

Coastside Chronicles

A Publication of the Half Moon Bay History Association

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“Every detail was important to him. The lock on a door... faucet handles...roof shingle types, gutters made of copper and weathered...an acorn...”
-- Lois White, about her father artist Ken Paul Lozado



Celebrating Coastside Legacies

From the President

—Juliette Applewhite

Happy New Year! I am beyond excited about what 2023 will bring for Coastsiders and guests alike.

2022 was a great year for the History Association! Our phenomenal docent team kept our Jail Museum up and running throughout the year. We are so very grateful for our dedicated team.

The Education Committee returned to some of our elementary schools and looks forward to presenting local history to every Coastside Third Grade classroom.

Our Museum Design Team has worked tirelessly designing the first phase of exhibits. The Coastside History Museum will open in the spring of 2023!

We look forward to sharing more stories of the Coastside in later phases, and we hope many of you will join us as volunteers. If you have Coastside artifacts you'd like to donate to the museum, we'd love to hear from you!

We have a new Oral History interviewer and are excited about all the stories being collected. Do you or someone you know have a story to share?

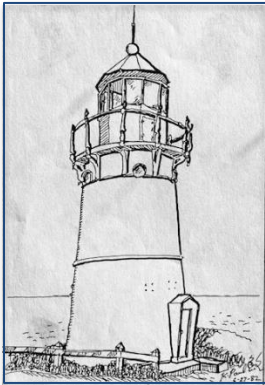
We relaunched our Speaker Series in the fall, with archaeologist Mark Hylkema speaking of the first people who lived on the Coastside. Our winter program featured big-wave surfers Bianca Valenti and Ryan Seelbach, who talked about the history of Mavericks and their experiences riding its huge waves. Judy Matienzo talked about her husband Alex Matienzo, who surfed Mavericks in the 1960s, and about Maverick—the white dog who was the spot's namesake.

We are looking for new volunteers! We have opportunities—website designer, museum docents, walking-tour guides, artifacts cataloger, Coastside Chronicles contributors, and researchers to answer history questions from the public. For more info, email us at VolunteerNowHMBHA@gmail.com

Ken Paul Lozado—Drawing places and spaces

—Lois White, Ken Paul’s daughter

Dad loved historical sites. Old buildings were places that held stories, you just had to find the pieces and fit them together to create meaning.



Montara Lighthouse,
1982

Dad loved nature. He would run early in the morning or late at night in the forests and foothill parks around the Bay Area. Dad loved people. People were the reason that these places were created or maintained. He found a way to understand and have a piece of these things in his heart and carry them wherever he went to share with friends and people passing through a similar space and place, for a moment. He did this through creating: artwork, music, and writing.

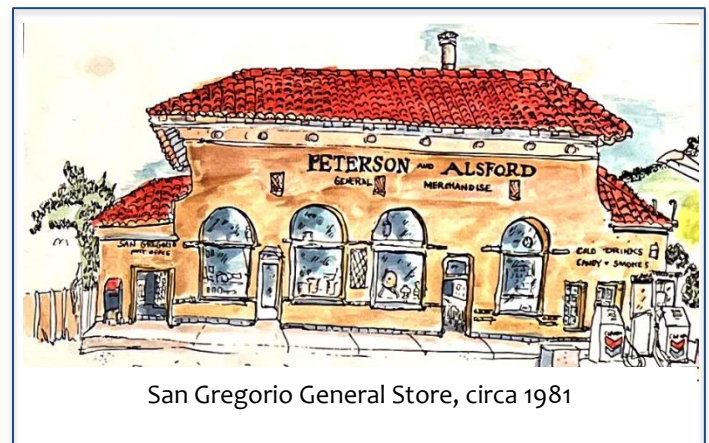
Dad was an intent listener. He would quietly listen to each person’s story, or journey in life, where they were and where they wanted to go. He would respond with insight and perhaps get out his ink pen and say “Let’s take a line for a walk.” His drawings had simplicity, depth, and character. They were expressions where words fell short.

During the 1970s, Dad would pick me up from grammar school to visit historical buildings he was drawing. I would watch him methodically draw lines and squiggles, dots, and broad strokes. Somehow they merged, and when I looked again after playing somewhere in the dirt under a pile of leaves or twigs, the lines had assembled themselves neatly into an image of a building. Dad was studying the buildings.

The residences had a story to tell, except that no one was telling the story because the buildings were often empty. The drawings brought the buildings to life. He would include small, overlooked images like a cat in the window, a small circular pull-down window shade string, a keyhole under a brass doorknob or a bird in a tree. Dad’s thoughtful pen and ink illustrations are a time capsule of Coastside and Bay Area life during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

These humble and quiet towns are now landmark destinations. Dad drew Filoli in the 1970s and early 80s. He was given the keys to the Crystal Springs watershed and we would drive on dirt trails to locations with fascinating sites behind stone walls overgrown with ivy. Filoli was a secret garden.

I loved riding in Dad’s old tan Buick station wagon to watch him draw a fascinating historical place. It was always an adventure. I remember visiting the San Gregorio General Store. Dad was set on drawing it. Earlier in the day, we visited a La Honda bee farm to get bee pollen for his marathon running. I sat in the Buick station wagon and watched him draw every tile on the store roof. →



San Gregorio General Store, circa 1981

Ken Paul Lozado —Drawing places and spaces...continued

Dad drew the Salt Box (Johnston) house before it became a national historical site in 1973. He planned and then actually illustrated every historical site on the Coastside that he believed should be preserved for the community to remember. Every detail was important to him.

The lock on a door, a specific tree species, faucet handles, roof shingle types, gutters made of copper and weathered into patina green, an acorn... He taught me to observe buildings and Nature. They both had lessons to teach. Since both were silent, the only way to learn their story was to illustrate with pen and ink. I love you Dad. ♦

Visit the Retrospective of Ken Paul's work January 12-30

In addition to his pen-and-ink works of art, Ken Paul created wood sculptures, carving his works from tree trunks and roots.



Don't miss the showcase of his remarkable drawings and carvings at Coastal Arts League Gallery, 300 Main Street, Half Moon Bay.

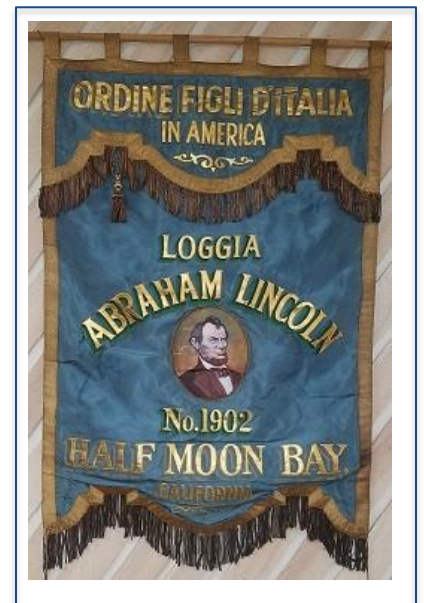
Figli d'Italia—the Sons of Italy in Half Moon Bay

The *Ordine Figli d'Italia in America*—the Order of the Sons of Italy in America—is a fraternal society founded in 1905. The word *figli* is plural, and can mean both men and women; the organization is known today as the Sons and Daughters of Italy.

The organization's early goal was to help assimilate Italians into American society and provide a social network during the immigration boom of the early 20th century. The Half Moon Bay chapter received its non-profit status in 1941, becoming the Abraham Lincoln Lodge.

This banner was donated to the History Association by Shirley Moorhouse and her mother Rose Barcellone., who were members of the Half Moon Bay lodge. We thank them!

If you or your family members have stories about this organization, we'd love to hear from you!



The April Fool’s Day Tsunami of 1946

—Siena Hinshelwood, with special thanks to Barbara Healy Stickel

As winter storms sweep through the Coastside and cause large waves and flooding, we can cast our minds back to another event that resulted in flooding and big waves, but from a very different cause. Around 10:30 a.m. on April 1st, 1946, Coastside residents were surprised by a tsunami. Known as the April Fool’s Day Tidal Wave, this was one of the most destructive tsunamis the Coastside has witnessed.

While we all know that we are on a fault line, a tsunami likely won’t be our “fault.” The San Andreas fault is a *transform* or *strike-slip* fault, meaning that the two tectonic plates slide past each other. A tsunami is caused by a large and sudden displacement of the ocean, most often caused by an earthquake below or near the ocean floor at a *convergent* fault. At a convergent fault, the earth might move up or down rapidly, displacing the water above it and causing a large wave through the whole water column—a tsunami!

In 1946, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake occurred off the Aleutian Islands in Alaska at a convergent fault, thus creating the perfect storm for a massive tsunami. After hitting hard in Alaska, the wave traveled and devastated parts of Hawai’i and then hit the West Coast of the United States. Fun fact—after this earthquake, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center was created to generate some tsunami-preparedness across the Pacific.

On the Coastside, the tsunami hit hardest in Princeton. There were 15-foot-high waves buffeting the whole area and a rise of 2.6 meters/8.5 feet in tides from normal levels. The first wave was a trough and the sea dropped 7 feet. The second wave brought flooding.

The *Half Moon Bay Review* wrote on April 4, 1946, on its front page: “Several small tidal waves followed in successive order a few minutes apart Monday at



Hazel’s Sea Foods—today’s Barbara’s Fish Trap

Princeton. It flooded homes, shoved boats nearly 1,000 feet inland, uprooted fences, washed automobiles from their parking spots for distances of sixty feet and did damage along the Coastside that may total \$20,000.”

Some residents weren’t as concerned as the *Review*’s report seemed to warrant. In an interview in 2006, local commercial fisherman Nat Johnson recounted how he noticed that a boat at the pier “kind of looked high” but he “paid no attention to it.” He was laying the foundation for a crab kettle at Hazel’s Sea Foods (located at present-day Barbara’s Fish Trap) and went back to his work. Then, he recalled, “there was no wave, just the water rose slow... it came across the highway and down below.” He even laughingly recalled John Patroni, the owner of the Patroni House, yelling, “Run for the Mountains, it’s a tidal wave,” before the wave stopped advancing. Mr. Johnson remembered it as one surge and then it was gone.

The *Review* reported, “through it all there was no injury to persons, although several chickens were washed out to sea on the ebb of several of the waves.” →

The April Fool's Day Tsunami of 1946...continued

There was plenty of damaged property and flooded roads. A report on United States tsunamis by several U.S. federal agencies described that a house was flooded to the windowsills.

The Coast Guard barracks in Half Moon Bay—luckily unoccupied—flooded, and the building was loosened from its foundations. Water “was about 1 m deep on the road” and “at nearby Granada a 10 m boat was washed onto the highway.”



The next day, the *San Mateo Times* reported on the aftermath. It wrote, “Fearful that a high tide at midnight last night might result in more damage, a number of persons gathered at the Nerli restaurant to keep a midnight watch on the

tide. Shortly after midnight, the restaurant closed and all departed.”

Residents were wary of the higher tides but were overall grateful that worse had not happened. The *Times* continued: “Mrs. James W. Healy was busily engaged today with a hoe scraping mud and sea-weed from her living room.” She then reportedly said, “After



the midnight high tide, and with nothing more happening, we went to bed. This is a mess, but when I think of what happened in the Hawaiian Islands I don't think we can complain too much.”

In 2014, researchers with the California Geological Survey and Humboldt State University came to the Coastsides to study sediment deposits in the Pillar Point marsh from the 1946 tsunami. They sought to study, and develop more methods to study, how historic tsunamis affected coastal areas and thus help prepare for future disasters. Tsunami preparedness saves lives, and no resident present for the 1946 tsunami was likely to forget it. ♦

Family Histories

Does your family have Coastsides history? Do you, or someone you know, have Coastsides 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

Rancho Corral de Tierra: The Francisco Guerrero y Palomares Years

—Marc Strohle

Many Coastside residents know Rancho Corral de Tierra as a scenic part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and a great place for hiking, with many scenic views. Yet the former rancho has a rich history, including that of the original land-grant owner and important figure in Coastside history named Francisco Guerrero y Palomares.

The original residents of the area were the Ohlone Chiguan people, who lived in the area for several thousand years before the arrival of Spanish explorers in 1769. The area was colonized by Spanish soldiers and missionaries who established the Misión San Francisco de Asís in 1776, now more commonly known as Mission Dolores. The missionaries attempted to convert the Ohlone to Christianity, ultimately resulting in the decimation of the Indigenous population from disease and poor treatment.

By the 1790s, Franciscans were grazing cattle in the Rancho Corral de Tierra area. The land was ideal for pasture because the original Ohlone inhabitants had periodically burned the land, leaving grass that was perfect for the longhorn cattle. The Spanish had earlier observed that the ridge and coastline around present Half Moon Bay has a similar shape to a natural earthen corral, which led to the name Rancho Corral de Tierra.

The Mexican War of Independence ended Spanish control in 1821, and by 1833 the Mexican Congress began seizing Church lands, starting the process of secularization of mission land and property. The

original intent was purportedly to return land to the Ohlone, but most was instead granted to soldiers and friends of government officials, including Francisco Guerrero y Palomares.

It's important to note that the Spanish naming convention puts the mother's last name after the father's, so Guerrero is the last name for this ranchero. Also note that Californians of this era were Mexican citizens also known as Californios.

Guerrero was born in Tepic, Mexico in 1811 and traveled to California in 1834, soon attaining the title of *juez de paz*, or justice of peace, for the lands around San Francisco. That duty included assisting with secularization of mission property. His efforts led to his promotion to the post of Alcalde of Yerba Buena, a mayoral position in what became San Francisco.

Historian Zoeth Skinner Eldredge wrote: "Guerrero was a man of high standing and well regarded by Americans as well as Californians." Merchant and trader William Heath Davis, in his book *Sixty Years in California*, wrote that he found Guerrero to be "one of the most important men in the district" and noted that he was appointed sub-prefect, an official charged with the administration of a territory.

Guerrero married Josefa de Haro, the daughter of an Alcalde. They had ten children, but only two males lived to adulthood. Guerrero applied for the land grant for Corral de Tierra in December of 1838, based on his military record and submission of a *diseño*, a basic map of the property he desired. →

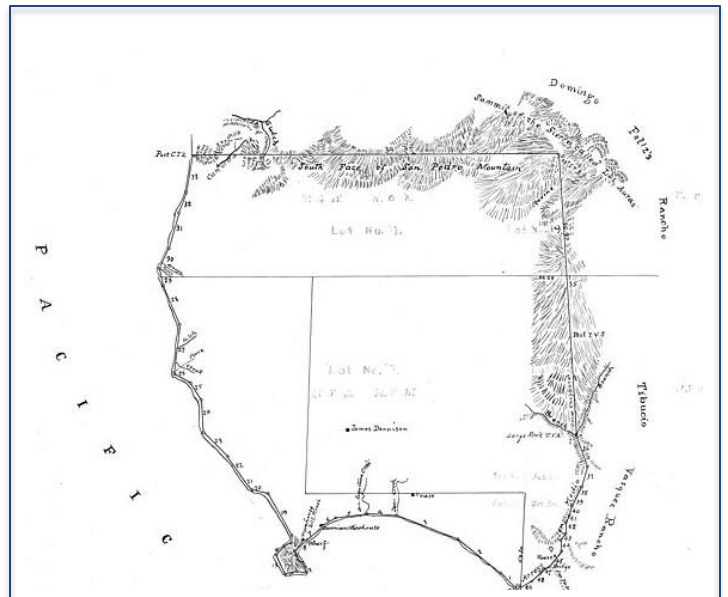
Rancho Corral de Tierra: The Francisco Guerrero y Palomares Years...continued

In 1839 Guerrero was granted his 7,766-acre rancho by Governor Pro-Tem Manuel Jimeno Casarín. The grant stretched from Montara Mountain to the north, the ocean to the west, Arroyo de en Medio (Medio Creek) to the south, and the first mountain ridge to the east. It included today's communities of Montara, Moss Beach, Princeton, and El Granada. The southern portion of Rancho Corral de Tierra was granted to Tiburcio Vasquez, extending from Medio Creek to Pilarcitos Creek.

Historian Frank M. Stanger noted in his book *South From San Francisco* "There were, in fact, strings attached to make sure that this would be a homestead, and not merely a speculation. The land must not be sold, mortgaged, or entailed; trees must be planted, and within one year a house must be built and it must be inhabited." Guerrero made good on all but the latter condition as he largely resided in Yerba Buena, not at his rancho. He did have an adobe house built at the rancho at the foot of the hills at Guerrero, near present-day Princeton, where he and Josefa would stay during their visits.

Guerrero lived primarily in Yerba Buena because he had significant official positions and duties in the city. Moreover, access to the ranchos was difficult due to poor roads and steep hills. Mitchell P. Postel noted in his book *Peninsula Portrait* that the ranchos were "largely cut off from the rest of Mexico's territories," and that "under such primitive conditions, rancheros were left to their own devices to govern their affairs." Guerrero took advantage of his presence in Yerba Buena to meet trading partners, and Davis said that Guerrero was "very social in his nature and fond of little dances which were frequently held at his house."

Life for rancheros such as Guerrero was described by Stanger as "free and easy," as the cattle, identifiable by their brands, "ranged freely with little or no watching, and there were servants to do the



Recorded map of Rancho Corral de Tierra, showing boundary lines. On the north, the map notes the "south face of San Pedro Mountain." Notes on the map identify features such as large rock, arroyo, and salt marsh.

drudgery." Indigenous Ohlone from the mission outposts were, in Postel's words "Kept as laborers in a feudal arrangement. A few of the most favored were allowed to become vaqueros," and were America's first true cowboys.

Each spring vaqueros rounded up calves for branding and steers for slaughter at the *matanza*, and held rodeos. Those events were major days-long festivals, with the vaqueros participating in riding competitions, bull fights, and grizzly bear hunting, with Guerrero and wife Josefa presiding over the events. Postel noted, the rancheros were "rich in land and cattle but essentially lived a cash poor existence." Hides and tallow from cattle were used much like currency and by 1840, California rancheros were trading between 50,000 to 80,000 hides to 20 to 30 foreign merchant ships each year. →

Rancho Corral de Tierra: The Francisco Guerrero y Palomares Years...continued

As more and more Americans arrived in the region, Guerrero found his ability to serve his sub-prefect role was difficult as he had no staff and Yerba Buena was entering a notoriously chaotic and dangerous period.

Despite his challenges in the increasing lawlessness of the region, Guerrero was accommodating to American immigrants. Davis said that Guerrero “encouraged immigration of foreigners to California” and at times, “defended their rights.” Despite his love for his native country, he believed that California needed, in Heath’s words, to “pass from control of Mexico.” Heath also noted that Guerrero had no dislike for Americans and “admired them as a progressive people and saw that they would ultimately control.”

On July 9, 1846, the Bear Flag Revolt ended with the Americans taking possession of Yerba Buena. It was that revolt and the accompanying tensions and the ensuing war between the United States and Mexico that convinced Guerrero and his family to leave Yerba Buena and take up permanent residence on their rancho. When the situation became calmer, he returned to the city and served as an elections inspector.

Guerrero’s considerable knowledge of legal issues surrounding ownership of the rancho properties coupled with his sympathetic relationship with Americans made him extremely valuable. Many of the new immigrants had scant respect for the Californios and their property rights, and Guerrero was called on to testify on the validity of many claims.

Guerrero’s expertise that made him so valuable to Americans ironically may have led to his demise. Both he and Tiburcio Vasquez were prosecution witnesses in the land-fraud case involving Prudencio Santillan, a

priest, and both Guerrero and Vasquez were murdered. In 1851 a Frenchman on horseback reportedly struck Guerrero on the head with a slingshot and Heath wrote that he believed that “parties interested in the Santillan land claim were instigators of the murder.” Vasquez was murdered in Half Moon Bay in 1863.

Davis described Guerrero as one of the “few real founders of San Francisco,” and one testament to that importance is the naming of Guerrero Street in San Francisco for him. With the cession of California to the United States following the Mexican American War, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided that the land grants would be honored, and the grant was finally patented to the widow Josefa de Haro de Guerrero in 1866. She had married American James Denniston in 1853, making him the first American owner of the rancho.

Today, much of the former land grant is now part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and few if any signs of the rancho years remain, but it is interesting to think back to the days of rancheros, vaqueros, rodeos, and grizzly bears in that not-too-distant past. ♦

Volunteer at your Coastside Museum!

We’re expanding the museum space, and we’re looking for more volunteers. If you enjoy history and helping people learn about our Coastside’s vibrant story, come join the fun! We provide training to get you started. For more info, email us at VolunteerNowHMBHA@gmail.com.

History Mysteries

Do you have a Coastside history mystery you'd like us to investigate? Let us know! Email us at info@halfmoonbayhistory.org.

Articles and Videos!

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

Help Preserve Coastside History

The Half Moon Bay History Association is dedicated to bringing together all members of the Coastside community to preserve, celebrate, 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 have made the Coastside what it is today, from the first Ohlone people, to the Spanish and Mexican periods, through the early American period, to modern times.



The History Association is an all-volunteer organization—your donations keep us going.

Thank you!

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