

HALF MOON BAY
HISTORY
ASSOCIATION
Celebrating Coastside Legacies

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

retro-spective

September, 2015

Vol. VII No. 3

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
HISTORY ASSOCIATION
RENEW – 2015 DUES**

**Next Meeting: SEE BELOW FOR DETAILS
Thursday, September 24, 2015**

**“World War II at home
America’s Fear Hits the Coastsides”**

Board of Directors:
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(In President’s Message)

**A note of thanks... To Deb Wong Graphic Artist –
Spring Mountain Gallery, HMB – Polishes up our logo...
Did you notice the difference?**

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ABOUT THE HMB HISTORY ASSOCIATION

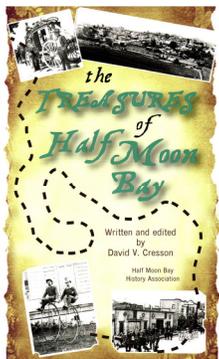
What we do:

Search for the bits and pieces ...

Tell the stories ...

Keep the records ...

...Of how our Coastsides came to become itself!



Annual dues \$25
2015 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 (Please!)

Maybe a little of both

Annual dues: \$25

**Mail to: HMB History Assoc
326 Main St.**

Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

Next Program...

Everyone Invited!

HMB History Association proudly presents . . .

Coastside History: **“World War II at Home
America's Fear Hits the Coastside”**

Half Moon Bay History Association MEETING Thursday, September 24

Topic: “World War II at Home - America's Fear Hits the Coastside”

Presenter: Naomi Patridge

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

Date: Thursday, September 24

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

Public welcome – No charge

Meeting begins: 6:00

Our many-times past mayor, Naomi Patridge will be relating a very real story about American history as it touched the Half Moon Bay Coastside. Hers is a very personal and important story – About her experience in the government deportations of Japanese residents to internment camps during WW II. The government move was part of the alarm that came to the United States – especially in the West Coast - after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, December, 1941.

“World War II at Home - America's Fear Hits the Coastside”

Our program will tell the story in the first person about...

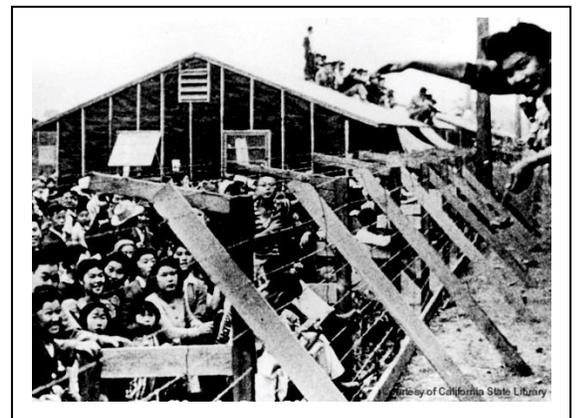
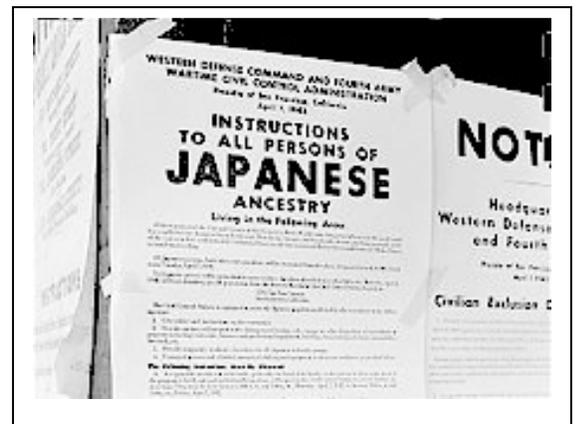
- The months that fear gripped the American Public –
- And the years that a vital part of our Coastside community went away to internment.

After Pearl Harbor was attacked, our Japanese neighbors were ordered off to internment camps by the government.

Hear about the personal story from one who lived it - - and then went on to become among the most gifted and generous community leaders of the Coastside.

Hear the stories about the arrival of U. S. troops coming to the coastside to patrol the beaches and man defensive guns. The fear of attacks on the mainland was real. The reaction to those fears was appropriate in some cases, and devastatingly inappropriate in others.

Twenty five year City Council member Naomi Patridge tells her compelling story her family's involvement in those days, and about how those experiences formed the backdrop for her emergence as a leader.



HISTORY STORY

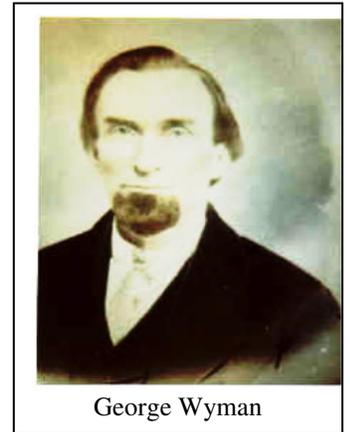
TRUE COASTSIDE PIONEERS THE WYMAN / KELSEY STORY

By Dave Cresson

A real pioneer is among the first to arrive and to develop. The first Americans to arrive in California came before the handful who were part of the Mexican American War (1846 to 1848). They came before the hundreds of thousands who came after the Gold rush (1848-1849). The American military and the Forty-niners did help develop California. But they came later than the true pioneers.



Long before the war and gold, a couple who ultimately settled in Half Moon Bay came to California. Alta California was Spanish a Mexican territorial settlement between 1776 and 1848. George Wyman (first came to California 1837) and America Kelsey Wyman (to Oregon in 1843, and California in 1844) were among the earliest and the very few Americans who lived in Alta California. After years of adventure and hardship, they arrived at the San Mateo Coastside, stayed, and raised a family. They served their community – Half Moon Bay – through their old age.



Very few Americans experienced California's stages of transition from frontier and Indian fighting days, Sutter's Fort, gold discovery, into its settlement to see the dawn of the thirty-first state's prosperous twentieth century.

The Arrivals...

George Wyman first arrived in Alta California when his whaling ship wrecked on Monterey's rocky shoreline. He was a nineteen-year-old country boy, who began his life in upstate (Oswego) New York. The loss of the ship (the *Commodore Rodgers*), was enough for the young man to decide not to ship out again. He would stay in California for the rest of his life. He found his way eastward towards a settlement that became known as Sutter's Fort.

There he began work for Captain Sutter, helping to build the fort, hunting, trapping, and looking after cattle.

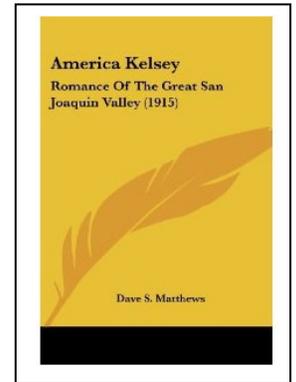
America Kelsey first arrived in Oregon in 1843 by way of a wagon train trail that later became known as the Applegate Trail. Her brothers had gone to California in the first wagon train ever to go directly over the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the historic 1841 Bartleson-Bidwell Emigrant Train – years before the doomed Donner party failed on the same route. To join her brothers, America and her parents went south, through the Siskiyou Mountains, to Sutter's Fort and California. America was twelve years old when she arrived in California.



A meeting like a romance novel...

America's parents, – David and Susan Kelsey – tried to start a farm on a Mexican Land Grant. When winter came, the farm was failing – and worse... small pox hit both parents. Alone with a dead father and sick and blind mother, young America needed rescue from the isolated farmland.

George Wyman and a friend (Will Buzzell) dared the wrath of the disease and saved her. The event led to their wedding two years later. Their story of the rescue and marriage was romanticized in a novelette that was published years later, in 1915. Their marriage was actually conducted by none other than Captain John Sutter, himself. The ceremony was in the fort, in 1846. Wyman was 28 years old, and she 14. Young, perhaps, but not so unusual in those frontier days.

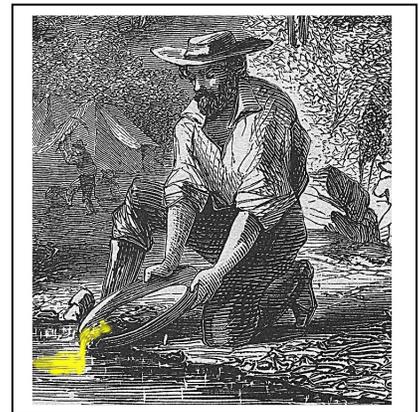


Mexican tensions rise against Americans

For some years, the Mexicans tolerated – sometimes encouraged – the “foreigners” (Americans and other Europeans) to settle in their territory. Not so after Commandante General Jose Castro came to power. He let the foreigners know they were to leave immediately. He ordered them to disarm themselves and to take only what they could carry. Of course that stern attitude could have been caused in part by the arrival of the likes of military explorer, Capt. John Fremont, America's “The Pathfinder.” The American government had already offered to buy California (and the rest of the southwest) from Mexico. (Mexico refused the offer.)

The Americans raised the Bear Flag over Sonoma in June, 1846, declaring California a to be an independent republic. That flag was replaced three weeks later by an American Flag. George Wyman was near the scene, and likely (not certified) served with his friend Will Buzzell in the famous California Battalion that pushed the Mexican Army out of California. The war in California was over by January 1847. Mexico surrendered to the U.S. in February 2, 1848, a week after gold was discovered. It was months before anyone knew of both events.

George Wyman said that he was working near Sutter's Mill when gold was discovered. He said that the cook's children (the Weimer family) found gold, and showed it to camp leader, John Marshal is credited by history for the discovery.



The Wymans never staked a gold claim and they didn't go into the many businesses that served the rush of prospectors. Instead, they quietly retreated towards Santa Cruz, looking for the next phase of their life.

The Wymans settled on farmland near the community called Purissima by 1852. They farmed with modest success, and raised a family. In the course of the still rough frontier life, Kelsey stabbed and killed a young neighbor from Kentucky (Nathan Kendrick) in a disagreement about some hogs. Kelsey was accused of murder. He pleaded self-defense. But he was convicted of manslaughter. Eventually, the popular Kelsey was pardoned by California Governor, John Downey.

LAST CHAPTERS IN SPANISHTOWN

George and America moved to Spanishtown (Soon, Half Moon Bay), and remained an active part of the community. He became a member of the Odd Fellows, a fraternity that was an important part of Spanishtown's social and charitable life. He also became the Deputy Sheriff and Constable for the county. George became a solid citizen, indeed a pillar of the Spanishtown community.

He passed away at age seventy-five. America Wyman lived on – in her son's (George) house – until the age of eighty-four. George and America are both interred in the Odd Fellows (IOOF) Cemetery (next to Route 92)



**The Wyman Home
611 Johnston St., HMB**

President's Message: A History Association Experience

For me, it began when J'aime Rubio telephoned from Roseville, near Sacramento. She likes history and writes about it as a newspaper freelancer and blogger. Her particular interest in history has an unusual perspective. She is one who finds the final resting places of people in cemeteries, and then examines those folk's roles in historic corners of their communities. She visits graveyards in person and she explores them on line.

J'aime called us because she had just found some hidden dots that connect parts of our local history. During a visit to the Coastside, she had noticed a broken grave in Half Moon Bay's Pilarcitos Cemetery – on Route 92. She saw the base of a grave marker for Petra de Jara Johnston (James Johnston's wife). Then, last month, J'aime was surveying websites and saw Petra's marker mentioned online (on "Findagrave"), reporting that it was in Sonoma County – in the historic Green Valley Cemetery.

We know that Petra and James lived together for about six years in the well-known Johnston House. Petra passed away in childbirth in 1861. She was Mexican-American, and so she was laid to rest in the Catholic cemetery. Over the years, Pilarcitos Cemetery gradually fell into disrepair. At some time, Petra's marker was broken - - and repaired prior to the 1980s. Then it was broken again. The pieces remained, and were still lying there in 1989. But within the next year or so, the broken piece disappeared, presumably taken by a vandal.

Perhaps after a crisis of conscience, it was dropped off at the old Green Valley Cemetery, near Sebastopol. A local man named Tony Pires found it decades ago. He is among a small number of people who devote their time and hearts to restoring neglected cemeteries and gravestones. In about 1995, Tony glued the fragment of the Petra headstone to a cinderblock backing and re-erected it in Green Valley.

When J'aime learned of the connection between Petra, Green Valley, and Pilarcitos, she called the president of the Sonoma County Historical Society, Jeremy Nichols. He is very concerned about locating and returning missing tombstones. Nichols believes that part of the problem with lost gravestones comes from neglect of cemeteries that are no longer active places for burials.

J'aime also called the HMB Review. They wrote a story about the discovery of Petra's missing headstone. Local resident Ulli Bisono saw that article, and contacted me. She said that she and her husband wanted to volunteer to take their truck to the Green Valley Cemetery and retrieve Petra's broken headstone. The Bisons brought the stone back to the Johnston House - - soon to be repaired by the Johnston House Foundation.

James Johnston died nearly twenty years after Petra. He was not catholic, so he would not be buried in the Catholic Pilarcitos Cemetery. As a member of the Odd Fellows fraternity, he was buried in the next-door Odd Fellows Cemetery. James Johnston's grave is close to the property line. He rests near Petra.

When Our Lady of the Pillar Church heard about the return of the lost stone. They were delighted. When Sally Benson, an Odd Fellows member as well as history association member, heard the story, she was excited. Both the church and the Odd Fellows are very interested in restoring their Cemeteries, and perhaps in adding interpretive signs for visitors learn about the cemeteries and about the early residents buried there.

Don't you agree that history can bring interesting experiences?



Looking forward to looking back,


Dave Cresson, President