



**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL  
HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

**RENEW – 2017 DUES**

**\* Or join this year? \***

**Next Meeting: SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS**

**Tuesday, June 6, 2017**

**“Fascinating Families of the Coastside”**

**Board of Directors:**

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**Mary Ruddy**  
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## IN THIS ISSUE...

- Next Meeting**                      **“Fascinating Families of the Coastside”**                      - Page 2  
Learn how to explore your own family tree.
- Coming Field Trip:**                      **To The Johnston House!**                      - Page 3
- President’s Message ... The Museum: Disappointing Progress**                      - Page 4
- What’s Happening?**                      **History Museum Coming!**                      - Page 5  
**Artifacts Gathering!**
- History Feature Story –**                      **The Portola’ Expedition**                      - Page 6  
**For God and Country**  
(Or, a funny thing happened  
On the way to Monterey Bay)

## ABOUT THE HMB HISTORY ASSOCIATION

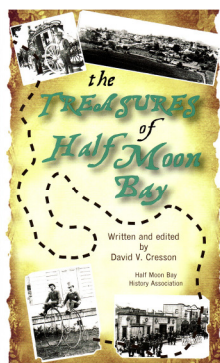
What we do:

**Search for the bits and pieces ...**

**Tell the stories ...**

**Keep the records ...**

**...Of how our Coastside came to become itself!**



**Annual dues \$25**  
**2017 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  
(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 (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 Invited!

## HMB History Association presents . . . “Fascinating Families of the Coastside” Learn how to explore your own family tree

**Presenter: Ron Madson**

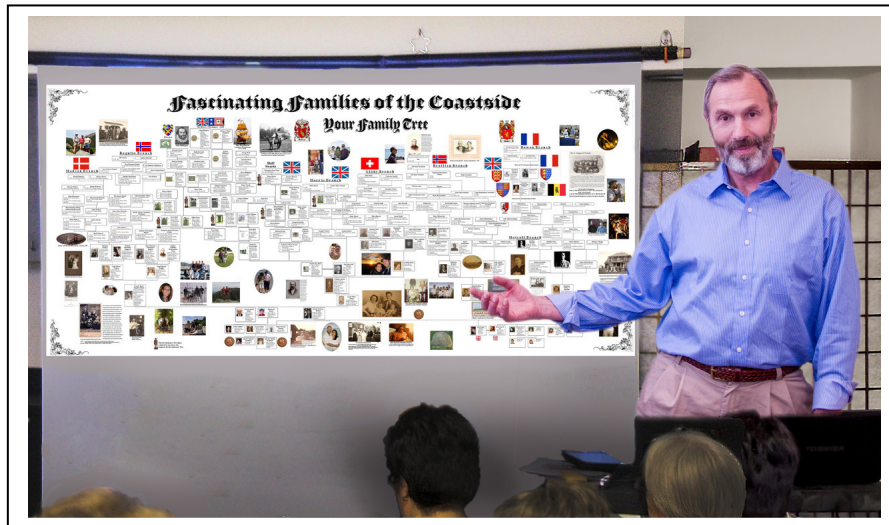
**Place** 724 Kelly Street, HMB, “Portuguese Cultural Center”

**Date:** Tuesday, June 6

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

**Public welcome – No charge**

**Meeting begins:** Business at 6:00 p.m., Program about 6:20 p.m.



Not sure how to get started with your family history research? This month's meeting of the Half Moon Bay History Association will explore basic genealogical research resources, skills, and methods to get started or improve your genealogy knowledge. The session will be tailored to meet the purposes, interests, and skills of those in attendance. Coastside family history

research resources will be discussed. As well, distant and online resources will be examined. As examples of how to proceed, presenter Ron Madson will take a look at researching three important Coastside families: Names like... Miramontes, Simmons and Cunha.

Ron will be giving anyone interested in doing work on their own family some free “How-to” research materials.

### **BIO**

Ron Madson, a passionate family historian for 12 years, has also been a photographer for over 20 years. His 45 years in IT and image processing experience helped him bring these two loves together. With a BS and MS in Math, he served 7 years as the educational coordinator for the largest international IBM computer users group and for 10 years he was the technical education coordinator for an international insurance company.

Reared in Seattle, Ron has lived on both coasts. His careers have included owning and operating a successful toy store, as well as a construction business. He built custom homes including his own retirement home in El Granada, where he lives with his wife Patricia, plus a Himalayan cat and seven koi fish.

## What is the Association?

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

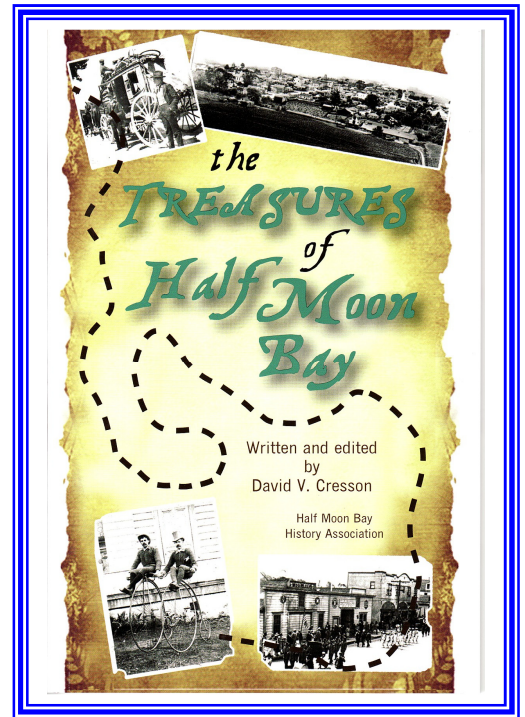
It plans to...

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

See form on front page

**FREE!** TO ALL 2017 MEMBERS – Pick up your free copy at the Zaballa House – 326 Main St., HMB  
**GUIDE BOOK OF HALF MOON BAY**

**A nice book for locals and visitors.**



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## Coming Field Trip: Joining up at the Johnston House!

Come join us on our next field trip on Saturday, **June 17** at 11:00 a.m.

I have great news for us all. The HMBHA has arranged a special tour for our group of the historic Johnston House which was built c 1855!



**Johnston House  
C1940s**

Our docent will impart many interesting facts and stories about this house, the Johnston family history and the original interior furnishings of that time period. I guarantee you will learn more of our HMB history than you ever knew before! Their website is [www.johnstonhouse.org](http://www.johnstonhouse.org) Do you know why the architecture of this house is named Saltbox House? Come and see and you will find out!!



**Johnston House  
Restored**

We hope to see you there with our group. Let's do this! Kathleen Baker – Education Committee

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

### The museum: Disappointing progress

Our newsroom does have good news to report. Many good things are happening in our world of local history.

**But first**, let me get it off my chest. Since 2014 we started advancing the fabulous idea of creating a local history museum in the center of town. The city owns two buildings on one lot – right on Johnston Street, just behind Main Street. Both buildings are historic – one, an old horse-freight barn used by Thomas Johnston, built around 1877. The other, the old County Jail built in about 1911. It was a gift to the city from the county, and the deed restricts the use of the property to history. The amount of space is good. It is appropriate that the structures themselves are historic. Centrally located. City property. Practically unused. As a museum it would be a year-round place for education and curiosity for our Coastside community. Simple.

**SELF - CENSORED :  
I HAVE BLOCKED OUT THE PARAGRAPH I WROTE.**

**MY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS OF GOOD  
PEOPLE AND THE SMALL TOWN GOVERNMENT  
TRYING TO WORK TOGETHER IS JUST TOO  
CONFUSED AND WITHOUT MUCH RESULT.**

**MAYBE WE CAN DISCUSS THIS ON SOME OTHER  
DAY...**

### Time for fun news...

San Mateo County – under the leadership of our supervisor, Don Horsley – is making big plans to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Gaspar de Portolá's expedition and the discovery of San Francisco Bay. San Mateo County Senior Planner, Sam Herzberg, is coordinating. The program is going under the working name of the "**Ohlone/Portolá Heritage Trail.**"

The effort includes the development of markers on roads and highways to indicate Portolá's general route. More excitingly, efforts will be made to bring walking or biking trails as close as possible to the expedition's actual locations. Certainly some of the campsites along the way, including those on our Coastside, should be identified and celebrated. Interpretive signs will tell the story of the trek, the wildlife, the encounters with the natives (the Ohlone), and all the things that might make history and family fun merge into an exciting Coastside adventure.

It is so impressive how much work has already been committed to the effort! Literally, over a hundred people are involved – from the National Parks Service, GGNRA, county staff, and others - all the way down to us good citizens. Some of those good citizens include our HMB History Association members: Dave Olson (member of the Midcoast Community Council) is working closely to Don Horsley on the Trails Committee. Barbara Dye (experienced in developing trails in Southern California), Mary Ruddy (local docent and student of the Ohlone presence), and I will be working with the Interpretive Committee. Lots of work. We hope that these members – and others able to help - will be able to contribute and celebrate the Ohlone/Portola Heritage Trail efforts.

Looking forward to looking back,



Dave Cresson

# History Museum Coming! Artifacts Are Gathering!

The dream of a local history museum slowly approaches reality. Among the next great challenges is GATHERING ARTIFACTS!

The museum will need displays: that is, displays of the things that show the Coastside community's past history. THINGS that were here before... Photos... Old papers and documents... Coastside antiques... Collectibles from business, life, families, school, cultures... THE THINGS that make museums fun and fascinating.

When old families and collectors donate things to the museum, the whole community and visitors can share the history into the future.

## LATEST ARTIFACTS DONATED:

### Gilcrest- Apothecary jars for drugs

One family of the Coastside was involved for generations in small businesses. Very early, the Gilcrests ran one of the first hotels – The Occidental Hotel. (Three stories of grandeur, located at the southeast corner of Kelly and Purissima Streets.) The family later operated the Gilcrest Pharmacy. The pharmacy opened in the 1930s, and closed its doors in the years that drugstore chains first came to town – in the 1970s. Deborah Gilcrest, now living in Green Valley, brought back some antique apothecary jars that were displayed and used in the earliest days of Gilcrest Pharmacy on Main Street.



### Lichtblau – Nautical equipment

Visitors to Half Moon Bay, staying at the Ritz, brought their eye for old and important objects from the past. The Lichtblaus collect antiques and have a hobbyist's interest in sunken ships. Neal Lichtblau and his wife Angel discovered the smallest corner of *something* buried in the sands of the beach below their hotel. When they saw the corner of this object made of iron poking out of the sand, they dug it out and brought it to the history association.



It appears to be the hanger for something, perhaps a bell, from an old ship. About three feet wide, it is small. It is encrusted with many decades of rust. They found it in the beach just below the 17<sup>th</sup> hole of the HMB Golf Club's Ocean Course, which is right where the ship *Alice Buck* sank in 1881, with loss of life and property (see last quarter's newsletter). We will be having maritime experts and researchers looking into more details of this find.

## HISTORY FEATURE:

### The Portolá Expedition

#### For God and Country...

(A funny thing happened on the way to Monterey Bay)

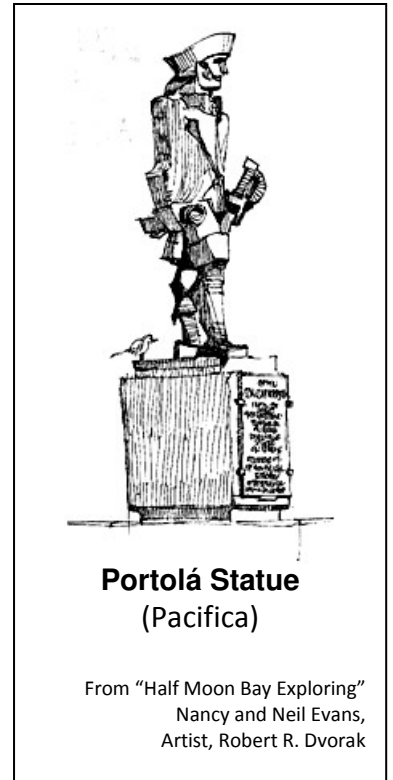
By Dave Cresson

Captain Gaspar de Portolá's Expedition is among the most important pages in California history. In a single story, it was an incredible failure, a remarkable success, and a demonstration of how life values change with the passage of time.

#### The Background...

In 1769, while American colonists were struggling with a British government in their thirteen colonies to the east, Spain was busy flexing its international muscles on the western edge of North America. King Carlos III of Spain decided to demonstrate Spain's rule by occupying California. At the same moment, he decided to practice his sense of righteousness by extending his Catholic Faith to natives who were living there. He would extend the missions to the indigenous people in Alta (northern) California. Of course, civilization does change its views of the world as the prism of time shifts while years go by.

A century later, the United States belief in its Manifest Destiny caused it to take possession of California (i.e., the Mexican American War). Also, as noble as it may have been at the time, history now takes a dim view of the Mission Fathers' moves to save the natives by converting them to Catholicism. In its place in time, the orders King Carlos gave to Portolá were at a high standard of politics and religion.



The purpose of the expedition was to carve a land route up the western coast from Spain's Baja California to a large bay that sailing Captain Sebastián Vizcaíno discovered and described years earlier named Monterey Bay. The trip would establish a military and Spanish government presence at the major bay. In addition, by sending Franciscan Brother, Fr. Juan Crespí, with the exploration, he was emphasizing a spiritual mission. Crespí, an official journalist for the trip, was also to observe the natives encountered. Crespí's major assignments were to observe and to report on the nature of the Indians in the northern district, with the larger goal of extending missions to convert them.

The expedition was staffed with a few Spanish officers and elite Catalonian (Spanish) troopers, as well as native Mexican soldiers, the tough soldado de cura (leather coated soldiers). In total, the expedition consisted of about 60 men and 200 horses and mules.

Three members of the group kept daily journals of the events and observations of each day. They were Portolá, Crespí, and engineer, navigator and cartographer Miguel Costansó. Their role for history is important because each was very well educated and made the writings that can make readers feel that they were along for the adventure. Their accounts of Half Moon Bay and the Coastside (and San Francisco Bay) are the recordings by the first European visitors.

#### The expedition begins...

They left San Diego on July 14, 1769. For months, they worked their way through brush and ravines and cliffs and hills until on about September 30, when they were actually near their goal, Monterey Bay. They did not know they were there. They had to rely on the century-and-a-half-old logs and reports of the ocean

explorers, principally Sebastián Vizcaíno, to identify Monterey. Nothing matched Vizcaíno's descriptions very well. Further, they were supposed to meet a supply ship in Monterey Bay. It had sailed north when Portolá departed San Diego. The ship, the *San Jose*, was not in sight on any horizon. Assuming they had not gone far enough, they decided to march on. They continued their search up the coast for something matching Vizcaíno's description. And the supply ship should be waiting for them somewhere off shore. It was obvious to them that they had not gone far enough north. (The ship, *San Jose*, disappeared forever, leaving no trace. Presumably, it was lost at sea.)

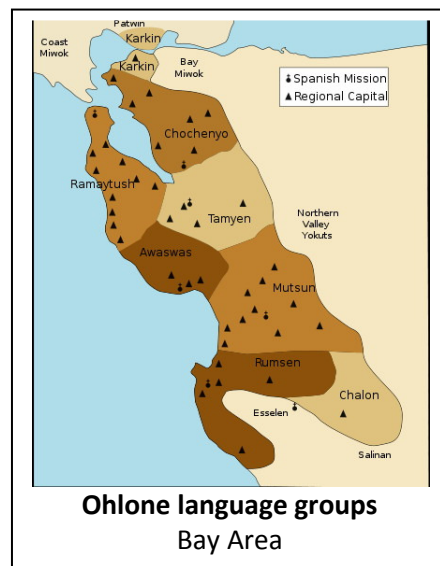
They pushed north. They needed fresh supplies. They were hungry and began to suffer from malnutrition. With every step came fatigue, increasing anxiety, and the onset of scurvy. (Scurvy is thought of as the early sailors' disease. It was often caused by months at sea without the Vitamin C that normally comes from fruits and vegetables.)

Nearly a month later (October 23) they approached Año Nuevo, just south of today's Half Moon Bay, and they were wasted. The weather in late October had turned rainy and cold. The fog was chilling. They were down to their last tortillas. Underfed, they considered (but would not) eating some of their burros. Scurvy put them in excruciating pain – swollen arms and legs, severe joint pain, and swollen gums, and loose teeth fell out. Some of the men were reduced to being dragged along on makeshift litters.

They had increasing encounters with natives as they proceeded. Generally, the expedition found the natives in the region to be respectful and friendly. They were more than willing to offer help and to act as guides along the way. The natives would trade their foods in exchange for beads and trinkets that the Spanish had brought with them for that purpose.

It is likely that (without anyone realizing it) these Ohlone may have helped save the expedition from scurvy. On October 22, the Friar, Crespí, commented that the natives "...welcomed us with demonstrations of pleasure, and immediately gave us some tamales made of seeds, some of acorns and some of other kinds of seeds, as well as a certain kind of honeycomb which some of our party said was bee honey. They brought it very neatly wrapped in leaves of the reed grass." "The seeds were something like pine nuts. Pine nuts and honey are now known to be high in Vitamin C. A few days later, Costansó, the engineer reported, "The swellings, and the contraction of the limbs, which made the sick like cripples, disappeared little by little. At the same time their pains left them, and all symptoms of scurvy disappeared: their mouths became clean, their gums solid, and their teeth firmly fixed." Although the diarists attributed their unexpected recovery from scurvy to an improvement in the weather, it is likely that they got a large dose of Vitamin C from the natives.

Natives along the San Mateo Coast became referred to as "Costanoan" ("people of the coast") by the Spanish. The natives – and scholars today – refer to the Bay Area natives' similar culture and language with the broad name, "Ohlone." There were many subgroups within the region. The Ohlone living in today's San Mateo county area called themselves the "Ramaytush."



#### About the Coastside...

At San Gregorio, Costansó said, "To us, the land seemed rich and of good quality; the watering places were frequent; and the natives of the best disposition and temper that so far we had seen. The village stood within a valley surrounded by high hills," Crespí added, "we arrived at the camping place, which is in a small valley with a good village of heathen, who received us with much friendliness. They are fair, well

Continued...

formed, and some of them are bearded. They have their village near the beach, about half a league from the camping place; but they also have their little houses in this valley, and at present are living in them.” (Of course, the term “heathen” is not so demeaning as it is descriptive. It meant that the people did not believe in the mission fathers’ Catholic faith.)

The group arrived at Purisima Creek, and discussed a vacant Ohlone community they found. “... On the northern side of this stream there were some abandoned Indian huts; all (the soldiers) who had the curiosity to look in to see these were covered with fleas.” (Costansó ) “All the inquisitive persons who wished to see the habitations which had been abandoned by the heathen, some few grass huts, were covered with fleas, for which reason the soldiers called it Village of Las Pulgas. (“Village of the Fleas.”) (Crespí).

Part of the Ohlone culture was to settle into a place until it had been gleaned, its facilities overtaken by the debris of habitation – and then move on. This village would be a small example. One very detailed study of the shell mounds (middens) of the Coastside concluded that Ohlone were mainly “foragers” – meaning that they moved around to where their food was. Foragers are considered more primitive than “collectors,” who bring their food to their central village, and store it over the seasons of the year. Scholar Mark G. Hylkema has reported that “This pattern required frequent residential moves within the coastal terrace.” A day later, the expedition found itself on the beach in today’s Half Moon Bay, where Pilarcitos Creek spills into the ocean. Among the observations of these hungry men was the multitude of geese that flew about the flat coastal lands. Crespí declared, “I named this arroyo, ‘The Holy Apostles San Simon and San Judas.’ In this place there are many geese, and for this reason the soldiers named it the ‘Plain of Los Ansares.(Geese).’ The natives from the next village north (Pillar Point) came to visit. “The people of the village on the point came to visit us and gave us some tamales made of black seeds which have not a bad taste; they are good for atole (a beverage), especially for those who watch the animals and go out early in the morn to explore.”

They moved on the next day to that native community that was apparently near Montara, just south of Devil’s Slide. Crespí wrote, “Near the point was noticed a good little bay, with pasture, good water and land, which would be suitable for a town... . I called the point, ‘Angel Custodio (Guardian Angel). ... but on account of the large number of mussels which they found on this beach, very good and large, the men called it, ‘Punta de las Almejas (Point of the Clams).’

### **The discovery...**

The next day the Portolá Expedition left Montara, went over the Montara Mountains near Devil’s Slide, and descended into Pacifica. On November 1, the scout for the expedition, Spanish Sergeant Jose Ortega, took his group out to see what was just over the big hill to the east. A three-day mini-exploration was planned. It was probably within the first couple of hours that Ortega and his men made the discovery.

Ortega continued exploring further and did not return to the base camp for a few days. Only when he returned did the whole Portolá Party ascend a ridge to a vantage point somewhere (some say Sweeney Ridge) above today’s Pacifica. Thus history celebrates November 4, 1769, as the official discovery date.



**Portolá Discovery of San Francisco Bay**

By Morton Kunstler  
From the National Park Service



Fr. Juan Crespí foresaw the importance of the discovery. Describing it in his diary, he said that the size of the bay "... could not only hold all the navies of His Catholic Majesty, but those of Europe as well." This discovery is certainly the most important single event of that century in California history: San Francisco Bay, a huge, protected body of water! In that world, the sea was the medium for political expansion, and for international trade. Safe harbors were economic, military and transportation hubs for empires that derived power from their nautical might.

#### **The discovery remains unrealized for years ...**

- San Francisco Bay, one of the best harbors in the world, was discovered by mistake. The discoverers found it because they missed their initial goal, Monterey Bay.
- Neither the leader nor the navigator of the expedition realized how important SF Bay could be for an imperial power. Only the spiritual member (Crespí) reported its value to a naval power.
- The group was still unable to identify Monterey as a possible harbor on their return trip, although they spent over a week in December overlooking it. Navigator Costansó declared, "We not only saw no signs of it, but not even the possibility that such a port had ever existed."
- A year later Portolá did return and help settle Monterey (Mission San Carlos Borromeo In Monterey – June 14, 1770). The Spanish leadership still did not develop or even mention San Francisco Bay as a potentially powerful base for a maritime economy.
- San Francisco was settled years later (Anza – Mission Dolores – 1776), but even then, more as a religious extension than a political or economic asset.
- The discovery of gold by Americans brought San Francisco Bay to prominence (1848)

#### **The Portolá Discovery Footnote from Modern (1911) Montara...**

More than a century later, the Port of San Francisco was well developed. Railroads had been invented and ran across the United States to San Francisco. In fact, where railroads were built, immense prosperity followed. The Ocean Shore Railroad came from San Francisco, and on through the Coastside community of Montara.

A zealous entrepreneur and real estate speculator named Harr Wagner was always looking for ways to promote the market for his property in Montara. He studied the diaries of the Portolá Expedition. There, he grasped a marketing idea. He noted that Portolá camped in Montara, but he would overlook the description of Portolá going over San Pedro Mountain into Pacifica, and from Pacifica, going east to discover the San Francisco Bay. Instead, Harr Wagner and a literary group (the Sequoia Club) raised local excitement and money to build a "fitting monument" in Montara. "... Sixteen feet high from the base and twelve feet in width, with a bell tower." (Chronicle, January 1911, Coastside Comet, Jan. 6, 1911)

Harr Wagner's fanciful commemorative monument to the Portolá Discovery Site can still be found on a hilltop behind the community of Montara.

(Today's reading of the diaries from the expedition does indicate that Pacifica's monuments and markers commemorating the discovery – near Sweeney Ridge - are credible celebrations of history.)

