



## President's Report

From the President's overworked computer:

As I write, Happy Memorial Day to all! This is a time to remember our history—almost 250 years of it!—and the universal ideals it is based on. America is always a work in progress, but progress has been made and we honor it.

It's been a while since we published this newsletter. It's a pretty long edition and we hope you enjoy it.

You will find a short story about Roger Castle who passed away not long ago. Those of you who have been with us for a while remember his calm persistence in supporting the Society. We miss him. He is a role model for us.

Another tradition is coming back, the member meeting. We are still working out the details but it's going to happen:

**The Morro Bay Art Colony  
June 28 at 3 pm**

Add this to your calendar and stay tuned for more info. There will be surprises!

As always, we thank you for your support. And your ideas. We always benefit when a member and supporter gives us a thought or a photo. They might end up informing the public via our bi-weekly column in the Estero Bay News!

Glenn Silloway  
President, HSMB

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# What Should We Do with the Old Morro Elementary?

By Glenn Silloway

Most of you have heard that the City Council has committed to purchase the old Morro Elementary School buildings and land for \$5.3 million. The San Luis Coastal Unified School District wants to sell the property because it no longer needs it (enrollment in its current buildings is dropping)—it has not been used as a public school since 2001. The parcel is in escrow based on a \$500,000 downpayment using reserve funds. The City must perform due diligence and make a final commitment to purchase on August 31 with a closing date in October.



Until the City Council removed the school from the current budget proposal, the plan was to make the purchase with a loan at about 4% interest over 10 years, or about \$664,000 per year. There are possibilities discussed where private developers would purchase part of the parcel in order to finance City uses of other parts. The long term financial structure is not yet clear. Note that the real estate transaction is still in process—the City aims to buy the parcel somehow.

The property is in a prime location. It is at the north end of Napa Street, adjacent to the shopping area on Quintana where the Dollar Store is and next to the Community Center. There are 8 buildings on the 9.7 acre parcel along with parking, a playground and open space. The main Spanish style building was built in 1935-1936 with huge community support and money from the depression-era federal Works Progress Administration. The main building was later expanded and the campus grew again in 1954 with the addition of the mid-century modern classroom buildings. Some of these buildings are historically significant, in HSMB opinion. Too bad the City has not adopted a historic preservation ordinance building on the draft HSMB submitted in November 2021.

What should the City do with property if the purchase goes through?

One proposal is to renovate the main building to serve as City Hall and administration; keep open space for playfields; and add some housing (type to be determined). The Chamber of Commerce 'supports workforce and 'missing middle' housing development.

Keeping the need for financing in mind, what do you think would best serve the City and its people? We'd love to hear your thoughts — Let us know: [info@historicalmorrobay.org](mailto:info@historicalmorrobay.org).

Check out the display cases in the hallway on the south side of Legends Bar.

The Historical Society of Morro Bay has three cases to showcase historic images of our town. Currently you may see "A Brief History of the Morro Bay Power Plant" consisting of stories with pictures from the construction of the plant until its closing. These stories are drawn from the articles published in the [Estero Bay News](#) every other Thursday, as are 3 other stories in the display case.

There also is a map of a section of town, within walking distance of Legends, showing historical buildings pictured and identified. The pictures are drawn from the Acadia Press book by Roger Castle and Gary Ream. Roger, who died recently after a long health struggle, was the driving force in the Society for many years, and we miss him greatly.

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### The Quonset Hut – Early Manufactured Housing

By Joe Ingrassia



At the outset of World War II, Quonset huts were introduced as a solution for the United States Navy, which needed an all-purpose, lightweight building that could be shipped anywhere and assembled without skilled labor. Named after Quonset Point in Davisville, Rhode Island, Quonset huts are semi-circular buildings leveraging the structural strength of the arch, made out of corrugated or galvanized steel enclosing plywood walls with doors and windows on the ends.

Quonset huts appeared all over Morro Bay soon after World War II began, especially at the U.S. Navy's Morro Bay amphibious training base. About 65 to 100 huts were built, located primarily along the waterfront where the Morro Bay power plant stands today. They were used primarily as sleeping quarters and training facilities.

Although most Morro Bay Quonset huts have disappeared, a few remain. The recently renovated hut at 1141 Main in Morro Bay has become the Q Inn, a boutique hotel with a strong link to history. There is a large hut on the southern end of the Embarcadero across a parking lot from The Shell Shop. It is now used by The Shell Shop for merchandise storage.

Another familiar sight in Morro Bay is the Quonset hut on North Main a little south of Highway 41 that has an art deco façade added in the 1980s. This hut has been used recently as an antique or 'previously used' retail space.

In this era of the housing affordability crisis, one wonders of something like the Quonset hut could help provide workable solutions. Its usefulness has been proved under tougher conditions.

# What Has the HSMB Been Up To?

By Marlys McPherson

A key mission of the Historical Society of Morro Bay is to educate our citizens about the history of the little towns along the Central Coast ... Morro Bay, Los Osos, and Cayucos. At the invitation of Dean Sullivan, the owner/publisher of the **Estero Bay News**, the Society has been writing columns that appear in the biweekly local newspaper beginning with the January 30-February 12, 2025 issue. Each column includes a photograph and a short story about the picture. You can find them [here](#).

We have covered topics of all kinds, sometimes ‘hidden history,’ such as:

- Greening Lake – also known as Carp Lake – which was a freshwater lake located approximately where the Morro Bay High School is today. Mr. Greening had the bright idea to raise carp, which he transported from Germany, to sell locally. He failed in his endeavor.
- President Richard Nixon campaigning in Morro Bay in 1950 and meeting with local fishermen.
- The Cloisters Hotel, which was built between 1915 and 1919 on a piece of land near the dunes next to Atascadero Road. It was the brainchild of E.G. Lewis, the founder of Atascadero. It was used as a hotel and gathering place for locals into the 1930s. During World War II it housed military officers. After the war, it was destroyed by looters. But the Cloisters name lives on in the housing development that took its place.
- The “Duck Pier” that was built in the 1920s by Baywood Park developer Richard Otto. It reached out into the bay with a floating dock, enabling small boats to launch. Hunters stayed at The Duck Inn across the bay at Sweet Springs because ducks and geese were so plentiful.
- The Mysterious Case of the Headless Corpse, a true story based on an 1867 coroner’s jury court record. The jury was charged with determining the cause of death of a headless, handless corpse found on the beach by Franklin Riley, the European founder of Morro Bay.

Future columns are planned for the development of the Morro Bay Harbor and the military use of Morro Bay during World War II, among others. Look for them in each issue of the [Estero Bay News](#). If you know of an interesting topic that you would like to know more about or have a historical photograph with a story behind it, please let us know: [info@historicalmorrobay.org](mailto:info@historicalmorrobay.org).

## Franklin Riley Park is Open!

By Glenn Silloway

We have been talking about the Franklin Riley Park for some time now. It’s finally ready to present to the world (even though people have been using it every day to walk their dogs).

The park is a triangle of bluff top land along Morro Street near its intersection with Olive. This parcel was already used like a park but without signage and amenities. It provides a spectacular view of the harbor, sandspit and Rock.



The land was available because of the Morro Cove development. As part of the negotiations between the City and the developer, it was deeded to the City as fee owner.

HSMB asked the City Council to name the parcel in honor of Franklin Riley, the City's European founder, because he was not recognized publicly anywhere else. As part of the process the Society agreed to add signage and worked with the City to upgrade the path and benches partly with funding courtesy of our generous members. The park's main location sign was donated by former mayor Jamie Irons. The residents of Morro Cove have also "adopted" the park and help to maintain it.

A lot of strollers walk their dogs; some sit on the new park benches made possible by HSMB; others just take in the wonderful view. The creation of Franklin Riley Park was a community effort that required very few tax dollars. It is now part of our history.

## Roger Castle Was HSMB's Leader

By Glenn Silloway



Many of you have learned that Roger Castle died recently after an 8-year battle with disabilities induced by a medical treatment. He was inspiring to us as we watched him continue to lead the fundamental work of the Historical Society of Morro Bay despite his physical limitations, proving to us that it is the ability that matters. Those of us who worked and planned with him know how invaluable he was to HSMB.

Roger filled almost every role possible in the Society over the years, from financial and compliance manager to Collections Director. He was there in 2002 when the Society came out of a 'hiatus' and re-organized under the leadership of Gary Ream. And of course he was President from 2007 to 2012 as well as being our one indispensable Board member over the whole time. Now we have to cope with that.

## Dues are Due - Please support your Historical Society

Our 2026-27 Membership Drive will soon begin. If you want to get a jump on it (and save us postage), you may do so now. You can either download and print the form below and mail it with a check to: HSMB, P.O. Box 921, Morro Bay, CA 93443. Or you can go to our website and pay with PayPal.

As you can see from this newsletter, HSMB is currently involved in several exciting projects, and we want and need your help and participation.

Would you like to volunteer? We would love to have you join us to contribute however you want. Please let us know:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, please contact me.

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HSMB is a 501 c 3 non-profit, volunteer organization that has existed for over 30 years because of your support. Thank you. We hope you will keep it up! You can use the form below and mail it in with a check to:

**HSMB, P.O. Box 921, Morro Bay, CA 93443. Or you can go to our website and pay with PayPal.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	I am a new member
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am a renewing member

Please check your desired type of membership:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual Membership \$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Business Membership \$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Membership \$40.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student Membership \$15.00

I would like to make an additional donation (enclosed) of \$

Name(s) or Company:

Date:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Email\*:

Phone:

\*Please provide as it saves postage and allows us to keep you up to date on new developments.