

HALF MOON BAY
HISTORY
ASSOCIATION
Celebrating Coastside Legacies

326 Main Street
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
(650)726-4468

retro-spective

January, 2016

Vol. VIII No. 1

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
HISTORY ASSOCIATION
RENEW – 2016 DUES**

**Next Meeting: SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS
Thursday, January 14, 2016
“Find a Single Leaf and Fit it on the
Tree of History”
And he is bringing a Mini-museum with him!**

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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!

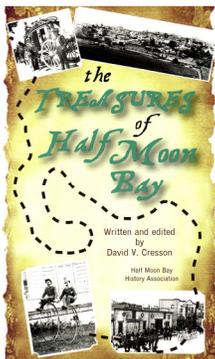
Name: _____
Address: _____
Telephone : () _____
e-mail: _____

Do you prefer ...

- To be a quiet supporter ..
To get involved (Please!)
Maybe a little of both

Annual dues: \$25

**Mail to: HMB History Assoc
326 Main St.
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019**



Annual dues \$25
2016 Membership
FREE! copy of HMBHA historic
Walking Tour book,
“*Treasures of Half Moon Bay*”
Pick your copy up at ...

And Send form to...
HMBHA
(650) 726-4468
326 Main St
HMB CA 94019

Next Program...

Everyone Invited!

HMB History Association proudly presents . . .

“Find a Single Leaf and Fit it on the Tree of History”

And he is bringing a Mini-museum with him!

Half Moon Bay History Association MEETING Thursday, January 14

Bob Chandler is a rare personality. He is a professional historian. For over three decades he lead Wells Fargo in the discovery and preservation of the company’s rich history. In the process, he has uncovered much of the fabric of the Old West.

He will share some of the chapters of history within Wells Fargo – their famous stagecoach service, their place in California’s gold rush, and development of its banking business. Dr. Chandler writes and speaks with authority on such diverse historical subjects as early express transport, banking, politics, civil rights, stamp collecting, and more.

What we know of his personality hints that he is likely to go anywhere in California history to regale us with anecdotes and how they fit into the largest waves of change in California history.

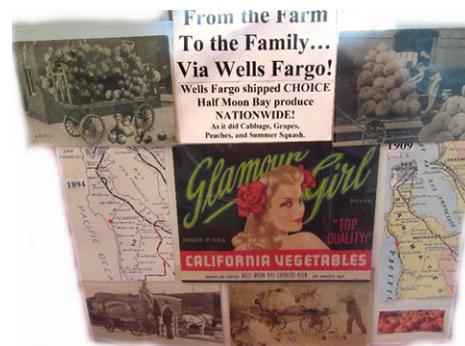
We met him when he came to help place an historical plaque on Main Street, Half Moon Bay. He was having fun there as he was reflecting on the sometimes dry topics of history...



Bob Chandler, Wells Fargo Bank’s senior research historian for 32 years, will elucidate why and how Wells Fargo did business. Using displayed historical documents, the speaker will illustrate the ways Wells Fargo performed its Banking, Express, Letter Express, and Stagecoaching activities. He reports that he will be bringing a mini-museum along for the meeting.

Bob is a curious cuss, declaring that one item begins a collection. As wife Susan says, “He finds a ‘leaf’ and then must determine where it fits on the tree of history.” His San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown (2014) illustrates his deductive method.

He has also written a short history of California, the Arcadia series volume on Wells Fargo, and more than 60 articles on Gold Rush, Civil War California, and early western transportation. Exceedingly serious, Bob is an X-Noble Grand Humbug of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus. His Mother’s family is from the Madeira Islands (by way of Hawaii) making Bob half-Portuguese – sharing some of the roots of our Coastside community.



Wells Fargo shipped choice Half Moon Bay produce nationwide!

Topic: “Find a Single Leaf and Fit it on the Tree of History”

Presenter: Bob Chandler

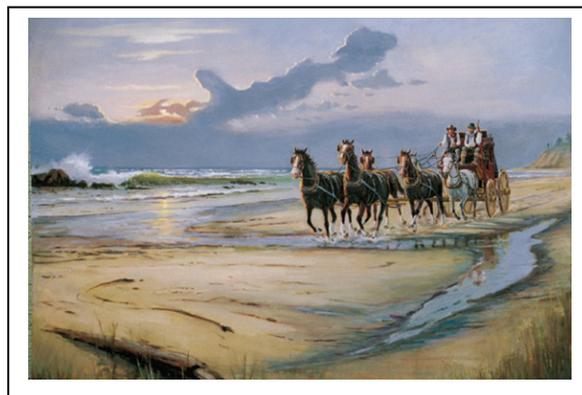
Place 724 Kelly Street, HMB, at the “Portuguese Cultural Center”

Date: Thursday, January 14

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

Public welcome – No charge

Meeting begins: 6:00



HISTORY STORY

A GOLDEN AGE FOR COASTSIDE SCHOOL BUILDINGS



Half Moon Bay School in the 1920s

In the earliest days of the American Coastside, nearly everybody was a farmer. Most parents wanted their children to go to school. The problem was the distances children needed to travel to school. The farms were widely spread across the fifteen or twenty miles of coastline - and also scattered several miles up the coastal canyons.

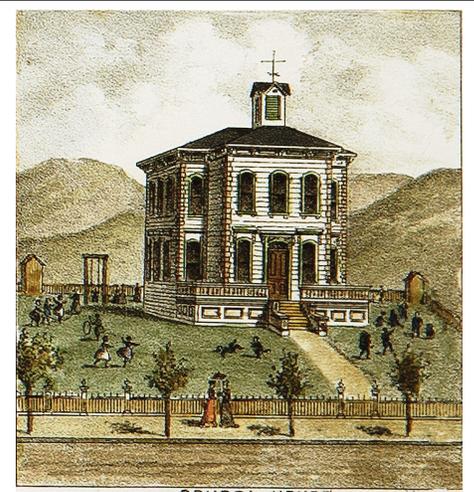
The problem was solved from the start with the farmers banding together to build very local, small schools along the coastal lands and within most of those canyons. The schools were tiny, often one-room buildings. A single teacher was hired to work with all the ages of the children in school's area. Teacher benefits often included housing for the teacher.

The Coastside's first school appeared in Spanishtown (later named Half Moon Bay). It was a school for Spanish speakers, and was built right in the center of the town. The first school for English speaking children was in Higgins Canyon – just south of the town. Every little hub of population between Montara in the north and Tunitas Canyon in the south created their own small school. Most of the earliest buildings were starkly simple.

(Continued)



First English Speaking School c.1858



**2nd Purissima School
1877**

A GOLDEN AGE (Continued)

When the railroad came to the Coastside (1906 until 1920), the future took on a different, optimistic look. Perhaps that was what influenced the construction of a few larger and distinctly handsome schools around 1910. The outstanding examples of the Coastside's beautiful schools include the grammar schools in Montara and Moss Beach and the high school built in Half Moon Bay. Those three were large, stately, and each used the imposing Spanish Mission Revival architectural style. A fourth new school built in that period was Half Moon Bay's grammar school. Some would say that that school building was perhaps the most attractive. The school was located on what is now Cunha School property – close to today's HMB Library.

The railroad's promise of a growing and modern population didn't materialize. Farming and an unchanging population continued along until after the Great Depression and through World War II. In 1939 the federal government gave Half Moon Bay one of its Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects as a way to improve communities and create jobs for the unemployed during the depression. The WPA constructed the school that eventually became Cunha Elementary. When the new building was opened, the high school went into the western wing – along Kelly Avenue. The grammar school went into the south wing, along Church Street.

The students from the HMB Grammar School moved a few dozen feet down the road, into the new school. The construction of that WPA project may mark the end of building the pretty schools of the Coastside.

Some of the more isolated small canyon schools continued in service for years, even after the population increases following the war. Eventually, easier transportation began to encourage centralizing the Coastside's education. In 1964 the Tunis School in Tunitas Canyon closed. Tunis School was the last one-room school house in the county.



**Half Moon Bay's
Union High School
1909**



**Montara Grammar School
1910**



**Moss Beach Grammar School
1911**



**Half Moon Bay's grammar and high school
1939**

MONTARA SCHOOL HOUSE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

By Donna Wolf

On Saturday, October 26th the Montara Grammar School, located on the corner of Sixth and Le Conte streets in Montara held a celebration to honor the historical building's centennial. Marina Fraser, mayor of Half Moon Bay, cut the ceremonial ribbon. Staff were available to tour small groups of guests from the entrance, through the first floor auditorium, through the upstairs living quarters and dance studios, to the stairway leading through the copper cupola and onto the rooftop! It was a perfect autumn day. Those of us that walked onto the rooftop were rewarded with beautiful vistas. At the end of the tour, the young ballet dance students provided us with a lovely dance performance. Afterwards, tea and refreshments were served.



Built in 1910, the Montara Grammar School's dedication ceremony took place on May 21, 1910 with an evening of dance and entertainment. Sadly, just a few years later in 1914, the front of the building suffered extensive damage from a fire and needed to be rebuilt. With a different design for the front and a new façade built around the entire structure, the building had a new look, hence the "circa 1915" date.

The school closed in the 1950's and was put up for sale. Owen Bryant an entomologist and his wife Lucy purchased the building to use as their home but also to house Owen's collection of 195,000 specimens of beetles and other insects. Lucy died in 1957, followed by Owen in October 1958. Owen left his estate to the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, which continues to house his collection to this day.

In 1960, the Academy sold the building to Colleen Fuller and her husband who lived there with their seven children. The family built lofts in the office rooms for the boys' bedrooms. Their girls' bedroom was a converted classroom overlooking the back garden. They renovated another classroom for their master bedroom suite. The auditorium served as an indoor playroom full of their children's bikes and toys. In the 70's the Fullers renovated windows, plumbing, added a brick fireplace and tiles and countertops for the kitchen. After her husband passed, Colleen remarried in 1972 and rented the building out to another family. The auditorium was used however for meetings and community parties and events.

For three years, in the late 1970's and into the early 1980's, the auditorium served as a hang gliding factory and a home to its tenants. About this time, San Mateo County worker George Miller's first assignment was to search out county historic sites and worked with Colleen to this end. Colleen had extensive work done on the gardens, gazebo and parking lots with the intention of hosting weddings and other community events.

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Tour Group atop the School

(Continued)

“This Side of the Hill Players” made the schoolhouse their home for three years until they found a permanent home in Half Moon Bay, now the Coastal Repertory Theater. Bernice Seymour of the Coastal Arts League hoped to make the school and “Art Building.” For two years, Susan Hayward rented the auditorium for her dance school. Aerobic classes also took place. A computer business and meeting rooms were housed upstairs. Two years later, Susan moved her dance school to the old saloon located on Main Street in Montara. After 12 years, in



1993 Colleen asked Susan if she might want to move her dance school back into the historic schoolhouse. In 1995, Susan Hayward purchased the building to use as her permanent home for her family and for her dance school.

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...

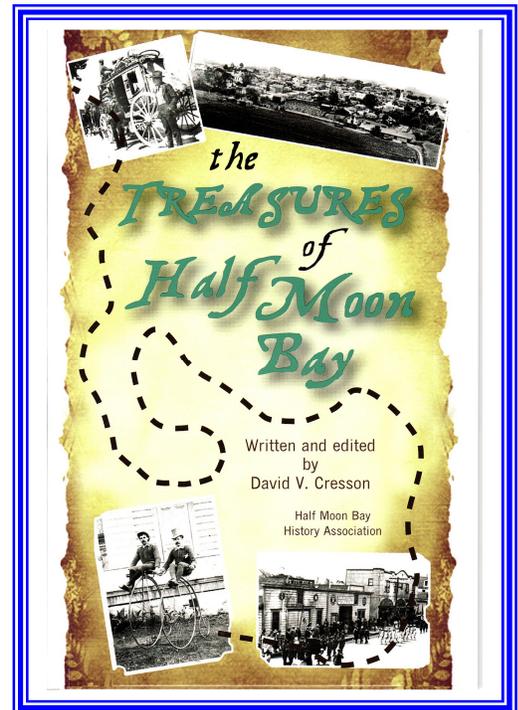
FREE! TO ALL 2016 MEMBERS – Pick up your free copy at the Zaballa House – 326 Main St., HMB

GUIDE BOOK OF HALF MOON BAY

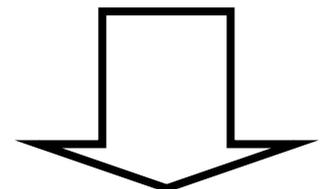
A New book for locals and visitors...

A souvenir for friends and visitors to remember the Coastside. It is an easy to read – even easier to follow - guide to historic places in Half Moon Bay.

Printed on fine quality paper, the book is a handy, descriptive and colorful piece, showing and briefly describing nearly seventy historic places in town. 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.



Next Page: Museum Report. Read On...



History Museum Progress Report:

The idea of a local history museum seems as distant now as it was when we started working on the idea. We think that the Coastside community has a remarkable array of interesting pieces of California history reflected along our shores. These are stories well worth showing and telling.

One possible museum location appears to be so perfect that we began studying it about two years ago. In most ways, it seems ideal. The idea is to combine the old Jail (1911) with the Johnston Barn (1877) that is right behind it. The buildings are both historic. They are already publicly owned – by the city. They are large enough to make a robust showplace for history images and artifacts. The property is very centrally located. The deed requires historic use of the property. Near perfect!



We thought the main problem was that the barn is not in legal structural condition to be used as a public building. Does it have fire sprinklers? Is it accessible for disabled people? Are there sturdy foundations, roofing, plumbing, electric panels, restrooms? And how much money would we need to make the improvements? We tried to gain entry to the barn for an expert building inspection.

Then we learned that we were not allowed to see the building. No serious talks were allowed to discuss any changes in the uses of the property. Discussion has been stalled by one City Councilwoman - - our most recent past Mayor. It took a year and a half to figure out the nature of the difficulty, and then another six months of trying to take the issue away from her sole control.

This History:

About fifteen years ago, this councilwoman (then part of Parks and Rec) was asked to be president of the non-profit group that had kept the Jail open to the public for over a decade. The activities of that group practically disappeared then. Offers to help reactivate it were made – and they were turned down. That group lost its IRS tax exempt status. (We began the HMB History Association in order to fill the vacuum for a local history group.) The Jail and the barn have been virtually unused for years.

When we began thinking about a museum, we asked the City Manager's office about the status of the property. At first, they said they knew nothing about it – not even if it was owned by the City. Then they reported that the Councilwoman controlled the property. We were instructed to speak only to that councilwoman about the matter. She said there was a contract tying the property to a local youth group. The old barn had been offered to that charitable youth group to be used for a two-day (Pumpkin Festival) fundraising location. The youths built a maze inside the barn. Pumpkin Festival visitors came to be frightened and entertained by an exciting "Haunted House." Before they had the barn, the group had used two other locations for their concession. The Councilwoman promised to arrange a meeting between us and the youth group. She changed her mind. A friend of ours immediately put us together and had a meeting with the youth group. But the youth group President said that they did not want to change the agreement they said they had with the Councilwoman.

Nobody would tell us any specifics about leases or agreements on the property, so we formally asked the city for copies of all written papers about the property. There are no written leases or contracts. So we asked the City Manager to consider allowing us to have access to it. The City Manager turned us down. She told us again that we should talk to the Mayor. Many members of the HMB History Association met with the Mayor, and tried to persuade her to work with us. Her response is always, "Not at this time."

Another former Mayor of HMB went to the City Manager to ask about the matter. The City Manager told her that the property actually was leased with the current Mayor. The lease is not in writing - - it is an oral lease. The city Manager did not reveal any of that lease's terms or conditions.

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So we have finally gone to a HMB City Council meeting. We want the museum idea to be considered by somebody else. During that City Council meeting the Mayor said that the history association is unwilling to talk to the youth group and is trying to, "... kick kids out of a barn."

Of course we said that is not correct. We asked for the matter to be placed on a future City Council agenda. We also asked for an official opinion about the legality of such private oral leases of city property. The majority of the Council seemed to agree to discuss it in January.

We are not sure what the situation is now. It has been difficult to believe that anything about a history museum could become contentious. We are real people with real and noble goals. We are definitely saddened that the differences cannot be resolved quietly and behind the scenes. Now the matter is on a public stage. We look forward to a dignified and harmonious discussion. We feel the conversation should answer **business** questions (such as two days of building use vs. 365 days), and address **humanitarian** aspects (as, how to accommodate the youth group's needs), and **ethical** perspectives (e.g., oral leases of city property with elected officials).

We hope the community will be interested in the next developments within Half Moon Bay's City Council.

