



Source: Cabrillo Club House, c 1929. **Morro Bay's Yesterdays**, Gates and Bailey (1982) via HSMB.

How Morro Bay Got Its State Park

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This story begins in the late 1920's when two land developers bought land in Morro Bay where the State Park is today. They had big plans to sell residential lots in what they called Cabrillo Country Club Estates. They hoped to create a "beautiful club and home paradise" in Morro Bay for summer visitors from the San Joaquin Valley. Initially they constructed a nine-hole golf course, an administration building, and a Spanish-style club house (pictured here) that opened in 1929. It was located where the parking lot for the Morro Bay Natural History Museum is situated now. Unfortunately, that same year the stock market crashed marking the beginning of the Great Depression. Real estate sales dropped sharply, and it was obvious that the Cabrillo Estates project could not continue.

Fortunately, however, in November 1928 California voters had approved by a nearly three to one margin a \$6 million bond issue to be used to purchase properties for state parks. Naturally, there was competition throughout the state to acquire park land. A group of individuals from various towns and cities in the San Joaquin Valley formed a committee to advocate for a park in Morro Bay. Pismo Beach also wanted a state park and had strong support from the San Joaquin Valley as well. In the end, both projects received funding, in part because of the combined support of inland and coastal regions and a planned highway from the San Joaquin Valley area to the coast.

In January 1934, the State Park Commission acquired the Cabrillo Estates property that included the golf course, White Point (where the Natural History Museum now stands), and Black Hill, along with 20,000 feet of ocean frontage and 25,000 feet of bay frontage. For this 1,500-acre piece of property the state paid \$132,750. The Commission also acquired Morro Rock as a state monument. It planned to make Morro Rock part of the park by constructing a causeway across the bay to the sandspit and building a good trail to the top of Morro Rock.

Between 1934 and 1939, major improvements to the park occurred under the direction of the New Deal Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) to create the structures needed for park visitors, many of which still exist today. The work of the C.C.C. deserves its own story.

In 1949, the golf course was expanded to 18 holes, and a new clubhouse was built. The 1929 clubhouse was divided, moved to a new location, and converted to living quarters for park employees. A new Natural History Museum opened in 1962, which serves thousands of visitors annually. It is the only natural history museum in the California park system. The Morro Bay State Campground was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2014. The steps to climb Morro Rock have been closed to the general public.