

# Coastside Chronicles

A Publication of the Half Moon Bay History Association

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“My Dad left me a treasured legacy... his love and pride for his Portuguese heritage and the importance of contributing to your community.”  
—Rose Ormonde

HALF MOON BAY  
**HISTORY**  
ASSOCIATION

*Celebrating Coastside Legacies*

## President's Message

—Juliette Applewhite

The HMB History Association has had a busy couple of months. Our amazing team has heartily begun the design phase, searching for unique photos of our coast and finding artifacts to share our fascinating history.



Jamie Verdura, our contractor, is looking forward to getting started on construction. He is working hard to make the remodel as efficient and economical as possible. We look forward to getting started soon. We acknowledge that construction in 2021 brings a new set of challenges, and we are confident that Jamie will help us navigate them.

Coastside Gives was a great success. We are so grateful to more than 85 donors, who contributed a total of \$22,500.

We are 'soft-opening' our jail museum, based on docent availability. We had our first visitors on May 8, and it went well. We are doing our best to protect our volunteers and visitors, and look forward to seeing you all soon.

We're looking forward to a very productive 2021, and we thank you for your continued support! ♦

## Articles and Videos!

Visit our website for intriguing articles and videos about Coastside history: [halfmoonbayhistory.org](http://halfmoonbayhistory.org)

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## 150 Years in Half Moon Bay: I.D.E.S and the Holy Ghost Festival

—Ellen Chiri, with thanks to Bob Fernandez

In 1871, The Brotherhood of the I.D.E.S. Society, a Portuguese fraternal organization, was organized in Half Moon Bay. I.D.E.S. stands for Sociedade Da Irmandade do Divino Espirito Santo—the Society of the Divine Holy Spirit.

Portugal's Queen Isabel, born in 1271, was very devout, and spent her life helping the poor and sick. She introduced celebrations of the Holy Spirit to Portugal, and its traditions became widespread in the Azore Islands. It is said that Queen Isabel would lead a procession to the church to celebrate Mass, carrying her crown, showing her submission to the will of God. People emulated these processions when in difficult situations, carrying a crown to the church to ask for God's help.

The Half Moon Bay I.D.E.S. Holy Ghost celebration follows a tradition rooted in the Azore Islands. A violent earthquake in the 19<sup>th</sup> century left the people without food and shelter. In a procession, they carried a crown to the church and celebrated Mass, asking the help of the Holy Spirit. Soon after their desperate plea for help, a ship arrived with sustenance for the people.

Holy Ghost celebrations of thankfulness are today held in Portuguese communities around the world. In Half Moon Bay on Pentecost Sunday, the seventh Sunday after Easter, a procession leaves the I.D.E.S. grounds and walks through town to Our Lady of the Pillar.

A Queen, representing Queen Isabel, carries the crown and is accompanied by her Maids and a Little Queen. The crown and scepter, symbols of thankfulness, are blessed. After the service, the Queen and her Maids lead the procession back to the I.D.E.S Chapel.

Tradition tells us that in 1896, each of the then-100 I.D.E.S. members contributed four silver dollars to have

a crown made. A San Francisco silversmith made the crown, which weighs eight pounds. That crown and the accompanying scepter have been used in Holy Ghost festivals ever since.

At noon on Pentecost Sunday the great feast begins. The tradition of thanksgiving includes welcoming everyone, and supplying all with generous portions of meat, bread, and wine. I.D.E.S. 1994 Past-President Bob Fernandez remembers, "Early on, the local farmers used to donate cattle to the I.D.E.S. for the Celebration." The members slaughtered and butchered the cattle, and "the meat was cooked and served to the people at the Celebration." Today, several thousand pounds of beef, blessed by a priest, are cooked in the large brick ovens on the I.D.E.S. grounds "...in a sauce

made of wine, water, and a variety of spices and secret ingredients known only to the head cook."

The Chamarita Dance begins after the feast, with people of all ages joining in. The dancers form a circle and a caller gives directions for the dancers to follow as the music plays. The dance sings Chama Rita! Chama Rosa! Que Bonita!... (Call Rita! Call Rosa! How pretty!...)

The Holy Ghost Festival continues to honor the Holy Spirit and give thanks, but it has become more celebratory than somber. Bob Fernandez remembers, "In earlier times like the

1950s and 1960s, students of the local schools had a minimum day on the Monday after the Celebration. This was so they could go to the Celebration, enjoy the rides the carnival had and have the traditional meal."

This year's Festival will be a greatly modified version of the full traditional celebration. The May 22-23 celebration will be much smaller, and will involve primarily I.D.E.S members. There will be a parade and Mass honoring the Holy Spirit, but no carnival. The indoor feast will be limited to the parade participants.



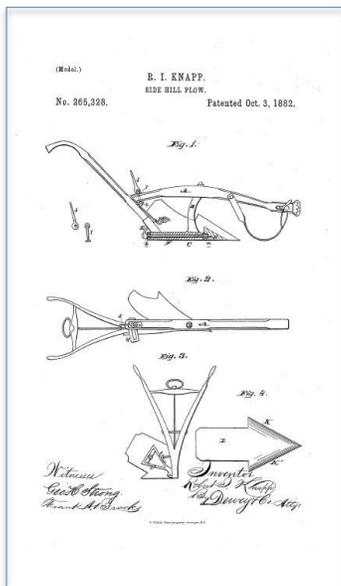
## Necessity Breeds Inventors and Innovators on the San Mateo Coast



—Marc Strohlein

The San Mateo coast is known for its bucolic scenery and beauty—not generally for its inventors. Yet Half Moon Bay and the surrounding communities boast some interesting and colorful inventors and innovators. Given the importance of farming to the area, it's not surprising that many of the inventions are rooted in agrarian applications. A common theme throughout the innovations is that “necessity is the mother of invention,” as all of the innovations described in this article are responses to significant “real world” problems and needs.

The most visible and colorful inventor was Robert I Knapp, a farmer, blacksmith, newspaper publisher, politician, and most notably inventor of the side hill plow. Knapp watched farmers struggling to plow their land on the coastal hills using Kilgore plows which were heavy, clumsy and difficult to reverse the blade after each row was plowed. The plows were also not durable and after having repaired many, Knapp decided to make his own plow in 1873.



1882 patent for Robert I. Knapp's Side Hill Plow

It was so successful that Knapp had three patents on it by 1875, as it was lighter, sturdier, and far easier to reverse the blade after each row without having to let go of the plow. The plow won 14 awards at state and county fairs, and another award at the New Orleans World's Exposition.

The San Mateo Gazette visited Knapp's Half Moon Bay firm in 1878, noting that along with the innovative plow, Knapp had invented a “drop hammer” machine for cutting and grinding steel to speed up manufacturing, as demand for the plows was substantial. He also creatively used a horse-driven treadmill as a power source at his garage.

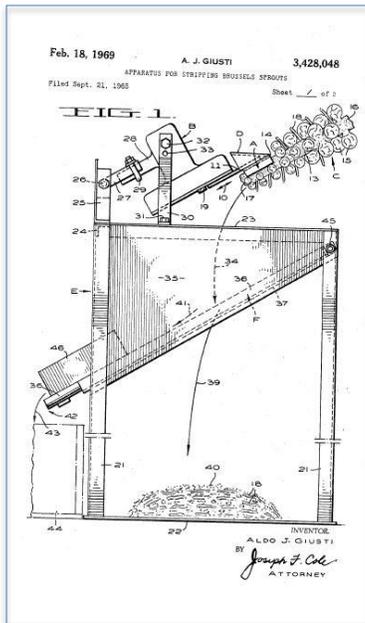
Knapp was the most visible of the Coastside inventors, but other lesser-known innovators made contributions as well. The boom in artichoke farming was the mother of necessity for another Coastside inventor, Ralph Woodman from Pescadero. Artichokes were introduced to the United States in 1806, but the first commercial planting in California is said to have taken place in El Granada, by Dante Dianda in the 1860s.

The first coastal artichokes were sent to the East Coast as early as 1904, to be sold to Italian populations. Big artichokes that sold for a nickel in San Francisco often brought as much as a dollar in Italian neighborhoods in Eastern cities.

Artichokes are priced by their size and Woodman found that existing graders didn't work well for artichokes, so he invented and patented an artichoke grader.

Woodman's patent filing number 1,513,684 dated October 28, 1924 states that he “Invented certain new and useful Improvements in Artichoke Graders. This invention relates to grading devices, my main object being to provide a grader especially adapted for grading artichokes, which on account of the more or less long stems which practically form an integral part of the vegetable, are hard to grade in the ordinary type of grader.” →

## Necessity Breeds Inventors and Innovators on the San Mateo Coast ...continued



1969 patent for Aldo Giusti's Brussels Sprout Harvester

Yet another inventor on the coast was Aldo Giusti, whose family can still be found farming on the coast. Like many farmers today, he faced a labor shortage in the 1960s that made it difficult to find men to harvest his Brussels sprout crops. At first, he brought back homeless men from San Francisco to work in the fields, but then came up with the idea for a mechanical harvesting machine for his

Brussels sprout crops and patented the idea on February 18, 1969, patent number 3,601,406.

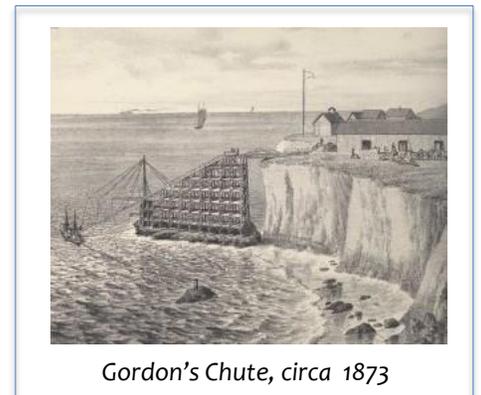
Giusti's patent describes "An apparatus for stripping Brussels sprouts and being provided with a cutter having a guide surface disposed to have the main stalk of an unimpaled Brussels sprout plant advanced there along, the cutter having an edge disposed to strip sprouts from the plant, and this cutter being connected to a rapid-speed vibrator that is continuously reciprocated back and forth in short strokes." His creativity went far beyond farming implements as in the early 1970s Mr. Giusti, an avid golfer, filed patent 3,601,406 for a "Golf-Practicing Apparatus." Players used a "self-adhering golf ball" that could "be propelled from a tee on a matt" to a panel, to which the ball stuck, and the panel was marked to show the elevation and distance of a drive.

In addition to the successful inventors were a few misses, including Alexander Gordon's chute near Tunitas Creek. A big challenge facing Coastside farmers was that of getting produce and goods to their markets and customers, as roads at the time were poor to non-existent and the rocky, bluff-lined coast was not

conducive to anchoring and loading of ships. And while there were wharves at Pillar Point and Amesport (now Miramar), farmers to the south faced lengthy and costly trips to get to them. Several Coastsiders rigged cables and hawsers to slide their goods from bluffs to waiting ships, but the most interesting approach was "Gordon's Chute," constructed for Gordon in 1872 by William Bell.

Gordon wasn't truly an inventor, as chutes date back thousands of years, but he gets points for the sheer audacity of his approach. The 100-foot-high chute was built on top of rocks and reached from the top of the bluffs to the open sea. Gordon had the chute built to solve his own problems in getting produce from his farm to market, but also hoped to generate income from other farmers. The structure was beset with problems from its inception. The bluff was high and windy, and more than one person was killed in accidents.

Ten-to-twenty-foot waves broke over the base of the chute, and ships' captains had to brave ocean swells to anchor on the reef—many would not.



Worse, the steep 45% angle slide to ships created friction that reportedly sometimes ignited sacks of produce, which arrived in flames or burst on impact at the bottom of the chute. Gordon's Chute had some successes, most notably during a grain boom in the 1870s, but ultimately the enterprise went bankrupt. It was destroyed on November 17, 1885 during a Southeast gale.

While the San Mateo coast can't boast any inventors of the fame and notoriety of Thomas Edison or the Wright Brothers, it did spawn some important ideas and creations that solved pressing problems and helped the Coastside to become what it is today. ♦

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## First Person: The Ormonde Family and the Holy Ghost Festival

—Rose Ormonde

The Holy Ghost Festival or Chamarita has been a part of my life since I was a small child. Some of my first childhood memories are of this annual Portuguese festival because my Dad, Ken Ormonde, was such an active member and officer of the local I.D.E.S. Society. He joined the I.D.E.S. as a young man just back from the Pacific theater in World War II. He served as President in 1973 and 1974 and later in 2003.

My Dad passed in 2014, but he left me a treasured legacy that is so precious to me now... His love and pride for his Portuguese heritage and the importance of contributing to your community.

When I was growing up in the 60's, Chamarita weekend was the biggest event of the year for Half Moon Bay. I remember the excitement of the Monday or Tuesday before the festival when the carnival would come into town and we would watch them set up the huge Ferris Wheel, various rides and all the arcade games in preparation for a Friday night that seemed magical...the lights of the Ferris Wheel, the delicious smell in the air of the Chamarita meat cooking for hours in the cookhouse, the first taste of pink popcorn or that wonderful cherry snow-cone. My Dad took me on my first Ferris Wheel ride and I remember the exhilaration of sitting with him quietly at the top of the wheel on a Friday night and seeing the whole town from up above...he would point out our house, my Grandmother's house, the school yard...it was quite a thrill for a 5 year old kid!

In 1967, I was honored to be chosen as Little Queen. I remember being excited, although I didn't really understand what I was supposed to do. My cousin remembers that I kept asking my Dad if I had to talk or say something...I was painfully shy and was worried I would have to give a speech! My parents assured me all I had to do was march down Main Street in a pretty

dress that my aunt sewed for me. I remember her stitching the rows and rows of lace on that dress. The cape was hand made too and it was my favorite shade of pink.

Every Summer I would travel with my parents for weekend Festas in other cities...Tracy, Newark, Mountain View and of course Pescadero were always on the itinerary. I remember the parade in Tracy was always in June usually in 90 degree weather...we would leave early in the morning just in time to get there to march in the hot sun.



*Rose, Little Queen of 1967, with her parents Ken and Lina*

As I grew older, I understood that the Holy Ghost Festival was more than a carnival or a colorful parade... it was to honor a centuries old tradition giving thanks to the Holy Ghost for saving the people of the Azore Islands after a drought and famine and honoring Queen Isabel. I would follow my Dad into the Capella every Sunday after the parade and lunch in the hall and he would give me a dollar or two so I could make a donation to the crown. →

## First Person: The Ormonde Family and the Holy Ghost Festival ...continued

My Mom, who is 91 now, remembers her mother taking her to see the crown on Pentecost Sunday in the 1930's during the Depression. Even with what little they had then, my Mom always was given a few pennies to leave as a small offering for Queen Isabella.

Our house was a whirlwind of activity from about April to late May, early June depending on what weekend the Pentecost Sunday happened to be that year.

My Dad loved all the preparation for the festival...He spent time on the phone ordering supplies, collecting donations from local businesses and various people in the community and in the weeks leading up to the festival, there was always work to do at the I.D.E.S. grounds. If someone stopped by looking for him, I remember my Mother always saying, "Did you check up at the Hall?"



*The Ormonde Family in the  
I.D.E.S. Capella*

It was a true brotherhood of members and for us a family affair. My uncle Bob Valladao, who was the I.D.E.S. Secretary for many years, was just as dedicated as my Dad. All the officers and members then, just as they are today, enjoyed working tirelessly to make each celebration a success.

When my Dad would come home and say "the flags for the parade are up" then I knew Chamarita was just around the corner. My Mom would work Festival weekend with my Dad...her post was usually as part of the lingua-stand crew making sandwiches from Friday night to Monday afternoon.

I would always be impressed when reporters for the Half Moon Bay Review would call through the years hoping my Dad would give them a new "angle" for that year's festival article. He was comfortable speaking to anyone about the history and lore of the Holy Ghost Festival and loved talking to whoever inquired about the early days or the future of the organization. I think one of his biggest thrills was being interviewed by Huell Howser for a PBS episode of "California Road Trip." ♦

## Coastside North and South: Montara and Torquay



--Ellen Chiri

Montara rests like a jewel between its beach and towering mountain. It's the first town you come to as you drive south from Pacifica; the last you pass through after leaving Moss Beach. Torquay would have been the most southerly Coastside town, between Franklin Point and Año Nuevo—but it never was a town at all.

### Montara: Resort-to-be

For thousands of years the Coastside was home to the Ohlone, the first people here. Spanish explorers arrived, then Mexican land grantees. After the California gold discovery, immigrants from the United States and around the world flooded in.

Ocean Shore Railroad construction began in 1905, intended to run between San Francisco and Santa Cruz. The railroad transported Coastside products to San Francisco, and it promoted real estate.

The motto “Reaches the Beaches” tempted prospective property buyers for the resort living that was to come—including in the towns of Montara and adjoining Farallone City.



Montara Station, circa 1908

--Photo courtesy of Barbara VanderWerf

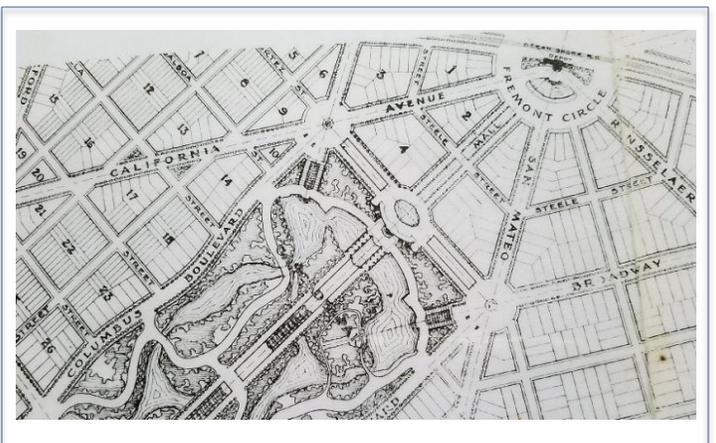
In 1908, Ocean Shore Railroad trains began chuffing along the precipitous Coastside cliffs on their way from San Francisco, through what is now Pacifica, to points south. The first stop after the perilous path around Montara Mountain and San Pedro Mountain was Montara Station. Today the station is a home on Second Street.

Early Montara was envisioned as an artist's colony. The dream of a formal artist's colony dissolved with the railroad's failure, but Montara has long been a favored locale for artists, writers, poets, and musicians.

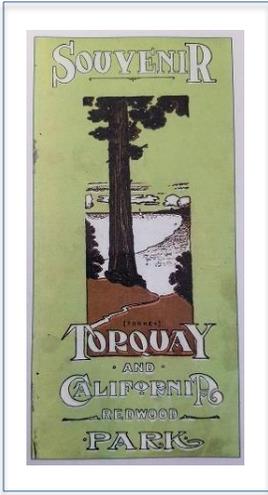
### Torquay: Town that Never Was

In 1907, celebrated architect Daniel H. Burnham envisioned a seaside resort mid-way between Pigeon Point and Año Nuevo. He called it Torquay, after the renowned seaside resort on England's south coast.

Burnham created the elegant but bewildering design for Granada, and his plan for Torquay was equally elegant. It included broad boulevards and promenades, a large park with meandering lagoons, and several small plazas. →



## Coastside North and South: Montara and Torquay ...continued



1909 Ad for Torquay Ad

-Torquay Images  
courtesy of  
Mike Merritt

Torquay was one of the many Coastside resorts-to-be that were anticipated with the arrival of the new Ocean Shore Railroad. The railroad's promotional material enticed prospective investors with tales of delights to come.

A 1909 advertisement explained that "With the completion of the railroad under course of construction you will be able to... spend Saturday to Monday at your country seaside home..."

Another early advertisement rhapsodized: "Only 90 minutes from San Francisco... one quick, direct link via Ocean Shore Railway... Torquay is a place Nature made for man, where may be enjoyed all the pleasures of the wild forest and bathing in the placid waters of the Pacific..."

And "Directly bordering the town is the finest beach between San Francisco and Santa Cruz with two miles of ocean bathing. On the other side of the city are the hills with their thousands of big trees including the California State Redwood Park."



The failure of the Ocean Shore Railroad spelled the end of romantic dreams for Torquay, and today only two cypress trees identify the site. ♦

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## Oral Histories

Does your family have a long Coastside history? Do you, or someone you know, have Coastside stories from long ago? Our Oral History team is gathering personal histories... may we add yours?

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## History Mysteries

Do you have a Coastside history mystery you'd like us to investigate?

Let us know! Email us at [info@halfmoonbayhistory.org](mailto:info@halfmoonbayhistory.org)

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## Volunteer Help Wanted!

Our Education, Oral History, and Program Committees would love to have your help.

Do you have experience designing websites or writing grants? We need you!

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## Our Board of Directors

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## Let Us Hear From You

- Visit us on the web at [halfmoonbayhistory.org](http://halfmoonbayhistory.org)
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- Check out our [YouTube channel](#).
- Email us at [info@halfmoonbayhistory.org](mailto:info@halfmoonbayhistory.org), or call us at 650.479.1935.
- Write to us at  
625 Miramontes St. #203  
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

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## Help Preserve Coastside History

Half Moon Bay History Association is dedicated to bringing together all members of the community, to preserve and share the history of the San Mateo County Coastside, from Montara to Año Nuevo.

Our history is the lives and works of all the cultures that made the Coastside what it is today, from the times of the earliest Ohlone villages, to the Spanish and Mexican periods, through the early American period, to modern times.



Our mission is to educate as we preserve, honor, and celebrate Coastside history.