HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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MORRO BAY STATE PARK

State Park No. 52

by

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MORRO BAY STATE PARK

Morro Bay State Park is located on the shore of the lower half of Estero Bay in San Luis Obispo County. Its geographic position is in 35° 20' north latitude and 120° 50' west longitude. The park is composed of two tracts of land separated from each other by an estuary known as Morro Bay, lying twelve miles northwest of the city of San Luis Obispo. One of the tracts consists of a long sandy peninsula about three and one-half miles long with an average width of a quarter of a mile, which separates Morro Bay from Estero Bay. This tract has a frontage on both bodies of water. The other tract of land is of irregular shape lying on the east shore of Morro Bay, separated by about a mile of water from the peninsula tract. The second tract has a shore line about two miles long on Morro Bay.

This section of the California coast first came to the attention of white men at the time of the Cabrillo expedition. Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo under orders from the King of Spain sailed from Mexico with an expedition in two small vessels to explore the California coast. His ships discovered San Diego Bay in September 1542, and from there proceeded slowly up the coast. On November 10, 1542, Cabrillo arrived at the present San Luis Bay, to which he gave the name "Todos

Santos." From there his ships sailed north and early next day rounded Point Buchon and entered the present Estero Bay, November 11, 1542. Here they found the great round volcanic plug projecting out of the water hundreds of feet into the air at the mouth of a large estuary. To this rock Cabrillo gave the name of "Morro." From Estero Bay, Cabrillo and his expedition continued up the coast.[1]

With the departure of this party there were no more white men in that vicinity for sixty years. Then the king ordered Sebastian Vizcaino to lead another exploring expedition up the California. This consisted of three vessels, which sailed into San Diego Bay in November, 1603. Following the same route which Cabrillo had taken up the coast, Vizcaino came into Estero Bay at the end of November, 1603. He and his party became the second group of Europeans to approach the vicinity of Morro State Park.[2]

After Vizcaíno's departure no other white men visited the coast for one hundred and sixty-six years. True the Manila Galleon passed down the coast each year but as a rule so far out to sea that its crew seldom sighted land. The next group to see Morro Bay and actually explore the land was

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1. H. H. Bancroft, History of California, I, 74-75.
2. Ibid., 98-99.

Captain Don Gaspár de Portola and his expedition. By July 1, 1769 Portolá and his party had arrived at San Diego and two weeks later a section of the company set out for the north on July 14, 1769 to explore the land route to Monterey Bay. Those who accompanied Governor Portolá were Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada, Sergeant Joseph Francisco Ortega, Lieutenant Pedro Fages, Engineer Miguel Constansó, Fray Juan Crespí, Fray Francisco Gomez, twenty-seven soldiers, six Catalan volunteers, seven muleteers, two servants, and fifteen christianized Lower California Indians.

The Portolá party marched so slowly that it took several months to travel from San Diego to the vicinity of San Luis Obispo. On September 5th they were at the southern end of Pismo Beach and on the evening of the 7th, camped on the site of the future mission. Next day September 8th they traveled northwest along the San Luis Valley to the ocean and that evening came upon Morro Bay and rock.[3] In his diary Father Crespí wrote:

> Friday, September 8, - After Mass was said on this great day of the Nativity of Our Lady, we went on by the same valley as far as the sea, which lies to the west. There were some obstructions caused by deep gulches which it was necessary to prepare so that the pack train could pass. At the end of two

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3. Z. Engelhardt, Mission San Luis Obispo, 6-7.

leagues we stopped on a hill in sight of the sea, near an Arroyo of good water covered with water cress. It is a pleasant land, with many trees and good pasture. Not far from the camping place there was a very small village of heathen which seemed to be nomadic, for we did not see a single house. About sixty persons came to see us as soon as we arrived and presented us with a sort of porridge made of roasted seeds which tasted like almonds, and everybody liked it very much. The governor returned the gift and they were all well pleased.

To the south an estuary of immense size enters this valley, so large that it looks like a harbor to us; its mouth opens to the southwest, and we noticed that it is covered by reefs which cause a furious surf. At a short distance from it to the north, we saw a great rock in the form of a round morro, which at high tide, is isolated and separated from the coast by a little less than a gun shot. From this morro the coast runs to the west - northwest as far as the point that we saw jutting into the sea, and between it and another point of the mountains that we left behind the shore forms a great bay, sheltered from the winds to the southwest and west; but it is necessary to examine it to make sure of the bottom. [4] This spot was named Valley of San Adriano.

The next morning September 9th they continued on their way following the coast to the northwest. The next four months were spent on the road to Monterey and San Francisco Bay. On their return to San Diego they again passed Morro Bay stopping at their former camp site on December 26, 1769, in the midst of a rainstorm.[5]

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4. H. E. Bolton, Fray Juan Crespi, 185-186.
5. Ibid., 250.

Several months passed after Portolá's party departed from Morro Bay on its return to San Diego. During that time what took place at the future state park is unrecorded history. Meanwhile Portolá and his followers arrived in San Diego, rested, and on April 17, 1770, the governor began his second expedition to Monterey. This time he was accompanied by Lieutenant Pages, Father Crespí, twelve Catalan volunteers, seven regular soldiers, two muleteers and five natives. On this trip the travelers followed their former route and since they were fewer in number moved faster. Consequently on May 7, 1770, Portolá's second expedition camped at Morro Bay and next day continued their march northward.[6]

This proved to be the last of the expeditions to pass by Morro Bay. Thereafter the Spaniards crossed directly over the Santa Lucia range from the spot where Misión San Luis Obispo was founded on September 1, 1772, to the Salinas Valley. That being the case Anza and later travelers did not use Portola's route by Morro Bay. After Misión San Luis Obispo was founded, the bay was visited by the soldiers of the mission guard and occasionally by others but nothing of great historical importance happened there except one inci-

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6. Bancroft, op. cit., I, 168-169.

dent.

It transpired that during the spring of 1772 the Spanish establishments in California began to run short of supplies. The vessels with new stores from Mexico failed to arrive at the regular date and by May the white people at San Diego, San Gabriel, San Antonio and Monterey were in great want. They were now almost wholly dependent on what food the natives could provide. In order to relieve this situation Governor Fages took thirteen soldiers late in May and went to "La Cañada de los Osos" which opens into the southern end of Morro Bay to hunt bears. There he and his men spent almost three months killing bears and sending the dried meat loaded on mules to the relief of the needy settlement. It was due to the great number of bears in that locality that the valley became known as the Valley of the Bears. It was soon after the end of this hunt that Father Serra and Fages founded Misión San Luis Obispo at the head of this valley.[7]

At the time that all these Spanish expeditions were visiting Morro Bay, they found there and in the neighboring country a considerable Indian population. When Cabrillo visited the coast it was discovered that these Indians had a culture superior to that of other California In-

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7. Bancroft, op. cit., I, 187-188.

dians and that they belongod to a nation whose people numbered tens of thousands and were known as Chumash.

The Chumash tribes were in the main a coast people, predominantly maritime in their habits. They had their villages all along the coast line from Malibu Beach north to San Simeon. They had little or no organized religion, but in their economy, in the arts, and in the organization of their society, they surpassed the other tribes. In the business of boat making, basket weaving and in fashioning implements of all sorts they were well advanced. From this it would appear that Chumash culture had a higher development on the material, technological, and economic side than on the religious.[8]

Marine life in the vicinity of Morro Bay is so rich that it attracted a considerable number of Indians at certain times of the year. There they obtained a plentiful supply of fish, Pismo clams, and other sea foods upon which the Chumash thrived until the Spaniards came to Christianize them.

These Indians were not a warlike people, so they received the Spaniards with unusual friendliness. However, the changes of habit and life which the residence of a supe-

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8. A. L. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 550-551.

rior race imposed upon them broke their spirit and produced in them a deep, inward depression. This led them to practice certain acts which produced a rapid decline in the birthrate. By the time Mision San Luis Obispo was secularized in 1836, the Indian population about Morro Bay had been reduced to a very small number. During the years between 1836 and 1946 the Indians at the missions were completely disorganized. Those at San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay were no exception. The natives disappeared rapidly and by the time the Americans had again reorganized the social life of California in 1850, only a few scattered individual Indians remained. The Chumash as a nation had become extinct.[9]

No sooner did the Indians disappear than the white people claimed their land. This was the case at Morro Bay. One of these claims was made by Vicente Cané. He was a Spanish sailor who arrived in California aboard the brig Asia at Monterey in 1825. He decided to stay in California and asked permission to remain. This request was granted by the authorities and he settled in Monterey. After several years there, he married in 1828 and prospered in business. During the 1830's he moved down to San Luis Obispo, and in 1839 applied for a land grant. On February 11, 1840,

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9. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 551.

he received a grant of one square league of land lying between San Bernardo and Morro Creeks from Governor Alvarado. This ranch called San Bernardo had a front on the beach at the mouth of Morro Bay where the town of Morro now stands. In 1841, Don Vicente was appointed Justice of the Peace at Misión San Luis Obispo. That year Cane built his ranch home on a hill now known as Black Hill above San Bernardo Creek overlooking Morro Bay, and about two miles east of Morro Rock.

At that time the adobe was the most pretentious structure in the neighborhood and was often described as a "castle" or a "great mansion," but in reality was only a house a story and-a-half high whose wings spread out over a considerable area. There is a legend that Don Vicente in looking for a site upon which to build his house was fascinated by the view of the great red rock cone rising majestically from the limpid blue sea. He admired the long white sandbar that served as a barrier to the rough ocean and a protection to Morro Bay. The golden sunshine and balmy breezes served as further inducements so he decided to build his mansion there. For that purpose he brought skilled Indian laborers from the two missions, San Miguel and San Luis Obispo. With their aid in making the adobe and cutting the timber he erected his home at a cost of over 40,000 pesos

for labor and materials. The walls were plastered with gypsum crushed in the neighboring hills while the windows, doors and flooring were brought by ships around the Horn, from the United States. The wings of the house contained the bedrooms and servants' quarters. One of the wings also contained a chapel with a raised altar where the Don and his family held private services.

It was in such a home that Don Vicente Cané reared his family and lived in grandeur. There many a bear and bull fight, many a horse race and many a fiesta were held to enliven the life of the ranch. And over his broad acres roamed his thousands of head of cattle, horses and sheep.[10]

According to the legend, it is told that Don Vicente was so attached to Morro Rock that he requested that at his death his body should be taken to the top of the Rock and there laid in a grave. He died about 1870, but his wish was not carried out. He also had a beautiful horse of whom he was very fond and which lived for several years after Don Vicente died. The neighbors used to tell how for many years, long after master and horse were dust, the steed could be heard neighing in the courtyard of the mansion and champing

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10. H. E. Rensch, Historic spots in California, counties of the Coast Range, 377-379.

at the bit. Then on moonlight nights horse and master would go galloping madly down to the bay. There spectators might see a misty form enter a phantom skiff and row away towards the rock. Thus a weary ghost was destined to go unlaid because a dying request went unfulfilled.[11]

Even today this great, interesting house of Don Vicente may be seen from the highway leading from Morro to San Luis Obispo, as it stands above the road about a mile and a half east of the former town. It is still fairly well preserved but has not been adequately maintained for many years. One side is covered with boards, and two others have been plastered with cement. Tar paper has replaced the tiles of the original roof. The great front door is still impressive, and is flanked by deep-set windows, which are protected by perpendicular iron bars. The splendid view towards the ocean from the front door is now obstructed by cypress and eucalyptus trees grown to great size. At the rear of the house there is a patio which is open on one side. Around the other three sides there extends a veranda with grapevines clambering over it to the top. The trunks of some of these vines are three feet in circumference which indicate that

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11. Mrs. A. L. Morrison, History of San Luis Obispo County, 165-166.

they probably were planted at the time the house was built.[12] A portion of the land in Don Vicente's ranch is now included in the mainland section of Morro Bay State Park.

The remainder of the land composing this park on the mainland and the peninsula as well was originally part of the land grant known as "Cañada de los Osos y Pecho, é Ysiay." This grant, which originally included the entire valley which opens up at the lower end of Morro Bay known as "Cañada de los Osos" extended almost to San Luis Obispo. It was first claimed by Victor Linares with the approval of Governor Juan B. Alvarado in 1842. Don Victor was a soldier in the San Diego company in 1826. Ten years later he was granted the Tinaquair Ranch near San Diego in 1837. The following year he moved to San Luis Obispo where he served as major-domo of the mission during 1838-1840. In 1841 he was an ensign in the civil militia. He was granted Cañada de los Osos in 1842 but seems to have lost it in 1843 when Governor Micheltorena took office. In 1846 he became Justice of the Peace for San Luis Obispo, but retired after the American conquest.[13] He was still alive in 1851.

The next claimant to this grant was Francisco Padillo a Mexican convict brought to California in 1825.

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12. Mrs. H. B. Hoover, Historic spots in California, 170.
13. Bancroft, op. cit., IV, 714.

He continued his lawless career here until his death. Sometime after 1830 he married Rafaela Garcia who bore him four children. On July 27, 1843 Governor Micheltorena approved his claim to the Canada de los Osos grant but after two years lost it. His career of crime continued and in 1860 was caught in the act of stealing and was lynched in company with one of his sons.[14]

No sooner did Padillo vacate his claim on the "Valley of the Bears" ranch than James Scott and John Wilson applied for it in 1845, the two men being partners in business. Governor Pío Pico approved the grant in 1845, but after the American conquest, this grant was in the courts for years. Finally the United States government confirmed, surveyed and gave John Wilson a patent to the grant on September 23, 1869.

James Scott was a native of Scotland who first came to California as supercargo of the Olive Branch and Waverly in 1826. Thereafter he was master of the Hunaear during 1827-1828. In 1830 he became a resident of Santa Barbara, but his business kept him constantly on the move. During the decade 1830-1840 he was supercarge and master of various vessels; also an otter-hunter. In 1830 he became a business

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14. Bancroft, op. cit., II, 707.

partner of Captain John Wilson and together they bought Mision San Luis Obispo and were granted Canada de los Osos ranch. During the conquest of California he was not friendly to the Americans so he remained in seclusion most of the time. He was not very active in business after the war having broken his partnership with Wilson in 1847 and died at Santa Barbara in 1851.[15]

John Wilson was also a native of Scotland, who came to California as shipmaster and trader in April 1826. In 1828 he was master of the Thomas Nowlan and from 1831 to 1837 was master of the Ayacucho. During 1838-1839, and again from 1841-1843, he commanded the Index. In 1840 he was master of the Fly, and during 1844-1845 of the Juanita. Meanwhile in 1836 he married Ramona Carrillo de Pacheco the widow of Captain Romualdo Pacheco who was killed at the battle of Los Angeles in 1831. After his marriage he considered Santa Barbara his home, and became naturalised in 1837. In 1839 he entered into partnership with Captain Scott and they were in business together until 1847. He engaged in otter-hunting in 1841, and in 1845 joined Pico and Castro in their revolt against Governor Micheltorena. For that service, Governor Pico allowed him to purchase Mision San Luis Obispo,

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15. Bancroft, op. cit., V, 714.

and later in 1845 granted him and Scott, Canada de los Osos and Cañada del Chorro. Wilson spent the remainder of his life at this ranch dying in 1860 at the age of 65 years. He was survived by his widow, a son John, and a daughter. They kept this ranch for many years.[16] It was from some of the heirs that the state acquired the land for Morro Bay State Park.

The land along the peninsula that separates Morro Bay from Estero Bay, is nothing more than a great sand bank with wide beaches on both sides. On the ocean side of the peninsula, the beach is the habitat of the delicious and commercially valuable Pismo Clam. This species known as Tivela - stultorum is a large, heavy-shelled mollusk common to Southern California beaches. The valves are large, massive, thick and so hard on the outer surface as to dull a file rapidly. These clams grow very large, the average length for a mature specimen being about six inches. It is not uncommon to find them seven inches in length and a few over that length have been found. The average weight of the Pismo Clams is from one and one-half to two pounds but the extra large ones have been known to weigh as much as four pounds. It is illegal to take clams less than five inches long.

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16. Bancroft, op. cit., V, 775.

The color of the adult clam is a pale buckskin with some faint light purplish concentric markings which denote each winter's growth. An occasional specimen shows striking radiating stripes of light chocolate brown running from the umbo to the margin and increasing in width with increase in size of the shell. These vary in width and arrangement in different parts of the shell and in the two valves.[17]

The Pismo Clam at Morro State Park, as elsewhere, is sharply limited to exposed sandy beaches and if transplanted to the sheltered waters of bays, soon dies. At Morro State Park they are found only on the outside beach of the peninsula. Experiments were made a number of times in transplanting the clams from the ocean side to the Morro Bay side of the peninsula, but every time, the clams planted on the quiet beaches of Morro Bay died within a few days. On the long beaches exposed to the constant pounding of the surf which their heavy shells fit them to withstand they flourish in what might be considered as an unfavorable environment. In early days the Pismo Clam was very abundant at Morro, and it is said that farmers plowed them out and picked them up from the furrows and fed them to their pigs and chickens.

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17. F. N. Weymouth, The edible clams, mussels, and scallops of California, Bulletin, No. 4, 29.

Even in recent years they have been plentiful, for example, during 1916 to 1919 the beaches of Morro and Pismo furnished over 150,000 individual clams a year with a total weight of over 200 tons. The number of clams on the beach varies each year due to the constant shifting of the sand and other conditions brought about by the action of the surf. Some winters the high surfs will wash hundreds of clams up on the high tide line.

The Pismo clam is distinctively a Californian bivalve and enjoys a high reputation as a food mollusk, being widely used in soups, chowders, fritters and baked in the half shell. The greater part of the shipments from the San Luis Obispo coast find their way to San Francisco and the bay cities or to Los Angeles. There they are used by restaurants or cafes rather than retailed. In the South a very large proportion are used for bait in surf fishing.[18]

Although the Pismo Clam exists only on the ocean side of Morro State Park other types of shell fish and mollusks are found in the quiet waters of the beaches within Morro Bay. In 1932 several boxes of Japanese seed oysters were planted in Morro Bay as an experiment, but so far little

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18, Weymouth, The edible clams, mussels, and scallops of California, Bulletin, No. 7, 34.

return has been obtained from them. At first sight the bay seems favorable for oysters, but there are several factors that present very real difficulties to oyster culture. The bay is very shallow and the bottom is more or less constantly shifting. However, with constant attention Japanese oysters might be grown successfully.[19]

Another experiment with sea life was tried at Morro Bay in 1919 when several thousand striped sea bass were planted in the bay. Since then the bass have thrived to some extent and they may be caught in the waters of the bay today.[20]

The bird life about Morro Bay State Park is also very extensive. Besides all kinds of song and other land birds the smooth quiet waters of the bay attract all sorts of water fowls and wading birds. During some months of the year thousands of ducks of all varieties may be seen on the surface of Morro Bay, and herons, storks, snipes and other varieties of wading birds may be found along the marshes of the bay. One of the most beautiful and distinctive of birds in this area is the yellow-billed magpie. Its black and white "pied" coloration and its extremely long tail, make

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19. P. Bonnot, "The California Oyster Industry," in California fish and game magazine, XXI, No. 1, 73.
20. H. C. Bryant, Out door heritage, 237.

its identification easy. Though all the magpies found in the rest of North America have black colored bills, there was developed in California a strain with a yellow bill. This bird has never been found outside of the state. The range of this bird is diminishing, and is now seldom seen south of San Luis Obispo County, but it is quite common there. Its nesting place is among the oak groves, and it builds a large globular nest in which to rear its young.[21]

Animal life in the park area is also quite extensive. At the time the Spaniards came, grizzly bear, elks, deer, mountain-lion, coyotes and other large game animals were plentiful in the country about Morro Bay. These were practically all exterminated after the Americans took possession of California. Now only the smaller animals remain. In the park areas may be found rabbits, squirrels, racoons, rats, field mice, gophers and other types of small animal life. The most distinctive of these is the Morro Kangaroo rat or mouse which is found nowhere else.

Plant life and wild flowers are also very abundant within the park areas. Among the sand dunes of the peninsula are found the different varieties of grasses common to sandy soil, as well as numerous kinds of creepers and other small

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21. Bryant, Out door heritage, 60.

flowering plants with flowers of all colors. The mainland portion of the park abounds with oak, pines and eucalyptus, and in the spring there is a profusion of wild flowers of many varieties the most conspicuous being the blue and yellow lupines, the wild mustard with its bright yellow flowers and the California poppy. In the thickets along the beds of the small streams are found wild roses, ferns, black berries and numerous flowering shrubs and woods.[22]

Not only has Morro State Park a great variety of plant and animal life both marine and land kinds, but its topography is equally diversified. That part of the park area on the peninsula consists of a long, low sandy strip over three miles long and on an average of three-eights of a mile wide. On the ocean side is a wide hard sandy beach extending the full length of the peninsula with a strong surf breaking over it. This beach is suitable for bathing and fishing for those who like the open ocean. The land area of the section of park on the peninsula amounts to 659 acres of sand dunes and flat sand covered with grass flowers and low shrubs, and is suitable for camp sites. There is plenty of room for thousands of people at any one time.

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22. J. S. Chase, California coast trails, 156-162.

The eastern side of the peninsula fronting on Morro Bay consists of a low, wide, fine sandy beach with calm water for those who prefer a quieter more sheltered place for swimming and fishing. The water on this side is shallow and safe so far as treacherous currents are concerned.

About a mile north of the upper boundary of the park lands and opposite the tip of the peninsula stands the great Morro Rock. This is not included in the state park but belongs to the federal government. Nevertheless, since it is such a conspicuous landmark in the landscape and one of the main attractions of Morro Bay and the surrounding country, which serves to bring visitors to the park, it should be mentioned here.

Morro Rock is a huge grey rock volcanic plug, almost circular in shape with a base about forty acres in extent which rises out of the shallow waters of Estero Bay, several hundred yards west of the mouth of Morro Bay, to the height of 530 feet. It is connected to the tip of the peninsula by a sand and rocky bar which at very low tide is exposed so that one may walk to the Rock and at high tide is covered by several feet of water. The sides of Morro Rock are very steep and in places perpendicular with a rounded top. There is scarcely any vegetation on its surface. This huge cone was first seen by Europeans at the time of the Cab-

rillo expedition in 1542 and was named by Cabrillo, El Morro.[23] This gigantic sugar loaf is called by the United States, Geodetic Survey, the most out-standing scenic feature on the coast. It appeals particularly to the artists, and a colony of painters and etchers is growing in that locality.

Between the peninsula and the mainland area of Morro State Park lies Morro Bay. It is a triangular body of water, about five miles long from north to south, and about two miles along its greatest width east to west. Its total surface area is about five square miles. Though Morro Bay is not actually a part of the state park, yet since the two sections of the park border on the bay it must be included in any history of the park as part of the recreation area. It is the only land locked bay between San Diego and San Francisco. In reality, however, it is not a bay but a large, narrow lagoon cutting inland into the valleys of Osos and San Bernardo creeks. It is very shallow throughout and at mean low tide most of the bottom is exposed. Near the mouth the bottom is of pure sand, but this changes gradually towards the head of the bay where it becomes mud. At the head of Morro Bay, along the shore-line, the lower areas of the

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23. C. H. Shinn, A study of San Luis Obispo County, 7. Chamber of Commerce, Souvenir of San Luis Obispo, August, 1917, 27.

valleys, as well as much of the water area is covered with Eel-grass which grows in great abundance. This is a great attraction for the thousands of water fowl and wading birds that frequent the lagoon at different seasons of the year. Morro Bay is also a delightful place in which to go fishing, swimming, or boating, either in row-boats, sail-boats or motor-boats, the water being clear and calm. During recent years Morro Bay has become a favorite summer resort for campers, hundreds of people making long journeys from the San Joaquin Valley and elsewhere to enjoy a few weeks pleasure on its placid waters.[24]

The mainland section of the park is an irregular tract of land consisting of some 850 acres. It forms an area about one and one-half miles long from north to south, and about one mile wide from east to west. Part of the western boundary of the park area adjoins the town of Morro on the east. On the southwest and south the park fronts on Morro Bay with a shore-line about a mile and one-half long, consisting of sandy beach and marsh-lands. From the south and west the ground slopes gently up towards the northeast for about a mile and a half, to the top of Black Hill, whose

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24. Bonnot, op. cit., XXI, No. 1, 73; also, San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce, San Luis Obispo in California, August, 1917, 1-2.

round summit rises to the height of 654 feet above the sea. A magnificent view is obtained of the surrounding country for many miles in every direction from the top of this hill.

To the north and east the ground slopes down from the crest of the hill in very steep slopes to San Bernardo Valley. The slope almost becomes a cliff on the east side of Black Hill, as the combined streams of San Bernardo, San Luisito and Chorro creeks cut a deep narrow canyon between it and the chain of hills east of it. After breaking through this box canyon the three streams disgorge their waters into the eastern extremity of Morro Bay by a wide fan-like, marshy delta fully three-quarters of a mile in width, all within the boundaries of the park. No less than six fairly large streams beginning with Osos Creek on the south, Chorro, San Luisito, and San Bernardo creeks on the east and Little Morro, and Morro creeks on the north, empty their waters into Morro Bay. All these streams surround the park areas from the three land sides, and with their picturesque valleys and intervening ranges, give a diversity of topography to the vicinity of the State Park that should please each and all tastes of the visitors.

The land for Morro State Park was acquired by the state after 1931 with the aid of money from state park lands and donations from the county and private subscriptions.

Development and improvements of the park area were begun under a C.W.A. project in 1934 with the aid of the C.C.C. boys. Since then development has gone on in the park from time to time under W.P.A. projects with help from C.C.C.

The peninsula area has been left very largely in its natural state, but some picnic spots and camping places have been improved. Tables, fireplaces and other conveniences have been built as well as trails and roads to make them accessible. On the mainland section the development has been more extensive and complete. During 1937, under a W.P.A. project, much of the land was cleared of brush, trees were planted, roads were built, twelve picnic spots and twelve camping grounds were laid out, tables and stone fireplaces and other conveniences were built. Also a beautiful nine hole golf course was laid out, after months of preliminary work which started in October, 1936. In March, 1937 the fairways were seeded, and the greens and tees were reconstructed, so that by July, 1937, the course was ready for use. A club house was built at the cost of $15,000 and the park was ready for use. The State Park Commission then leased the golf course to a local club which is now operating it.[25]

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25. California Conservationist, March, 1937, 24, 32; also Monterey Peninsula Herald, Auto section 1; California State Park System, 12.

Since Morro State Park has been developed to its present state, it has become one of the most popular recreation spots in that section of California. It is well patronized by people from San Luis Obispo County and Santa Barbara, but hundreds go every year from the Salinas and San Joaquin valleys, and from as far south as Los Angeles. As the fame and fine reputation of its attractions continues to spread throughout future years, Morro State Park gives promise to become one of the finest recreation centers in the state system of parks.

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