RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Whales, Fish and Fishers - The Tides at 100

"Both Californias, the old and the new, lie stretched beneath the windy summit of Bodega Head. *To the west, salmon dart through kelp beds and the oily blow-spray of migrating whales tingles the ocean mist. To the east, in a hook-shaped harbor, fishermen tend to the thousand tasks that keep a boat in "ship shape." At the head of the bay, a splash of Union Oil orange and blue brightens the town's focal point, The Tides Pier."* *

The distant view gives us a perspective. Bodega Bay, despite its remote location, our rugged individualism and our ability to take care of our own, was and still is largely affected by world affairs and now climate change, our nation's demographics and politics, state and local regulations.

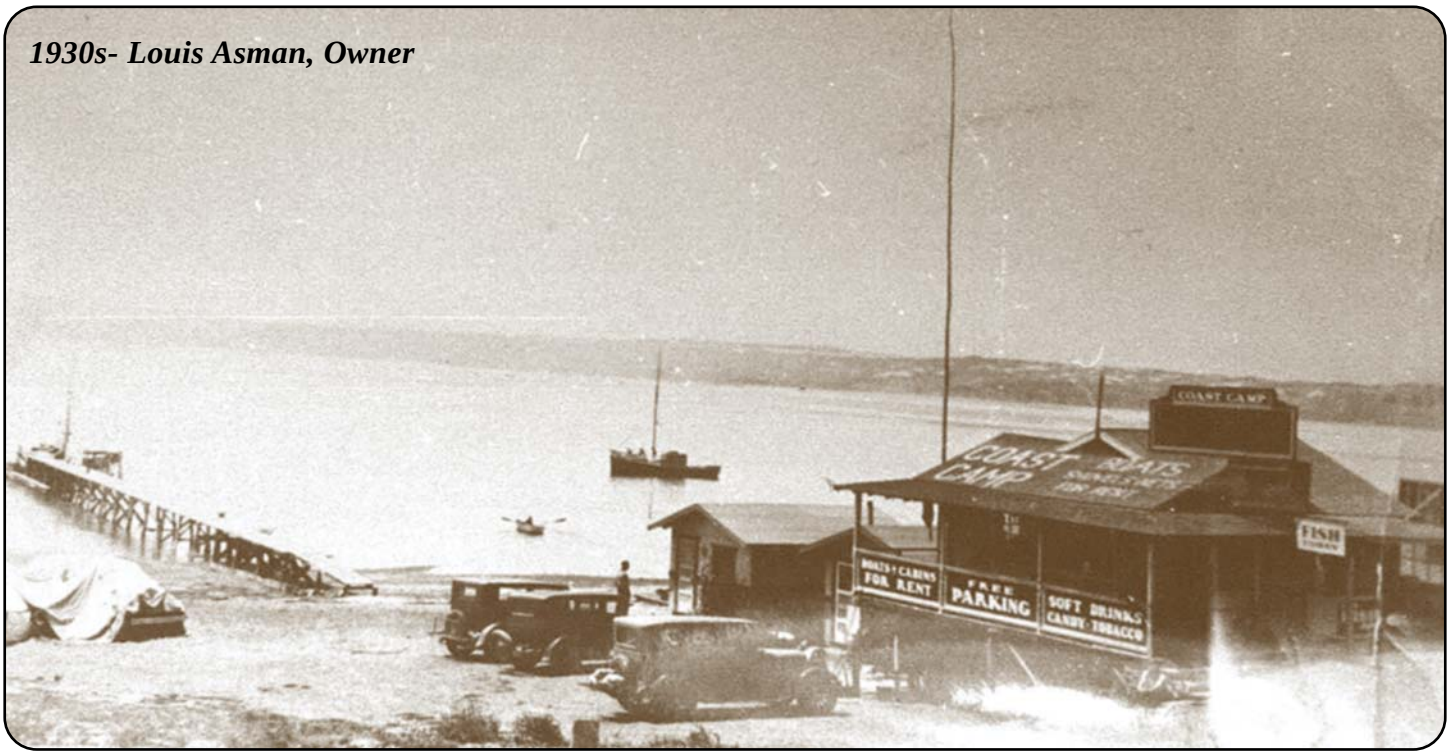
Today, the salmon and kelp beds are struggling for life and nearly disappeared when in 2015 a "Warm Blob" of water surged through our clean cold waters bringing new species. Environmental worries such as climate change presumably affected Pacific Gray Whale migrations with an "Unusual Mortality Event" (UME) from 2019 to 2023. This year in 2026, again, there are more whale strandings, exceeding levels seen previously, while Humpback Whales are driven closer to shore chasing anchovies.

Closer to home, The Tides' 76 gas station has a much lower profile. Yet The Tides' history is inseparable from Bodega Bay's community history. It's a family-owned business that's seen good times and bad.



1926 - Louis Asman, Owner

COAST CAMP BECOMES THE TIDES



1930s- Louis Asman, Owner

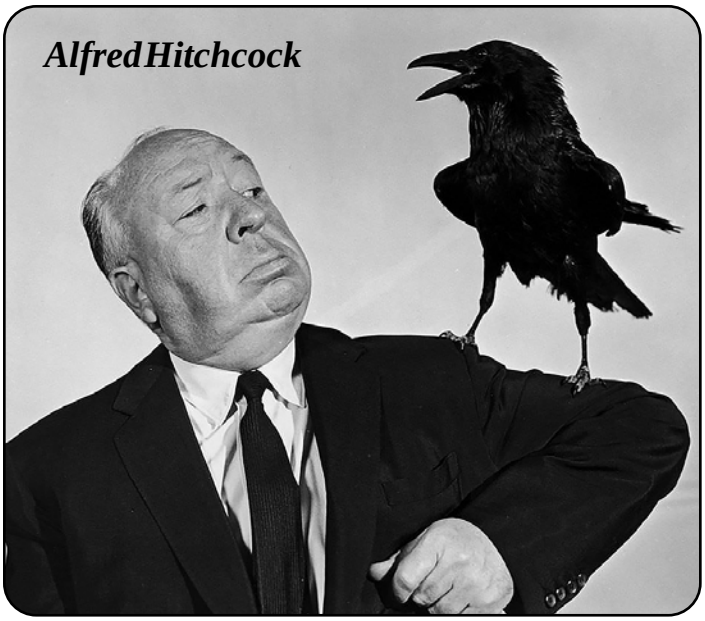
In 1926 it was just a tiny refreshment stand called **"Coast Camp"** that sold soft drinks and refreshments to sports fishers.

The business went through The Great Depression and Prohibition when no doubt rum runners delivered their goods to secret destinations and speakeasies. The docks witnessed World War II. Terrifying times even when the fog cleared, the coast was not clear. Japanese subs were right offshore. Fishing boats mysteriously disappeared. Balloons blew overhead dropping firebombs on West County. Soldiers were posted at look-outs and were housed in the old hotel that is now Diekmann's store.

After World War II, when the second owner's family took over **and named it the Tides,** they wondered why there were only 400 inhabitants in the fishing village. Business on the coast is notoriously slow in winter months, even on weekends, so it takes gumption, commitment, and good luck to keep any business going on the rugged and remote western edge of the continental United States. Without a population base, it's a wonder the small business survived.

Then Baby Boom arrived with a fast-growing population and a healthy, world-wide appetite for nutrient-rich food like fresh fish. More electricity was required for more houses, more refrigeration and frozen food, and way more cars than ever before. The motoring public needed gasoline and oil. Worldwide, there was a growing food shortage.

In the 1950's California's growing population thirsted for energy. PG& E was spurred to build nuclear power plants with a first one right here on Bodega Head on Campbell Cove. They got pretty far along, until a server at the Tides heard the men drop the word "nuclear" over coffee.


Alfred Hitchcock

A few years later, Alfred Hitchcock showed up at The Tides with his crew and more birds than were migrating naturally on the Pacific Flyway. He literally put Bodega Bay on the map.

The Tides second owner, Mitch Zankich, was the namesake for Rod Taylor's character and landed his own speaking part.

The Tides business adapted and survived a big fire, boating accidents, "dismal" crab catches, 9/11, closed salmon seasons, Covid and now the inevitably changing climate. Today, the business mirrors its own earliest history, surviving and oftentimes thriving.

Commemorating a Centennial Birthday

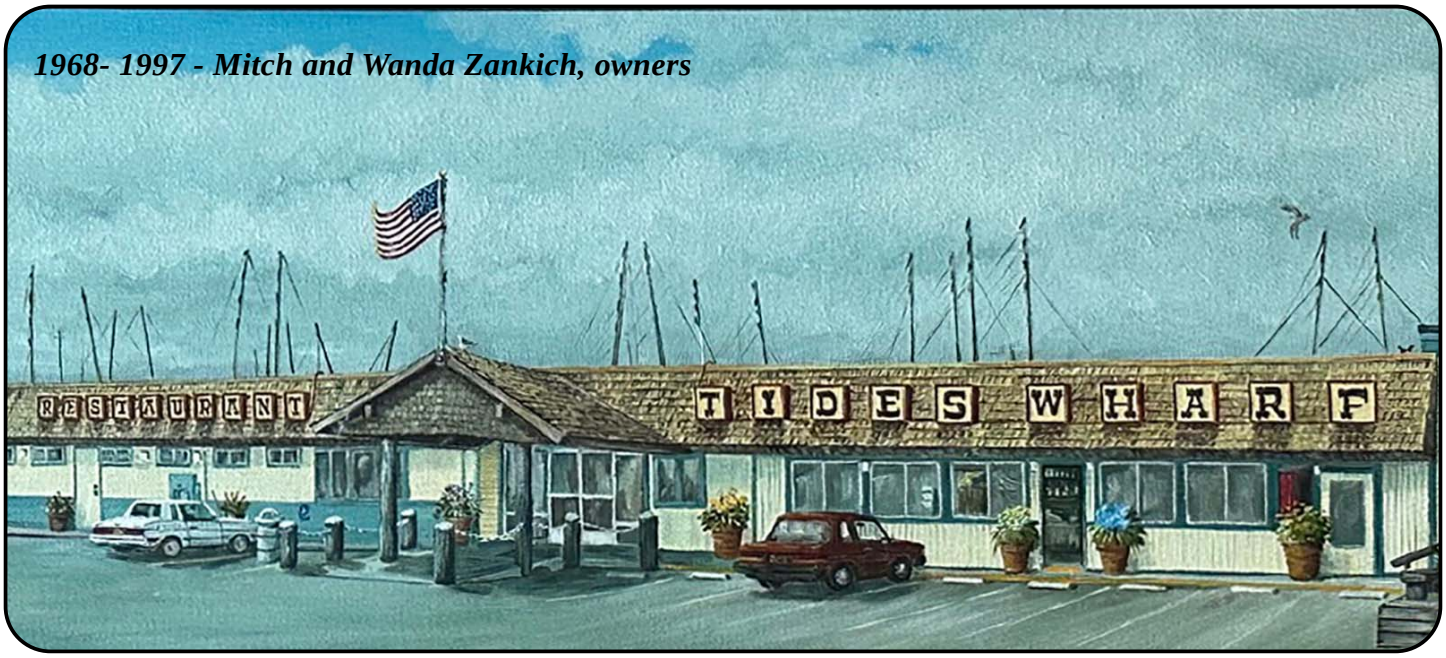
In 1926, a building contractor named Louis Asman showed up at our tiny port community known as "Bay" to build Bay's Schoolhouse. He purchased a small piece of property on what was more mudflat than water and opened a shack selling bait, fish, cigarettes, and soda pop. Asman rented camp sites to sport fishers and named his place "Coast Camp," foreshadowing The Inn at the Tides. 100 years later, The Tides still sells bait, tackle, cigarettes and soda at its gas station. ■



1960s- The High Tides and the Low Tides



1968- 1997 - Mitch and Wanda Zankich, owners

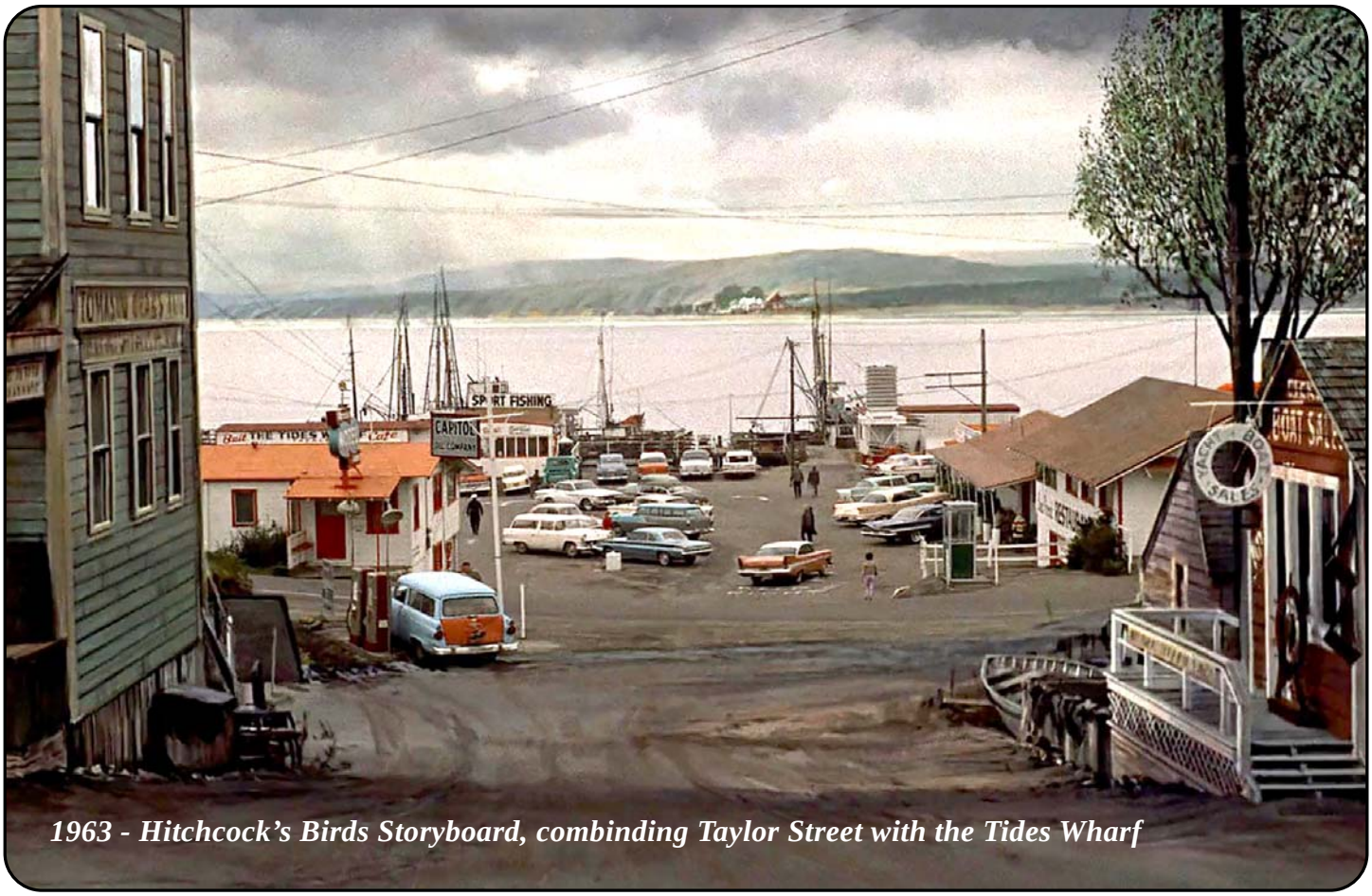


* NOTE: “Whales, Fish and Fishers” is a published article about solving the world’s food shortage with fish and fertilizers made from whale’s urea. The article features The Tides. It appears it was from a 76 Union Oil publication in the mid-1960’s. Source and dates of the published article are unclear.

THE TIDES



1950s & 1960s - Radich Wholesale Fish Partners



1963 - Hitchcock's Birds Storyboard, combinding Taylor Street with the Tides Wharf