



SPRING | 2021

**San Luis Coastal Unified School District
Board Meeting September 10, 2020**

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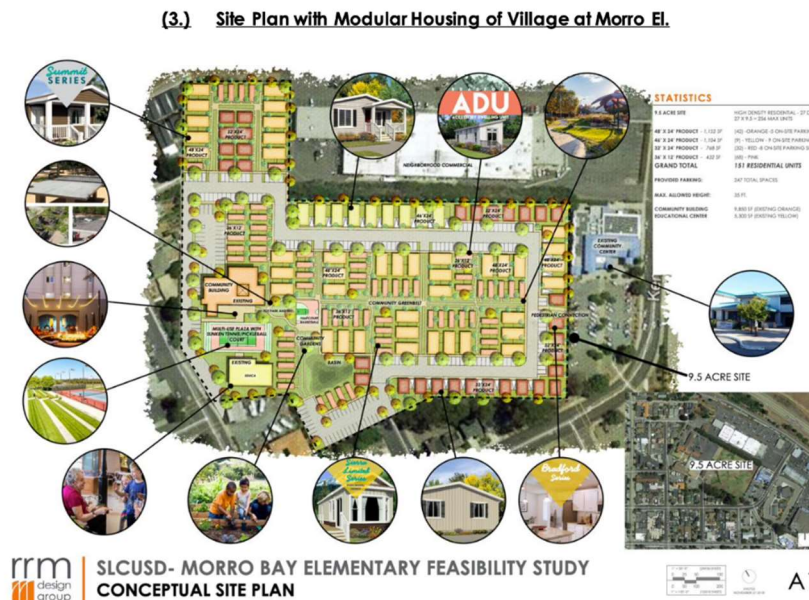
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President's Report

By Glenn Silloway

Hi Everyone!

How many years has this plague been going on? I know it's been just over a year, but in some ways it does feel like a much longer time to me.

My wish is that all of you are well and safe. But I know that you have had losses close to you, or close to someone you love, and I send my condolences for them. This disease spreads with relentless logic that respects no human.

We respect you though and thank you for your connection and support for our community. We are going to engage again, starting now.

Your Board has a couple new members in big jobs. Our new treasurer is Marlys McPherson who will bring good thinking to our discussions and a hard nose for proper practices in managing our limited funds. Donna Stoll is our new secretary,

but she is an old friend of the Society – she was our main adviser and idea-person in putting on the historical art exhibit from Marty Eckstrom's collection at the Art Center a few years ago.

We happily welcome back Emily Dunn who was part of our Board when I first joined and will be designing and editing some of our digital communications (like this newsletter). I also want to thank Shelagh Considine who managed those tasks admirably for the last several years but is passing the torch back to Emily.

Board members Susan Stewart, Joan Solu, Marlys McPherson and I met with leaders of the San Luis Coastal Unified School District, including Superintendent Eric Prater, to discuss the SLCUSD plans to develop housing on the old Morro Elementary campus. Our goal is to preserve as much of the old historically important buildings as possible. In that effort, we aim to build the historical record to show how much a part of our community that school has been. **Please contact us with stories, photos, old newspaper clippings, or anything else that will help with the history of the school.**

Roger Castle with the able help of Mary Sproul is rejuvenating the collections process. One of their first projects is to complete our collection of Morro Bay High School yearbooks (we may be asking for a missing edition or two) and to digitize that to share with the world.

I have talked with Mayor John Headding about inserting the Society's draft Historic Preservation Ordinance into the upcoming planning process (and made sure he has a copy!). Getting this ordinance, which was written by a committee of our members and friends, into the process will help fulfill one of the action items of the new General Plan and will also be a big help in talking with folks like the school district about their precious buildings.

Lots going on, and more to come. See our most recent Hidden History panel about the history of the Coast Guard in Morro Bay coming soon, next to the newly renovated Coast Guard station.

Please stay safe and stay in touch.
Glenn

A Note from Your Treasurer

By Marlys McPherson

As you can see from this newsletter, the HSMB Board has been busy, despite the pandemic. At our most recent meeting (via Zoom), the Board voted to change the membership year from March through February to July 1 to June 30. The last page of this newsletter is a form that can be used to accompany your dues. The Board also voted to keep membership dues at their current levels except for business membership, which was increased to \$50 a year.

We hope you will consider renewing your membership in the Historical Society of Morro Bay. We continue to work on increasing the number of Hidden History panels around town, getting a Historical Preservation Ordinance passed, revitalizing Franklin Riley Park now that it has been designated an official City Park, increasing and cataloguing our historical collection, and educating Morro Bay citizens about the importance of preserving the historical buildings on the old Morro Elementary School site, as well as other projects in the works. We remain hopeful that we can return to quarterly in-person educational meetings now that most of the pandemic restrictions will soon be lifted.

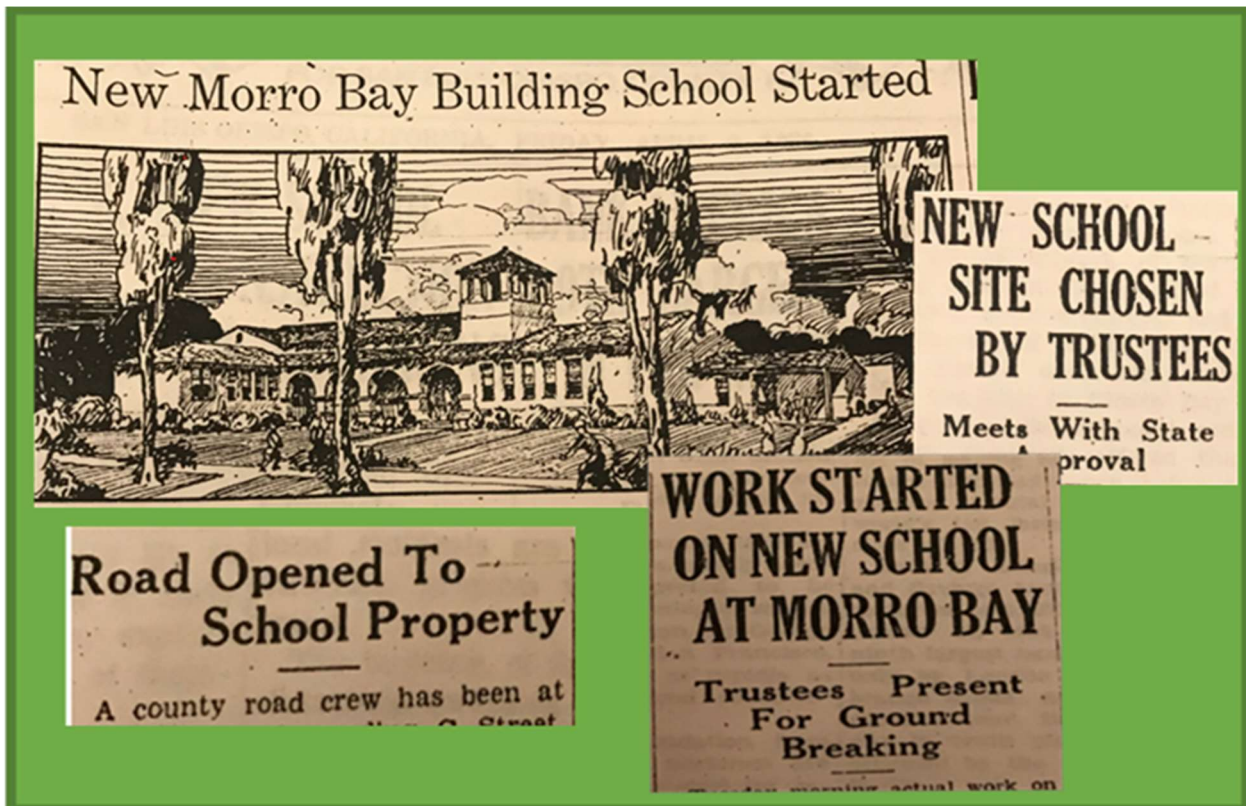
We encourage you to join us in preserving the unique history of Morro Bay.

Sincerely,
Your new Treasurer, Marlys McPherson

A Piece of Our 'un-hidden' History is in the News

By Joan Solu

85 years ago, Tuesday morning March 11, 1936, workers broke ground on a new El Morro Elementary School. That day everything changed for generations of school children in Morro Bay. The community had waited for, had voted for, and had rallied around the possibility of a "New School" as a kind of community center. The Morro Union Grammar School District Board of Trustees conceived plans, secured funds and awarded contracts. That March morning was a much anticipated true beginning. There are documented accounts of the residents of the community being so excited that, "the flow of people to the site was consistent throughout the day."



San Luis Obispo newspaper accounts state "A tractor in addition to a crew of laborers was employed in the work of leveling the ground." The Tract which consisted of 5.7 acres joined the Sissel Campground and was selected because of its central location serving all parts of the community of Morro Bay. The purchase price for 5 acres was \$2,000 or \$400 per acre with the remaining 7/10 fraction of an acre being donated. Simultaneously grading by County crews occurred at C Street (now Monterey) north of Sixth (now Harbor) on to the Sissel Campground and then to the new Morro Bay school property. The road cut through from 7th street (now Dunes) and was widened to 80 feet in width and directed through the area that had been used as a picnic grounds at the Sissel Campground. It was reported that the district was cooperating in every way possible to create ample, safe access to the school in the middle of the community. The goal was to have all roads leading to the school graded and graveled.

The San Luis Obispo newspaper at one point reported that the building was to be "Modern in every respect and will be constructed as a PWA project, the Federal government making a gift or grant of 45 percent of the cost to supplement the \$34,000 bond issue recently authorized by a decisive vote of the qualified electors of the district." The bid for the building was awarded to F.C. Stolte Co. of

Oakland. The local representative of the company was George Loorz of San Simeon. The original bid amount for complete construction of the new school was \$52,100.

Award winning State Architect Louis N. Crawford of Santa Maria designed the main school building. At the time he was also in charge of the designs for schools in Cambria and Cayucos. He was well known for his use of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture which spread in use across the United States in the early 1900's and was immensely popular in California. The school's design was influenced by the style and the beauty of the our well-loved Spanish Missions. Mr. Crawford reflected these influences with a white stucco exterior, red tile roof (original on the building), external breezeways, elegant arches and a regal bell tower which held a bell to call the students to the classrooms.

85 Years later, the roads that were graded have been paved and still lead to the long sought "new school" building which is still standing. Since 2001 El Morro Elementary School has not operated as a public school and most elementary age public school students attend Del Mar School. The now 9.44 acres is currently owned by the San Luis Coastal Unified School District which is proposing to build a housing development on much of the site.

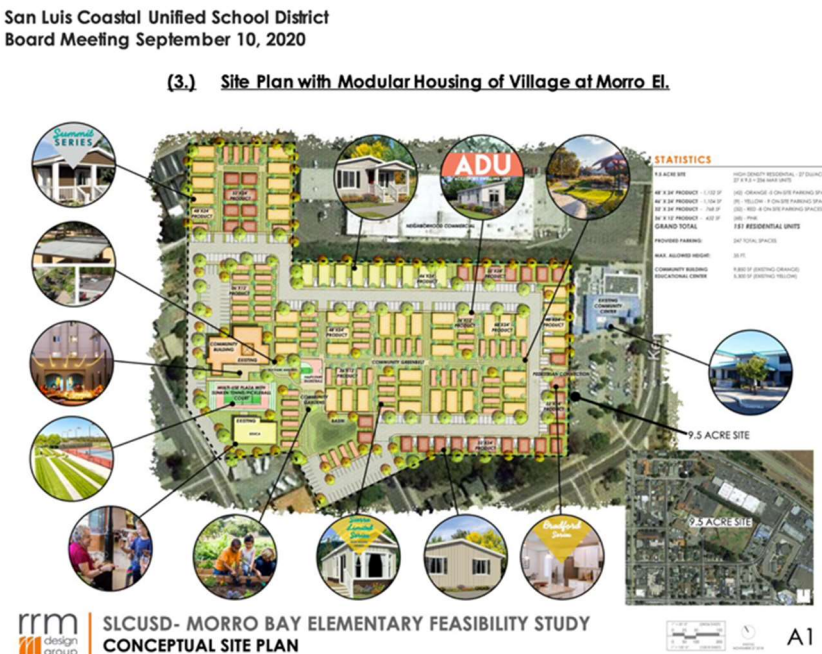
For the several generations of grammar school students who passed through these halls the thought of change can be stressing. Many early life experiences and memories are inextricably tied to his place. As keepers of our local history it is up to us to support the best compromise possible between all the sometimes conflicting needs.

Future articles will report on the school board's plans and actions and try to provide some further history. How did the site become 9.44 acres from the original purchase of 5.7 acres? When did the expansion occur? When were the more modern looking classrooms added? Who designed the unique butterfly roof line Mid-Century Modern buildings?

Is It the End of El Morro Elementary School?

By Glenn Silloway

The San Luis Coastal Unified School District (SLCUSD) is planning to make sweeping changes at the old Morro elementary school site. It is looking for a way to develop the bulk of the campus for workforce housing. Most of the existing buildings would be removed to make way for up to 150 small housing units. The image below shows one concept of the plan. Please note that the school district emphasizes that this concept plan is in no way an official document; it is the product of RRM Design Group as part of discussions.



The Historical Society advocates for the preservation of historic buildings. At the concept level as conceived by RRM, the only buildings that would remain are the front portion of the 1936 Spanish-style “bell tower” building and the newest building on the campus built in 2000. Everything else would be gone, including the little old one-room schoolhouse and the wonderful mid-century modern classroom buildings designed by architect Frank Wynkoop and built in the late 1950's.

The school district is seeking a way to monetize the campus, which it refers to as "surplus property." Its goal is to work out a leasing arrangement of some kind that will allow it to receive a substantial monetary value every year that can be used to fill a variety of revenue needs. If the district sold the property outright, it would be constrained in how it could use the funds, e.g., for capital costs of new projects.

The last thing the district wants to do right now is build new school buildings, so the idea of leasing it is appealing. Working with an array of consultants, it has considered housing development options ranging from mixed-value stick-built housing to an all-modular home layout with a lower cost. The district has concluded that built-from-scratch options are simply too expensive, so it looks like the modular approach has the upper hand.

We have been given no timetable for this project. However, given the amount of planning that has gone into the project, it is clear that the district is serious. The property is zoned "high density residential," and because the bulk of the 9-acre plot is playground and soccer pitch, it is open and easy to build upon.

We believe that the City would have few strong arguments against this development even if it wanted to use them. The proposed plan would have some benefits the City would like. The State mandates that Cities build a certain amount of new housing including workforce housing every year, and most do not. This would be a big leap forward in meeting that mandate.

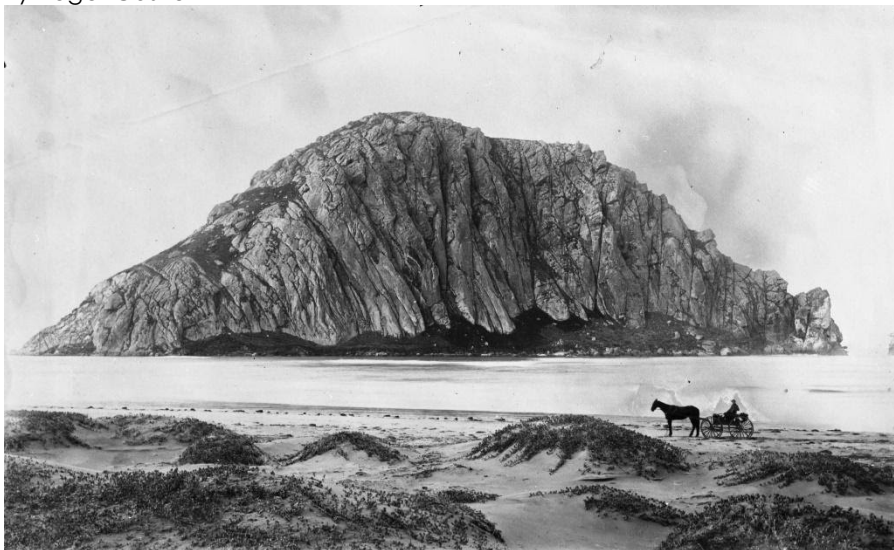
Are you in favor of preserving historic buildings?

Please send us your thoughts and comments: info@historicalmorrobay.org OR by mail to HSMB, PO Box 921, Morro Bay, CA 93443. If you have stories or photos, we have ears and eyes for them.

We are gathering these materials to document the historic nature of the current campus. We want to establish the historic value of the buildings. And we need your help to fill in the important details about how the old school was part, not just parcel, of our community.

Exploring Our Historical Collection

By Roger Castle



Have you ever seen this picture of the Rock? You are looking across the open north channel at a rock face that has never been quarried. This suggests that the image was made before 1900. We recently became aware of it while working with State Parks on one of their projects.

Your historical society has been collecting bits and pieces of our area's past for more than 28 years.

We have some exceptional artifacts and items in addition to the usual photos and documents. We have a large leather bound ledger from William Matson's c1875 general store. We have an 1872 city map by Carolan Mathers, a surveyor and friend of European founder Franklin Riley. The map is annotated with the names of pioneers who purchased the plots. We were given all the research for

the book Morro Bay's Yesterdays by the author Jane Bailey, which contains enough information for a second book.

Our artifacts and documents have come from members and others, stored in bins and boxes unindexed and unsorted. In 2017 we established our first office, and we were then able to begin serious efforts to preserve and organize this treasure.

Now, after a brief hiatus for quarantine, your collection committee (Roger Castle, Garry Johnson, & Mary Sproul) has begun again. Won't you join us? Just going through the collection is great fun. We often find gems we have never seen. Whatever your skill, we have a job for you. How would you like to revisit some of our past meeting programs? They need indexing. Do you have computer skills? We need to create lists and indexes. Think you can identify some old pictures? We need you.

Please call me directly at 805-235-8477 or email me at morrobayhistorical@gmail.com .
Thanks, Roger Castle. (Put my name in the subject line.)

(PS: I would love to talk to someone with a connection to the City Engineer's office. I hear they have old maps!)

Historical Society of Morro Bay
P.O. Box 921, Morro Bay, CA 93443
Email: info@historicalmorrobay.org

MEMBERSHIP FORM

_____ I am a new member

_____ I am a renewing member

Memberships are due on July 1st of each year. Please check your desired type of membership:

_____ Individual Membership	\$20.00	_____ Business Membership	\$50.00
_____ Household Membership	\$35.00	_____ Student Membership	\$15.00

I would like to make an additional tax-deductible donation (enclosed) of \$ _____

Name(s) or Company _____ **Date** _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email* _____ **Phone** _____

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

The Historical Society of Morro Bay is a registered nonprofit 501-c-3; Tax I.D. #77-0574960.