

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

retro-spective

June, 2014
Vol. VI No. 2

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
HISTORY ASSOCIATION
2014 dues: \$25**

Next Meeting: SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS

Tuesday, June 24, 2014

“Coastside’s First American Pioneers”

- See story on inside -

Board of Directors:
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NEWS: A ballot measure in Half Moon Bay that preserves the Historic Main Street Bridge passed this month. Accordingly, if the bridge can be practically repaired it will NOT be replaced by a new bridge. THREE CHEERS!!!

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HISTORY FEATURE

The Night Pigeon Point Was Invaded By JoAnn Semones

Since 1872, many tales have been told about Pigeon Point, its historic lighthouse, and its tragic shipwrecks. Recently, an unusual story surfaced from a man who was a Coast Guard keeper there during the Korean War.

Born in San Francisco in 1928, Reece Harris was fascinated with ships. One, the *Ohioan*, is etched in his memory. After World War I, she carried 8,000 American troops from France, including the highly decorated Sergeant Alvin York.

“It was foggy, and the *Ohioan* ran aground in 1936 near Seal Rock at the entrance to San Francisco Bay. Crowds of people went to see her,” Harris recalled. “My dad had been in the Navy, and was very excited. He retrieved some of the wreckage, including a life preserver.” (CONTINUE ...)



Pigeon Point Lighthouse as it was in the 1950s.
(Courtesy of JoAnn Semones)

Harris joined the Coast Guard just before the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950. Initially, he was assigned to Monterey Bay. From October 1951 to October 1952, he was stationed at Pigeon Point Lighthouse as an assistant keeper. The original keepers' dwelling, which was demolished in 1960 to make way for bungalow structures, still stood. "Four of us lived there," Harris said. "I was on the lower floor. The apartments were quite comfortable."

A major duty was operating the radio. "If there was less than five miles visibility, you ran the radio so ships could pinpoint their location," Harris stated. "We used a radio-beacon to triangulate with Point Bonita and the lightship *San Francisco*." Put into service in 1951, the *San Francisco* was stationed three miles off the Golden Gate Bridge and served there for the next eighteen years.

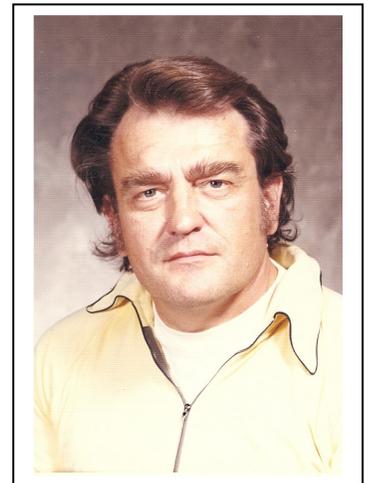
"Every thirty minutes, you had to broadcast at an exact time. Otherwise, you ran the risk of broadcasting over the next station's signal, making triangulation impossible," Harris explained. "If power was lost, it messed up the clocks. If you missed your transmission, you'd be disciplined. I always wanted to keep my keeper happy."

That was the "most adventure" the crew experienced until one night when Harris thought Pigeon Point was being invaded. On watch in the radio room, he heard voices along the walkway surrounding the fog signal building. "It sounded like a strange language, so I kept an eye out. I wondered if I should report it to the keeper then decided to investigate," Harris declared. "I discovered it was seals making noises out there. I sure would have felt silly reporting that!"

After departing Pigeon Point, Harris was assigned to Alameda where he served as a relief keeper at several northern California lighthouses. About a year later, the Korean War ended. Harris left the Coast Guard, carrying with him the memory of the night Pigeon Point was invaded.



In fog, Harris used a radio-beacon to triangulate with the lightship *San Francisco*, pinpointing the location of ships near Pigeon Point. (Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard)



(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.)

REPORT FROM THE *EDUCATION COMMITTEE*:

Mary Ruddy, Chair

Our “History Box” Comes to Farallone View Elementary School

Here is a scene from last April:

The 3rd Grade youngsters are lined up at the meeting room door, eagerly waiting to see what will be happening for the next 45 minutes. Once inside they meet three members of HMBHA who have brought historic photos and a “History Box” to share. Inside the box are several dozen authentic or reproduction items like those used by families throughout our local area’s history. Three classes of Third Graders that day are part of the “pilot program” the HMBHA Education Committee is launching for all area schools.

While asking the students to guess the locations in the historic photos of our local towns, Sheila Cresson introduces the idea that history is about the generations of people who have lived here before us and how today we are part of that history too. She distributes a handout that shows the many flags that have flown over California and this coastal area.

Focusing on Native American Ohlone presence along our coast, Mary Ruddy shows examples of how reeds were used to make baskets, bird decoys and boats, how locally mined Monterey Chert was made into hunting arrow and spear points as well as scraping tools, and tells how coastal Olivella shells were traded throughout the West. Moving on to the era of Spain and Mexico, hides and twine ropes illustrate the local cattle ranching life that still continues coastside today.

Discussing the era of later American settlement and development, Pat Keefe illustrates various home and kitchen tools that were hand-powered, and shows the care and artistry of quilt-making. Kids are proud to correctly guess what were early clothes-pins and how early irons were heated. Life for children on 19th century farms is described, encouraging the students to imagine how their own lives are both different and the same.



The kids from each classroom respond with enthusiasm and many questions, which is a delight to the three presenters! They are well-behaved and show great interest in all the items. They seem most interested in items for which it is hard to guess the purpose; or in items that are mechanical, such as a coffee grinder with a turn handle; or in items made from common resources, such as the reed duck decoy. A late Victorian ladies’ folding fan and an early 20th century nightgown also draw interest. Each class exits with many thank-yous from the students and their teacher.

That was a day in late April, and we learned then that we would be invited back next year to Farallone View! We received good feedback afterwards from the teachers as to what worked best, and how to improve our program so that it might be even more interactive with the children.

This summer we will once again ask both public and private school 3rd Grade teachers in our area if they would like us to visit their classroom with a “History Box” during the next school year. We also have a new plan being developed to offer Cunha Middle School Eighth Graders assistance with their individual history project. As we look to the future, we realize that we need to broaden our approach to reach our local youth in more ways, such as local clubs, churches and libraries that offer children’s programs.

All of these efforts can only be successful long-term if we have strong support from the HMBHA membership, so please consider volunteering for the Education Committee. You don’t need experience working with students; you only need a passion for local history and the patience to share that passion with kids! We will also need the donation or loan of more items for the History Box!

Please contact Mary Ruddy at miramar288@gmail.com to join us in this great project!

Next Program...

Half Moon Bay History Association MEETING Tuesday, June 24

Topic: "The Coastside's First American Pioneers"

Presenter: Dave Cresson

Place 724 Kelly Street HMB "Portuguese Cultural Center"

Date: Tuesday, June 24

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

Public welcome – No charge

Meeting begins: 6:00

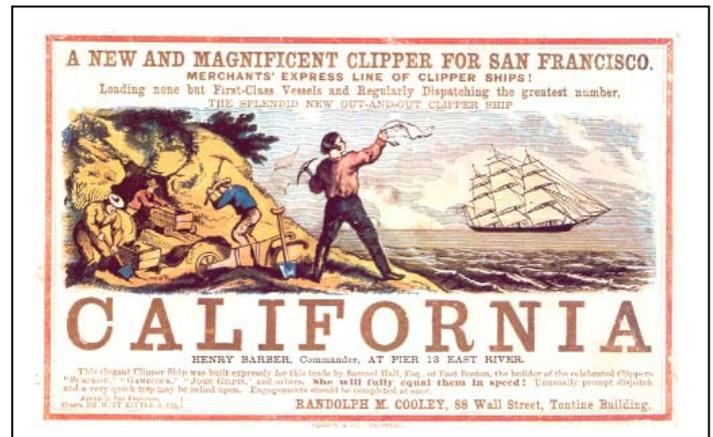
"The Coastside's First American Pioneers"

Speaker: Dave Cresson, President, HMB History Assoc.

The Gold Rush changed everything!

Thousands of Indians (Native Americans) Thousands of Mexicans (They referred to themselves as "Californios") lived in California. There were hardly any Americans from the eastern half of the continent anywhere in California before gold was discovered. Perhaps only two or three Americans had even set foot on the Coastside – between Pigeon Point and Devil's Slide - before the gold was found.

Hear the story about three of the very earliest American Pioneers to find the Coastside. They have become all but forgotten in Coastside history.



This program will discuss the daring explorer who was the first to climb westward - over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It will also describe a sailor thrown ashore by the wreck of his ship. And then there is the deserter from a passing whaler who became a California war hero.

Just being on the Coastside in such early days should earn each of them a place in our local history books. But how they got here, and what they did in early California and the Coastside makes for good story telling.

Dave Cresson is the presenter. He dusted off the old archives to find these folks, and to fall in love with their adventures.

Dave is the President of the HMB History Association. He has written books and numerous papers about the Coastside's colorful history. The "*Treasures of half Moon Bay*" is the popular and colorful walking tour guide of the town's historic places. "*Turning Points*" is the more academic book, chronicling important events and historic paths that the Coastside followed as it became the community it is today.

Dave came to the Coastside from corporate work in New York City in the mid 1960s. He led a marketing research company for over thirty years, and has lectured on corporate and non-profit leadership around the world.

Reflect an interest in Coastside history in your home



Frame Sizes – 18 x 22 – White Maple Frame - Fair retail price - \$165.00

HMB History Association price: \$99

HMBHA Member price: \$75 (Limit: One per member)

Call 726-4468 for details

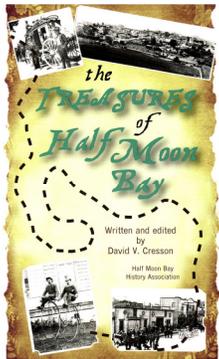
- Rare, Vintage excellent quality
- Photographs from the early 1900s
- Dozens of Coastside scenes to select from...
- Buildings, beaches, old Montara light, and many more
- Want details? Email:
dave.c@csc-research.com



HALF MOON BAY
HISTORY
ASSOCIATION
Celebrating Coastside Legacies

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
2014 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

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

President's Message

Moving ahead... A Real History Museum - - Here!

When we travel through towns and cities, we often look for the local history museum. It tells us a little about how each place came to become itself. Usually it's about early industries. Sometimes a really historic event occurred there.

Another part of that museum experience is that we can meet and talk a little with the docent or guide who is often stationed there... A touch with the people who are part of the community. For visitors, a history museum speaks as much about a town – is as meaningful a part of a travel experience – as all the recreational or shopping experiences.

But for the local residents, a museum is so much more. It's a place to see the pathways that led to the present day. For the children, it can explain how their home was part of the major moments in California and American history. It is an entertaining, tactile place that can make the past become a part of a fun day's adventure.

I wish we could all think of one such museum we visited --- and then wonder why we don't have a serious museum here on our Coastside. Some of the ones I can think of around California are housed in big, old libraries. Many in historic homes. Some in regular, centrally located store fronts. They all told interesting stories. We do not have a large space depicting our broad width of history in our community.

Of all smaller towns around San Francisco, the Coastside deserves a special place to enjoy history, a place to learn and perhaps even a place for serious study. Among communities around California, few have actually experienced so many of the great movements and events that built our state.

Indians – Native Americans lived here. The Spanish explorers came through, built their Presidio and Mission Dolores nearby – in SF – and then kept their mission cattle here. Mexicans developed their great land grants here. The Gold Rush (and the Mexican American War) brought the Americans. Agriculture, small businesses, tastes of the Industrial Revolution and even a railroad. Prohibition, with its huge profile here... The Great Depression, and military emplacements to ward off the expected Japanese attack.

We have the real stuff here – not just our own local growth, but the reflections of so much of California's development. The Coastside somehow managed to keep so many of its old structures, without replacing them with glitter lights, chrome, and glass.

The Coastside deserves a serious history museum. And the Half Moon Bay History Association wants to try to build one.

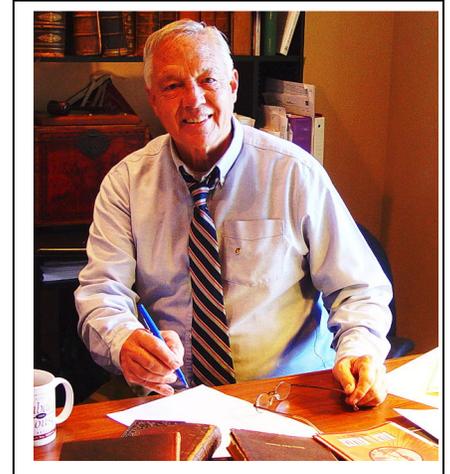
The history association cannot do that by itself. If this is a dream that can come true, it will be with the helping hands and minds of neighbors and of capable community service groups.

This message is an invitation to begin considering a history museum.

Looking forward to looking back,



Dave Cresson
President





EXPLORE THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF YOUR COASTSIDE STATE PARKS

SATURDAY, JUNE 28

PIONEERS IN THE REDWOODS

9-10:30am - Butano State Park - Visitor Center

Just as California State Parks were getting their start, new immigrants to the coastside were making fresh starts for their families. Although little remains of their homesteads, the pioneers affected dramatic changes we can still see today. Revisit their lifestyle, hopes, and struggles as you stroll in the shade of ancient redwoods. Please join interpretive specialist Rosanna Petralia for this 1 mile/1.6 km walk back in time. **Parking \$10**

SHORE WHALING AND SHIPWRECKS

1-2:30pm - Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park - Dining Hall

Sail back into history to explore “shore whaling and shipwrecks” in this talk with maritime author and historian JoAnn Semones. Discover the whaling station, shipping center, Chinese fishing village, and dog-hole port that were part of the area before the lighthouse was built. From Portuguese whalers to Gold Rush dreamers, the 1850s and 1860s were a pivotal time for this rocky point on the San Mateo coast.

SUNDAY, JUNE 29

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES: OUR NEXT 150 YEARS

10-11:30am - Año Nuevo State Park - Franklin Point

Imagine all the ways California has changed since 1864. Through all the changes and challenges of the last 150 years, our parks have worked to preserve the very best of our state. Please join interpretive specialist Joseph Carr Ritchie at the Franklin Point trailhead (north of the main entrance) for this .6 mile/1 km exploration of the changes and challenges waiting for us over our next 150 years - and some of the best views on the coastside!

GHOST TOWNS OF AÑO NUEVO

2-3:30pm - Año Nuevo State Park - Horse Barn

In 1864 lumberman William Waddell built a shipping wharf and tramway to his mill alongside Año Nuevo Bay and soon the small settlement known as Waddell's Wharf was born. What happened to this aspiring community? Please join interpreter Mike Merritt for a talk revealing the untold stories of Waddell's Wharf and the other forgotten towns that have all but vanished from the shores of Año Nuevo. **Parking \$10**



Advanced registration at parks150.eventbrite.com (not required) ensures a stylish tote full of 150th anniversary gifts - as well as your share of refreshments produced right here on the coastside - waiting for you at your first event! For directions and detailed program descriptions, please visit www.coastsidestateparks.org or call (650) 879-2025.

