for storage or filing if we wanted. A year and a half of patience has yielded a result. Although construction would apparently be delayed for another two years, at least the ball may be rolling.



A possible plan: Entry & shop at Jail – covered historic farm equipment display in Atrium – Museum in Barn

What is the association?

Half Moon Bay History Association is a non-profit – tax deductible 501(c) (3) corporation. (Since 2006)

It plans to...

- Try to find answers to any questions asked about Coastside history,
- Publish books and papers about the community's historic places, events, cultures,
- Publish a newsletter about current activities of the group (On-line, free to all who request it)... And Programs too!
- Manage the History Room in the Zaballa House,
- Manage a website devoted to Coastside history,
- And whatever an idea person comes up with...

FREE! TO ALL 2016 MEMBERS – Pick up your free copy at the Zaballa House – 326 Main St., HMB

GUIDE BOOK OF HALF MOON BAY

A New book for locals and visitors...

A souvenir for friends and visitors to remember the Coastside. It is easy to read – even easier to follow - a guide to historic places..

Printed on fine quality paper, the book is a handy, descriptive and colorful piece, showing and briefly describing nearly seventy historic places in town Half Moon Bay. Short, but informative descriptions of each place are combined with pictures of the historic sites as they are today - - and as they appeared in days gone by.

