

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Honorina Tuomey

*by Robin Rudderow - 2013*

Imagine the Sonoma Coast beaches in the 1860s, just after the Bear Flag Revolt, when the State of California was just settling into its existence. It was here that Honorina Tuomey was born, in 1866, on the Buckhorn Ranch on Coleman Valley Road, and here that she made her mark by assuring that our beautiful coastline was preserved as a part of the 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 State Parks Commission. She recommended the following sites be included in the State Parks system: “Bodega Bay region; first white settlement, Kuskof, on the Gallagher Ranch [Bodega]; the redwood grove known as Joy Woods; Fort Ross; Mount Saint Helena; the General M.G. Vallejo Estate; the Petrified Forest; Russian Gulch, on the ocean coast; the south border of the Gualala River for some distance back from the ocean; the north border for an equal distance, being a Mendocino county project.” As we can see, her efforts paid off.



A friend to many historical figures of her day, including Luther Burbank and the daughters of General Vallejo and Jasper O’Farrell, Honorina celebrated the significant historical events that had unfolded around her. In the 1920s she placed several other markers, including in Santa Rosa at the site where two members of the Bear Flag party were killed in 1846 and in the town of Bodega at the site of the Russian farm and at the site of the adobe house of Capt. Stephen Smith, the first owner of Rancho Bodega.

A teacher by trade, 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, the school in Bodega used in the movie, “The Birds”, where Honorina had gone to school as a child. 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 Honorina organized a festival, called “Discovery Days”, the predecessor to the Fisherman’s Festival, to honor 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 volumes (1926) & 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.