

HALF MOON BAY
HISTORY
ASSOCIATION
Celebrating Coastside Legacies
326 Main Street
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
(650) 726-4468

retro-spective

December, 2013

Vol. V No. 4

**TIME TO JOIN...
- OR RENEW -
MEMBERSHIP FOR 2014**

Next Meeting: SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS
Tuesday, December 3, 2013

Topic:

**WATER FOR THIRSTY
COMMUNITIES**
Development of Coastside Water

Board of Directors:
Dave Cresson, President
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History Feature ...

[**Editor Note:** We were doing some research on another Coastside tidbit of history when we ran across this wonderful newspaper article. It was written for the Daly Alta California newspaper in 1857 – Just as Americans were beginning to settle the Coastside. The article gave the feeling that we were right there with the writer - experiencing the difficult horse and buggy trip from San Francisco to Half Moon Bay - - Spanishtown.

Here is what traveling over our Route 92 was like in 1857!

In 1857, newspapers were in their infancy. The writing for this front page story is not as slick and polished as journalists do it today. But much of the fun is in the old fashioned expressions. We edited it for our newsletter – but tried to keep its flavor.]

A Trip to the Coast

Daly Alta California 1857

Many people have lived for years in San Francisco without making themselves acquainted with interesting localities which abound in the vicinity of our City. We decided to get away from the din and hubbub - to take a trip to a place very near us and well worth visiting.

We had an invitation from a friend who lives about thirty-five miles from here, beyond Half-Moon Bay. We took a horse and buggy and wended our way in that direction.

For the first eighteen miles, we followed the stage route to San Jose, with which most of our readers are familiar. A turn to the west, and about five miles more, the road descends into a beautiful little valley. This is the "Crystal Springs," a quiet little place, embraced by the shady foliage of the brilliantly green live oak trees.

From there, we began the road going up and over the coastal mountain range towards the coast. Horses seem to have a natural inborn objection to going uphill. That objection is augmented by the fact of having buggies attached to them. We concluded it better to walk, which we did, leading the animal up to the top of the mountain. Finally we reached the top.

Continued - next



The view however from the summit, is one which fully compensates for the labor required to reach it. From here, both the bay and the ocean are visible, the one lying still and placid in the summer sunshine, the other lashing itself and foaming up against our rugged coast. We stopped and gazed awhile upon the one side, and the other, and then commenced our descent.

Unlike the uphill, our horse was slightly inclined to go down in a hurry. So we got out and held him back a little. While resting upon a piece of table land in the road, we were met by an individual coming up on horseback.

We asked how far it was to Spanishtown, He informed us that it was only about three miles; but, "Boys," said he, "Ye will never get down that way."

"Why not?" said we.

"Well," said our friend, "I've travelled a good deal. First and last... and been up and down a good many hills. But there's a place just ahead that for steepness is very bad. Just the worst out of any buggy road I ever did see." He went on, "Ye never can get down without locking yer wheels. Yer buggy will be pitchin' right over the horse's head. The road is straight up and down - like a yard o' pump water."

"Well," said we, "What should we do? We haven't any thing to lock our wheels. And I think we'd better go back to the Springs and give up the trip to the coast for now."

"Oh no, boys," said our friend, "don't go back; it's a lovely spot when you get to it, and yer can go down easy enough if you only lock yer wheels.*"

"But," again we reiterated, "We have nothing to lock with."

"Well, boys," said he, holding up a piece of rope about ten feet long, "Here's a piece o' rope I'll let yer have. What'll yer give me for it?"

"Well," we said, "What's it worth?"

"It cost me four bits, and I think I ought to make two bits on it. So you can have it for six bits."

We completed the purchase - - although we were a little suspicious that the steepness of the descent had been somewhat exaggerated by our friend.

We fastened the two hind buggy wheels with it to the axletree, and started on. We soon found, that there had been no exaggeration at all. For about fifty yards just previous to reaching the valley, there was the nearest "straight up and down" buggy road ever. But our wheels were locked. So, below us lay the valley, green and smiling, inviting us down, and down we went. Without really much trouble.

About two miles from the foot of the mountain is "Spanishtown," a collection of a couple of dozen adobe houses. At the main adobe, the Mexicans had gathered to the holiday.

The appearance of things about here reminded us more of California in its ante-golden days than anything we have seen before in this vicinity. The *gente* had gathered from the neighboring ranches, and were lolling across their saddles, smoking cigaritos, "talking horse," and swearing, looking as happy, and as careless, as could be.



Continued - next

We learned there had been two or three horse races during the day, and that there was to be a "fandango " at night.

But we were to push up the valley to stay the night, and about dark we reached the house of Mr. Selleck, some four miles from Spanishtown. We were certainly glad to meet after our day's eventful, yet pleasant journey.

We saw that the agriculture is strong here, with a very rich soil, naturally moist, and easy of tillage. For a distance of about three miles, down the coast from Spanishtown, the land was originally embraced in the Miramontez grant. Now those who originally "settled " on the land, have purchased. There are about thirty American families living on the tract. It is now a perfect garden. The crops of wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, and onions, are very superior.

After on excellent night's rest and a good breakfast, we took a walk down to the beach, distant about half a mile, to see "the lions " — literally to see "the lions." — "sea lions." at least a thousand of them. Some weighed two thousand pounds. Each one will turn out from five to twenty gallons of oil, which is said, for burning purposes, to be fully equal to the best whale oil.

After taking a walk upon the beach, we harnessed up, and after ascending and descending once more the Coast Range, finally reached San Francisco. We can safely recommend the trip and would simply suggest to those who go in buggies, to profit by our experience, and carry something with which to "lock their wheels."



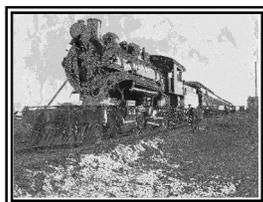
HALF MOON BAY
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**TIME TO JOIN... OR
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Annual dues \$25
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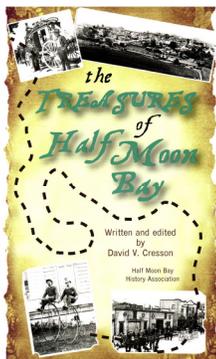


What we do:
Search for the bits and pieces ...
Tell the stories ...
Keep the records ...
...Of how our Coastside came to become itself

Name: _____
Address: _____
Telephone : () _____
e-mail: _____

Do you prefer ...
To be a quiet supporter ..
To get involved
Maybe a little of both

Annual dues: \$25
Mail to: HMB History Assoc
326 Main St.
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019



Next Program...

Next Half Moon Bay History Association meeting – Tuesday, December 3.

Topic: “Water for Thirsty Communities”

Presenter: Bob Rathborne

Place 300 Main Street, HMB – Suite #5

Date: Tuesday, December 3

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

Meeting begins: 6:00

Public welcome – No charge Seating limited

“Water for Thirsty Communities”

Bob Rathborne presents...

One of the biggest and most complicated community construction projects is out of sight - - So invisible that we probably wouldn't guess what it was.

The history of the Coastside's water supply is surprisingly complicated. It began in the very first days of Half Moon Bay - - Spanishtown. That was a project that took Coastside water and sent it many miles away, to an explosively fast-growing San Francisco.

More than a century later, with the help of an engineering masterpiece, the Coastside is getting some of its water back from San Francisco – from its famous Hetch-Hetchy pipeline - - All the way from the Sierra Nevada Mountains.



Hear how this historic circle was completed over twenty years ago. It was a challenging project that that balanced engineering, politics and construction. It put a huge tunnel down and then under Crystal Springs Reservoir.

The size of the project made it the most expensive local public works project up to its day (Surpassed now by the Montara Tunnel). As complicated as it was, it was done practically out of sight. Now completed, it remains out of sight. Unnoticed, it is a secure source of water assured into the foreseeable future by the Coastside County Water District. “The Little District that Could”

Bob Rathborne will present this remarkable story. Rathborne is one of the Coastside's long time residents and community servants. He is a native, having grown up on the Coastside, and still very much a part of it. He served as HMB Postmaster for nearly twenty years and then nearly thirty more with the Coastside County Water District Board, the last few as General Manager. Retired, he stays close to the water – but is now a fisherman.

Hear about this important piece of Coastside history, told by the man who managed its biggest single project from beginning to end.

President's Message

Some fun discovering history...

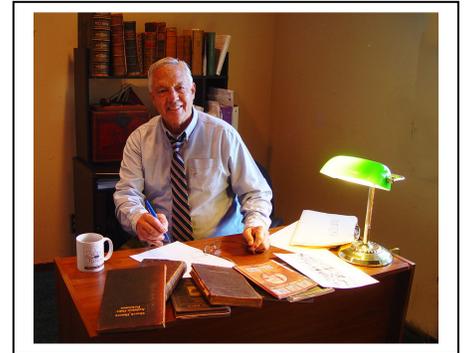
By Dave Cresson

One of the main reasons I have fun with Coastside History is that our town sparkles with reflections of the birth of America and of California.

With all our open space, it is easy to picture the Ohlone natives working together to gather their food from ocean, fields, and streams. We can imagine bears and mountain lions still ruling the hillsides. Our communities still have old buildings reminding us of the days of early growth after the Gold Rush. And there are so many fascinating old stories to be explored.

For example...

I was learning about the nearby town of Purissima - now, the Coastside's own Ghost Town. I was struck by the two spellings of the word, "Purissima." With one "s" it refers to the canyon, four miles south of Half Moon Bay. "Purissima," with two "ss's", refers to the community that had sprung up within that canyon. It was just a fun little curiosity - Why two ways to spell what is almost the same thing?



Surprising as it may be, the quest uncovered a really interesting and important story.

The two "ss's" denote the accidental tracks that were left by a remarkable early resident. His name was Willard Buzzell. He was among the very first Americans to become a Coastsider. Perhaps before the more famous James Johnston and the Spaniard Zaballa.

Buzzell, it turns out, was part of the hearty fabric of men involved in the birth of California. We all recognize the names of Sutter, Stockton, and Fremont. Buzzell however was not one of the giants of California history. Willard Buzzell the essential part of the "next layer down". He was a real human person, who was both flawed and inspired, probably much like most of the men whose actions transported California into the United States. The real stuff of California's history. Buzzell began his California adventure here, on the shore of the Half Moon Bay Coastside. After a lifetime of action, Buzzell's life also ended here, on the Coastside. All too young and tragically.

I want to share this story with the HMB History Association within the next few weeks.

Just another of the reasons that it's fun to be digging around in our wonderful Coastside history

Oh! About those two "ss", and how they lead me to learning about Willard Buzzell ...

He opened one of the first businesses within Purissima Canyon. It was a typical road house of the day. A saloon, general merchandise store, and had rooms to rent. He named it the "Purissima House" - with the two "ss's". Maybe he thought that names are supposed to have double letters in them - - Like "Buzzell." Who knows.

Of the several businesses in the town of Purissima, The Purissima House was the last to close its doors. It was torn down in 1944 - still remembered by some of the old timers.

I never would have found out about his amazing life in California if I hadn't started digging into who first used the two "ss's" in our ghost town, Purissima.

Still looking forward to looking back,

Dave Cresson
President