

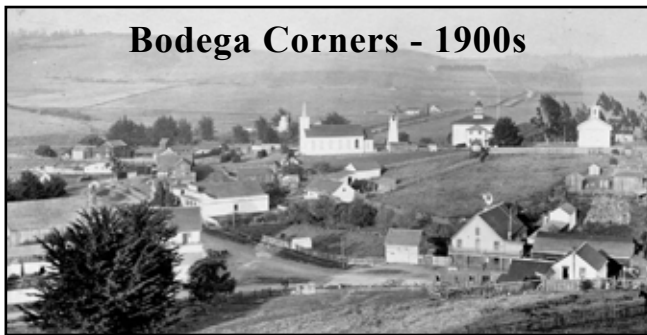
RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Honorina Tuomey - *Preservation of the Coastline*

Imagine the Sonoma Coast beaches in the 1860s, just after the Bear Flag Revolt, when the State of California was just settling into existence. It was here that Honorina Tuomey was born, in 1866, on Buckhorn Ranch on Coleman Valley Road, and here she made her mark by assuring our beautiful coastline was preserved as a part of California State Parks.

While it took the efforts of many Sonoma County residents, including Howard McCaughey, the unofficial “mayor” of the coastal communities, to have our coastline declared a park, in 1928, Honorina Tuomey was named an official adviser to the CA State Parks Commission.

She recommended that the Bodega Bay area be included in the State Park system, as well as, the following sites: 1) the Russian ranch, on Salmon Creek Rd outside the town of Bodega; 2) the redwood grove then known as Joy Woods on Fitzpatrick Lane; 3) Fort Ross; 4) Mount Saint Helena; 5) General M.G. Vallejo Estate in Sonoma; 6) the Petrified Forest outside Calistoga; 7) Russian Gulch on the ocean coast and 8) the south border of the Gualala River for some distance back from the ocean to the north border for an equal distance, a Mendocino County project. As we can see, her efforts were valued.



Not only did she preserve sites for the future, Honorina celebrated significant historical events that unfolded around her. A friend to many historical figures in her day, including Luther Burbank, the daughters of General Vallejo and Jasper O’Farrell. In the 1920s she placed several markers, including one in Santa Rosa at the site where two members of the Bear Flag party were killed in 1846, a second in the town of Bodega at the site of a Russian farm and, at the site of the adobe house of Capt. Stephen Smith, the first owner of Rancho Bodega.

A school teacher, Honorina taught art and vocal music at the Sebastopol Elementary School, was the principal for 10 years at the Marshall Grammar School in Green Valley, and returned for two final years of teaching at Potter School, where Honorina had gone to school as a child, the school in Bodega used 40 years later in the movie, “The Birds”. She retired in 1921 at the age of 55.

Living in a house in Bodega owned by her friends, Annie and Ben Joy, Honorina’s retirement was anything but sedentary. In 1925, she organized a festival, called “Discovery Days”, the predecessor of today’s **Fisherman’s Festival**, honoring the 150th anniversary of the discovery of Bodega Bay by Spanish explorer Don Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra. As one of our first Northern California historians, she wrote the following books: *History of Sonoma County, 2 huge volumes (1926)* and *History of the Mission, Presidio and Pueblo of Sonoma*, co-authored with Luisa Vallejo Empanan, the daughter of General Vallejo (1934). Sadly, Honorina suffered a nervous breakdown in 1935 and was hospitalized at Napa State Hospital until her death in 1938 at the age of 72. Honorina’s archives are at the Sonoma County Museum. *by Robin Rudderow - 2013* ■