



HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of* MORRO BAY

Summer 2018

President's Report

We went back to Minnesota recently to visit friends and relatives and were reminded what the “dog days” of summer means: hot, humid weather that clings to you like a wet blanket. As always, it was a relief to get back home. Of course, “dog days” also refers to the rising of Sirius the dog star, which we DO have if the marine layer cooperates.

Franklin Riley Park, the newest park in Morro Bay in response to the Historical Society's efforts, is making progress toward refurbishment as a fine place for walking, reflection, and passive recreation. Joan Solu has located the original designs for the park, which we are using as a platform for going forward. On completion, it will be an ideal link between the Embarcadero and the town, and between our past and present, located just above Tidelands Park on the bluff.

We are looking for people to help Roger Castle with the collections. Roger has developed a system for organizing and cataloging things and information, but we have a large backlog that has not been put through the system. If you would like to help the Society, this is one of our greatest needs. And as a bonus, you will get training by Roger in how to use the system! If you want to help, leave a message at (805) 399-2772.

The August 19th Member Meeting will feature Robert Kittle talking about his book *Franciscan Frontiersman*, which describes the activities of 3 priests who accompanied the Spanish as they moved into what is now the American Southwest. One of these priests landed in Morro Bay in the 1700's and recorded his impressions of our area. Bob Kittle was the editor of the Editorial page in the San Diego paper for many years and will give a lively presentation on a colorful and consequential part of our history. This will be at the Presbyterian Church, 4 pm, August 19th.

At our November 11 Veterans' Day Member Meeting, Joe Dunlap will share his research on the Morro Bay Amphibious Training Base that operated 1942 - 1945. The old Navy Base was the turning point in our history that every resident and friend of the city should know about. Please put this afternoon meeting on your calendar now. Details will follow.

Please get in touch if you would like to get more active in the Society. We have a lot going on, and it takes people power to make it happen. I look forward to seeing you on the 19th.

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 RELATIONSHIP TO THE REGION, AND NATION BEYOND, TO AUDIENCES OF ALL AGES AND INTERESTS.

Franciscan Frontiersmen: August's Program

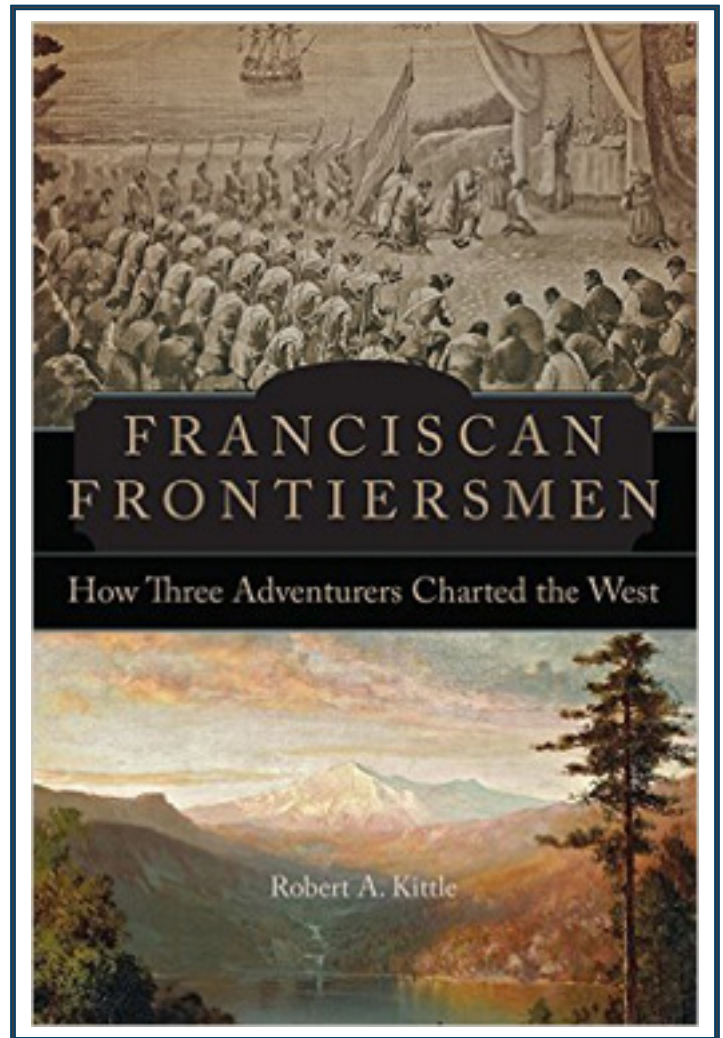
**Sunday August 19th
4 PM**

**Presbyterian Church
in the Fireside Room, 485 Piney Way
Morro Bay**

When the Spanish soldiers made their way north from Mexico on their mission of conquest and “civilization,” they brought with them Catholic priests who carried the Christian message to the native peoples they encountered. Bob Kittle’s recent book, *Franciscan Frontiersmen*, is about 3 of those priests, one of whom spent time in what is now Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo County.

The Catholic priests on these missions had a primary purpose in bringing the message of Christ to new people, without regard to whether they wanted or needed it. However, side benefit of their presence was the creation of an amazing record based on their daily observations of the Spanish effort and the interactions between the Spanish and the indigenous people. The priestly role as recorder of history was one of the most important ways information about Western European history was preserved during and after the Dark Ages.

Therefore, this book gives a unique window on the Spanish colonial mission, with a view on the ground of the harsh conditions in the mountains, deserts and seascapes the Spaniards traveled. It must have been a shocking change for the priests, who had been educated in relatively comfortable conditions in monasteries at home. Their diaries were one of Kittle’s primary sources in reconstructing the daily lives and occupations of these visitors, giving us a level of detail we have not been able to see before.



We can also imagine how outlandish the Spanish must have seemed to the Native peoples, bringing their Renaissance technologies into the natives’ ancient stone age cultures. We get to see these first encounters through the eyes of the literate and diligent priests.

Bob Kittle will summarize this story in his presentation, and his book will be available for purchase. We are excited to bring this special story to you.

Franciscan Frontiersmen:

How Three Adventurers Charted the West

By Robert Kittle

The Sun was a weekly paper published by J.N. Moses that served Morro Bay, Cayucos, Los Osos and Cambria from 1932 until 1972 when it became the *Sun Bulletin*

New Secretary for Board

We are delighted to tell you we have found a new Secretary for the Board, Chriss Austin. Chriss is a 20-year resident of Morro Bay with a talent for technology and a determination to get the details right.



Chriss is a Minnesotan transplanted to paradise. We are very happy to invite her on the Board, and you will get to meet her at the Member Meeting on August 19th.

This is the last hardcopy of the newsletter that will be mailed to you.

The cost of printing, mailing and volunteer hours require us to take this step.

To continue receiving the newsletter, get an email address and share it with us. There are many free email services available, and if you don't have a computer the library will let you use theirs.

Thanks

From the Tribune.....

Take a tour of Morro Bay in 1948

What did Morro Bay, California, look like in the 1940s? An 8mm video shot in 1948 by Cayucos resident Vic Hansen shows how much the San Luis Obispo County city has changed in the years after World War II.

<https://www.sanluisobispo.com/news/local/article215549940.html>

Growing up in Morro Bay.

In the last few months I have been enlightened by an interesting post. For those of you who are able to access Facebook, a site you may be interested in is called: 'Growing up in Morro Bay'. It is a collection of memories, pictures and quotes from the past. Some folks write about "days gone by" and post pictures their families have had and they have just found. I have seen pictures of the stacks being built, fishing boats during the good times and stories of people who use to live in our town. For those of you who are interested, it is fun to browse and remember the "good ole days".

Cathy Ryan



Childhood Bliss in 1950's Morro Bay

This is the second and final installment of Joe Dunlap's selected childhood memories of Morro Bay.

In our far from politically correct world in the 1950's, a world just a decade or so removed from the catastrophe that was the World War II, playing army was not only frowned upon, it was completely accepted, if not openly encouraged. Every boy had some form of toy gun, be it a six-shooter or a .45. But to "play army", more equipment was needed and Horton's Army Surplus store was a veritable treasure of military related stuff. It was also easy to get to from the News Stand.

At a drop of a hat, several of us would hop on our bikes and after some bumping and bashing into one another, set off coasting down the sidewalk single file, dodging the occasional pedestrian to make the three-block trip to Horton's.

Once there, the bicycles were piled on the sidewalk outside and in we went to look at all the "cool" army stuff we could never afford. The first thing you would notice, and I have never forgotten, was the smell. It was not entirely unpleasant, but quite unique. Leather, burlap, hemp, oil, grease and metal odors swirling around ones head in an aroma guaranteed to send a young boy's testosterone output into overdrive. The place just reeked of ARMY-NAVY-MARINE-AIRFORCE!

Wandering the aisles of crude, wooden shelves and bins, there were all sorts of goods and devices to "ooh" and "ah" over, some familiar, some quite mysterious. Army green backpacks, Navy sea bags, folding shovels, canteens, heavy web belts with metal clasps that must have weighed a pound or more. Helmets, fatigue shirts and pants, some with people's names still stenciled on them. Navy dungaree shirts and bellbottom pants and dozens of white navy caps I was to become quite familiar with a decade later.

Another aisle had all sorts of gauges, dials, radio equipment, tools and lots of brass and steel. To us, it was all like a military Disneyland and museum wrapped into one. I think I talked my Dad into a backpack at some point, but my memory is fuzzy on that one.

In dredging up this memory, it suddenly occurs to me why Horton's existed in a little town like Morro Bay. I suspect that most, if not all, of the inventory in that store must have come from the Army-Navy when the Amphibious Training Base was closed following the end of the war.

A summer Saturday would find us gathering at the grand hub of social activity, the Bay Theatre. Meeting friends there to wait in line and gossip was always a weekly highlight. The movie didn't matter much as long as it had plenty of action, war movies were the preferred medium, of course, and plenty of cartoons. It is difficult to imagine in these days of blockbuster movies at giant Cineplex's that one could spend an entire Saturday afternoon in a darkened theater, watching a double feature, a couple of "B" movies anyway, with as many as a dozen cartoons in between, not to mention a couple of previews of coming attractions. This allowed for multiple trips to the concession stand, as well as the restrooms, all in the name of FUN.

So, having stood in line in the fog for half an hour, and purchased a ticket for twenty-five or thirty-five cents and another seventy-five cents worth of popcorn, soda and candy bars, one could spend the next five hours or so in a sugar induced coma watching the Allies hammer the Axis and Tom and Jerry hammer each other, and see previews of more of the same coming next week. Utter bliss for a nine year old!

At the end of it all, with the credits scrolling up the screen and our bladders once more stretched to the limit, we would make our way through the folded seats, over the sticky floor, as it threatened to pull the shoes from our

feet, and up the aisle to the lobby. Pushing, shoving, laughing and snickering about the simulated and animated carnage we had been watching and finally spilling out onto the sidewalk, now bathed in a blinding, setting sun that had finally burned away the afternoon fog. Squinting and shading my eyes with my hand, I headed down the hill towards the flashing red light in the middle of Fifth and Main. Sun warming my face, the whine of the turbines at the plant in my ears, the scent of salt air in my nostrils, and the lingering taste of Jujubes stuck in the remains of my molars thinking “I wonder what Mom’s making for dinner?”

Morro Bay, what a great place to be a kid!



Wanted: Treasurer for Society

We have a spot to fill on the Board: Treasurer. This office is just one of the many things Roger has done for us, but we need to fill the position to go forward.

We are converting our books to a standard Quickbooks format, so the main job of our Treasurer is to keep track of the income and expenditures, make monthly summary reports to the Board (using built-in Quickbooks reporting), and supply information for our year-end reports.

All of this should be quite simple since we have few transactions in most months (even the Quickbooks part is simple, if you want to learn a little).

Perhaps more important, the Treasurer is one of our officers and a Board member. We would expect the Treasurer to attend Board and member meetings, or about 11 meetings a year. Also, the Treasurer would become a regular contributor to the Society as a participating Board member, helping to shape policy and activities.

Cayucos by-the-sea

Captain James Cass left his New England home, sailed round the horn and settled in Cayucos in 1867 on 320 acres of the original Rancho Moro Y Cayucos Spanish Land Grant.

Realizing the future possibilities of the excellent location as a shipping point for cheeses, hides, beef and fresh water, he and his partner, Captain Ingalls built the wharf along with a store and warehouse. He named it Cass' Landing.

Captain Cass' home still stands along the beach at the north end of town.

from 'Morro Bay Visitors Guide' 1976

Franklin Riley

Franklin Riley was the man who founded the town of Morro Bay. Early sketches describe Riley as a "large, handsome man, not too tall but broad shouldered and strong." His wife, Hannah was portrayed as "a small shy woman who dressed in black flowing capes and shawls. Both were "fine upright citizens, honest, friendly and trustworthy."

After farming on San Simeon Creek some 30 miles north, Riley and his wife moved to Morro Bay in 1864. He plowed the better land and planted barley. He built the first house in Morro Bay which stood on what is now Morro St between Morro Bay Blvd and Harbor St.

And in 1870, on a homestead of 160 acres, Riley founded the town of Morro Bay and built a wharf on what would soon become the bustling Embarcadero. The founding of the town was properly celebrated, as recorded in the following account from "Angels History of 1883."

"The neighboring settlers turned out to the number of 200 to celebrate the Fourth of July, 1870, meeting at Toro Creek where suitable exercises were held. A.M. Hardie acted as Marshall; Revs. A.B. Spooner and A.P.Hendon assisted in the spiritual portion of the programme; L.J. Beckett read the immortal declaration; J.Grigsby orated, and Miss Leonora Hazen sang. Thus we see that Morro and its neighborhood had grown in

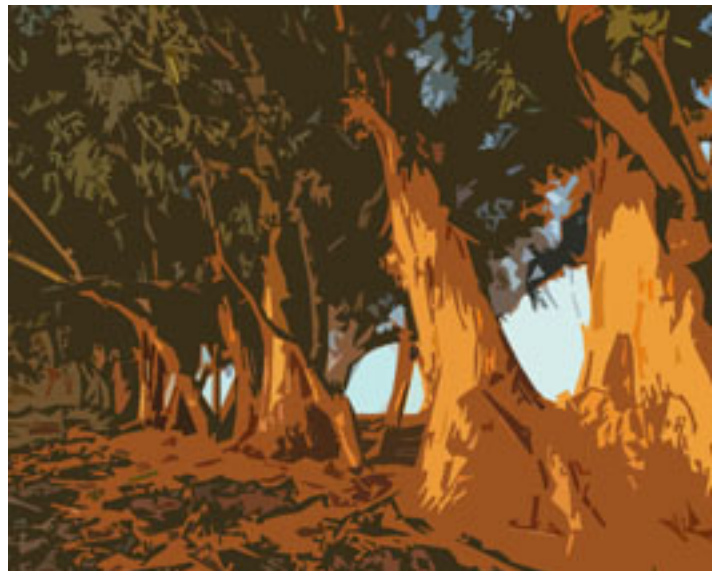
numbers, and were not deficient in patriotism."

The first citizens of Morro Bay not only had to contend with primitive living conditions, but with the forces of nature. At that time, the area was covered in greasewood and brush lupia, the only vegetation that would grow in the loose, sandy soil. Whenever an area was cleared, the wind would whip flying sand into houses and clog wells. The few well-traveled streets were in such bad condition that a strong horse could barely pull a light buggy through the deep sand.

To combat the strong wind, Riley obtained eucalyptus seeds, which were nurtured into seedlings. Riley planed hundreds of these seedlings, and sold them to anyone who wished to buy and plant.

The seedlings slowly matured and Morro Bay was eventually blanketed with trees. Gradually the rutted streets became wide avenues lined with stately eucalyptus. Fallen branches and leaves were used as fuel, and at the beginning and end of each day, plumes of blue-grey smoke would rise over the town and the pungent aroma of burning eucalyptus would fill the air.

Today the Rileys' are buried in the family plot in Cayucos. He left us our town and some magnificent trees.



In 1939 the population of Morro Bay had soared to 400!

The 'Rock'

How Los Osos came to be.

1772 the settlement at Monterey was threatened with starvation. Remembering the abundant wildlife around Morro Bay, seen by members of the Portola expedition, a party of men traveled to what is now Montana de Oro State Park and killed enough grizzly bears to feed the settlers of Monterey for 3 months!

Think of Monterey when you see the bear statue at both ends of Los Osos. The bear jerky kept people alive!

Taken from 'Morro Bay area Visitors Guide' 1976

Since the late 1800's, quarrying had taken place on the sides of Morro Rock to provide materials for breakwaters such as the one at Port San Luis Obispo. In 1933 the Rock was again jolted by blasts as the WPA began construction on a jetty to connect the Rock to the mainland.

In 1968 Morro Rock was declared a State Historical Landmark No. 821. Years of quarrying had forever changed the shape of the monolith, though it still covered 50 acres at its base.

Now, under the protective wing of the government, the 'Gibraltar of the Pacific' will be only altered by nature.



Morro Bay's fire station and equipment in the early 1950s.

MORRO BAY
Rexall DRUGS

MORRO BAY *Rexall* DRUGS 



NEW BUILDING
MORRO
Rexall
DRUG STORE

Please join us in preserving the history of this town . Members receive discounts on books, free admission to presentations, and the pride of knowing they have contributed to this towns' heritage.

info@historicalmorrobay.org [please print]

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Our mailing address is: PO Box 921 Morro Bay California 93443

Voicemail: (805) 399-2772 info@historicalmorrobay.org