

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MORRO BAY

Spring 2017 Newsletter



Next Meeting!

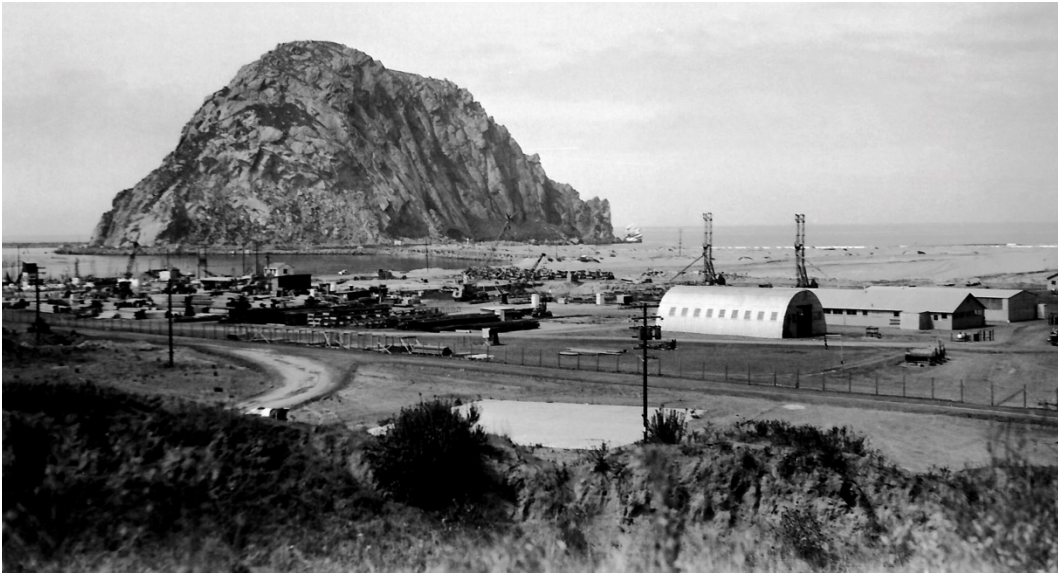
May 7th (4:30 PM) – Quarterly Member Meeting – St. Peter's Episcopal Church Hall

Program: The Impact of WWI on Morro Bay.

Details below.

A Message from the President

Dear Members and Friends:



I hope you plan on attending our next Member meeting on May 7th. Our program will be a cut down version of the Mind Walk presentation about the impact of WWII on Morro Bay that local historian Dick Miller and I gave at Vet's Hall in February.

It is remarkable how much of modern Morro Bay is the way it is

because of the wartime development of the Embarcadero. Come hear the story.

I'm sorry that I have to report that our long-time friend and Board member Victoria Berry has resigned from our Board for personal reasons. Vic represented HSMB well on the city's 50th Anniversary of Incorporation Committee and she was our legal anchor through getting our 501 c 3 tax exempt status reinstated and putting us on a sound footing with our bylaws and procedures. Vic has been gently nagging at me to get our Board minutes and agendas published on the website (I know, we should do it), so when I get around to it I will dedicate the page to her. We will miss her.

Speaking of a missing Board person -- If you, or someone you know, would like to join the Board as Public Relations person, please let me know. We need someone to help maintain and manage our calendar of events in order to get the word out to the public on a timely basis. The main responsibilities will be to write/edit brief press releases (with help) for local news outlets and to make sure our events and publications are advertised on available websites or newspaper calendars.

Who knew the city had a “public property naming policy?” Yes, it does, and HSMB is in its grasp. You may recall that we have been working to get a park named after Franklin Riley, the founder of modern Morro Bay. Board member Joan Solu and I presented a dog and pony show to the Rec and Parks Commission on March 16 asking to name the little open space above the parking lot at Tidelands after Riley. Recently, Kirk Carmichael, the manager of Recreation Services, gave us a copy of the naming policy. Now we know the next steps, and we’ll keep you in the loop on our progress. I’m optimistic.

Does anyone remember a man named Claire Tyler, who lived in Morro Bay in the 30’s and 40’s? Check out the article on him elsewhere in this newsletter. We are trying to track down his family and more information about him. If you have info, please give us a call or send an email.

Sincerely,
Glenn Silloway
President, HSMB

WINTER GENERAL MEETING & PROGRAM

Please join us for our next meeting at **St. Peter’s Church Hall, Driftwood and Shasta Streets on Sunday May 7th, 2017**. We will begin the event with a potluck dinner beginning at **4:30 PM**. Please bring a dish to share and your own table service. Coffee and water will be provided.

As mentioned above our president, Glenn Silloway and local historian Dick Miller will reprise their presentation on the lasting effects of WWII on our harbor and city. Modern Morro Bay owes much to the wartime installations and training that took place here. Our presenters have unearthed new facts about this well-known story and invite you to share your personal memories of those years.



MEMORIES OF LIFE BY THE BAY BY ROGER CASTLE

After last issue’s trip to San Luis Obispo Morro Bay, Cathy Ryan offers the following memories of the stores in the ‘big city’.

Planning all week long to take the long trip into San Luis Obispo (not SLO) to do a little shopping was exciting to look forward to. Do you remember some of the shops in San Luis Obispo that we looked forward to going to? For us young girls, Trend O’ Fashion was a commanding place to buy your clothes. Then, of course, you needed to go down the street to the Woolworth’s soda counter and get some refreshments. And if you needed new shoes, you could stop by Gallenkamp’s or Brown’s. Then you could go get some new toys or books at Leon’s and finish off with Brown’s Music Store. How many remember going into the sound proof booths to listen to records before you bought them. That was quite a treat. Then you could stop by Delight Bakery before you left for the long journey home.

Tell us if you remember these places or what you add to the list. Call us at 805-399-2772 or email us

at morrobayhistorical@gmail.com . We will share your memories in future issues. Now we continue our memory visit with typical bike trip to town for a 1950s era 11 year old.

“I’m going up-town, Mom,” I shouted to my mother. “OK, dear. Be careful,” she called after me. She knew exactly where I was going. The ‘up-town’ of my youth included all the shops and business along Morro Bay Blvd. (then 5th St.) and Main Street. Before the freeway, this route through town was part of Highway 1. The Embarcadero, the waterfront, was a different destination, separated by function and geography. North Main, although part of Morro Bay, was known to many as ‘Atascadero Beach’ or ‘Morro Del Mar’.

My frequent trips to town began with a walk or bike ride from my home (near the today’s high school), south along Highway 1/ Main Street. The streets there were much different before the freeway. Little Morro Creek Road and Quintana Road met the two-lane Highway 1 about where Lemos Feed and Pet Supply is today. From here I pushed my bike up the hill along the highway through tall eucalyptus trees. That steep, dark, often damp and drippy, slope marked my entrance into town. Once I reached the top of this hill I could remount my bike and coast.

One of my first stops was the service station at Beach and Main, where the Lamplighter motel is now. Now at that time a service station really offered service and was not synonymous with ‘convenience store’. Most did sell cold sodas, in glass bottles, with pry-off tops. Some also sold cigarettes. The remainder of the merchandise was car related: oil, fan belts, radiator and gas caps, and fuzzy dice.

It was the (free) air for my bike tires that brought me to the station. A well-filled tire ran swiftly on the sidewalks of town. After leaving the station I had a choice to make. Right, down Beach, would take me to the waterfront; left would take me up to the elementary school. Up the last bit of hill, Main St. led into town. At the top of the hill (Main and Dunes) was Coy House’s Morro Bay Dry Cleaners. Coy could often be seen in the window, puffs of steam venting as he worked the shirt press. In the next block was the Ocean View Garage and on the corner Happy Jack’s, the roughest bar in town. It was still a rough place during my own high school years. Recently renamed The Siren, owner Paul Boisclair has restored much of the historic atmosphere including the old sign, now over the bar and restaurant that once existed between the bar and the Ocean View Garage.

Vic Lawrence grew up in Morro Bay a few years before me and his parents ran the Rock Café which is now the Thai Elephant. According to Vic, Happy Jack’s may well be the most famous landmark in Morro Bay, next to the Rock. Opened in 1929 by Jack Williams, a county farmer, Happy Jack’s was (and still is) the oldest continuously running business in town. Vic remembers “...a very long bar with the top made of matchbook covers neatly varnished into place.” He also reports: “Before and during the war, Happy Jack’s was a rough place. A French crew came in off a [Standard Oil Company] tanker, one of the crew took a bite out of a glass and ate it.” *Visit Vic’s fine website “Old Morro Bay” at www.oldmorrobay.com.*

Only slightly less seedy was the Circle Inn, diagonally across the street. Now Legends Bar, the Circle Inn was most notable for its corner front door. Above the door was a large circular portico-ah-la-marquee. For years this was ringed with neon which always seemed to be in some state of disrepair.

Behind the Inn, and up two or three stairs because of the slope of the road, was a large room with a high ceiling and a wooden floor. It was, at various times, a skating rink, a ballroom, and, in my memory, a dance studio.

Back down Main Street, in a wooden building that is where the Art Center is now, was the Morro Bay library. My mother was an avid reader and later a librarian so my trips to this tiny brick building began early. I remember that as soon as I could sign my name I got my own library card. I would pour over the shelves of wonders and select an old friend or a new adventure or two. Mrs. McKennon would stamp the books, and a card for each one, with the due date. The patron then signed the card next to the new stamp so you could tell which of your friends had recently read a book by looking over the card.

The brick building next to the library was Cardoza's Grocery. The tiny store was stuffed to the ceiling with grocery items. After selecting our books we were often allowed select a treat. Now Coalesce Bookstore the building still has the same wooden floors and warm, stuffed feeling although now it's books and cards not vegetables and canned goods!

The last business on that block, the corner of Main and 5th was the Bank of America. Now the Morro Bay Realty, it was notable for its parking lot and for its exterior decorations. The lot was a tiny paved portion of the lot not occupied by the building. It was one of the few businesses in town with off-street parking available to the public. The top corners of the street sides of the building are still adorned with bas-relief, circular plaster ornaments. About 4 or 5 feet in diameter, they feature a sailing ship riding a wave, the old logo of Bank of America.

One more memory test!

How many played jacks with nuts for the jacks and golf balls for the little red rubber ball?

-Cathy Ryan

The Historical Society of Morro Bay

Office: 695 Harbor Street, Ste. F

Morro Bay, CA 93442

Email: morrobayhistorical@gmail.com

Website: www.historicalmorrobay.org

www.facebook.com/HistoricalSocietyofMorroBay

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MORRO HARBOR, 1936 BY GLENN SILLOWAY

If a "harbor" is a safe place, especially for boats to get shelter from the elements, then before the WPA finished the north breakwater in 1936, Morro Bay was not actually a harbor. Before improvements began that enabled building a harbor in the estuary, the unpredictable ocean currents flowed on both sides of the Rock. Reports suggest that sometimes the estuary was easier to reach on the north side of the Rock, and sometimes on the south side. It took detailed local knowledge to bring an ocean-going boat alongside the crude docking facilities at the foot of the bluff.

Local business people and farmers had long wanted to be able to ship into and out of Morro Bay, but conditions were difficult and kept traffic relatively small. The big pier in Cayucos was easier to reach and was often more sheltered from wind and currents.

But once that north breakwater was stabilized (it took a couple tries in 1936-37), the possibility of a safer harbor emerged. A story in the local newspaper, The Sun, in April 1936 was titled “New Interest in Morro Bay for Harbor.” The closing of the north breakwater had forced tidal currents into a stable pattern on the south side of the Rock and “a scouring process...developed a basin near the breakwater.”



With this development, Supervisor Alfred Ferrini began working to get the U.S. government interested in building the infrastructure needed for a full service harbor in the estuary. He invited Captain M.W. Gilland of the Los Angeles office the Corps of Engineers to review the estuary with the prospect of building facilities. Although Captain Gilland was noncommittal about the potential of the harbor, he did urge the local authorities to estimate the cost of building one, thereby encouraging them to persist.

The optimism the boosters felt was clear in The Sun’s report that “According to harbor authorities Morro Bay equals the San Diego harbor in safety and as a naval base it is said to be looked upon with favor...” This vision was unrealized until 1942, when the war gave the Navy a whole other reason to invest in Morro Bay.

For the rest of the story be sure to attend our meeting on May 7th!

2017 Membership Drive Success

Our 2017 membership drive has been a great success so far. As of press time we had more than 140 individual members and 33 business members. If you still have not become a dues paying member we would appreciate your support. Membership gives you a 10% discount on our books and merchandise and a voice in the work of our society. A membership form is included on the last page or you may join via PayPal on our website www.historicalmorrobay.org/join-us/. You do not need to join PayPal to use this service.

We particularly want to thank the local business community for their support. Please thank these businesses when you visit them and encourage your favorite stores not on the list to join.

Art Ministry, Inc.
Mackey & Mackey Insurance
The Salinan Heritage
Preservation Association
Morro Bay Drug & Gift
Morro Bay House of Jerky
456 Embarcadero Inn

IOOF Lodge
Beads By the Bay
Bay Pines Trailer Park
Coalesce Bookstore
Jim's Automotive
Morro Dunes RV Park
Horizon Realty

Morro Palms Mobile Lodge
Windows on the Water
California Images
Sunshine Health Foods

Beach Bungalow Inn & Suites
Morro Bay Antiques
Ed Crye Construction
Don Maruska & Co
Morro Hilltop Motel
Hwy 41 Antique Emporium

Karen Perlette Insurance
The Paddleboard Co.
Harmony Cellars
The Hofbrau
Ocean Breeze Vacation Rentals
Mikes Barbershop

Seashells and Sawdust
Franklin Real Estate
Morro Bay Art Association
Wavelengths Surf Shop

Who is Claire Tyler?

Member and new city councilman Red Davis has brought to our attention the fascinating story of Claire Tyler. Mr. Tyler lived in Morro Bay in the 30s and 40s. We are told that he was the only resident of Morro Bay who was killed in WWII. Harry Peterson tells us that the Veteran's Hall was once named after him and that his picture once hung on the wall there. We are also told that Morro Bay once had its own American Legion post and it was named after Mr. Tyler.

If these stories are indeed true the Society would support efforts to honor this local veteran. If you have any knowledge of Mr. Tyler, his family, his years in town or his service please let us know. We especially like to locate the picture mentioned above. We would also appreciate a volunteer to coordinate this research and follow this project through to its conclusion. Leave us a message at 805-399-2772 or email us at morrobayhistorical@gmail.com.

Upcoming History Events

June 11 Celebrating the publication of a new book.

A Small Town Women's Movement: A Memoir
by Carol Alma McPhee

This is the story of the 1974-1975 campaign to form a San Luis Obispo County Commission on the Status of Women by the leader of that campaign.

Sunday, June 11, 2017 from 2:30 to 4:30

Coalesce Bookstore Garden Chapel, 845 Main Street, Morro Bay

All profits from sale of the book will be donated to Planned Parenthood Central California Coast

June 24 Summer Solstice Celebration

11AM – 3PM, Free, Morro Bay State Park Picnic Area

Activities for all. Perfect for families.

Sponsored by the California State Parks and the Central Coast State Parks Association

For More information call 772- 2694 or visit www.centralcoastparks.org

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MORRO BAY MISSION STATEMENT

The Historical Society of Morro Bay is a non-profit educational institution whose mission is to promote an understanding of the history of Estero Bay by collecting, preserving, exhibiting and interpreting that history and its

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MORRO BAY MEMBERSHIP FORM
P.O. Box 921, Morro Bay, CA 93443 **805-399-2772**
morrobayhistorical@gmail.com historicalmorrobay.org

Name(s) or Company _____ Date _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email** _____ Phone _____

Memberships are due on March 1st of each year

- Individual Membership (\$20.00)
- Couples Membership (\$35.00)
- Business Membership (\$30.00)
- Student Membership (\$15.00)
- Information Change/Correction Only
- Email List only
- New or Renewal

If this is gift membership please put your contact information here:

Tax deductible donation also enclosed \$ _____

*Please provide an e-mail address if at all possible. It saves us postage costs and allows us to keep you up to date on new developments. Thank You!

Office Use Only: Gmail _____ Q'Books _____ Rpt. _____ Letter _____

P.O.Box 921
Morro Bay, CA 93443

Hope to see you at the Spring General Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner
Sunday, May 7th, 4:30PM
St. Peter's Church Hall, Driftwood and Shasta, Morro Bay