

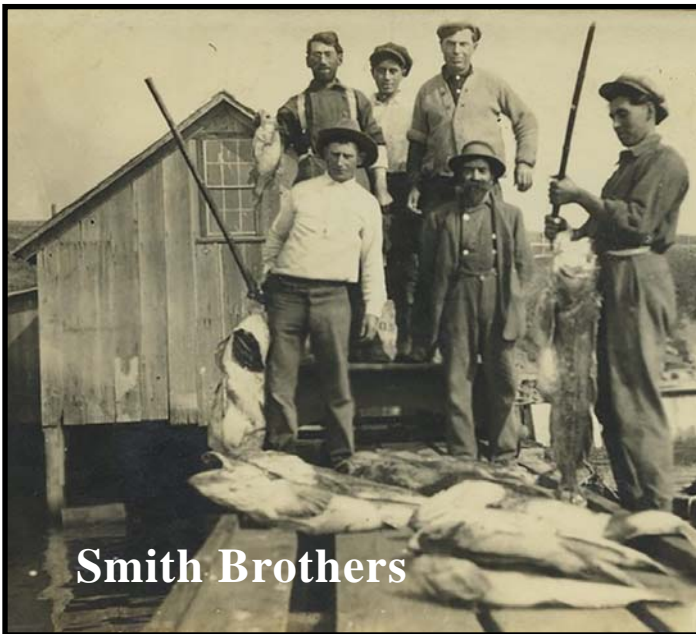
RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Touring Bay Highway Then & Now

In Bodega Bay much of the landscape and structures from more than a century ago are still here. Horses and wagons are gone. Luckily, we don't carry our own water any longer. Fishing and Ranching are still valued as a way of life. Then and now the community strongly supported each other and were quick to say, "we take care of our own."

Illustrated in this newsletter issue, the area's culture and historic character persist today. Even Google Maps shares the evidence. The village then known simply as "Bay" is found by traveling on "Bay Highway" otherwise known today as Highway One.

Smith Brothers Road At the turn of the 20th century,



Smith Brothers

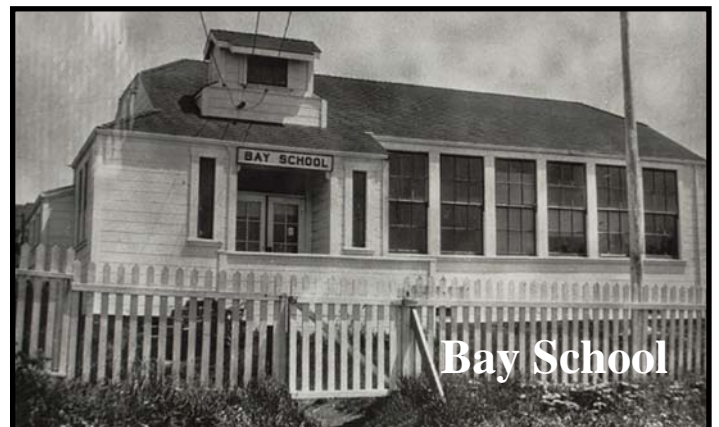
when heading north, the first landmark on your left was the home of the Smith family, where today Smith Brothers Road turns from the highway toward the water's edge. Not surprisingly, it was home to a fishermen's family with strong Coast Miwok heritage. The matriarch of the Smith family was Tsupu, a Coast Miwok. Her son, William (Bill) Smith, born in 1843, was fathered by Capt. Stephen Smith, Bodega Rancho's first recorded landowner.

Bill Smith and his sons fished from small boats off the sand spit known as Doran Beach. In 1911, five Smith brothers fished in Alaska earning enough to buy two 50-foot trawlers from the Boat Works in Sausalito. Their catch from the twin boats, named Smith Brothers 1 & 2, was sold from the fish market operated by the sixth brother in Santa Rosa. By 1919 the Smith Brothers were selling their catch at Paladini's fish market in San Francisco, establishing themselves as the first true commercial fishers in Bodega Bay.

The Smith's purchased property easily accessible to the water from the Doran's. Their home resided on the highway. On the water, they built a two-story structure with a boom and wharfage facilities to handle three boats at a time. **Tooch Columbo**, who passed recently, remembered playing there as a boy. (see page 6)

The old warehouse still stands today, in 2024 it's Bodega Bay Yacht Club, owned and operated by Sonoma County.

Up the road was Bay School. In 1926 when the



Bay School

fishing village was simply known as "Bay," Louie Asman came from his mother's home in Eureka to build Bay's schoolhouse. Harold Ames' Grandmother was a teacher at Bay School. Today the Carpenter family proudly displays a picture showing her class in 1932.

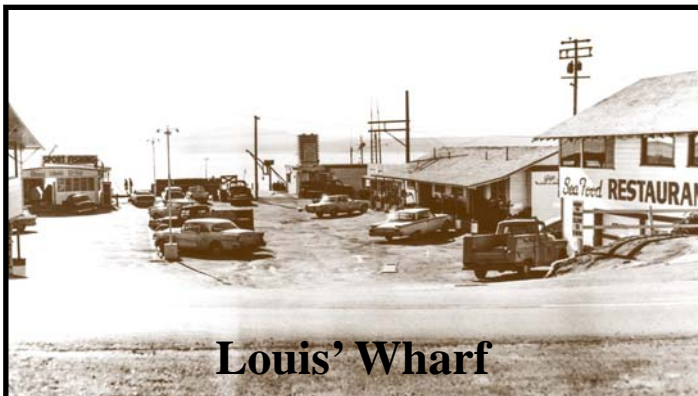
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Mid-century school trustees included Paul Wedel, Shirley Ames from Bay and Pauline Columbo from Bodega. Recently, one of Bodega Bay's native sons who still lives in the village, remembers attending 5-6th grades at Bay School. He went on to 7 & 8th grade in the new school built on top of the hill. For high school classes, just as students today, he rode the school bus to high school in Tomales. The men in these families fished for their living and served the community as volunteer firefighters, while their wives served as postal workers and post mistresses in both Bodega and Bay.

Bay School eventually closed in favor of the modern school at the top of the hill, today's Bodega Bay Elementary School. When the property sold Great Grandma Ames didn't move far; her family replaced her school with two new homes for the Ames and Carpenter families. Their families figure large in our local history. Sister-in-laws Shirley Ames and Glenice Ames Carpenter, both born in 1931, outlived their husbands and were the closest of sisters living next door. Glenice Ames Carpenter died in 2021. Shirley Ames died one year later.

Now in 2024, the two homes are owned and cherished by Carpenter families. Now painted blue, the younger generations of Carpenters lovingly updated and remodeled the twin homes, preserving their family's ownership and history. Across the street on the water is the original Ames family home.

The Fishing business was growing fast! At the waters



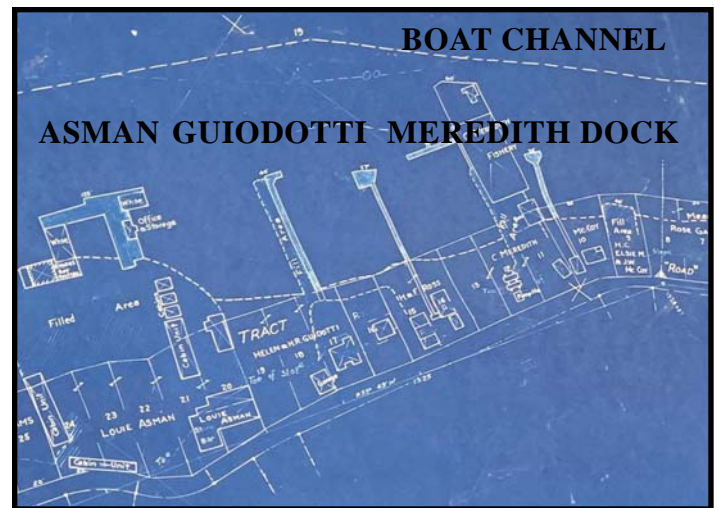
Louis' Wharf

edge, the next stop on Bay Highway was Luis Asman's refreshment stand selling bait, fresh fish, soft drinks

and cigarettes. He went on to build **Louie's "Coast Camp"** adding his Wharf and starting a wholesale fish business with Paladini. Louie eventually built a bar and restaurant (more bar than restaurant). In 1940 a family reunion was served a hearty breakfast, enjoyed a day of swimming, boating, fishing, softball, and dancing. For dinner they enjoyed a fish dinner with crab, rock cod, oysters, salmon and clam chowder.

In the 1940's, Bay village thrived. After the channel was dredged in 1943, (except for the sand spit on Doran Beach) docks spouted on Bay's shore. World War II created demand for protein-rich food. An airstrip formed where today we wander the Bird Walk following unnaturally square paths. When the boys came home, the Baby Boom began, the fish were abundant and the docks spilled over with rafted fishing boats and fish canneries.

The Tides was Bay's meeting place. On the wharf,



the "Low Tides" with board floors, curved counter and tables with benches, was the commercial fishermen's refuge offering the constant chatter of a marine radio, strong coffee, enormous breakfasts, beer and chowder.

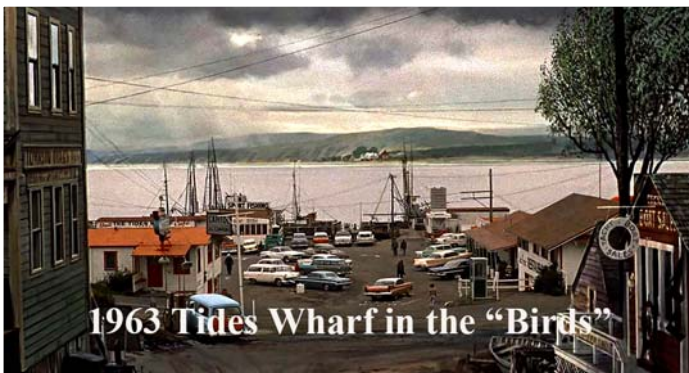
The restaurant known as "The High Tides" was the fancier dinner house with big windows with a good view of the bay. The Grange even held it's meetings there.

Gaye LeBaron, Bodega Bay's respected historian, colorful columnist and former resident tells the story that one day near the end of World War II a tired Louie

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sold his business to a Yugoslavian immigrant who gave him a \$50 deposit.

In the 1950's the Zankich family took over the entire business including boat ways (rails for the boats to go into dry dock), the party boat business, both restaurants and 21 cabins. On the water, The Tides and its Dock remained the community hub of activity hosting the Fish Fest boat parade, the Blessing of the Fleet, the boarding place for party boats and more. In 1963, Mitch Zankich had his 15 minutes of fame when Alfred Hitchcock filmed "The Birds" on the property.



In 1980, after nearly 30 years, the Zankich's sold to Bob Bugatto from San Francisco, owner of Pt. St. George Fisheries, a fish wholesaler with plants up and down the West Coast. The stalwart family-owned business remains a popular roadside stop with generations of tourists and a place where locals gather family and friends. On the water, fishermen still parade to the docks especially when Salmon and Crab seasons are open. Bugatto's family continues the wholesale fish business today, a diverse successful enterprise operating the Tides Wharf, The Inn at the Tides, The Tides 76 Gas Station, a Fresh Fish Market, Gift Shop & Snack Bar.

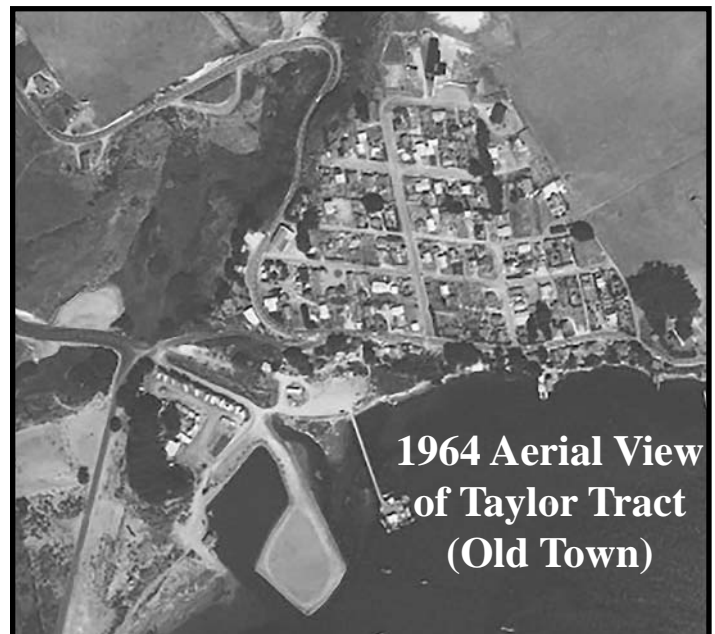
Continuing north on Bay Highway, an original landmark is the Creamery. The distinctive building still stands on the water below Highway One. As early as the 1800's ranchers brought fresh, rich milk to the Creamery, which in turn brought the milk by boat to the growing population in San Francisco. Cattle still roam our hills and ranch owners are actively recognized in our Sonoma County's Local Coastal Plan approved last year, in 2023.



The Heart of Bay Village served fishermen and families. Proposed in 1922, "Taylor Tract" was the first residential development for fishermen and their families. The new school was at the top of the hill. Plenty of beautiful redwood was available. Skilled shipwrights used expert carpentry and woodworking skills to construct small, practical, and beautiful residences that mirrored wooden wheel houses and boat cabins.

Dubbed "old town" by newcomers, the heart of Bay was and remains today as the center serving Salmon Creek, Porto Bodega, the fishermen on the docks, still reflecting the cool character and culture of Bodega's **Bay Village, a fishing village.**

* It's important to recognize and give credit to the original writer of most of the above article. Gaye LeBaron is an esteemed historian. She and her husband once lived and worked in Bodega Bayo



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Bay's Post Office, its general store, salt water baths, and a dance hall called "The Blue Room" served the growing community. A boarding house (Bay Hotel) operated during the war served as temporary quarters for troops protecting the coast. Today, Diekmann's Bay Store can be found there. Second homes cropped up for land lubbers escaping inland heat.

By the 1960's, wrapping around the highway curve, the Firehouse stood on the left side of the road followed by the hangout called the Dry Dock, preferred by deckhands. It's the same place where Sophie and Rick Powers' Boat House serves Fish & Chips today.

Across from the Dry Dock, the new Grange Hall representing Fishermen as farmers of the sea served the Fishermen's Marketing Association. Across from the Grange, Pelican Plaza once a gas station, came later. ■

