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HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

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DUES

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Next Meeting: SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

“Rocks and Shocks”

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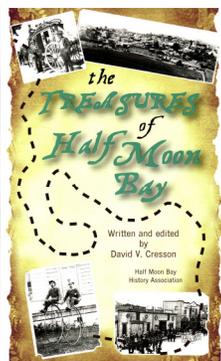
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ABOUT THE HMB HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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



Annual dues \$25
2018 Membership
FREE! copy of HMBHA historic
Walking Tour book,
“*Treasures of Half Moon Bay*”
Pick your copy up at ...
And send form to...

HMBHA
c/o Zaballa House
326 Main St.
HMB, CA 94019

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Name: _____
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Do you prefer ...
to be a quiet supporter ..
to get involved (Please!)
maybe a little of both

Annual dues: \$25

**Mail to: HMB History Association (HMBHA)
326 Main St.
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019**

Next Program... Everyone is Invited!

HMB History Association presents .

“Rocks and Shocks” How the **GEOLOGY** of the Coastline Changes the **HISTORY** of the Coastside

Presenter: Tyler Ladinsky

Place Portuguese Cultural Center, 724 Kelly Ave, HMB

Date: Tues., December 5

Time: 5:30 p.m. doors open – finger snacks and refreshments

Public welcome – No charge

Meeting begins: Business at 6 p.m., Program about 6:20 p.m.



Rocks and Shocks: The San Gregorio Fault

How does local geology affect the landscape and history of the Coastside?

Most of us have heard of the San Andreas Fault, but in fact, it's the San Gregorio Fault that is the major factor in determining the landscape on the Coastside. We will learn about the Seal Cove fault zone, one of the few onshore exposures of the San Gregorio fault, and how its history has played a key role in shaping Pillar Point, Princeton, Moss Beach, El Granada and Montara.

We will also talk about how sea level fluctuations have influenced development along the Coastside and what may be ahead geologically for the Coastside.

Mr. Ladinsky is a licensed professional geologist with over seven years of experience identifying and mitigating geologic hazards on a wide variety of projects from critical infrastructure to single family residence throughout northern California. Typical geologic hazard investigations (GHI) he's been involved with have focused on delineating fault-induced ground rupture, co-seismic shaking, liquefaction, and slope instability (landsliding). His knowledge draws on his wide diversity of projects experience coupled with research-based paleoseismic and Quaternary geologic studies. His experience and training is focused on surface processes, paleoseismology, and engineering geology. Mr. Ladinsky received his MS in geology from Humboldt State University in 2012.

History Feature...

SHORE WHALING ON THE COASTSIDE

By JoAnn Semones

The history of Coastside shore whaling is much broader than what can be covered in this story. Presented here is a snapshot of early events, some of which involved a prominent local figure.

Shore whaling in California began in Monterey around 1855 when Portuguese settlers from the Azores formed a shore whaling company. According to an early news clipping, “A number of Portuguese whalers established themselves at Monterey for the purpose of capturing whales that are indigenous to California. They captured 5 gray whales, 9 humpbacks, and 4 killers; 6 others were killed but lost. This was for the months between April and September, and it paid the men \$438 each.”

Shore whaling proved to be so profitable that whaling stations were established all along the coast. At Half Moon Bay, a shore whaling company was formed in 1861. Like most other “companies,” it consisted of one captain, one mate, a cooper (someone who makes and repairs wooden casks and barrels), two boat steersmen, and eleven other crew.

The men pursued whales in small boats. Once a whale was conquered, it was towed to the beach and “flensed” or stripped of its blubber. The blubber was melted down into oil in try pots (huge cast iron kettles) set in furnaces made of rocks and clay. The cooled oil, which would be used to light lamps and lubricate machinery, was poured into barrels for shipment to San Francisco.

According to George Davidson, a surveyor with the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Service, the Half Moon Bay whaling operation was located “one mile northwest from the extremity of Pillar Point.” Known as Whaleman’s Harbor, the area was adjacent to property owned by James G. Denniston.

Denniston was one of the richest inhabitants of San Mateo County and a prominent politician. His “Rancho Corral De Tierra,” which featured a creek running across the acreage, centered near what is present day Princeton-by-the-Sea. According to an 1860 issue of the San Mateo County Gazette, Denniston’s rancho was “one of the most productive of its kind, namely, for grain and stock raising.”

In order to transport his products to market in San Francisco, he built the first wharf in Half Moon Bay in 1858. Located on the southeast side of Pillar Point, it became known as Denniston’s Landing or sometimes Potato Wharf because of the volume of spuds loaded onto ships.

Denniston’s ranch also attracted whales. On one occasion the Daily Alta reported, “Another huge whale came ashore a few days ago on the ranch of James Denniston, making it the third which has come ashore in the same place within the last eight months. This is larger than the others. It is of the species known as humpbacks and measures 65 feet in length. It is estimated it will yield 40 barrels of prime oil.”



This shore whaling station shows a whaler’s cottage, whale bones, and try pots used to melt blubber into oil.

(Courtesy of JoAnn Semones)

Shore Whaling Continues on p.4

The property was in the news again when the British iron ship *Rydal Hall* wrecked near Half Moon Bay in 1876. A newspaper notice advertising the auction of the vessel's remains said, "We will sell the *Rydal Hall* as she now lies on the beach, abreast of Denniston's Ranch near the whaling station, together with her entire cargo."

When the *Rydal Hall* wrecked in 1876, this auction ad mentioned the ship's location near the Half Moon Bay whaling station.

(Courtesy of the Daily Alta)

Although the original Half Moon Bay whaling station moved to Pigeon Point in 1862, another company was organized and operated until 1874. Others followed, but the station was abandoned in the 1880s.

(Editor's Note: JoAnn Semones is a maritime author and historian. Visit her website at

www.GullCottageBooks.com for books and stories about Coastside history.)



We hope you have heard that the city of Half Moon Bay has given the History Association the opportunity to open a history museum on city property. The museum will be in the historic Thomas Johnston barn and the old city jail.

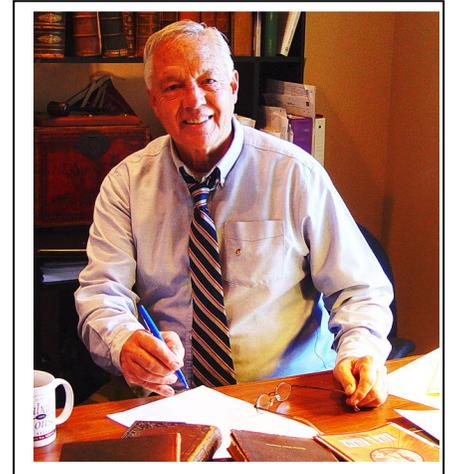
We will be needing **volunteers** for **two** immediate types of activities:

1. **DOCENTS:** For those who enjoy meeting and exchanging kind words with the public, we will train docents to become hosts in the jail, ready to talk about the museum project and the Coastside's past. Trainers support those docents, building their strengths in becoming the best storytellers and explainers ever.
2. **FUNDS DEVELOPMENT:** Have you had experience raising money for worthy community causes? The museum project needs immediate support in presenting an effective and entertaining campaign to raise the money needed to restore the old barn. This is NOT a huge amount of money. In over ten years serving the community, we have not needed to raise serious money before. If you have worked on this kind of project, have ideas that might help, or simply want to help – please let us know!

President's Message...

Our History Makes Our Museum Vital

We are starting the work of establishing a local history museum. This is a good time to remind ourselves that a museum for our community is important. A history museum is probably important for any small town. However, few other towns, if any, have such a string of historic events, cultural shifts, and close reflections of state and national history flowing around as we have on our Coastside. Telling our story to local schools, residents and visitors is community service. ***Preserving and displaying our history is important.***



Starting at home, today....

When I first moved to California for my new job, all I wanted was my career and a home by the ocean. By a process of elimination, I found the Coastside for my future home. It was bright and sunny and was within a half-hour commute to my job in the Ferry Building in San Francisco. The Coastside was filled with flowers, hillsides, its spectacular ocean and so much natural, open space. I learned later that the water is chilly, and we are sometimes engulfed in fog. I also learned later that my neighbors – attracted, I'm sure, by some of the same features – are special, real people. That must have something to do with the various things that bring folks to live here.

Fifty years or so later, despite rumors to the contrary, things have not changed that much. The undeveloped natural beauty with its space is still the major feature. Freeways and massive developments did not roll across every hill and valley. That was not the plan fifty years ago. Here is where understanding history gives us special appreciation. For better or worse, the past was filled with efforts – often conflicting – that created the present situation. We can simply enjoy what we have. I enjoy it even more by knowing a little about the political push and pull, the politics, voices and votes that shaped this part of our here and now. ***Recent history tells that important story about the Coastside today.***

Education. Enjoying Coastside history teaches California history ...

Physically our Coastside is on the ocean, sandwiched between two of the biggest, most advanced cities in the country. We are separated from the bay and from San Francisco and Silicon Valley by a line of relatively small mountains.

The ocean water and fields of grasses allowed the natives to exist here for thousands of years. The Ohlone left their history recorded in the earth, but not so much in written records. Spanish explorers moved through this Coastside, with their journalists making written notes about their first impressions of the places we now call Half Moon Bay, Moss Beach, Montara. California matured as the Mexicans governed and made land grants. The bay became the highway for the Americans to take California over and to explode its population with the rush for gold. With America's western movement came the commerce, agriculture and land ownership, tourism, and all manner of enterprise – from whaling to plow-manufacturing, cheese production, lumber and more.

American movements flowed through California and the Coastside. The age of the railroad touched here. Dreams of real estate riches drifted in, followed the farm boys being drafted for the Great War, and Prohibition with our brand of bootlegging and roadhouses. Came the Great Depression and on its heels, fear of Japanese invasion on our beaches. That made the Coastside an armed camp and it caused a displacement of our Japanese neighbors and restrictions on our resident German and Italians as well. The reflections of an American spirit of growth was a bit different locally. California rode on an age of prosperity and the post war years saw a remarkable migration west to California. As mentioned above, the mood of this area slowed the growth a bit here on the Coastside. ***Coastside history is the grass roots of California history.***

The diverse cultures on the Coastside are a vital thread of its History...

From its beginnings, the communities of the Coastside have created important stories of different cultures. Most of these cultures came here looking for new lives. The early meetings of different groups were not always particularly smooth. The Spanish contact with the natives and the Mexican replacement of Spanish, followed by the American westward movement marked the beginning of the modern west. Later, as the population developed, the encounters became more frequent and relaxed. With few exceptions, new nationalities and ethnic groups cooperated, dreamed, worked, and formed the community together. The result was been a changing mix of aspiring cultures.

The founders and the builders of today's Coastside are Mexicans, Americans, Scots, Italians, Irish, and so many more. Each brought something of their own touch of lifestyle and business energy to the growth. Among them all, the Portuguese earn special note. They brought and maintain an enduring spirit and a celebration from their Azores roots that became a lasting part of the Coastside tradition... The Chamarita!

Every family that has ever lived here does leave some mark that colors local history.

For fun or for wisdom—a museum can be a bank of trivia and tales of action and adventure.

Many of the early buildings were not swept under by demolition to make way for shopping areas or newer housing developments. Expansion slowed. Older buildings remained to become living artifacts of an earlier time. Each can tell stories of events from those Gold Rush and railroad years. Street names remind us of the town fathers who shaped the town.

Preserving the little things in archives, files or displays is the work of a museum. The tidal shifts and anecdotal events can all be preserved for reference or amusement: dreamers, builders, marauders and grizzly bears. Daring construction and wild stagecoach drivers and their robbers.

Big and small, these threads that form the fabric of a community will be preserved.

Knowing about our own family tells us who we are. Local history tells us where our town has been and how our community has come to be itself.

Looking forward to looking back.

Dave Cresson
President

What is the Association?

The Half Moon Bay History Association is a nonprofit tax deductible 501(c) 3 corporation. (Since 2006)

It plans to...

- Try to find answers to any questions asked about Coastside history,
- Publish a newsletter about current activities of the group (Online, free to all who request it)... and programs too !
- Manage a website devoted to Coastside history,
- And pursue whatever idea someone comes up with...

See form on front page

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