

Hidden History Stories: Happy Jack's

Happy Jacks, The Fuel Dock, and The Siren. This legendary bar has been called multiple names over the decades, but its iconic stature remains. Today, it remains in operation as the longest continuously operating business in Morro Bay. This bar was first opened in 1929 by Mr. Jack Williams, a farmer from Burrton, Kentucky. But Jack wasn't just any old farmer: "At the tender age of thirteen Jack left his home because of the strictness of his grandfather." Jack began his career in California working on a ranch in Adelaide, a community in San Luis Obispo. He eventually migrated west to the coast where he met his wife Emma Silacci. In 1929, he purchased the saloon down the street from the water; he named it "Happy Jack's" after himself, for he was known throughout the town by his smile and good nature.

Jack purchased his bar at the beginning of the Great Depression, so times were hard for him and his business. Jack focused on supporting his family as well as the Morro Bay community. It was even said that Jack "bought beer one case at a time, and when it was sold he bought another."

He would buy beer one case at a time to make certain he had enough for his monthly payments on his establishments. With whatever he had afterwards, he would provide food to families who needed it. It was noted on the Old Morro Bay website that "Jack was by nature a very generous person and although he was having somewhat

of a difficult time himself, he provided some families with food and also shoes for their children" Through the tough times, the bar helped boost morale as one of the most popular social venues in the area and helped bring the Morro Bay community together. The advertisement on the right was one of many that popped up in the SLO tribune around the 1930s advertising social events held at the bar.



Figure 1. This is an ad found in the October, 1935 edition of the SLO Tribune. Original Photo.



Figure 2. "A few of the people are: The Jack Williams family (the three in front), also Annie Cardoza, Don and Margaret Judkins all in the back. Also in the rear is Mr. Jones from the Jones OCEAN VIEW Garage and on the right Mr. Mederous" (OldMorroBay.com)

Rough times also brought rough people. In 1937, a boxing ring was set up in the bar to occupy and entertain the bargoers. Vic Lawrence, a resident of Morro Bay, recalled "Before and during the war, Happy Jacks 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." This type of rowdy crowd filled the bar from the time that it was owned by Jack and even in the years prior to his selling of the bar. Dell Franklin, a bartender at Happy

Jack's spent his time after working their retelling stories of the rough crowd. Despite the rough reputation the bar had, it was still a very popular spot in town and created a family-like community.

Jack had owned the bar for a total of 12 years when he decided it would be best to sell. He had grown tired of the bar business and all of the stress that came with it. As a Kansas native who grew up in a farming town, Jack wanted to get back to his roots and to the simple life of farming—the other main reason Jack sold his bar.

Happy Jack's has had many owners and has even gone through a few name changes. In 1968 David W. Tope purchased the bar and ran it until 1998. The current owners have had the bar since 2014 and made the name change to The Siren. Before it was The Siren, it was known as The Fuel Dock Saloon for a period of time.



Figure 3. The current outside of The Siren. Original Photo.

Though the original name may be gone, the legacy of Happy Jack's Saloon still lives on. Today, the bar can be found sporting its new look and new name: The Siren. Owners Paul and Kelly Boisclair have worked hard to maintain the bar's original structure and preserve its history while giving the bar a few key upgrades. After purchasing the venue in 2014, they spent three years and three million dollars



Figure 4. The current inside of The Siren, during one of the many performances held here. Photo from SLO Tribune.

towards renovating the building and changing the aesthetic, while still maintaining the vintage vibe. Since its grand opening in 2017, The Siren has functioned as both a restaurant and a popular music venue, hosting local talent as well as serving as a stop for state and national tours. This liveliness of The Siren will assure the bar stays open and bustling for the next generations to come, carrying the legacy of Jack Williams.

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