

Coastside Chronicles

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“He was always trying something,
he was a very creative person.”

Bruno Giusti, about
his brother Aldo

HALF MOON BAY
HISTORY
ASSOCIATION

Celebrating Coastside Legacies

President's Message

—Juliette Applewhite

As 2021 comes to a close, I am reminded of how much the HMB History Association has achieved! We started the year by receiving our building permit and selecting our construction contractor, local Jamie Verdura of Verdura Construction. We packed up the historical artifacts that were stored in the barn, and construction began in July. Jamie and his team have worked hard to transform a 100-year-old barn/garage into a beautiful space for a modern museum. We look forward to construction being complete in early 2022.

I would like to recognize our committees, which have spent the year working on a variety of projects to bring our Coastside history to as many people as possible. Our fabulous docents have kept our jail museum open on the weekends, and for special events. The education committee created an informative workbook about our history, and distributed it to all Coastside 3rd graders. The museum design team has worked tirelessly on our

collections and on planning for the design of the museum. The oral history committee is gathering Coastsider stories from long ago. The communications committee has produced quarterly publications filled with local history and lore. And I want to recognize our busy board members, who have not missed one meeting in 2021.

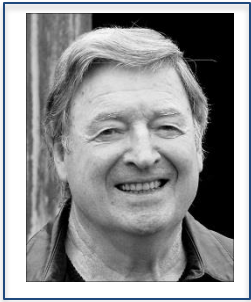
We are beyond grateful to our supporters, who have donated and volunteered throughout 2021. Thanks to them, we are ending the year with a **triple match** of up to \$150,000 through February 2022! **Please consider including us in your year-end giving, to take advantage of this opportunity to turn \$20 into \$60, \$100 into \$300, and more!** The funds will go toward designing and building exhibits that celebrate our rich Coastside history. We look forward to an exciting 2022!

We wish you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday and new year! ♦

Coastsider Portrait: Aldo Giusti—Farmer, Inventor, Renaissance Man

—Marc Strohle

Perhaps the best quote about Aldo Giusti, lifelong Coastsider resident, farmer, and inventor, came from his brother Bruno who said, “He was always trying something, he was a very creative person.”



Aldo had a life-long ability to spot a need and create a solution. Indeed, Aldo could be called a Renaissance man for his many talents and contributions to the Coastsider.

Aldo was born in Moss Beach in 1926 to Guido and Geni Giusti.

Guido had immigrated from Italy and, in 1921, found his way to the Coastsider to escape the heat of the central valley; Geni arrived in 1926. In 1949, Guido and a couple of partners acquired a farm plot near the Johnston House that was later handed down to Aldo.

Aldo grew up on the Coastsider, serving as class president at Half Moon Bay High School. He also played sports and was active in the school band. Aldo took up trumpet in high school and was drilled by his band teacher Leo Hillings on military marching songs, including pieces by John Philip Sousa. When he later joined the army in 1946, he listed one of his skills as trumpet playing and found himself auditioning for the Army’s band. To his surprise the audition required him to play the same music that he had been drilled on and he was chosen, serving in the Army band until 1947. One of his memorable experiences was playing for wounded veterans at the Hot Springs Arkansas Veteran’s Hospital.

After leaving the service he married Rose Rovai in 1948 and began farming Brussels sprouts and artichokes a year later. Later he formed Giusti Farms and purchased Cowell Ranch from POST in 2006.

His son John notes an interesting fact about Aldo, stating that “he didn’t like farming; his goal was to get off the farm.” He tried to find work as a bricklayer with no success, and so became a farmer. And, as in his other endeavors, Aldo threw himself into his work, becoming an innovator and successful, exemplary farmer who passed on his passion for farming to his son John. In the 1950s artichokes and Brussels sprouts were harvested by hand, and as many as 100 workers worked the fields at the Giusti farm. The 1950s also saw a major boost in nationwide popularity of Brussels sprouts as frozen food companies began distribution.



Brussels sprouts in their leafy nest

When the Bracero farm worker program ended in 1964, loss of immigrant labor caused shortages and Aldo at first traveled to San Francisco to hire homeless people as workers, but then conceived a mechanical harvester. John Giusti recalls his father “tinkering at night and working at a machine shop in Half Moon Bay to create a Brussels sprout harvester prototype” that he patented.

The device used a three-pass process to cut sprouts right from the stalk, and John notes that “it worked better than today’s one-pass harvesters, which have trouble with some stalks,” but was slower.



Ready for harvest

Aldo eventually sold prototypes to some large food companies along with the rights to the patents, and the devices were used in the United States and United Kingdom for about five years. →

Coastsider Portrait: Aldo Giusti ...continued

Aldo served on the first Half Moon Bay Planning Commission in the early 1960s, soon after it became a city. He also served on the Board of Fellows for Santa Clara University. Among his many pursuits and hobbies, Aldo was an avid golfer—so avid, in fact, that he invented a golf game in the 1960s that used a curtain to simulate a fairway, and Velcro balls that, when hit, would stick to the curtain. Golfers could determine where the balls would have landed on a real fairway. Unfortunately, he didn't patent the Velcro ball, which was later turned into a commercial product by other companies.

Nonetheless Aldo remained an active golfer, including a month-long trip to Ireland in the 1980s. Son John successfully ran the farm in his absence, including managing the payroll—a formative, if formidable experience for the younger Giusti.

In 1999, Aldo was selected as Farmer of the Year by San Mateo County, also gaining recognition from the U.S. House of Representatives and the state Assembly.

Aldo Giusti died on November 14, 2007, leaving his legacy of Giusti Farms, along with his many contributions to the Coastside.

Today, third-generation farmer John Giusti farms about 350 acres of peas, artichokes, beans, and Brussels sprouts. In perhaps the best testament to Aldo's legacy, John recalls "my father Aldo taught me everything I know about farming. He had his own business and he loved it, and he really encouraged me to join farming."

And the apple doesn't fall far from the tree—John was selected Farmer of the Year in 2011, while son Jacob won first place in the San Francisco Bay Area Science Fair for his study "What Keeps Food Fresh," finding a solution that kept 50% more vegetables fresh. ♦

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? Let us know! Email us at info@halfmoonbayhistory.org

What Are Those Mysterious Concrete Circles?

—Ellen Chiri

At the end of Kelly Avenue, just south of the Half Moon Bay State Beach Ranger Station, are the semi-circular remains of—what? A close look shows that the ocean-facing side of the Ranger station mimics the curve of the concrete circles. What does that mean?

Legend tells us that a fellow named Sam Miami built a bar and café on the bluffs during Prohibition, and named it the Moon Dream Inn. The Inn was the building that is now the Ranger Station. But what about the concrete arcs?



Aerial photos taken before the level of current erosion show intriguing crescent shapes. This image, taken in 1972 for the [California Coastal Records Project](#), shows the crescent shapes south of the eroding ravine:



As the story goes, old-timers recalled that the cement crescents were the foundation for a large, grand Moon Dream Inn. The scale of that project became cost-prohibitive, so the planners moved north and built the more modest bar, and a few cabins, next door. The bar and café operated throughout Prohibition; during World War II, the cabins housed some of the thousands of soldiers who came to protect the coast.

Although the Moon Dream Inn is no more, at least one lifetime Coastsider remembers the place—her father once escorted her, a teenager, into the place through a side door. ♦

History Mysteries

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

Let us know! Email us at info@halfmoonbayhistory.org

Daniel Burnham's Granada—the Jewel of the Coast

—Marc Strohle

As visitors to El Granada try to navigate its circuitous streets, many are likely to wonder who created such an odd design. The wide avenues and boulevards with islands lined with giant eucalyptus trees are unusual for a small town.

The street layout is arranged as a half of a wagon wheel, like Paris, France—also highly unusual for a small town.



The short answer is that El Granada was designed by famous architect and urban designer Daniel Burnham, but there is a lot more interesting history behind the formative years of the town's development.

The San Mateo coast in the early 1900s was rural and difficult to reach from the north and the east, so development was sparse until the construction of the Ocean Shore Railroad, which began in 1905. The railroad was backed by a group of wealthy businessmen of San Francisco, including J. Downey Harvey, who became the president of the railroad. Shortly thereafter he also became president of the Shore Line Investment company, created to purchase and develop property, which hired Burnham in 1905.

The railroad was a boon to local farmers, lumberjacks, and ranchers. It also sparked a vision to link San Francisco and Santa Cruz with a rail line dotted with beach towns and resorts, including one originally called Balboa. Unfortunately, by the time Shore Line Investment tried to register the tract with the county of San Mateo, a town in Southern California had beaten them to the punch, and the tract was registered as Granada. The town was later named El Granada, its current name, by its first postmaster, reportedly after Hotel El Granada, where the first post office was located.

Ocean Shore billed itself as the "railroad that reaches the beaches." Ads for Granada lots described the future town as "the magnificent city which will be to San Francisco what Atlantic City is to New York, and what Long Beach is to LA." Charles Kendrick was hired by the company to purchase properties for development, with the first being land for the showpiece town of Granada. He acquired 1,271 acres at a cost of about \$60,000 setting the stage for development.

Daniel Burnham, the architect selected to design Granada, was named the "Father of the City Beautiful Movement" and was renowned for his work, including the



Flatiron building in New York, Union Station in Washington D.C., and the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. He also created plans for Chicago, San Francisco, and Manila, but Granada is the only Burnham-designed town in the United States. The City Beautiful Movement integrated parks and public spaces with monumental architecture and residential areas to create beauty and visual variety while promoting a more civil society. →

Granada—the Jewel of the Coast ...continued

Burnham hated traditional grid street patterns and preferred for roads to follow the contours of hills, as cows would navigate them. He envisioned Granada's streets being used by pedestrians and carriages and indeed, with a few notable exceptions, the streets and avenues are quite easy to navigate.

He also wanted to maximize ocean views from residences, which also influenced the radial design. Much of the actual design work was done by English architect Edward Bennett. While Burnham worked from photos, maps, and models in his Chicago office, Bennett rode the property on horseback. It's possible that Burnham never actually visited the site in person.

The design incorporated public plazas, 640 acres of open space including the land now known as the Burnham Strip, and oceanfront promenades including a boardwalk. He created a unique concept of "park chains" in the form of trees planted on broad islands within the avenues that radiate outward from the strip. The plan also incorporated extensive planting of eucalyptus, pine, cypress, and other trees—pre-Burnham era photos of Granada show nearly bare hills. Underscoring his vision, he wrote: "Nowhere on earth is the ocean availed of by men as it should be. Perhaps we can set the pace and inoculate the men of the Pacific Coast with the right ideas."

As the intended jewel of the coast, Granada had to have the best railroad station—a Mediterranean design with tile roof, stucco walls, and arched openings. The building has been much modified but still stands at Alhambra and Granada Avenues. The railroad reached the station in June 1908, setting the stage for the selling of lots. On June 21, 1908, 500 prospective lot buyers were given a free train ride to Granada as guests of Kendrick. Upon reaching the Granada station, they were met by Shore Line's real estate agents, while caterers unloaded lunch baskets.

An ad in the April 28, 1909, San Francisco Call invited prospects to "Come with us Sunday—enjoy a basket lunch on the Beach at our expense—let us help you to have the most enjoyable day of your life." The ad listed Charles Kendrick as "sole agent," and he had exclusive rights to sell the lots on 400 acres designated for homesites.

Throughout 1908, 1909, and 1910, prospective buyers rode the special charters, listened to pitches from agents, and ate lunch before returning to San Francisco. Residential lots sold for \$250 to \$900, and 1,727 were sold, but many lot owners stopped making payments or forfeited lots—not altogether surprising given the promotional free train rides and lunches—who could resist? Unfortunately, many of the lots were bought by investors with no intention of building on the lots. In 1908, the San Francisco Call described Granada as "the place for real estate speculation, for values will double and triple in the next year." Instead, the Shore Line Investment Company, faced with bankruptcy, put Granada up for sale in February of 1920 and the railroad itself ceased operations in August of that year. Much of the planned development never happened.

The town has grown considerably over the years and is still dotted with original cottages and a few reminders of its origin, but the radial design is perhaps the most notable reminder of Burnham's work, along with the Burnham Strip. In 1977 El Granada created a master plan that designates the strip as open space, keeping a key part of Burnham's vision alive.

Walking the streets of El Granada, one can imagine that Burnham might be frustrated that the plan he and Edward Bennett created didn't fully come to fruition, but he would be pleased with the beautiful ocean views from much of the community—the "ocean is availed by men as it should be." ♦

Real Life Learning—Students Volunteer for Community Service

Half Moon Bay High School recently held its first annual Real Life Learning “Service Jam” in the school quad. The gathering connected students with local service organizations, to help them find ways to complete their community service hours.

Mary Ruddy set up a table displaying some of the History Association’s artifacts. An octant, an old measuring instrument used in maritime navigation, roused lots of curiosity. Old photos from Half Moon Bay High challenged students to identify when they were taken, based on the clothes the people wore and other clues (the photos were from the 1930s and 1940s).

During the Service Jam, several students joined with the History Association to complete their service hours, working on a variety of projects. We’re delighted that they’re helping us to preserve and share Coastside history! ♦



Articles and Videos!

Visit the History Association website to read more intriguing articles, and to watch videos—
halfmoonbayhistory.org

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!

Email us at info@halfmoonbayhistory.org

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.



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Mary Ruddy—Jail Museum Manager & Interim
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