



**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

RENEW – 2017 DUES
* Or join this year? *

Next Meeting: SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS
Thursday, March 9, 2017
“Half Moon Bay’s Drag Strip”

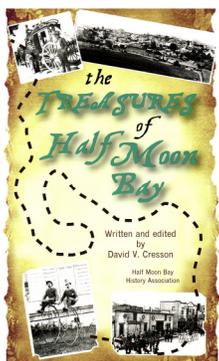
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ABOUT THE HMB HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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
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 . . . “Half Moon Bay Drag Strip on the National Stage”

Long before the Pumpkin Festival and Mavericks,
Half Moon Bay had a national identity

Presenter: Bob Senz

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

Date: Thursday, March 9

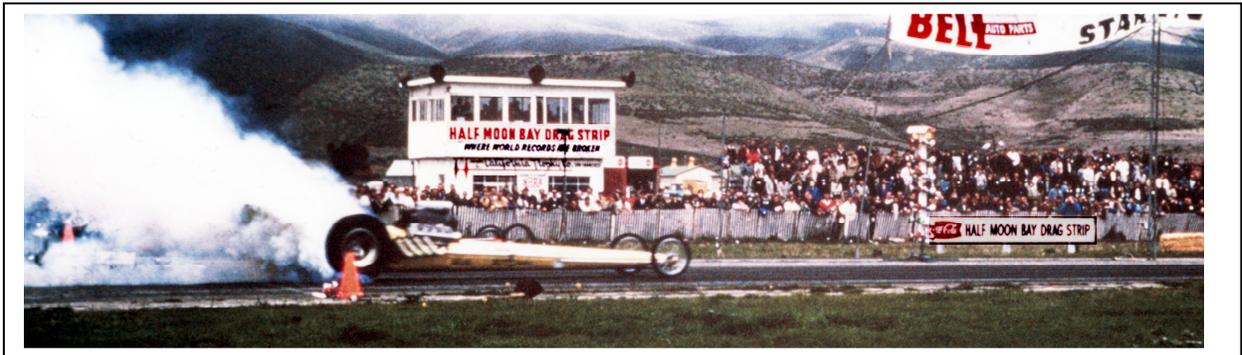
Time: 5:30 Doors open – finger snacks and refreshments

Public welcome – No charge

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

Half Moon Bay Drag Strip (1957 – 1969)

Sixty some years ago, tens of thousands of American young men and teenagers were addicted to building powerful cars out of the old prewar cars of the 1930s and 40s – Hot Rods! A new national pastime was born. High school kids and mechanics found old Fords and Chevys and the like. They tore them apart and rebuilt them into new, fire breathing monsters. The generation began pushing grease under their fingernails and putting chain-hoists up in their backyards.



Drag racing became a national sport using both street rods and strictly-for-racing, all-out dragsters. It was remarkable that one of the famous drag strips became well-established on the Coastside; so well established, in fact, that it attracted the biggest stars of the day – men with the names of “Big Daddy” Don Garlits and Don “The Snake” Prudhomme and later, movie star Tommy Ivo. For over ten years, Half Moon Bay was a sanctioned NHRA drag strip, with the biggest names and a national following. Spectators plus amateur and professional racers came from the town, the county, and from across the country.

Come hear about how the Half Moon Bay Drag strip started – and how it was operated and how it departed – not to return again.

Bob Senz is a man well known on the Coastside, as a businessman and former owner of Half Moon Bay’s Ocean Shore Hardware, now Ace Hassett Hardware. He has always been considered a go-to man for support and supplies for so many of the Coastside nonprofits and community service organizations.

Bob and his brother were among the thousands from around the country to come and watch – and to race – at the HMB Drags. He has become something of an historian on the subject. And he is regarded as one of the fathers of the distant descendent of the drags – the now famous annual Half Moon Bay Dream Machines event.

HISTORY FEATURE STORY...

The Bridge to the *Alice Buck*

By Dave Cresson

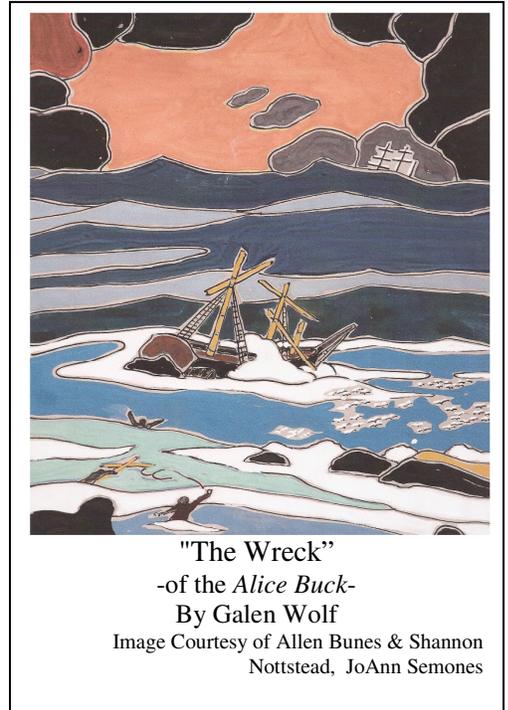
A tragic shipwreck in September of 1881 resulted in the construction of one of the biggest structures on the Coastside. It was a great bridge reaching out into the surf from the cliffs near Miramontes Point, close to today's Ritz-Carlton Hotel. The *Alice Buck* was a sailing ship carrying a huge shipment of very valuable railroad steel rails and hardware. The schooner had begun its long journey from New York City, traveling around Cape Horn, heading for Portland, Oregon. It was to deliver the cargo to the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company. The ship began leaking when it encountered a storm off the Central California coast. With his crew working the hand pumps for two days and nights, the captain, Herman Henningsen, was desperately trying to make it to San Francisco for repairs.

Then the wind disappeared while they were still south of Half Moon Bay. With no wind power, the relentless Pacific swell pushed the ship towards the rocky shore. At midnight, she entered the surf line and began slamming the reefs north of Purisima Canyon. The ship began coming apart. Some of the crew tried to escape to shore in lifeboats. Others decided to try to stay aboard, hoping for rescue while the ship was breaking beneath them.

At sunrise, a rancher, A.C. Markman, was milking cows near the bluffs above sea on the Hovious dairy ranch. In the quiet sunrise, he heard desperate screams coming from the ocean. He ran to the edge of the cliff high above shoreline. From there, he could see the horrifying situation a hundred feet below his feet. Men and bodies were being tossed in the surf. Further out, more men, struggled among the wreckage of the ship floating within the grip of the reefs. Markman couldn't help by himself. He jumped on his horse and alerted the ranch – and then galloped north to Spanishtown, where he sounded the alarm as he was passing through. He rode on to the wharf at Amesport Landing, where he heard there was a steamship loading grain. He found Captain Smith, whose steamer, *Salinas*, was docked at Amesport. Smith immediately weighed the *Salinas'* anchor to head out to try to help in a rescue. It didn't take long for the *Salinas* to reach the site of the wreck. She lowered her small boats over the side and was able to pull several crewmen out of the wreckage.

As the *Salinas* was racing south, a nineteen-year-old young man, Silas Hovious Jr., the son of the dairy owner and county sheriff, with his friend Frank Hale Jr., had raced to the bottom of the cliff. They worked to pull crewmen out of the water. The crewmen were also struggling to pull their friends to the shore. It was chaotic and tragic. One witness described a crewman a hundred feet from shore, holding on to a rock with one arm and using the other to keep a young boy's head up out of the water. A piece of wreckage hit the boy out of his arms, and the youngster was lost. Another crewman saved two of his friends, then waded back in to save another. This time, he was unable to make it back.

Word had spread to the south, and a rancher from the nearby community of Purissima, George Wyman, rushed to the cliff top above the wreck. Wyman is one of the Coastside's earliest American pioneers, one of the few Americans to arrive in California before the Gold Rush. That morning, Wyman came to the cliffs in time to see bodies still bobbing among waves and within the *Alice Buck's* debris. He could see the *Salinas* working beyond the breaking surf. Wyman spotted one more survivor tangled in the wreckage but still showing signs of life. Waving his coat, Wyman got the attention of *Salinas* crewmen, and signaled them over to the last survivor. That man turned out to be Captain Henningsen.



"The Wreck"
-of the *Alice Buck*-
By Galen Wolf

Image Courtesy of Allen Bunes & Shannon
Nottstead, JoAnn Semones

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Nineteen-year-old Hovious and his friend Frank Hale were later recognized by a proclamation of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade of San Francisco. They were given an inscribed gold coin with a written citation saluting them for their heroism. The citation mentioned "...unflinching courage ... for the sake of saving human life ... saved four lives from the wreck of the *Alice Buck*..." In all, eleven lives were lost, including the thirteen-year-old cabin boy and the first and second mates. Thirteen lives were saved.

Immediately after the wreck, efforts to recover the cargo began. The cargo was well insured – some reports said \$100,000 – a great deal of money in those days. And the cargo was worth more on the market than its insurance. Salvage, if possible, could be profitable. The cargo aboard the *Alice Buck* was close to 2,000 tons. It consisted of the essentials for building a railroad – rails and bundles of fishplates for joining fixed rails. There were kegs of bolts, and other fasteners called dog spikes. The steel industry was new then. It had only started to strongly develop twenty or so years earlier. Railroads, too, were a new and expanding industry. Steel was in demand everywhere, especially in the still remote west coast.

In December, two months after the wreck, a steamer named the *Ferndale* began work in calm waters just above the place the *Alice Buck* went down. The *Ferndale* was able to raise several hundred tons of the railroad steel from the sea bottom before the seas became too rough for the work to continue.

The more ambitious effort began in the following month. Professional salvage expert, J.A. Fleming, obtained a contract to build a wharf out to the wreck site. Fleming's plan was to build a long, high bridge from the cliffs to the wreck. It would become a platform from which the rest of the iron could be pulled up and then hauled back to shore. The innovative engineering effort was built out from the edge of the cliffs, starting at a height of over fifty feet. From there it was built leg by leg – far out over the surf. Finally, it reached a full 1,200 feet, over sea and reefs, ending right above the field of lost cargo. The sea bottom was rocky. The structure had to be built over and through those rocks. Divers drilled holes into the rock bottom and then dropped long timbers down into the holes, securing the legs. Depending on the shape of the reefs, the water depths varied between zero and about thirty feet. When the structure was completed, recovery divers were lowered from the platform at the end, down to the wreckage. Under water, they tied cables around bundles of the steel.



Stump of old piling from the Bridge
(On the beach below the 18th Tee,
HMB Ocean Course)
Photo by Keith Mangold January, 2017

Salvage from the wharf began in July, 1882. It continued for well over a year. Engines on the platform above would pull the rails and materials out of the water, ready to be hauled the length of the bridge back to waiting wagons. Then, finally, the long journey of the *Alice Buck*'s cargo would continue on to Portland, Oregon. Eventually those rails were laid along the banks of the Columbia River to the Dalles and towards Eastern Oregon.

The salvage operation was wrapped up in 1884. At its conclusion, the contractor who built the bridge and collected the cargo, J.A. Fleming, purchased the now useless bridge. Like the salvage man that he was, Fleming took it apart, and then sold the lumber to be re-used for the job of building California.

Thanks to Keith Mangold and JoAnn Semones for their information and insights on this topic!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Time Flies! Our Tenth Birthday ...



Our Half Moon Bay History Association began ten years ago!

In the perspective of history, a decade is a mere moment. Even in real time, those few years since we began have gone quickly. Naturally, I feel that every real community needs an active group of people working together to “*Educate, Celebrate and Preserve our Local History!*” It is not a difficult thing to do, and it is extremely rewarding in so many ways.

Plenty of interest and support has been coming from the community. We have hundreds of folks that receive our newsletters every three months or so. We enjoy nice coverage in the newspaper, local radio, community TV, and Coastside Buzz. Over the years, many have attended – and enjoyed – our quarterly history programs. The history association has been fortunate to find the support of a regular hundred dues-paying members... friends and neighbors chipping in a few dollars a year to help cover the modest costs of operating.

Right now, we really don't need very much money to operate. We spend just a little money on the supplies for our school programs and also on the refreshments that we serve at our four-times-per-year history program meetings. (We have a good program coming to us this month!) Our Education Committee has a very modest budget to bring the series of local history presentations to our Coastside elementary schools. Our Historic Markers group is closing in on the goal of placing plaques in front of about fifteen local historic buildings around town, and that is paid for by an outside grant.

The excitement brewing now is about getting started on creating the serious local history museum. Currently, we are still waiting with patience (not really that much patience) for the City to tell us that the community and the association can use their 1911 Jail and 1877 Johnston Barn for the museum. As soon as the paperwork for the use of that City property is completed, we will begin to raise the dollars for renovations and the enthusiasm for energy and helping hands for developing and opening a splendid museum.

The museum will be able to touch on so many parts of California's history that have been reflected in our own local Coastside history: Native Americans, explorers, mission fathers, Mexicans and then Forty-niners settled in for their new lives. Rich moments of trade, adventure, and mishaps in the waters occurred off our shores. A community grew with ranches and the lumber to build a new state, and a thriving local community, and even a railroad. National events were dramatically expressed on our Coastside: political movements, Prohibition and the wartime military installations during WW II. Then post-war expansion, development and conservation... open space was reserved in the shadows of our massive metropolitan neighbors, San Francisco and Silicon Valley. Most small communities have played out but one or two big stories – Our history book has many chapters.

Of course, the history association feels an obligation to be sure the stories, files, artifacts and the spirit of our rich past is preserved – and shared. Let's plan to keep it up for a few more decades.

Still looking forward to looking back,

Dave Cresson

What is the association?

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

It plans to...

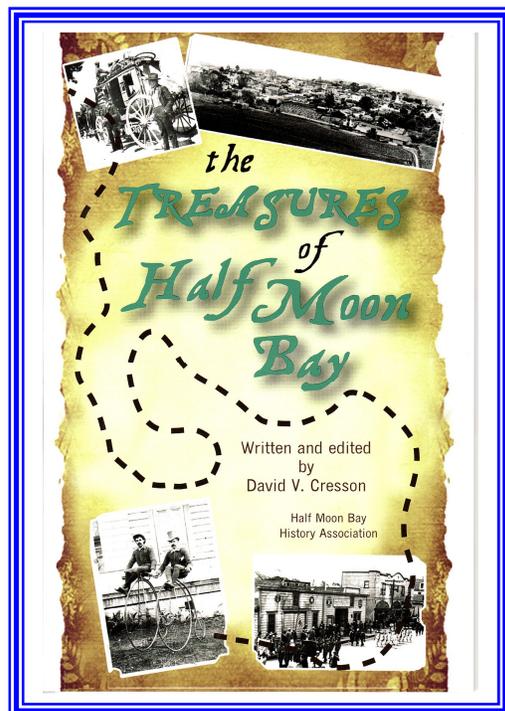
- Try to find answers to any questions asked about Coastside history,
- Publish a newsletter about current activities of the group (On-line, free to all who request it)... And Programs too!
- Manage a website devoted to Coastside history,
- And whatever idea someone comes up with...

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.



Coming Field Trip: To the County History Museum!

Come join us on our next field trip on Saturday, **March 18** at 12:45 pm. There will be a special docent-led tour for our group of the San Mateo County History Museum in Redwood City at 1:00 pm. (2200 Broadway, Redwood City – Whipple Exit from Rt. 101)

Our tour will focus on how early peoples used the natural resources, how transportation changed our county from a frontier to a suburb, and how the history of our immigrant experience impacted our county. The tour will be one and a half hours, leaving plenty of time to visit other exhibits, including one on our very own Mavericks surfing phenomenon!



There is also "Encore Books" in the Lower Level for great used books (open from 11 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.).

The cost will be determined by the number in our group (will be under \$10). So please sign up by contacting Mary Ruddy at miramar288@gmail.com with your name and your email or text information.

Who is helping?

Every year we look back to see those who has helped the history association do its work.

Here are some who have been particularly helpful – one way or another – over the course of the past year or so.



Helping on ...

The Education Committee:

- Mary Ruddy, Pat Keefe, Kay Beffa, Christine Beffa, Sheila Cresson, Juliette Applewhite, Kathleen Baker (also organizing **HMBHA Field Trips**)

The Historic Marker Committee

- Robin Kirby, Barbara Dye, JoAnn Semones, Julie Barrow, Charise McHugh

The Program Committee

- Erika Pardo, Barbara Dye

Program Presenters

- Bob Chandler, Carmen Blair, David Crabbe, JQ Oeswein

Newsletter Committee

- Dan Bodmann 💧 June Baxter

Museum Activities Committee

- Bonnie Dunham, Clyde Beffa, Sally Benson, Chad Hooker

Artifacts, Collection and Research

- Greg Keeney, Michelle Nye, Keith Mangold

Special Media Work

- Jim Henderson, Michelle Dragony

Program Hospitality

- Tina Soloman, Sheila Cresson

High School Community Service Volunteer

- Carson Anderson

Board of Directors

- Dan Miller, Stuart Hoffman, E. Pardo, Mary Ruddy, Robin Kirby, Dave Cresson

Thanks to everyone who has made the contributions that keep the association rolling.