

City of San Luis Obispo Citywide Historic Context Statement

REVISED 2025



Prepared For
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PROJECT SUMMARY

The following project summary is applicable to the Historic Context Statement developed by Historic Resources Group in 2013:

The September 2013 version of the Citywide Historic Context Statement was prepared at the request of the City of San Luis Obispo, and was funded by a grant through the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. In October 2012, the City contracted with Historic Resources Group for the preparation of the Historic Context Statement. It follows the guidance outlined for the development of historic contexts in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation, along with National Register Bulletin 16B: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form.

The activity which is the subject of this Historic Context Statement has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the California Office of Historic Preservation. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the California Office of Historic Preservation, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the California Office of Historic Preservation.

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In 2025, Page & Turnbull prepared an update to the Historic Context Statement at the request of the City of San Luis Obispo. This update includes revised and expanded information on the city's historic communities and updated approaches and procedures for the evaluation of historic resources.

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INTRODUCTION



View of downtown San Luis Obispo . Source: Historic Resources Group (2012).

The City of San Luis Obispo received a State of California Certified Local Government (CLG) grant for the period 2012-2013 to prepare a Citywide Historic Context Statement. This project is part of the City of San Luis Obispo's ongoing efforts to identify and evaluate potential historic resources.

The Historic Context Statement was developed by Historic Resources Group, including Founding Principal Christy Johnson McAvoy and Principal Christine Lazzaretto, both of whom meet the Secretary of the Interior's professional standards.¹ Assistance with field work, research, and content was provided by Robby Aranguren, Planning Associate, and Heather Goers, Architectural Historian. Coordination of the project was administered by Phil Dunsmore, Senior Planner for the City of San Luis Obispo, and it was overseen by the City's Cultural Heritage Committee. Marie Nelson and Amanda Blosser at the State Office of Historic Preservation served as advisors.

An update of the Historic Context Statement was completed by Page & Turnbull in 2025. Staff responsible for the update included Christina Dikas, Principal; Stacy Kozakavich, Cultural Resources Planner, project manager; and Clare Flynn, Cultural Resources Planner, primary author, all of whom meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Architectural History. Coordination of the project was overseen by Brian Leveille, Principal Planner for the City of San Luis Obispo with review by the Cultural Heritage Committee.

¹ Federal Register, Vol. 48, No. 190, p. 44738-44739, September 29, 1983.

PURPOSE

In order to understand the significance of the historic and architectural resources in the City of San Luis Obispo, it is necessary to examine those resources within a series of contexts. The purpose of a historic context statement is to place built resources in the appropriate historic, social, and architectural context, the relationship between an area’s physical environment and its broader history can be established.

A historic context statement analyzes the historical development of a community according to guidelines written by the National Park Service and specified in *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* and *Nation Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys*. Bulletin 16A describes a historic context as follows:

Historic context is information about historic trends and properties grouped by an important theme in pre-history or history of a community, state, or the nation during a particular period of time. Because historic contexts are organized by theme, place, and time, they link historic properties to important historic trends. In this way, they provide a framework for determining the significance of a property.²

A historic context statement is linked with tangible built resources through the concept of “property type,” which is a grouping of individual properties based on shared physical or associative characteristics.³ This report also considers intangible cultural heritage, which includes traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors and passed on to descendants, and may be linked to a specific property that is owned or occupied by a cultural community.

This historic context is not intended to be a comprehensive history of the City of San Luis Obispo. Rather, its purpose is to highlight trends and patterns critical to the understanding of the built environment. It identifies the various historical factors that shaped the development of the area, including historic activities or events, important people, building types, architectural styles, and materials, and patterns of physical development. The historic context provides a framework for the continuing process of identifying historic, architectural, and cultural resources in the City. It is meant to serve as a guide to enable citizens, planners, and decision-makers to evaluate the relative significance and integrity of individual properties.

Specific examples referred to in this context statement are included solely to illustrate physical and associative characteristics of each resource type. Inclusion in the context statement does not imply significance or designation at the local, state, or national level. Exclusion from the context statement does not diminish the significance of any individual resource.

² National Park Service, “National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form,” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997.

³ National Park Service, “National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys,” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1977; revised 1985.

METHODOLOGY

The first phase of the project involved collecting and reviewing existing documentation. Several surveys and studies have been conducted in the City of San Luis Obispo which included historic overviews of the City. In particular, the 19th and early 20th centuries have been well documented. These previous studies largely formed the basis for the discussion of these periods in this context statement.

Background information in this report on state and national trends that generally influenced the development of San Luis Obispo were borrowed and tailored for this report. Additional research was conducted as needed in City archives housed in the Community Development Department, at the History Center of San Luis Obispo County, and through a literature review of sources documenting the history of the area.

This historic context was developed with the assistance of the City's Cultural Heritage Committee, and included a public outreach component. Progress updates were provided by City staff to the Cultural Heritage Committee throughout the process, providing the opportunity for Committee members to provide direction and feedback. Two public workshops were conducted at critical stages of the project. The first workshop included a discussion of the major periods of development, with attendees providing additional background information, along with property- and neighborhood-specific details related to each period. At the second workshop, members of the community were updated on the progress of the project, and a discussion of eligibility criteria and integrity thresholds was held. Information gathered from the Committee and the public workshops was used in the development of the historic context.

A citywide street-by-street reconnaissance survey was undertaken to inform the historic context. Particular attention was given to buildings and neighborhoods from the post-World War II period, as this aspect of the City's history has not been studied as rigorously as earlier periods. In addition, properties included on the City's Master List of Historic Resources (individual buildings and historic districts) were reviewed in order to determine the overall integrity thresholds of recognized resources, and to have a better understanding of the population of properties from each period that have already been designated by the City. Properties that are illustrated within this historic context are meant to serve as examples of a particular context, theme, property type, or architectural style; exclusion of a property from the historic context is not an indication that it is not eligible for historic designation.

The update to this Historic Context Statement completed in 2025 included review of additional documentary materials to expand and revise the historic contexts, additional photographs taken during targeted surveys, as well as review of updates to City of San Luis Obispo historic preservation code and policy.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION POLICY

This Historic Context Statement is part of ongoing historic preservation efforts in the City of San Luis Obispo. The City of San Luis Obispo has an active historic preservation program, and historic preservation is included throughout City policy. Historic Preservation has been part of City policy since the 1980s, when the City established the first set of Historic Preservation Policies; the policy document was soon followed by a City historic resources survey and the formulation of the first historic districts. In 2010, the City adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance and updated the Historic Preservation Guidelines in an effort to stimulate preservation and provide design guidance for new development. In 2025, the City revised the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 14.01 of San Luis Obispo Municipal Code, to reflect current best practices in historic preservation.

In 2012, the City of San Luis Obispo became a Certified Local Government (CLG). The CLG program is a preservation partnership between local, state, and national governments focused on promoting historic preservation at the grass roots level. The program is jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) in each state, with each local community working through a certification process to become recognized as a Certified CLG. CLGs then become active partners in the Federal Historic Preservation Program and the opportunities it provides.

The General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) was adopted in 2006 (Reso# 9785-2006 series). Chapter 3 of the COSE contains various policies for the preservation of the City's cultural heritage. To implement these policies, the City Council has adopted several documents that help protect these resources. In addition to the Historic Preservation Guidelines and the Historic Preservation Ordinance discussed above, these documents include:

- Archaeological Resource Preservation Program Guidelines, adopted by Council Resolution No. 10120 (2009 Series) – Updates procedures to be used for the protection of sub-surface cultural resources, both historic and pre-historic features.
- Community Design Guidelines, adopted by Council Resolution No. 9391 (2002 Series) and updated in 2004, 2007, and 2010 – Establishes site and architectural design standards for development projects, including projects involving historic resources and historic districts, and demolitions.
- Demolition and Moving of Buildings – Appendix E of the San Luis Obispo Municipal Code – Establishes procedures and requirements for the relocation or demolition of historic buildings.
- San Luis Obispo Zoning Regulations, Chapter 17.56 San Luis Obispo Municipal Code – Establishes the Historical Preservation Overlay Zone (H) and describes its purposes and application, allowed uses and property development standards.
- Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 14.01 (Ordinance 1557-2010 Series) – established codified regulations for eligibility criteria for historic listings, review procedures and standards for actions on historic properties, and defined actions subject to Cultural Heritage Committee review.

HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEYS



Lithograph of San Luis Obispo. Source: Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley (1865).

There have been several historic resources surveys documenting the cultural and architectural resources of San Luis Obispo. The first occurred in 1982-1983, when the Cultural Heritage Committee completed an architectural and photographic survey that recorded over 2,000 pre-1941 buildings, sites, and objects within the City. This survey is referred to as *Historical Resources Survey I*. The surveyed properties were located primarily near the central downtown core. The goals of the survey included the preparation of a master inventory of cultural resources and the identification of “parameters for establishing guidelines for preservation issues and themes.”⁴ Those sites found to be architecturally or culturally significant formed the basis of the City’s Master List of Historic Resources. Additionally, the City established three Historic Zoning Districts: the Downtown Commercial District (now the Downtown Historic District), the Mill Street District, and the Old Town Neighborhood (now the Old Town District). The Downtown Historic District encompasses the oldest part of the City of San Luis Obispo with the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa at its center. Contributing buildings in the district date from the Spanish and Mexican eras to 1930. The Mill Street Historic District is a residential neighborhood that contains buildings constructed primarily from the 1900s to 1920s. The Old Town District contains one of the city’s oldest residential neighborhoods that was built up around the turn of the 20th century and has a period of significance of 1880 to 1920.⁵

The second study took place in 1987, when the Cultural Heritage Committee initiated *Historical Resources Survey II*. For this study, the Committee identified approximately 500 properties that warranted further research, the majority of which were single-family residences located outside of the downtown area. Following preliminary fieldwork, the list was refined to 400 properties, which

⁴ City of San Luis Obispo, “Completion Report: Historic Resources Survey,” July 1983, 9.

⁵ City of San Luis Obispo, “Historic Preservation Program Guidelines,” November 2010, 34-50.

were evaluated by a qualified historical researcher. The purpose of the evaluation was twofold: 1) to determine the eligibility of approximately 100 properties for inclusion on the City's Master List of Historic Resources and/or nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, and 2) to determine if any of the 400 initial properties were eligible as contributors to potential Historic Zoning Districts.

At the time, of the 100 properties evaluated by the first criteria, fourteen properties were deemed eligible for addition to the Master List of Historic Resources. Additionally, one of the properties satisfied the criteria for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The remaining 300 properties were evaluated for their potential significance as contributors to future Historic Zoning Districts, and the report also recommended that the City establish three additional Historic Zoning Districts: the Little Italy/Railroad District, the Monterey Heights District, and the Mount Pleasanton/Anholm District. In 1987 a Chinatown Historic District and a Railroad District were also identified. The Chinatown Historic District recognizes the important contributions of the Chinese community to San Luis Obispo's history and development and has a period of significance of 1884 to 1945. The Railroad Historic District contains buildings at the site of the Southern Pacific Railroad railyard, as well as residential and commercial areas to the west which were constructed between 1894 and 1945.

In 2006-2007, City staff surveyed two neighborhoods known as East Railroad and Monterey Heights. As a result of that survey effort, twenty-five properties were added to the list of Contributing Historic Resources within the East Railroad area, and seven properties were added to the list of Contributing Historic Resources within Monterey Heights.

In 2011, the Cultural Heritage Commission initiated a survey to update the City's Historic Resources Inventory as directed by the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan. Following a careful evaluation of the most critical areas in the City, the Cultural Heritage Committee selected an area outside of existing historic districts adjacent to Johnson Avenue between Higuera and Buchon Streets. The surveyed properties date from approximately 1900 to 1925 and occupy the block between Higuera and Marsh Streets at Johnson Avenue. As a result of this survey effort, fifty-three properties were added to the City's list of Contributing Historic Resources.



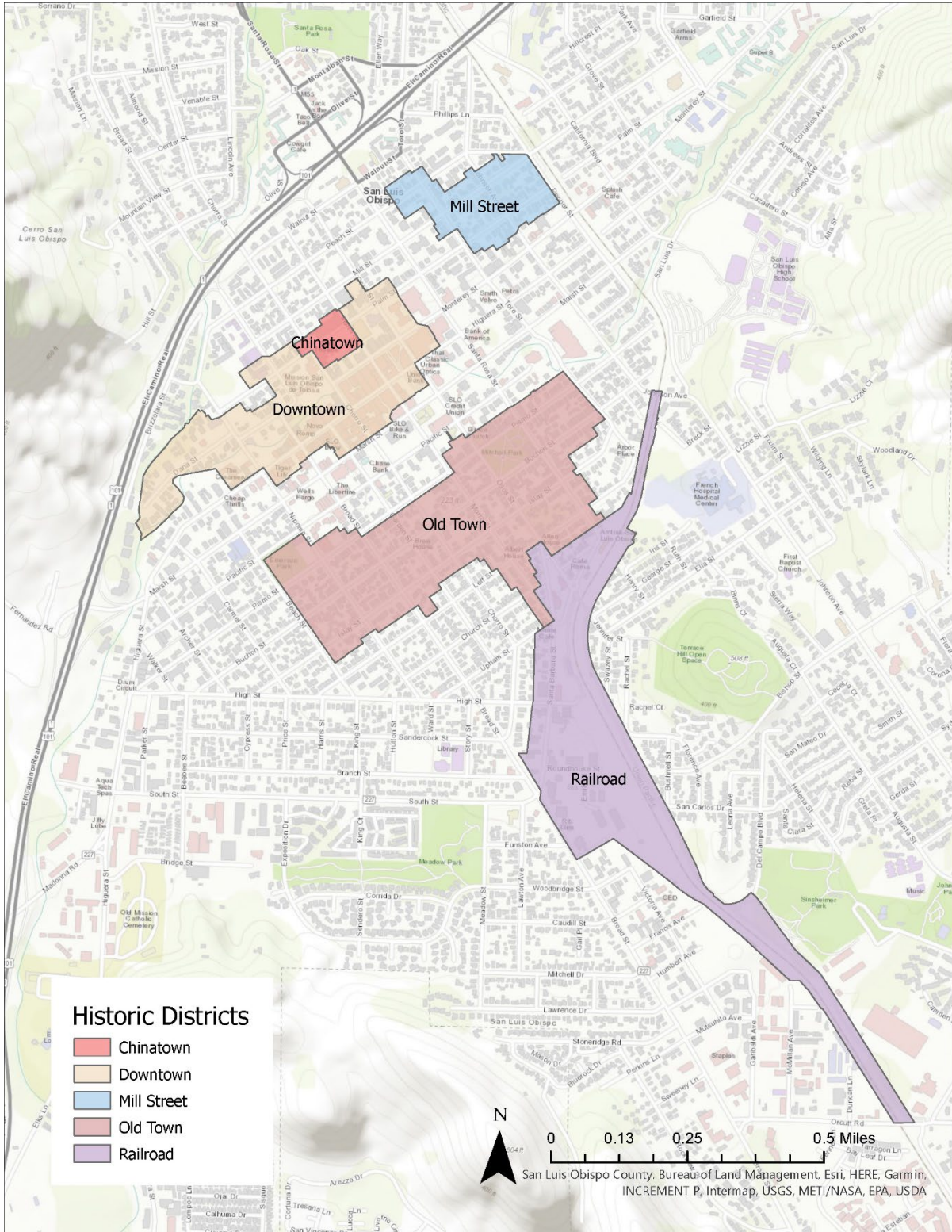
View of Buchon Street.

Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



View of Monterey Street.

Source: Historic Resources Group (2012).



Historic Districts Map. Source: Page & Turnbull, based on City of San Luis Obispo data (2025).

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

This Historic Context Statement provides guidance for listing at the federal, state, and local levels, according to the established criteria and integrity thresholds.

A property may be designated as historic by National, State, and local authorities. In order for a building to qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or the San Luis Obispo Inventory of Historic Resources, it must meet one or more identified criteria of significance. The significance criteria required by the City of San Luis Obispo's designation program are described in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 14.01 of the San Luis Obispo Municipal Code. Additional guidance is provided by the *Historic Preservation Program Guidelines*. The National Register, California Register, and Local Inventory criteria are provided in full in **Appendix A**. Typically, properties are considered eligible for evaluation for the National Register when they are 50 years old or older. Properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years must be "exceptionally important" as outlined in National Register Criteria Consideration G.⁶

In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must also retain sufficient historic integrity to convey its historic significance under the criteria and theme within which it is significant. Historic integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance and is defined as "the authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic period."⁷



Myron Angel House, 714 Buchon Street, 1886-1891.
Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



Tribune Republic Building, 1763 Santa Barbara Avenue, 1873. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1993 for its association with the early newspaper business and the railroad industry in San Luis Obispo.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

⁶ National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1997).

⁷ National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 16A: *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1997).

The National Register recognizes seven aspects or qualities that comprise integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. These aspects of integrity are defined fully in **Appendix A**.

In general, a higher integrity threshold is needed for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; properties that may not retain sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register may be eligible for the California Register or for local designation.

In some cases, properties associated with a specific ethnic or cultural group should be evaluated with a lower threshold of integrity, understanding that extant properties are rarer, may have been altered over time to meet the changing needs of the community, and may be associated with intangible cultural heritage. As such, the aspects of integrity that are most important for these properties include location, feeling, and association, and design to a lesser degree. A property may have some alteration to its design but may remain eligible for its association with an ethnic or cultural group so long as the property has enough of its essential physical features to be able to convey its reason for significance. A rule of thumb is that the property would be recognizable to a community member who was familiar with the property during its period of significance.

Within each of the contexts and themes discussed in the following sections, a property must meet the following basic requirements for eligibility for designation at the national, state, or local level.

An individual property must:

- Be demonstrably significant under at least one criterion;
- Date from the period of significance for the theme within which it is found eligible;
- Represent the property type associated with the theme under which it is significant (e.g. properties significant under the Residential Development theme for a specific period should be residential building types);
- Display most of the significant character-defining features of its type or style it ; and
- Retain the essential aspects of integrity appropriate to its property type and significance.

A historic district must:

- Be a definable, unified geographical area that possess a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development;
- Possess a majority (60 percent or more) of the properties or components within the district boundary contribute to the district’s significance.
- Retain overall integrity of design, setting, and feeling to convey the “time and place” of the period of significance. Contributors within the district should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The City of San Luis Obispo has a rich and varied history. This historic context provides a broad-brush historical overview of the overarching forces that shaped land use patterns and development of the built environment of the City of San Luis Obispo. It is not meant as a complete historical narrative of the City, but instead provides a framework for the identification and evaluation of historic resources. Much of the history contained here is drawn from existing narratives, particularly of the City's early development, which has been well documented by previous studies. Within each context is an identification of the relevant themes associated with that context; a description of the associated property types; a discussion of the relevant criteria and integrity considerations; and specific eligibility standards.

The overarching goal of the historic context statement is to serve as a planning tool that will assist City staff and officials, residents, and interested stakeholders identify those properties that tell the story of San Luis Obispo and contribute to the architectural, cultural, or social history of the City. San Luis Obispo retains important properties from each significant period of development, from the earliest built resources associated with the establishment of Mission San Luis Obispo, through post-World War II expansion and growth. Properties represent the City's residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, agricultural, and civic growth throughout history. There are numerous properties that are significant as excellent or rare examples of a particular architectural style, or as the work of a master architect. Properties may be significant under multiple contexts, but only need to meet criteria under one context or theme in order to be eligible for designation.



Mission San Luis Obispo, 751 Palm Street.
Source: California Views, The Pat Hathaway Photo Collection (1865).

SUMMARY OF CONTEXTS & THEMES

For purposes of this historic context, seven broad historical periods in the history of San Luis Obispo are identified:

- Early History
- Spanish Colonization and Mission San Luis Obispo (1772-1821)
- Mexican Rule (1822-1846)
- Late 19th Century Americanization and Town Settlement (1846-1900)
- Early 20th Century Development (1900-1929)
- The Great Depression and World War II (1930-1945)
- Mid-Late 20th Century Growth (1945-1980)

Within each broad time period, the following themes are discussed relative to the development of the built environment in San Luis Obispo:

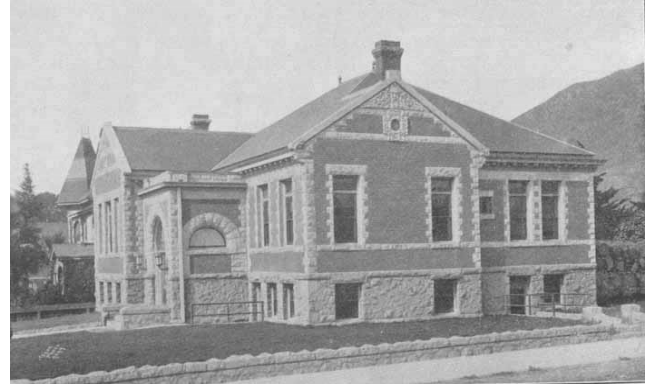
- Residential Development
- Commercial Development
- Civic & Institutional Development
- Agricultural & Industrial Development
- Transportation- and Infrastructure-related Development

It should be noted that **ethnic and cultural diversity** is a major thread that runs through all of these themes. As such, the history and contributions of San Luis Obispo's diverse communities are discussed throughout this Historic Context Statement as they are inextricably woven into the overall history of the city. This report also considers **intangible cultural heritage**, which includes traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors, passed on to descendants, and shared within and between communities. Oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts are examples of intangible cultural heritage.⁸ Intangible cultural heritage may be linked to a specific property that is owned or occupied by a cultural community, such as community center, social hall, commercial storefront, or religious property, even if the intangible traditions are not all practiced or executed at that physical location.

⁸ UNESCO, "What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?" accessed November 14, 2024, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-isintangible-heritage-00003>.



Dallidet Adobe, 1185 Pacific Street. Source: San Luis Obispo County Historical Society (1860).



Carnegie Library, 696 Monterey Street. Source: historyinsanluisobispocounty.org (1905).



Postcard of Monterey Street. Source: historyinslocounty.org (1930s).



Southern Pacific Depot, 1011 Railroad Avenue, built 1943. Source: Historic Resources Group (2012).

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

San Luis Obispo is located in the Central Coast region of California, approximately 200 miles north of Los Angeles and 230 miles south of San Francisco. The area is naturally bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Santa Lucia mountain range to the north, east, and south. These mountains are also the source of the San Luis Obispo Creek, which runs through the city of San Luis Obispo and empties into the Pacific Ocean at Avila Beach. The creek flows along the Nine Sisters, a chain of volcanic peaks which originates in San Luis Obispo and extends west to the Pacific Ocean. The chain of hills forms the dominant scenic backdrop to nearly all parts of the city. The serpentine ridge that extends southeast from Cerro San Luis is flanked on the south side by the wetlands of Laguna Lake, much of which is preserved by the City today as a wildlife preserve. The topography of the surrounding mountain ranges forms a natural barrier that generally restricted the development of San Luis Obispo to the flatlands around San Luis Obispo Creek.



Map of San Luis Obispo County. Source: UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library (1874).

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the area now known as the City of San Luis Obispo was part of a larger territory long inhabited by the yak tit^yu tit^yu yak tiłhini people (hereafter referred to as the tiłhini) whose name refers to the location of the current city and means “The People of the Full Moon.”⁹ The tiłhini established a network of villages along the region’s creeks and coast.

The region was not substantially explored by Europeans until the Spanish colonization of Alta California beginning in 1769. In 1772, Father Junipero Serra founded Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa on the banks of the nearby San Luis Obispo Creek. The establishment of the mission system of which this was a part would ultimately have a devastating effect on local indigenous peoples throughout what would become California. Forced relocation and labor, introduced diseases, and intentional suppression of traditional lifeways had far reaching and long-term impacts on San Luis Obispo’s indigenous inhabitants, the tiłhini, and the peoples of neighboring territories.

The Mission, however, prospered and soon became self-sufficient, establishing vineyards and orchards and cultivating the surrounding land for agriculture. Due to its isolated location, the mission became a convenient stopover for those traveling between missions to the north and south, and the settlement soon established itself as a regional market center.

From the late 1700s through the mid-nineteenth century, Spanish and Mexican ranchos had extended across the county. The California Land Act of 1851 prompted a dramatic shift in the residential development of San Luis Obispo during the mid-19th century. Surrounding ranchos were subdivided into smaller parcels of land, forcing many rural landowners to migrate into the city. In 1850, California was admitted to the Union, and in 1868 San Luis Obispo was officially designated as the county seat.

From before the days of mission settlement, the development of San Luis Obispo has been intimately connected with the surrounding landscape. The region’s topography and waterways shaped the land use patterns of the tiłhini, which in turn influenced the locations of Spanish settlements. The first European settlements in the area were located near the San Luis Obispo Creek, whose tributaries provided a framework for the town’s early housing and gardens. The surrounding landscape was largely dedicated to agricultural pursuits, including crops and vineyards cultivated by the mission and later by the adjacent ranchos. Construction materials for early mission buildings and residences, including thatch, wood, and adobe bricks, all originated from local sources. As the community surrounding the mission grew, the demand for construction materials increased and the variety of materials expanded in kind. While the development of San Luis Obispo’s first commercial brickyard in the late 1800s replaced the earlier use of adobe bricks, quarries were developed in the surrounding areas to mine quartz, sandstone, and other rock for commercial construction. Agricultural activities in the surrounding landscape also evolved in the late 1800s. Vineyards, once abandoned following

⁹ The tiłhini people have been, in the previous edition of this Historic Context Statement and other publications, referred to as the Northern Chumash or Obispoño. The use herein of the name tiłhini recognizes the people’s own linguistic and cultural history. Anthropologists initially applied the term “Chumash” to the people living on Santa Cruz Island, but it is now often used to refer to the entire linguistic and ethnic group of societies that occupied the coast between San Luis Obispo and northwestern Los Angeles County, including the Santa Barbara Channel Islands, and inland to the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley. For more information see Wendy M. Nettles, “The Copelands Project: Neophytes, Shopkeepers, and the Soiled Doves of San Luis Obispo,” City of San Luis Obispo, Community Development Department, October 2006; YTT Northern Chumash Tribe, “yak tit^yu tit^yu yak tiłhini Lifeways,” accessed October 10, 2024, <https://yttnorthernchumashtribe.com/lifeways>; Randall Milliken and John R. Johnson, *An Ethnogeography of Salinan and Northern Chumash Communities – 1769 to 1810*, (Davis: Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc., March 2005); and John R. Johnson, *Descendants of Native Rancherías in the Diablo Lands Vicinity: A Northern Chumash Ethnohistorical Study* (Santa Barbara: Prepared for the PG&E Diablo Canyon Power Plant, September 2020).

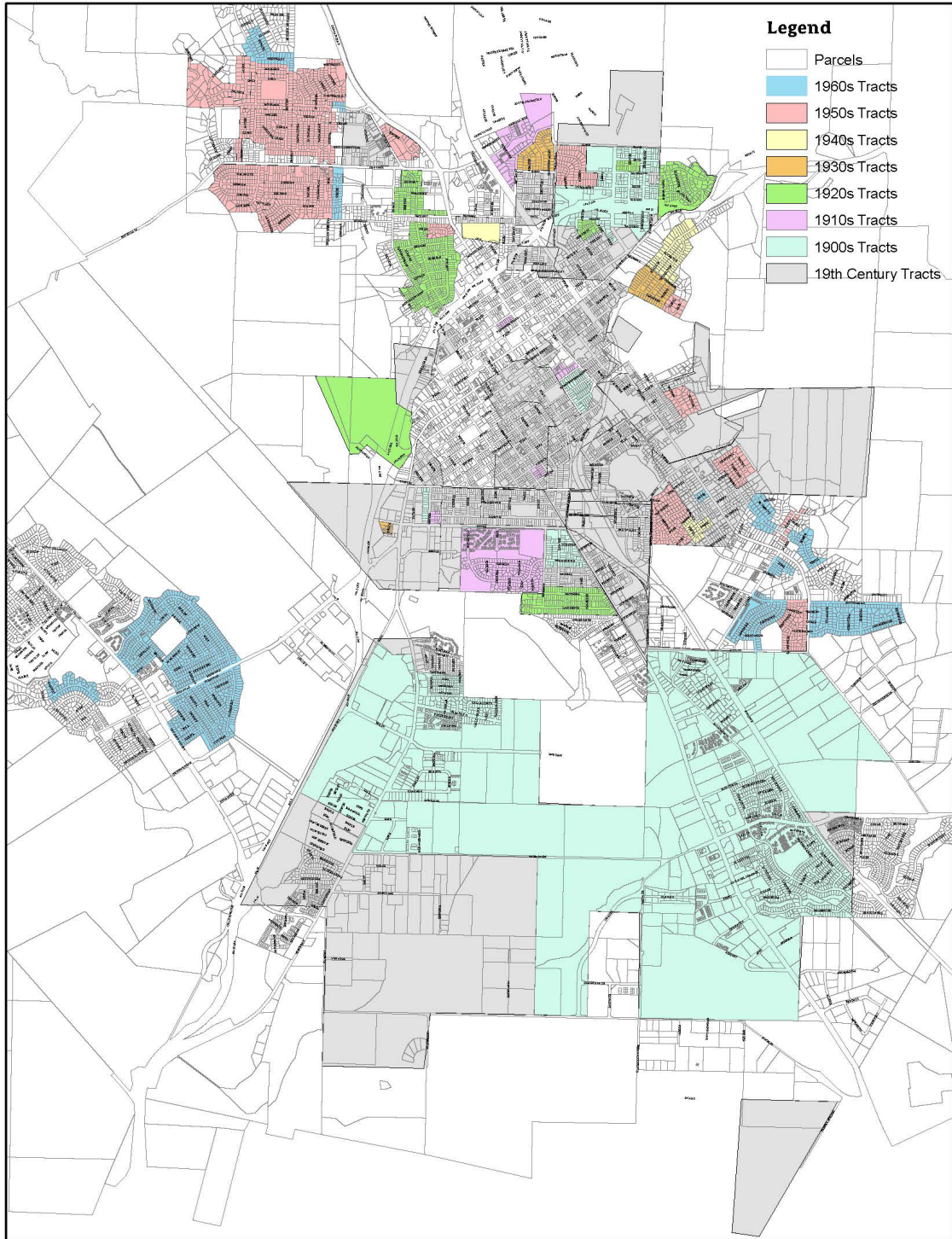
the secularization of the mission, were revived and a significant regional winemaking industry subsequently flourished.

Following a major drought in 1862-1864, cultivation of the surrounding land shifted from cash crops to cattle, and a booming regional dairy industry was soon established. San Luis Obispo continued to grow throughout the second half of the 19th century as improvements in transportation increased access to the isolated area and created a direct connection to the coastal maritime industries. Stagecoach routes were first introduced in the 1860s and railroad lines were extended throughout the 1890s, allowing the area to serve as a regional hub for both trade and tourism. With the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in the late 1890s the town and the local environs expanded into a burgeoning county. In the early 20th century San Luis Obispo served as a center of trade and travel in central California with the arrival of the railroad, the development of the Union Oil of California's (Unocal) oil fields, and the tremendous agricultural and dairy industries.

In 1901, the California Polytechnic Institute (Cal Poly) was established in San Luis Obispo. The presence of Cal Poly, its focus on vocational and agricultural training, and its growing influence on the community significantly impacted the development of San Luis Obispo throughout the 20th century. Another significant influence on the central coast was William Randolph Hearst and his San Simeon Ranch, commonly referred to as Hearst Castle. The development of these two conspicuous landmarks, in addition to the historic Mission San Luis Obispo, served to stimulate the regional economy and influenced the growth in and around San Luis Obispo.

In the 20th century, the advent of the automobile made it possible to expand development in San Luis Obispo beyond the central city. City services, utilities, and roads were also expanded and improved during this period to meet the needs of the growing city. Tourism, and in particular automobile tourism, continued to play a role in the area's development in the 20th century.

While the economy slowed nationwide during the 1930s due to the Great Depression, the economic effects on San Luis Obispo were mitigated by the establishment of Camp San Luis Obispo, a military training camp. The creation of the camp caused a sudden and dramatic increase in population in the area, which influenced the development of San Luis Obispo throughout the mid-century. As training activity increased in preparation for World War II, more soldiers and their families moved to the area, and many returned after the war to settle permanently. San Luis Obispo evolved dramatically in response to the sudden and significant postwar demand for single-family housing in the 1950s and 1960s. Annexations expanded the city's boundaries and large residential subdivisions were constructed outside the city center.



Map indicating subdivisions recorded in San Luis Obispo from 19th century to 1965.
Source: San Luis Obispo GIS data.

EARLY HISTORY

The earliest residents of what is now known as San Luis Obispo were the tiñhini, who have lived in this area for thousands of years and whose traditional territory extends from the Pacific coast to the Coast Ranges between, approximately, the Santa Maria River and Point Estero.¹⁰ The mild climate and abundant resources led to one of the most densely populated areas in California’s pre-history. More than 20,000 people are estimated to have lived along and near this part of the California central coastline prior to European settlement of the area, residing in both coastal and inland villages. Descendants of the tiñhini who were residents at the time of Spanish settlement continue to live in San Luis Obispo.

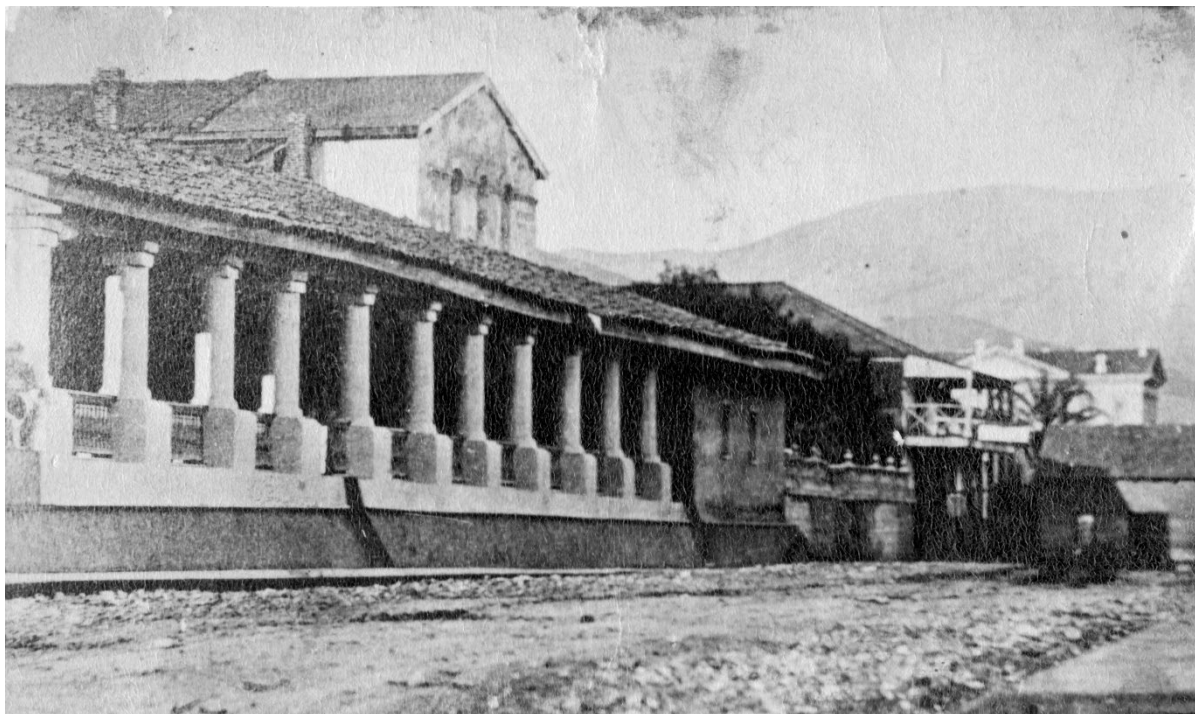
Early History: Associated Property Types, Integrity Considerations & Eligibility Standards

There are no known built resources associated with the tiñhini population of what is now San Luis Obispo prior to settlement by European colonists. However, the channel of San Luis Obispo Creek and its tributaries were significant resources for the area’s inhabitants throughout human history, and are of historical and cultural significance to the tiñhini.

Buried deposits and artifacts discovered from this period are likely to yield information about the past lifeways and culture of the tiñhini. Archaeological and ethnohistorical frameworks for identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the sites and cultural materials of earlier populations are not included in this context statement, which focuses on the identification and evaluation of extant built environment and landscape resources. The exclusion of these approaches to learning about San Luis Obispo’s past from this context statement should not be understood to diminish the significance of their contributions to our understanding of the city’s history. Interested readers are encouraged to consult the City of San Luis Obispo’s Archaeological Resource Preservation Program Guidelines for more information about the City’s policies and practices for the appropriate treatments and mitigation under CEQA for archaeological resources.

¹⁰ M. Colleen Hamilton, Kholood Abdo and Keith Warren, *From Mission to Commercial District: Archaeological Excavations at CA-SLO-1419H, San Luis Obispo, California* (San Luis Obispo: Prepared by Applied EarthWorks, Inc. for Copeland Properties, December 2017). YTT Northern Chumash Tribe, “yak tit’u tit’u yak tiñhini Lifeways,” Nettles, “The Copelands Project.”

SPANISH COLONIZATION AND MISSION SAN LUIS OBISPO (1772-1821)



Late 19th-Century Photograph of Mission San Luis Obispo.

Source: San Luis Obispo County Regional Photograph Collection, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (ca. 1870-1878).

Spain was the first European nation to achieve a foothold in present-day California. Spanish explorers came to California in the early sixteenth century, and as early as 1542 entered the bay of San Luis Obispo. In 1697, the Order of Jesus, the Jesuits, was given a license to enter the peninsula of Lower California and establish missions for the conversion of the Indians to the Catholic faith. They were given ecclesiastic, military, and civil authority, and for seventy years the Jesuits were undisturbed in their labors of founding missions. In 1767, Charles the Third of Spain, grown jealous of the political power of the Jesuits, determined to supplant them, and in April, 1767, issued a decree ordering their expulsion from all parts of his dominions.¹¹ From that point, the Order of Dominicans was to have charge of the Lower California missions, and the Franciscans were to establish missions in Alta California. In 1769, King Charles III formally authorized the Franciscan missionaries to begin the settlement of Alta California, naming Don Gaspar de Portola as emissary, assisted by Father Junipero Serra.¹²

The Spanish typically sent small groups of soldiers and clergy to settle new areas, establish missions to convert the indigenous people to Catholicism, and teach them agriculture and animal husbandry. In theory, the missions were mandated to occupy and make the land fruitful for the benefit of the

¹¹ Annie L. Morrison and John H. Haydon, *History of San Luis Obispo County and Environs, California, with Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County and Environs Who Have Been Identified with the Growth and Development of the Section from the Early Days to the Present History*, (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1917), 24.

¹² Myron Angel, *History of San Luis Obispo County with Illustrations*, (Oakland, CA: Thompson & West, 1883). Reprinted by Fresno Valley Publishers, 1979, 19.

Native Californians, but in reality the proliferation of the missions intentionally and violently disrupted the traditional way of life of California's original inhabitants.¹³

By design, the Spanish settlements were intended to have three components: a mission to serve as a religious and cultural center, from which to Christianize native peoples; a military presidio; and a commercial pueblo. In reality, few of the settlements developed a fully functional pueblo, particularly those in present-day Northern California, in large part because Spain forbade trade with foreign powers, undercutting the potential for commerce.¹⁴

The architectural style of the missions was developed by Serra and the other Franciscan missionaries, who drew on the architectural traditions of Old Spain. California's climate, geography, and available resources also impacted material and aesthetic choices. General characteristics include a picturesque composition, clear expression of functional elements, large expanses of blank walls marked by ornamentation at a few crucial points such as around openings, and a prominent tower and dome.

There were ultimately twenty-one missions established in California: the first was Mission San Diego in 1769, and the last was Mission San Francisco Solana in Sonoma in 1823. The missions were linked by *El Camino Real* ("The Royal Road" or "The King's Highway") which spanned the 600 miles from San Diego to Sonoma.

Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa was founded on September 1, 1772.¹⁵ The mission was originally established near *Arroyo de la Huerta Viejo*¹⁶ (later Brizzolara or Stenner Creek), which flows into San Luis Obispo Creek (near present day Dana Street), and initially consisted of a few shelters made of brush. By 1776, the Mission was relocated to its present-day site due to repeated flooding. The Mission was constructed in the traditional plaza configuration, enclosed to the outside world. The church and other related buildings were originally made of adobe, tulle, and logs, making them susceptible to fires.

In 1776, the Mission suffered the first of three devastating fires that were attributed to outside attacks. The first fire destroyed nearly the entire Mission complex, with only the church building and granary escaping damage. The repeated assaults led to experimentation with clay roof tiles that were widely employed in traditional Spanish architecture. Mission San Luis Obispo was the first Mission to employ tile roofing, which could be made on site. The improved roof material proved so successful that soon all of the California missions followed suit.¹⁷

In 1793, the church and *convento* wing, where priests resided, was constructed of adobe bricks made on site by the local *tihini* people. The *convento* wing also featured a portico with eleven columns, depicting the twelve Apostles minus Judas. By 1800, additional buildings had been constructed to provide housing, storage facilities, and a water-powered mill.

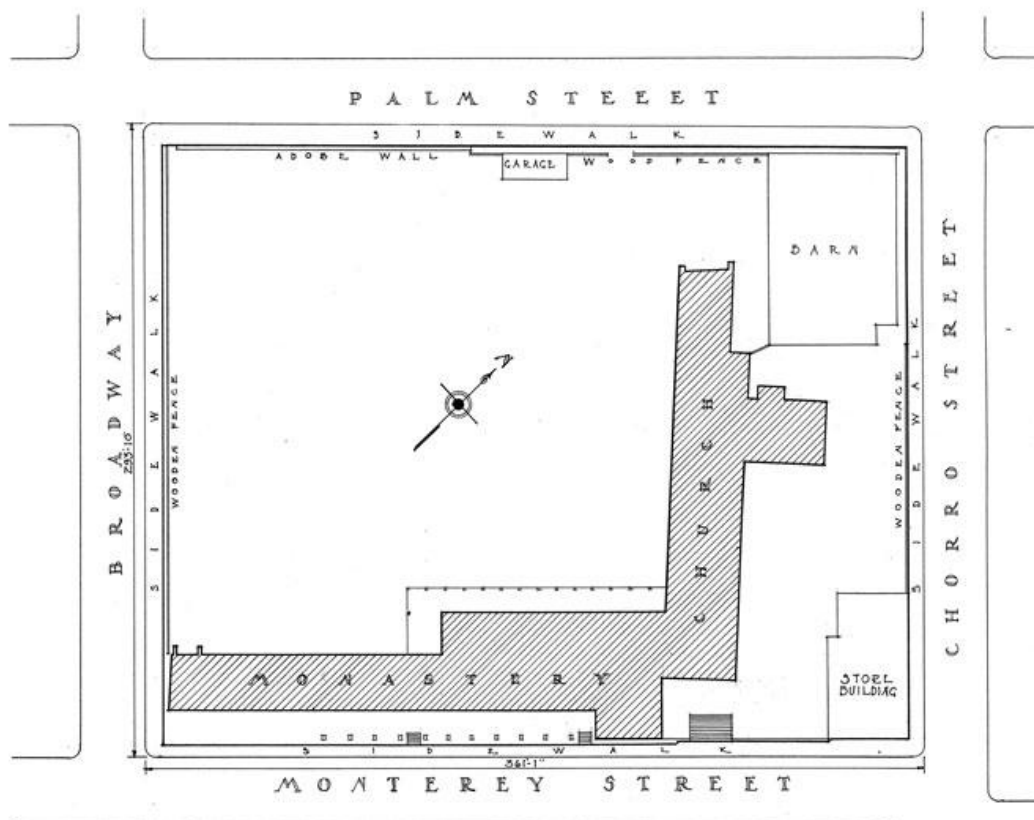
¹³ Dorothy Krell, *The California Missions* (Menlo Park, CA: Sunset Books, 1979), 35.

¹⁴ San Francisco Planning Department, *City Within a City: Historic Context Statement for San Francisco's Mission District*, (San Francisco, November 2007).

¹⁵ Mission San Luis Obispo was the fifth mission chronologically in the chain of 21 missions in the state.

¹⁶ Arroyo de la Huerta Viejo refers to the "Old Garden" which was located in near what is now the 700 block of Broad Street; Broad Street was originally known as Garden Street.

¹⁷ George Wharton James, *The Old Franciscan Missions of California*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 1919, 119.



Plot Plan Mission San Luis Obispo. Source: Historic American Buildings Survey (1936).

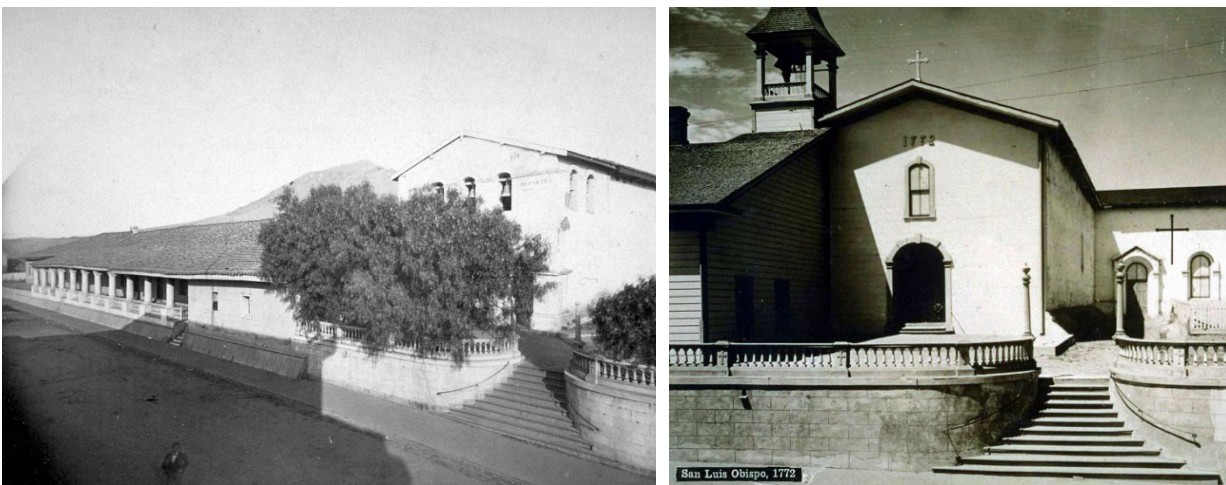
By 1794, the church and most of the related buildings were completed. In 1810, the Mexican War for Independence broke out, leaving the missions with little funding from Spain to aid in their development. However, by that time, all of the California missions were virtually self-sufficient, and the Mission San Luis Obispo in particular had become prosperous enough to not only support itself but to fund additional expansions as well.

Between 1810 and 1820, the Mission site grew to include cabins, mill wheels, and a granary. The quadrangle was also completed and the portico on the *convento* wing was renovated, changing the shape of the adobe columns from their original square profile to a round column. In 1820, the Mission's bells were installed. Mission San Luis Obispo's combination of belfry and vestibule is unique among California missions.

Mission San Luis Obispo flourished from the beginning, and it became one of the most industrious and prosperous of all the missions.¹⁸ In 1774 and 1776, expeditions led by Juan Bautista de Anza came through San Luis Obispo, en route to establishing a land route from Sonora, Mexico to Monterey.

¹⁸ W.W. Robinson, *The Story of San Luis Obispo County* (Los Angeles: Title Insurance and Trust Company, 1957), 8.

The explorers were welcomed at the Mission, and reported the fertile lands and pretty fields in the region.



Images reflecting the changes in appearance of Mission San Luis Obispo over time.
Source: Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley (Left c. 1880; Right c. 1909).

The area surrounding the Mission grew and flourished during this period as well. Orchards and vineyards were established, and the land cultivated for agriculture. Other adobe structures were constructed, and by 1805 there were approximately forty residential structures and a hospital in San Luis Obispo.¹⁹ The Mission also included a cemetery, which has had three locations in its history. The original cemetery was located immediately outside the Mission quadrangle. The second location fronted Higuera Street, at the end of Carmel and Pacific Streets, and was active after 1860. In 1877, the city passed a law prohibiting burials inside the city limits, and the current Mission Cemetery at Bridge Street and Higuera Street opened that same year.

The establishment of Mission San Luis Obispo had a destabilizing effect on the local *tíhni* population. The development of agriculture and growth of livestock grazing in the area devastated the supply of acorns, seeds, and other plants foods that were a foundational part of the *tíhni* people's subsistence and made it increasingly difficult for the *tíhni* to maintain their traditional ways of life. Faced with introduced diseases, land loss, starvation, and the disruption of their leadership systems, craft guilds, religions institutions, and family relationships, many *tíhni* individuals eventually entered the mission system, although others fled and became refugees living with other tribes. In 1803, the viceroy of New Spain decreed that converted Native Americans could no longer live in villages and must move into the missions, resulting in a period of heavy recruitment of the *tíhni* into the missions until 1805.²⁰ In 1803, the indigenous population at Mission San Luis Obispo (consisting of *tíhni* as well as Salinan and Yokuts people who were brought to the Mission) reached its peak of 919; by 1804 most of the nearby villages had been abandoned and the *tíhni* that remained in the area were living

¹⁹ Paul Tritenbach, *San Luis Obispo Discoveries*, (San Luis Obispo: Excellence Press, 1989), 12.

²⁰ Deana Dartt-Newton and Jon M. Erlandson, "Little Choice for the Chumash: Colonialism, Cattle, and Coercion in Mission Period California," *American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 3-4, Special Issue: Decolonizing Archaeology (Summer-Autumn, 2006): 416-430.

at the Mission or one of its outposts.²¹ At the missions, indigenous people were often forced to work as enslaved laborers and experienced physical, emotional, gendered violence, and forced assimilation.²²

Throughout the period of its construction and operation, t̥ihini labor and knowledge shaped the mission's buildings and landscape. As evidenced by recent reports investigating water conveyance features at the Mission San Luis Obispo, the site's indigenous residents continued traditional practices and approaches to land use while building and residing within the mission.²³

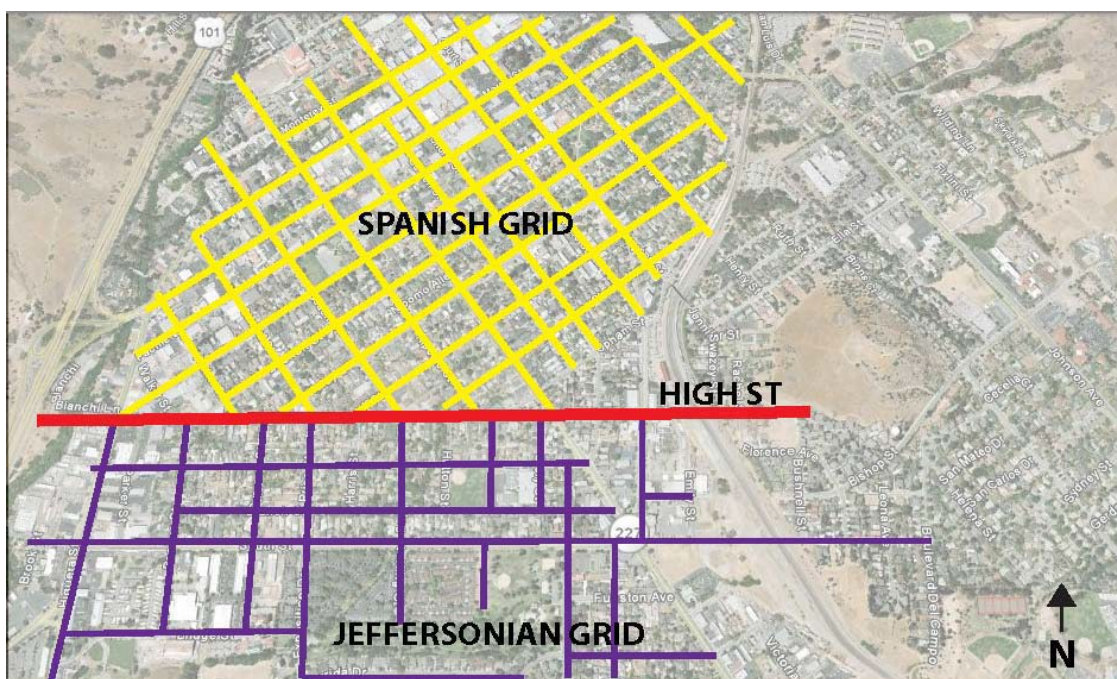
²¹ Nettles, "The Copelands Project," 53.

²² Sarah Biscarra, ytt Northern Chumash PhD Candidate, "Diablo Ancestral Canyon Homelands Back," YouTube, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://yttnorthernchumashtribe.com/lifeways>.

²³ For example, see Rebecca Allen, Mark Rawson, and Paul D. Zimmer, "Water and Infrastructure as Resources for Native Californians within the Mission Landscape at San Luis Obispo," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*, Volume 38, No. 1, 2018.

Mission-Era Institutional Development

The establishment of the Mission had a profound effect on the development of San Luis Obispo and the surrounding region. The missions were self-sufficient communities, and each included a church, residences, and support facilities. San Luis Obispo was first planned on a Spanish Grid according to the Laws of the Indies, which were the body of laws and regulations issued by Spain for the governance of its colonies outside Europe. The laws were intended to guide the creation of new communities established by Spanish settlers and missionaries and contained highly detailed regulations on the location, configuration, and construction of settlements. The regulations were based on classical principles of architecture and planning and called for a plan featuring a central plaza surrounded by a rectilinear grid of streets oriented to the prevailing winds. As a result, communities constructed according to the laws are frequently situated on a diagonal orientation rather than a true north-south orientation. In San Luis Obispo, the community was first planned around the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, which served as the town's central plaza, and surrounding streets were constructed on an angle. Although the city center has expanded over time and later development conforms to a rectilinear street grid, the historic core retains its original plan and reflects the influence of these early principles.



San Luis Obispo Street Grid. Source: Adrianna Jordan, *The Historical Influence of the Railroads on Urban Development and Future Economic Potential in San Luis Obispo*, online version p.33.

In the 1820s, the Mission's prosperity began to decline and the buildings began to fall into disrepair, aided by heavy rains and insufficient funding and manpower to rebuild. An earthquake in 1830 also caused substantial damage. The front of the Mission Church had to be taken down for fear of collapse, and by 1832 the belfry had already been demolished by rains and had to be reconstructed (this time, of masonry). The decay of the Mission was further compounded by the takeover of the Mission by the Mexican government after the Secularization Act in 1834, which rendered all mission lands property

of Mexico and subject to disposition. Mission lands were often sold; if not, they were used for any purpose deemed necessary by the Mexican government. The San Luis Obispo Mission's *convento* wing served for a time as a school, as well as a jail and the first county courthouse.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: It is unlikely that any previously unrecorded extant institutional structure or portion of a structure directly associated with the Mission will be discovered.

Remnant structures, landscape or hardscape features such as retaining walls, and other infrastructure that was constructed as part of the Mission should also be considered and evaluated under this theme.

Period of Significance: 1772-1821

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events)²⁴

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated with Mission San Luis Obispo 	Due to their rarity, any extant property or feature would be considered significant under Criterion 1, regardless of integrity.

²⁴ The criteria for eligibility in each section are expressed as the alphanumeric codes for the National Register (letter)/California Register (number)/Local Inventory (number).

Extant Examples: Mission-Era Institutional Development



Mission San Luis Obispo, Palm Street, built 1812. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
Source Historic Resources Group (2012).



Mission San Luis Obispo Detail Views
Source City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Mission-Era Residential Development

The Mission and surrounding settlement was the first populated area in San Luis Obispo County.²⁵ Residential properties from this period are primarily of adobe construction were built by local indigenous people.

In 1991, the Getty Conservation Institute compiled a list of approximately 350 extant adobes, out of more than 2,000 that were estimated to have been constructed in California.²⁶ In the ensuing thirty years, which include the Northridge Earthquake in 1994, additional adobe structures have been lost. Most adobe structures in the Southwest have been abandoned, and only those that have had continuous care have survived. Many of the surviving adobes are in ruins, or heavily altered, and therefore do not retain their authenticity or historic integrity. San Luis Obispo has a collection of extant adobes dating from the mission era through the late 19th century.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Single-family residences, multi-family residences
 Period of Significance: 1772-1821
 Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Integrity Considerations

- Properties from this period are extremely rare and represent the earliest European settlement in San Luis Obispo. Therefore, a greater degree of alteration is acceptable and extant examples which have been substantially altered would likely retain eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register, and Local Inventory.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rare example of residential development associated with the Mission era • As a rare representation of the earliest European settlement in San Luis Obispo 	Residential properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

²⁵ City of San Luis Obispo, "Completion Report: Historic Resources Survey," July 1983, 16.

²⁶ Steade R. Craigo, "To Do No Harm: Conserving, Preserving, and Maintaining Historic Adobe Structures." Getty Conservation Institute, accessed December 2, 2024, http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/pdf/gsap_part2d.pdf.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare extant property that has a documented association with an individual from the Spanish settlement era, such as a Franciscan priest or Spanish official. Since this property type is extremely rare, any property associated with such a person will likely be the only local representation of the person's influence or achievements. 	<p>A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.</p>
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare remaining example of adobe construction from the period; any remaining examples from this period would likely be individually significant as an example of this theme due to the rarity of type 	<p>Residential properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.</p> <p>In general, the adobe walls should remain largely intact, and the residence should retain the majority of the character-defining features associated with an adobe structure of its age. Alterations that are consistent with upgrades typically seen in early adobe structures, including later wood frame additions and replacement windows within original window openings, are acceptable. It is expected that the setting will have been compromised by later development.</p>

Extant Examples: Mission-Era Residential Development



La Loma Adobe, 1590 Lizzie Street, built c. 1780. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



Sauer-Adams Adobe, 964 Chorro Street, built c. 1800; second story added 1860. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

MEXICAN RULE (1822-1846)

After a long struggle, Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, and California land that had been vested in the name of the King of Spain belonged to Mexico. The power of the priests and the vast wealth of the missions were coveted by the new government, so steps were immediately taken to supersede ecclesiastical power with secular authority. In 1824 and 1826, the Mexican government passed laws suspending the pay of the priests and releasing all Native Americans from slavery. This act was premature, as the new government was not equipped to handle the aftermath and the existence of established settlements was threatened. The law was quickly repealed, and many of the Native peoples were induced to return to the missions.

In the 1830s, there was renewed pressure on the Mexican government to secularize the missions. In 1833, the Mexican Congress passed the *Act for the Secularization of the Missions of California*, and in 1834 the governor issued orders for its enforcement which would take effect in 1835. This act sought to do away with the supreme power of the priests, to release the lands held by the missions for settlement, and to put the missions on the same footing as the parish churches. As a result, between 1834 and 1836 control of the California missions was transferred away from the Church. Lay administrators, along with appointed parish priests, ran Mission San Luis Obispo from 1835-1845. In 1846, the Mission was sold to Petronillo Rios, ending the Franciscan era.

The secularization act specified that:

To each head of a family and all who were more than twenty years old, though without families, a plot of ground not more than three hundred yards square nor less than one hundred yards square was to be given from the mission lands. Sufficient land in common was to be set aside for watering the cattle. Villages with roads were to be established and corporation lands designated. Half of the movable property of the missions was to be distributed to the Native Americans, and one-half of the seeds and roots and one-half of all implements indispensable for agriculture. The other half of all property mentioned was to be in the care of an agent, or steward, named by the supreme government, and from the common mass of property, the expenses of missionary work, the stewards, churches, schools, cleanliness and health were to be met.²⁷

In the 1830s and 1840s, California governors granted lands for ranchos throughout San Luis Obispo County, as it was determined that vast mission lands were no longer needed for ranching and agricultural purposes. Without their consent, the traditional lands of California's indigenous peoples were divided and distributed to private owners. The land and villages around Diablo Canyon, for instance, became the Rancheros Pecho y Islay and San Miguelito. By this time, the indigenous population had decreased to 170 living at the mission.²⁸ While some stayed at the mission, others established small villages on or near the rancho land grants.²⁹

²⁷ Morrison and Haydon, *History of San Luis Obispo County and Environs*, 35.

²⁸ Nettles, "The Copelands Project," 54.

²⁹ Chester King, "The Names and Locations of Historic Chumash Villages," *The Journal of California Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1975), 172.

The vast Mexican land grants were typically given to wealthy families or military officers as a reward for their service to the Mexican government. However, the conveyance of land from the Mexican government was a complicated process that took years to formalize. The era of Mexican governance proved to be a short transitional phase lasting less than a generation between the earlier Spanish mission period and the American settlement period that followed.

During the era of Mexican rule, there were approximately thirty ranchos within San Luis Obispo County. Several of the owners of surrounding ranchos played significant roles in the development of the City of San Luis Obispo. Miguel Avila was granted Rancho San Miguelito in 1842, and served as one of San Luis Obispo's earliest *alcaldes*, or municipal magistrates, in 1849. The ranch land extended to Avila Beach, which now bears his name. William Goodwin Dana was a former Yankee sea captain who became one of the first settlers of San Luis Obispo outside the mission. He became a Mexican citizen in order to marry into a prominent Mexican family and was subsequently granted the deed to Rancho Nipomo in the 1830s. Many of Dana's thirteen children went on to become prominent members of San Luis Obispo society. Joaquin Estrada received the grant to Rancho Santa Margarita in 1841 and went on to be elected to San Luis Obispo County's first Board of Supervisors in 1852, later serving as County Treasurer.

Mexican-Era Residential Development

Residential development from this period will largely be associated with the Mexican ranchos. Residential properties from this period are extremely rare. Due to the relatively narrow time frame, it is not anticipated that there will be a significant number of extant resources associated with the era of Mexican rule.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	Residential development during this period largely followed patterns established during the Mission era, and therefore it is anticipated that resources from this period will largely consist of single-family properties constructed of adobe and simple, wood-frame structures.
Period of Significance:	1822-1846
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Integrity Considerations

- Properties from this period are rare and represent some of the earliest development in San Luis Obispo; therefore, a greater degree of alteration may be acceptable.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare extant representation of the early settlement of the region For a specific association with the development of a Mexican rancho 	Residential properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with the life of a significant early resident. 	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare remaining example of adobe construction or an early wood frame structure Any remaining examples from this period would likely be individually significant as an example of this theme. 	<p>A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.</p> <p>Any remaining examples of adobe construction from this period with fair integrity would likely be eligible. In general, the adobe walls should remain largely intact and the residence should retain the majority of the character-defining features associated with an adobe structure of its age. Alterations that are consistent with upgrades typically seen in early adobe structures, including later additions constructed with wood framing and replacement windows within original window openings, are acceptable. It is expected that the setting will have been compromised by later development.</p>

Extant Examples: Mexican-Era Residential Development

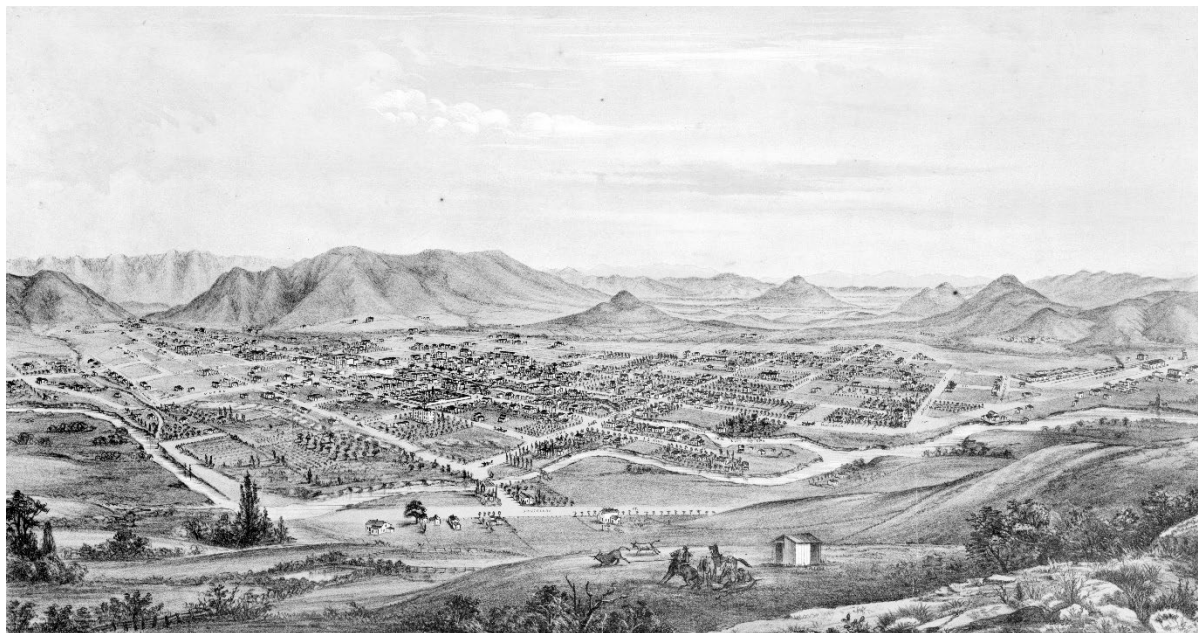


Andrews Adobe, 1451 Andrews Street, built c. 1830. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: San Luis Obispo County Regional Photograph Collection, Cal Poly Special Collections (c. 1890-1906).



1451 Andrews Street. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).

LATE 19TH CENTURY AMERICANIZATION & TOWN SETTLEMENT (1846-1900)



Bird's Eye View of San Luis Obispo, by Eli Sheldon Glover. Source: California State Library (1877).

The Mexican-American War took place between 1846 and 1848. In the years preceding the war, the United States, fueled by new technological breakthroughs and inspired by the concept of "manifest destiny," confidently expanded its territories westward. A border skirmish along the Rio Grande in the wake of the U.S. annexation of Texas started the fighting, which was quickly followed by a series of U.S. victories. Fighting continued until September of 1847; the war ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. As a result of the Treaty, Mexico ceded nearly half of its territory to the United States, including resource-rich California, while promising that existing Mexican land divisions, including the ranchos, would be respected.

In 1850, the California territory became a state. That same year, the County of San Luis Obispo was established as one of the State's original 27 counties, with a population of 300 people.³⁰ The village of San Luis Obispo remained small. According to the account of a man named S. A. Pollard in the *San Luis Obispo Morning Tribune* in 1852, San Luis Obispo's population consisted of "about a dozen white men, half of them Americans, and several hundred Indians" who had been living at the mission.³¹ The mission's indigenous population—most of whom lived in the area where the city's Chinatown later developed—was decimated by diseases brought by the Spanish, European, and American immigrants. Pollard's account described an incident in which a man from Texas died of cholera shortly after arriving in town, but not before passing the disease on to the tiñhini population. Pollard described the devastating effects on the tiñhini: "[The disease] was a veritable 'scourge.' [The tiñhini] went down before it like chaff before the wind. Some 60 or 70 at least died here and the rest scattered

³⁰ Robinson, *The Story of San Luis Obispo County*.

³¹ "In 1852," *San Luis Obispo Morning Tribune*, 31 August 1892.

like a flock of quail. What became of them I don't know. They had been very numerous about here and about the different ranches but after the cholera came, there was hardly any comparatively and never have been since."³² While 168 Native people were counted as living in San Luis Obispo County in the 1860 federal census (approximately eight percent of the county's population), by 1890, the number had dropped to 47, just 0.3 percent of the county's population.³³ Although a few Native Americans were able to rise through the new social and economic system to become independent farmers, according to the 1860 census, most worked as housekeepers, servants, or laborers, mostly in the region's burgeoning agricultural industry. Though their ancestors had lived on the same land for generations, the tithini were treated like immigrants. Their treatment set the precedent for the ill treatment of other immigrants who arrived in the San Luis Obispo area over the following decades.³⁴

In 1868, San Luis Obispo was confirmed as the County seat. The City's population at that time was 600 residents living within one square mile of the town center.³⁵ The City of San Luis Obispo was incorporated in 1876. In 1851, Congress passed the California Land Act, which created a three-member commission charged with reviewing all land claims and settling disputes of land ownership between settlers and Mexican landowners, many of whom had been gifted parcels of land by the Spanish and Mexican governments. Unless landowners could present evidence supporting their claim to the land within two years, the property would automatically pass into the public domain. However, making a claim for land was an expensive and lengthy process which most Mexican landowners could ill afford. Hampered by the vague and informal systems of record-keeping used in the past, many Mexican landowners were bankrupted by the legal process or compelled to cede the land to their attorney as payment for services rendered in fighting the land claim. The implementation of the Land Act served as one of the catalysts for a "fracturing of rural lands into smaller parcels and the increase of rural in-migration into the City of San Luis Obispo."³⁶

Mission San Luis Obispo was claimed by John Wilson by right of purchase, but Bishop Joseph Alemany petitioned the government to return approximately 52.72 acres of former mission land to the Church. In 1855, the United States Land Commission upheld the Church's claim, and the Church re-established ownership of the remaining buildings, cemeteries, and gardens associated with the Mission.³⁷ All other acreage previously farmed by the Mission was divided into ranchos, none of which are located within the present City boundary. In 1874, the portion of Mission lands south of the creek was laid out in town lots and sold.

This change in ownership marked a period of dramatic transformation for the Mission, and renovation efforts began in 1872 to repair and "modernize" the Mission buildings. Due to extensive earthquake damage, however, the Church's portico and belfry could not be saved. The colonnade marking the *convento* wing was also demolished, and both the *convento* wing and the church were clad in wooden clapboard siding. A new "New England" style belfry was also added and parts of the tile roof were covered in shingles. In 1893, the Church was enlarged with an annex situated north of the Nave and constructed of concrete and brick.

³² "In 1852," *San Luis Obispo Morning Tribune*, 31 August 1892.

³³ United States Department of the Interior, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864).

³⁴ Douglas P. Jenzen, *Growing Conflict: Agriculture, Innovation, and Immigration in San Luis Obispo County, 1837-1937* (Master's thesis, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, 2011), 57-58.

³⁵ City of San Luis Obispo, "Completion Report: Historic Resources Survey," July 1983, 18.

³⁶ City of San Luis Obispo, "Draft Historical and Architectural Conservation Element," n.d., 11.

³⁷ Robinson, *The Story of San Luis Obispo County*, 8.

Agricultural development during this period was centered around activity on the ranchos. The prosperous ranchos began to decline in the 1850s as a result of the Land Act; this decline continued into the 1860s when the region suffered a severe drought that lasted from 1862 to 1864. Many of the cattle ranches were forced to sell land and stock as a result of the drought, and the primary agricultural activity began to shift to dairy farming. At the same time, many of the land grant families were forced to sell their land to European-American entrepreneurs who saw opportunity in the region during this period.

As a result, by the late 1860s the population of San Luis Obispo expanded and housing demand outweighed supply.³⁸ The total population of San Luis Obispo in 1870 consisted of 1,579 people, 1,500 of whom were white (95 percent). The remaining five percent included four Black, 15 Chinese, and 60 Native American people.³⁹ To meet the increased demand for housing, additional tracts of land were purchased and improved, and new subdivisions became part of the City. By the early 1880s, there were approximately 3,000 people living within the City limits.⁴⁰ By this time, gas and water works had been installed and a fire company organized, and several bonds had been issued to erect town buildings.

Institutional development during this period included the establishment of the first newspapers in the region, including *The Pioneer* of San Luis Obispo. The editor and owner was Rome G. Vickars, and its first issue was January 4, 1868. *The Pioneer* was a Democratic paper, so the Republicans founded the rival *San Luis Obispo Tribune* in 1869 under the ownership of H. S. Rembaugh & Company. In 1880, publisher H.H. Doyle debuted *The Mirror* from offices on Court Street between Higuera and Monterey Streets, which were later used by *The Breeze Publishing Company*. *The Telegram* was first published in 1905.

As in other regions of the state, the first Chinese people to arrive in San Luis Obispo came in search of gold during the Gold Rush and to escape poverty in their homeland.⁴¹ The construction of the Pacific Coast Railroad's narrow gauge railroad from Port Harford to San Luis Obispo brought more to the region in the 1870s. Most of the Chinese workers who built the railroads in San Luis Obispo were recruited by Ah Louis (given name Wong On), an early San Luis Obispo businessman and civic leader in the Chinese community, who had arrived in California in the 1860s in search of gold and worked for John Harford. For the Pacific Coast Railroad, Louis recruited 160 Chinese Americans who traveled from San Francisco via schooner.⁴² These workers blasted tunnels through the Cuesta Grade mountain pass in the Santa Lucia Mountains and helped build wharves at Port San Luis. Ah Louis used the profits from his recruitment work to develop San Luis Obispo's Chinatown, which was located on the site of former Mission-era Native American dormitories along Palm Street between Chorro and Moro streets, and became the heart of the local Chinese community.⁴³ Many of the railroad workers settled in San Luis Obispo's growing Chinatown neighborhood. Louis' store at 800 Palm Street was not just a commercial business but the Louis family's residence and community gathering space

³⁸ Nettles, "The Copelands Project," 55.

³⁹ United States Department of the Interior, *Ninth Census – Volume I, The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872).

⁴⁰ Angel, *History of San Luis Obispo County*.

⁴¹ Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 60.

⁴² Emily Pan, "A Timeline of the Chinese Population in San Luis Obispo," *Central Coast Asian American History*, January 3, 2021, <https://www.centralcoastasianhistory.org/post/a-timeline-of-the-chinese-population-in-san-luis-obispo>.

⁴³ Colin Rigley, "The Long, Storied History of San Luis Obispo's Historic Chinatown and the Artifacts Left Behind," *San Luis Obispo New Times*, 1 October 2014, <https://www.newtimesslo.com/news/the-long-storied-history-of-san-luis-obispos-historic-chinatown-and-the-artifacts-left-behind-2935874>.

where annual Chinese New Year celebrations took place.⁴⁴ By 1870, San Luis Obispo County contained the largest population of Chinese immigrants in the state.⁴⁵



Ah Louis (center with beard) with his family in Chinatown.
Source: Cal Poly Library Special Collections (c. 1933-1936).

Racism, an economic depression, and high unemployment led to an increase in anti-Chinese sentiment and racial violence across the country in the late 1870s. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which prohibited the entry of Chinese laborers, though it included an exemption for merchants, students, teachers, tourists, and diplomats. The law became permanent in 1902. Additional laws restricted reentry to the United States, preventing those who had already settled in California from visiting their families in China. As a result of these laws, the number of Chinese people living in the country dropped sharply between 1880 and the early 1900s.⁴⁶ In San Luis Obispo, the number of Chinese residents dropped from a peak of 297 in 1890 to 88 in 1900.⁴⁷ The decline in Chinese laborers left a vacuum that other immigrant groups quickly filled in the early 20th century to meet the continuing demand for low-wage workers.

Due to the presence of the Mission San Luis Obispo and the recent adoption of San Luis Obispo as the County Seat, the town had become the focal point for economic and administrative activity in the

⁴⁴ Emily Pan, "Ah Louis Store," Central Coast Asian American History, January 3, 2021, <https://www.centralcoastasianhistory.org/post/ah-louis-store>.

⁴⁵ Emily Pan, "A Timeline of the Chinese Population in San Luis Obispo," Central Coast Asian American History, 17 June 2020, <https://www.centralcoastasianhistory.org/post/a-timeline-of-the-chinese-population-in-san-luis-obispo>.

⁴⁶ Page & Turnbull and Donna Graves, "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1970," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2023, E-257 - E-259.

⁴⁷ United States Department of the Interior Census Office, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I - Population* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1892); United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901).

region. Many of its prominent early residents were active in civic and government affairs. One of San Luis Obispo's most influential early residents was Charles H. Johnson, a successful San Francisco mercantile owner who relocated to San Luis Obispo in 1856. He first worked as Inspector of Customs for the Port San Luis before being elected to the California State Assembly in 1860. When the town government of San Luis Obispo was organized in 1859, he was elected president of the Board of Trustees. Johnson was also a devoted historian of San Luis Obispo history, frequently writing and lecturing on the early days of the county. Many of the significant early histories of San Luis Obispo draw heavily from his work.

Several of San Luis Obispo pioneer William Goodwin Dana's children became active in the civic of the town during this time. Charles William Dana served in multiple elected offices including the California State Assembly, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, and as mayor of San Luis Obispo in 1881. William Charles Dana served as County Treasurer and was active in the San Luis Obispo Republican party. Businessman Samuel A. Pollard, son-in-law of William Dana, also served at times as County Recorder, County Clerk, Justice of the Peace, and County Administrator. He was later elected Chairman of the county's first Board of Supervisors and also served as the county's first postmaster.

Other influential pioneers included Myron Angel, a historian and journalist who wrote several early regional histories; he was also one of the earliest and most vocal supporters of the effort to establish the California Polytechnic School in San Luis Obispo. J. P. Andrews, an entrepreneurial rancher, made his fortune during the drought of 1862-1864 and later went on to open the Andrews Hotel in 1886, and the Andrews Bank in 1894. Pierre Hypolite Dallidet constructed the Dallidet adobe in 1859 and was also the first commercial vintner on the central coast, producing wine for the mission community. Walter Murray was an attorney, a district court judge, and co-founder of the *San Luis Obispo Tribune*; he was also instrumental in forming the Vigilance Committee in 1858 to combat the county's rampant crime. Chauncey Phillips was a tax collector who co-founded San Luis Obispo's first bank (later known as the Bank of San Luis Obispo) in 1871 and served as its manager. Following his retirement from the banking industry, he became a prominent real estate developer and was instrumental in lobbying Southern Pacific Railroad to extend the line into San Luis Obispo. William Shipsey was an attorney and notary who first served as the City Attorney before being elected mayor in 1900. During his term as mayor, Shipsey revamped the bankrupt City's finances and spearheaded efforts to locate the California Polytechnic School in San Luis Obispo.

Early retailers and businessmen included brothers George and Andrew Sauer, who operated the A. Sauer & Company grocery and bakery. The three Sinsheimer brothers, Bernard, Henry, and A. Z., also operated a mercantile in a distinctive building on Monterey Street. William Sandercock operated a drayage company, Sandercock Transfer Company, which delivered freight for the Pacific Coast Railway and made deliveries to local businesses. German immigrant George Kluver founded the Kluver & Sons Pioneer Cigar Factory, marketing the company's own "Pioneer" brand of cigars. Kluver held one of the earliest federal permits to manufacture cigars in California. Ah Louis, as discussed above, is credited with the development of much of San Luis Obispo's Chinatown, which included his store and personal residence at 800 Palm Street.



Kluver Cigar Factory, 726 Higuera, 1897. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



Left image: Sandercock Transfer Building, 856 Higuera Street, 1890. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).

Late 19th Century Residential Development



Snyder House, 1406 Morro Street, 1885. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Residential properties constructed in the last decades of the 19th century represent San Luis Obispo's establishment and early development as a city. When the county was first organized, San Luis Obispo was its only settlement, with a few small adobe buildings clustered around the Mission. By the early 1850s, the main road running through the San Luis Obispo pueblo ran northeast to southwest, crossing San Luis Obispo Creek below the Mission, at the end of what is now Dana Street. The pueblo became part of the earliest neighborhoods during Americanization in the late 19th century. Neighborhoods from this period are located close to the downtown commercial center, and include the Mill Street and Old Town historic districts.

Although adobe construction was still common, by the 1860s, wood frame construction was becoming more prevalent. Most wood frame residences built in San Luis Obispo during this period were examples of vernacular hipped roof cottages or Neo-classical cottages. The Mission Orchard Tract, which was laid out in 1888 on land that originally belonged to the mission, is an example of a late 19th century neighborhood largely developed with more modest housing, including cottages and Folk Victorian examples.

In 1875, San Luis Obispo attorney De Guy Cooper wrote:

We can boast of some very fine private residences. Heretofore, the style of architecture has been of a rather primitive nature; but latterly there has been a marked improvement

in this particular area, and buildings erected within the past year have been of a better nature, and of a more permanent character.⁴⁸

This period also saw the construction of prominent residences erected in architectural styles representative of the period. Captain W. G. Dana erected the first frame building in the county on Monterey Street from material brought from Chile. Captain John Wilson soon after erected a two-story frame building on the lot where the public library now stands.

Residents who were building more opulent homes during this period often chose styles that were popular in other parts of the country, including Queen Anne, Eastlake, and Italianate styles. These large two- and three-story homes often had elaborate scrollwork and other decorative details. They were constructed beginning in the 1870s, and these styles remained popular until the turn of the 20th century. Local architects associated with this period include William Evans, Hilamon Spencer Laird, W.C. Phillips, and Alfred Walker.⁴⁹

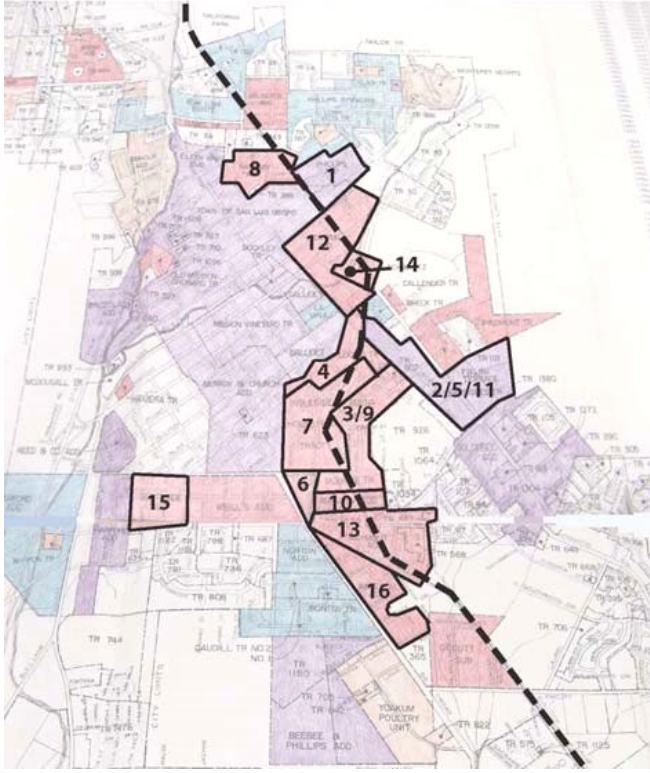
The introduction of the railroad also brought an influx of new residents to San Luis Obispo and led to the development of new communities. Railroad workers became the impetus for new residential development in the city in the late 1880s. As railroad activity expanded toward the end of the 19th century, the needs of the growing employee population sparked a demand for increased worker housing. Although many workers opted to live in downtown San Luis Obispo, development in general shifted towards the eastern and southern boundaries of the city and focused on tracts adjacent to the Southern Pacific right-of-way. The Loomis, McBride, and Homestead tracts, developed in 1887, were especially popular with railroad workers due to their proximity to the Southern Pacific rail yard and service facilities.⁵⁰ These neighborhoods were developed with relatively modest single-family residences.

Much of the railroads' workforce consisted of immigrants. As work on the railroads increased in the late 19th century, several ethnic communities were established in San Luis Obispo. European groups, including Italian, Swiss-Italian, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh settled in the area. The Imperial Addition tract, which was developed in 1891 and was conveniently located near the Southern Pacific roundhouse, eventually became known as "Little Italy" due to the high concentration of Italian railroad workers who resided there. There was also a Portuguese community who were part of the fishing industry at Morro Bay.

⁴⁸ De Guy Cooper, "Resources of San Luis Obispo County," reprinted in *A Vast Pictorial Domain: San Luis Obispo County in the 1870s*, 1993, 17. Quoted in Robert C. Pavlik, "Historical Architectural Survey Report for the Cuesta Grade Project," California Department of Transportation, October 1994.

⁴⁹ The vernacular nature of most residential development during this period indicates that most homes were designed without the use of an architect. The architect identified in this section is based on information available in existing surveys; additional research should be conducted to identify other architects from this period.

⁵⁰ Hemalata Dandekar and Adrianna Jordan, "The Railroads and San Luis Obispo's Urban Form," *Focus*, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Volume XVII, 2010, 48.



1. Phillips Addition (1874)
2. Deleissigues Tract (1876)
3. Buena Vista Tract (1885)
4. Loomis Tract (1887)
5. Deleissigues Subdivision (1887)
6. McBride Tract (1887)
7. Homestead Tract (1887)
8. Hathway Addition (1887)
9. Buena Vista Addition (1887)
10. Fairview Addition (1887)
11. Deleissigues Addition (Block 5) (1887)
12. Central Addition (1888)
13. Maymont Addition (1889)
14. Schwartz Addition (1889)
15. South Side Addition (1891)
16. Imperial Addition (1891)

Map showing land annexations for residential development along the proposed right-of-way for the Southern Pacific Railroad, 1874-1891. Source: Adrianna Jordan, *The Historical Influence of the Railroads on Urban Development and Future Economic Potential in San Luis Obispo*, 2011, 35.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Residential property types from this period include single- and multi-family residences.

Period of Significance: 1846-1900

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an increasingly rare example of late-19th century residential development. • A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. 	Residential properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in San Luis Obispo's early history. 	<p>A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.</p>
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare remaining example of adobe residential construction. As a good or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with the period. As the work of a significant architect or designer. A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. 	<p>In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under the Late 19th Century Residential Development theme.</p> <p>Residential properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and feeling. Any remaining examples of adobe construction from this period with fair integrity would likely be eligible. In general, the adobe walls should remain largely intact and the residence should retain the majority of the character-defining features associated with an adobe structure of its age. Alterations that are consistent with upgrades typically seen in early adobe structures, including later additions constructed with wood framing and replacement windows within original window openings, are acceptable. It is expected that the setting will have been compromised by later development. Wood frame buildings from this period should retain good integrity, although minor alterations are acceptable.</p>

Extant Examples: Late 19th Century Residential Development



Hays-Latimer Adobe, 642 Monterey Street, 1860. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
 Left image source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections (no date).
 Right image source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Dallidet Adobe, 1185 Pacific Street, 1860. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
 Left image:source: San Luis Obispo County Historical Society. Right image source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



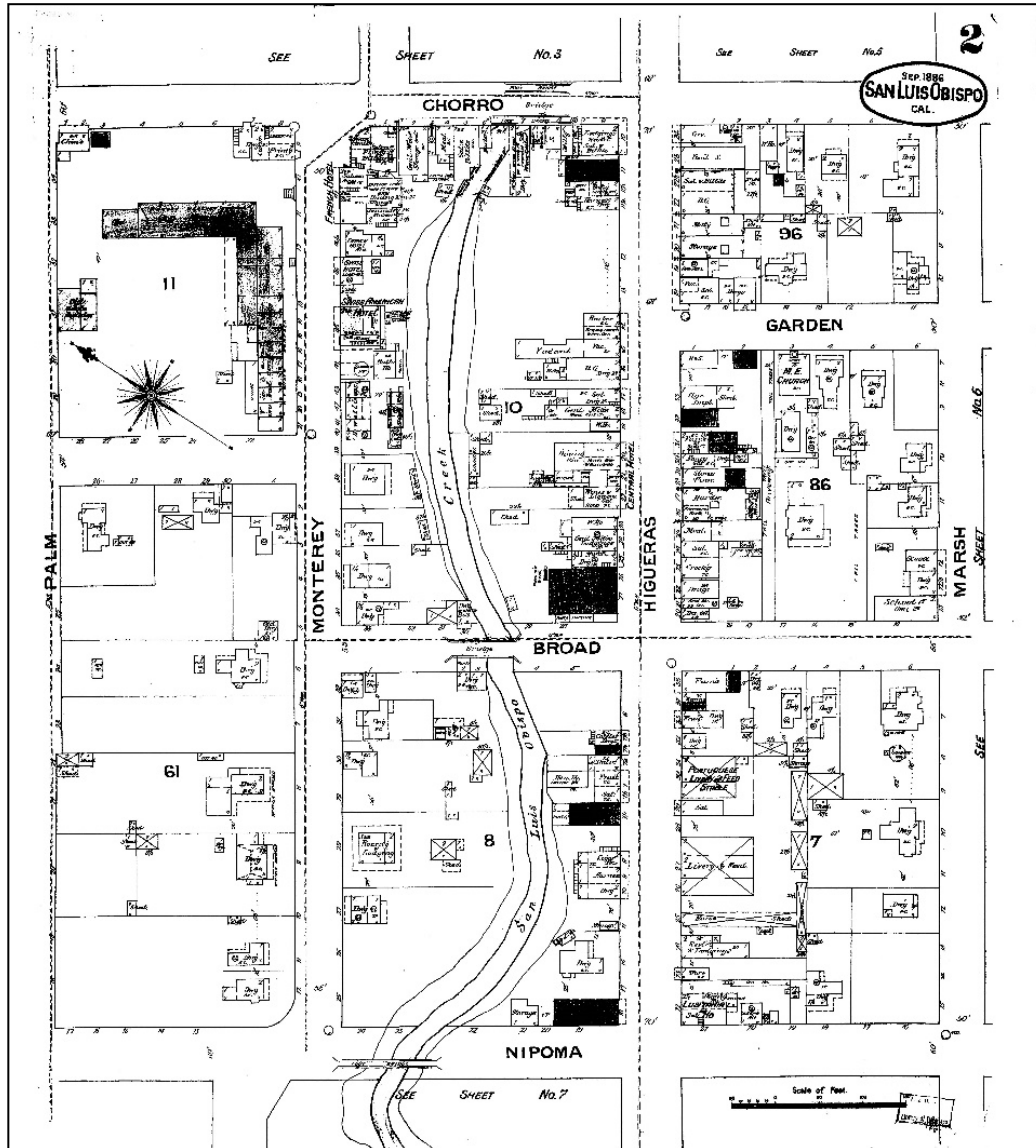
Righetti House, 1314 Palm Street, 1877. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
 Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Anderson House, 532 Dana Street, 1898. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
 Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Late 19th Century Commercial Development

Prior to the late 19th century, Monterey Street developed as a transportation corridor and commercial thoroughfare.⁵¹ While the original mission settlement had not been formally planned and the early growth of San Luis Obispo conformed to the natural topography and Laws of the Indies, in 1850, William Hutton was authorized to survey and layout the town of San Luis Obispo in an American grid pattern.⁵² By the 1880s, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps document significant commercial development along Higuera, Monterey, and Chorro Streets.

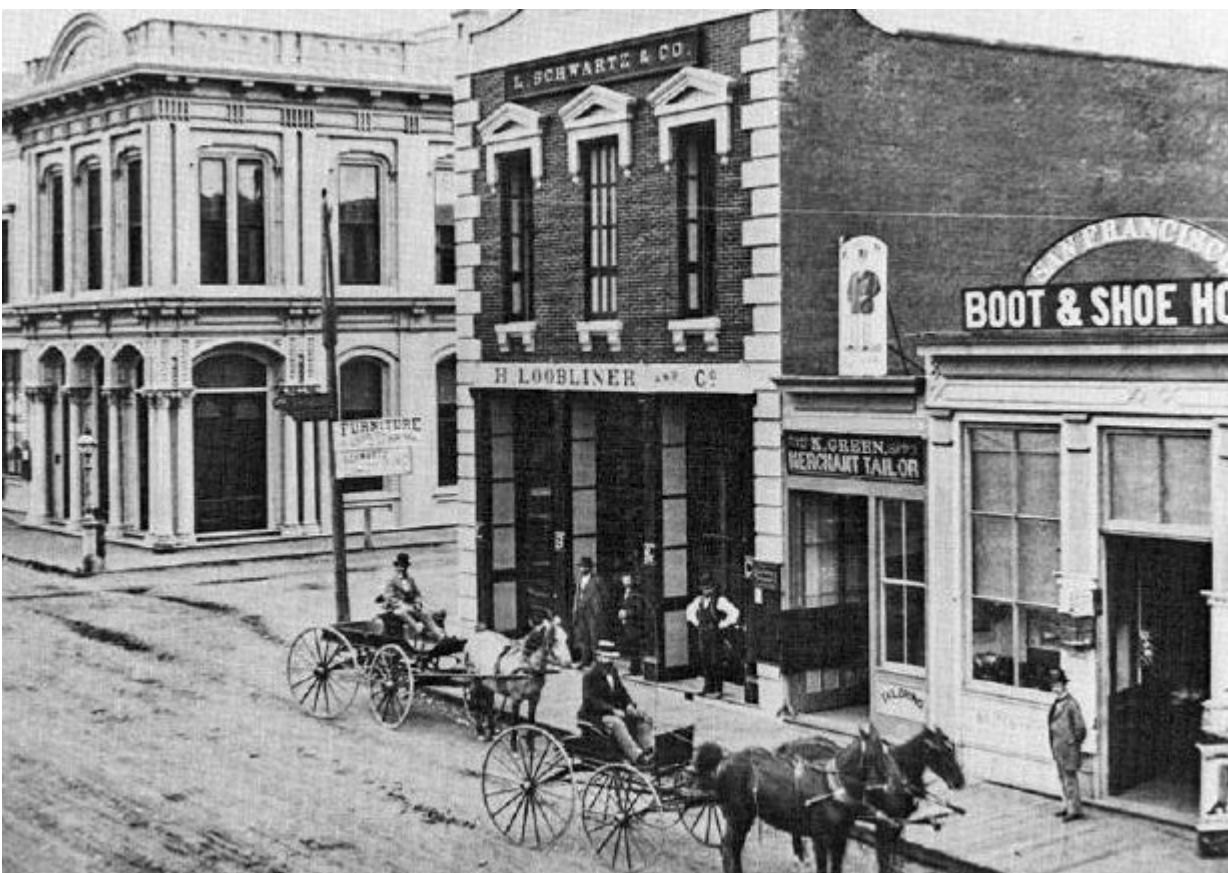


1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Source: San Francisco Public Library.

⁵¹ Angel, *History of San Luis Obispo County*.

⁵² Nettles, "The Copelands Project," 54.

During this period significant financial institutions were established in San Luis Obispo. The first was the Bank of San Luis Obispo in 1871; its permanent home was constructed on the northeast corner of Monterey and Court Streets in 1881. The Commercial Bank was organized in March 1888. Its first location was on Monterey Street; in 1899, it moved to the southeast corner of Chorro and Higuera Streets. Other significant commercial ventures were established during this period by some of San Luis Obispo's most prominent residents. J.P. Andrews constructed a second hotel in downtown San Luis Obispo following the fire at the original Andrews Hotel. He also established a bank on the corner of Monterey and Osos Street which was constructed of brick, with granite and terracotta details. The Sinsheimer Brothers was founded in 1876 by Bernard and Henry Sinsheimer. The Sinsheimer Brothers building was completed in December of 1884. The first floor was a general store dealing in dry goods, groceries, and clothing; offices were housed at the rear of the building and on the second floor.



Bank of San Luis Obispo at Monterey and Court Streets, built 1881.
Source: San Luis Obispo County Historical Society (c. 1890).



Sinsheimer Brothers, 849 Monterey Street, built 1884.
Source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Special Collections (early 20th century).

On April 18, 1886, the Andrews Hotel burned to the ground along with the Bank of San Luis Obispo, the post office, the town's principal livery stable, and a number of small shops and offices. As a result of the loss of the Andrews Hotel, the newly formed California Southern Hotel Company constructed the grand Ramona Hotel in 1888 to provide accommodations for railroad passengers. The financial panic of 1893 and the depression that followed it impacted the railroad and the commercial development in San Luis Obispo. After reorganizing its management, the hotel reopened in 1895 to great fanfare. In 1905, the Ramona Hotel was completely destroyed by fire.



Andrews Bank Building, 998 Monterey, built 1894. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Left image source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Special Collections (no date). Right image source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Hotel Ramona, built 1888. Source: Cal Poly Special Collections (1905).

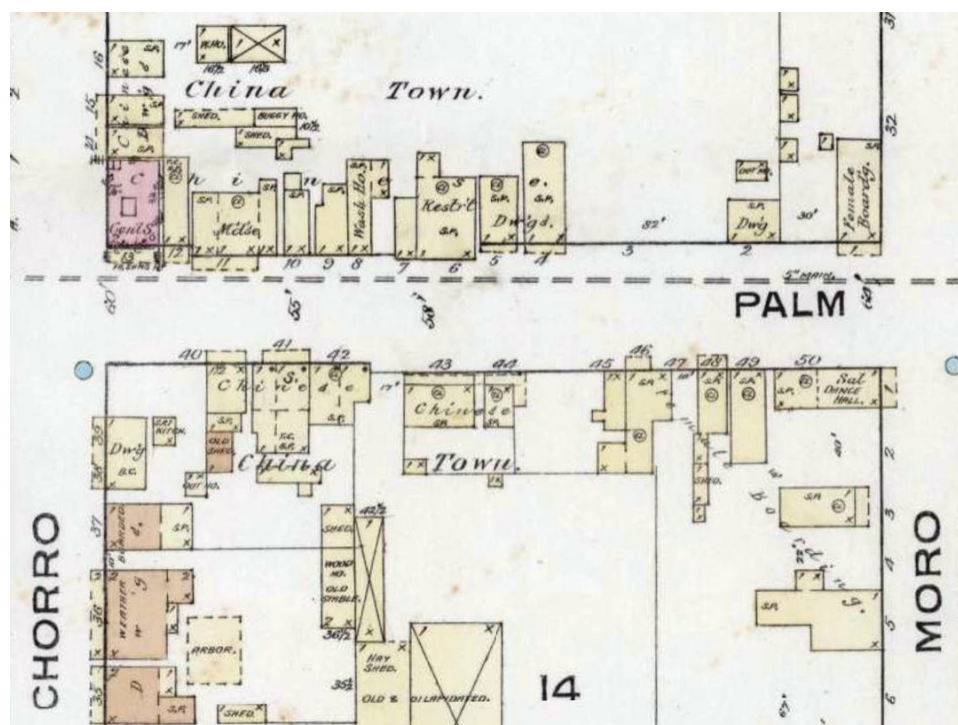
According to historic Sanborn maps, a series of brothels labeled as "female boarding houses," were constructed on Morro Street near Palm Street sometime between 1874 and 1886. The buildings were owned by Mrs. Nancy Emeline Call, a widow who began to invest in real estate following her husband Silas Call's death in 1880. Although it is unclear if Mrs. Call knew that her tenants were engaging in prostitution, proprietors of the houses were frequently arrested for liquor offenses and the properties were regularly cited in the local newspaper. By 1895, the Progressive movement had begun to take hold in San Luis Obispo and there was growing opposition to the operation of the houses only one block north of Monterey Street, the town's main thoroughfare. Mrs. Call herself was arrested twice in 1895 and charged with knowingly renting houses for purposes of prostitution; she was found guilty at the first trial and was acquitted at the second. By 1900, citizens began to petition the San Luis Obispo City Council to close down the brothels, and Sanborn maps confirm that the female boarding houses were demolished by 1903.

The city's Chinatown developed nearby on Palm Street between Chorro and Moro streets. Chinese immigrant and entrepreneur Ah Louis used wealth he had acquired recruiting Chinese workers to build railroads, roads, and wharves in the region to purchase property at the corner of Palm and Chorro streets. The Ah Louis Store, which first opened as a wood framed building in 1874, was the first Chinese commercial establishment in the County. In 1885, Louis rebuilt the store as a two-story fireproof brick building on the corner of Palm and Chorro streets. The Ah Louis Store became the center of Chinese life in San Luis Obispo, serving as the residence of Ah Louis and his family from 1885 to 1936, as well as a pharmacy, general store, post office, bank, employment office, and

gathering place.⁵³ The city's Chinatown also included several boarding houses, restaurants, and residences.

The Ah Louis Store was built with bricks manufactured from Louis' own brickyard, which was located between Bishop's Peak and Cerro San Luis and featured one of the first brick kilns in the area. In addition to the Ah Louis Store, Louis' bricks were used to construct several other buildings in San Luis Obispo, including the Southern Pacific roundhouse, the old courthouse, and the east wing of the San Luis Obispo Mission.⁵⁴

Commercial development during this period was in a transitional state: there were still modest adobes being constructed, along with the grand railroad hotels and more elaborate banks and other businesses that were populating the commercial core. Wood frame and brick construction were becoming more prevalent, and more elaborate details and materials were used. Commercial architectural styles represented in San Luis Obispo during this period include Commercial Vernacular, Italianate, and Romanesque Revival. Local architects associated with this period include William Evans, Hilamon Spencer Laird, W.C. Phillips, and Alfred Walker.



Detail from 1886 Sanborn Map Company fire insurance map, showing the city's Chinatown.
Source: Library of Congress.

⁵³ Emily Pan, "Ah Louis Store," *Central Coast Asian American History*, January 3, 2021, <https://www.centralcoastasianhistory.org/post/ah-louis-store>.

⁵⁴ "A History of Chinese Americans in California," National Park Service, November 17, 2004, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/5views/5views3h2.htm.



Buildings in San Luis Obispo's Chinatown, including the Ah Louis Store, on the west side of Palm Street between Chorro and Moro streets. Source: Cal Poly Library Special Collections (c. 1910).

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Examples of commercial buildings from this period may include markets, hotels, and low-rise storefront buildings. Examples range from modest one-story commercial storefronts, many with pioneer "false fronts," to more elaborate two-story banks and hotels. The commercial center continued to grow along with the City's population. Commercial buildings constructed during this period are typically located within the downtown center and represent some of the earliest extant commercial buildings that represent the establishment of San Luis Obispo as a City.

Period of Significance: 1846-1900

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare, intact example of late 19th century commercial development. For its association with the early growth of the city's original commercial core. 	Commercial properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in San Luis Obispo's history 	<p>A commercial property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.</p>
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare remaining example of adobe commercial construction. As a good or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with the period. As the work of a significant architect or designer. A collection of commercial buildings from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. 	<p>In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under the Late 19th Century Commercial Development theme.</p> <p>Commercial properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and feeling. Any remaining examples of adobe construction from this period with fair integrity would likely be eligible. In general, the adobe walls should remain largely intact and the building should retain the majority of the character-defining features associated with an adobe structure of its age.</p>

Extant Examples: Late 19th Century Commercial Development



Goldtree Block-Hotel Wineman, 849 Higuera Street, built 1883. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Sinsheimer Brothers, 849 Monterey Street, built 1884. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Ah Louis Store, 800 Palm Street, built 1884. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



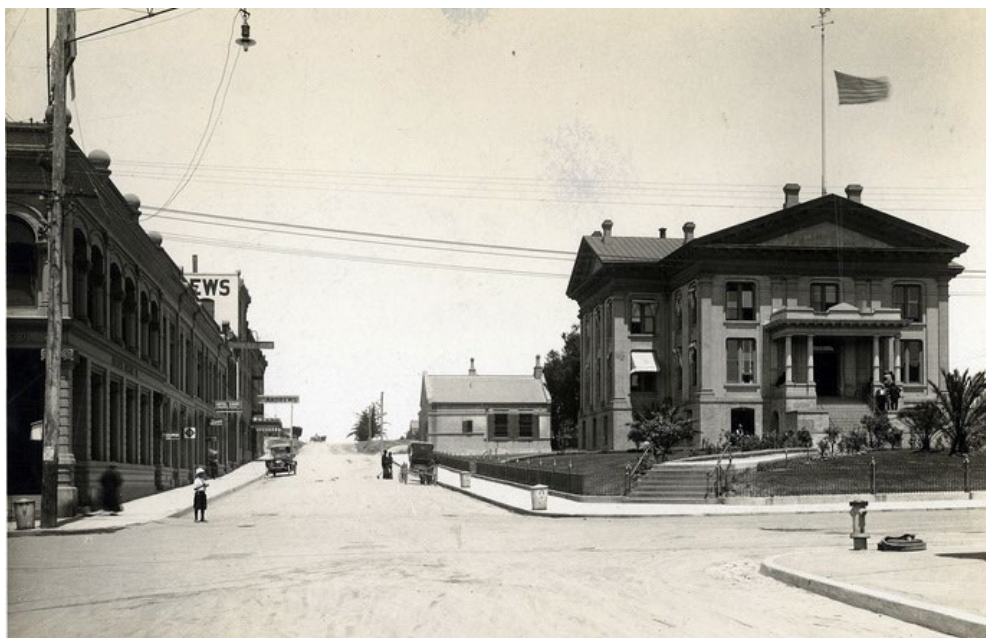
Call Hotel, 1703 Santa Barbara Street, built 1895. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Late 19th Century Civic & Institutional Development

During this period, the City's civic and institutional development began in earnest. Prior to this period, rooms in the Mission served a wide variety of civic functions, including jails, court, and barracks. San Luis Obispo was the location of the first public school in the County, which was established in the early 1850s and originally housed in the Mission. The first official post office in the county was established at San Luis Obispo in 1856, with Alexander Murray as postmaster. In 1871, Walter Murray, editor of the *San Luis Obispo Tribune* opined that:

...beyond a good jail we really have nothing to show for the large revenue annually drawn from the taxpayers. San Luis Obispo should be possessed of a decent courthouse, yet when the county and district court happen in session together, one or the other has to go gerrymandering about town to find a room to sit in. This was the case last month and doubtless will be again. The old adobe building called a courthouse is a marvel of repulsiveness, and that court room with its wretched appointments is a disgrace to the county.⁵⁵

As a result of Murray's editorial, and with the support of other progressive citizens, in 1872 County supervisors allocated funds for a courthouse and jail. J. P. Andrews and Ernest Cerf donated the land for the construction of a courthouse.



San Luis Obispo County Courthouse, built 1873, with Andrews Hotel in background, Osos and Monterey Streets.
Source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections (1915).

Numerous social and fraternal institutions were established during this period. The Oddfellows Hall was constructed on the southwest corner of Monterey and Court Streets between 1870 and 1874. The Masonic lodge was organized in San Luis Obispo in 1861. The first I. O. O. F. lodge in the county

⁵⁵ The jail was located on Palm Street, and is non-extant. *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 1871.

was instituted in 1870 and named Chorro Lodge. A Rebekah Lodge was established in 1877. The first hospital was completed in 1878, and the original City Hall was constructed in 1879.⁵⁶

Other institutions established during this period include the included the Methodist Episcopal Church, constructed in 1873 on Garden Street, which was the first Protestant church in the county.⁵⁷ In 1874, the first Presbyterian services were held in San Luis Obispo; a church was erected in 1884 on the corner of Morro and Marsh Streets.⁵⁸

In the fall of 1876, Mission School, which later became known as the Court School, was constructed on the corner Mill and Santa Rosa Streets, on land donated by J.P. Andrews specifically for the construction of a school. That same year, the Convent School, operated by the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was established on ground that was once part of the Mission lands.



Court School, built 1876, at Mill and Santa Rosa Streets.
Source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections (1917).

⁵⁶ Despite the proliferation of social and fraternal institutions during this period, it appears that the Oddfellows Hall may be the earliest extant property associated with the City's social and fraternal institutional development during this period.

⁵⁷ Morrison and Haydon, *History of San Luis Obispo County and Environs*, 128.

⁵⁸ This building was later moved to the adjoining lot and was used for social meetings, and Sunday school; in 1905 a new church building was constructed.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Examples of civic and institutional buildings from this period include courthouses, post offices, libraries, schools, and a sanitarium. Non-governmental institutional buildings include churches, meeting halls, and other buildings associated with social organizations. Civic and institutional buildings from this period represent some of the earliest institutional development in San Luis Obispo, and represent the establishment of San Luis Obispo as a City and the County seat.

Note on intangible cultural heritage: Civic and institutional properties, including social halls, religious buildings, and other community gathering spaces, may also be associated with intangible cultural heritage, such as annual festivals, parades, and/or other cultural events and practices.

Period of Significance: 1846-1900

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Eligibility Considerations

- For listing in the National Register of Historic Places, religious properties must meet Criteria Consideration A, which states that a religious property is eligible if it derives its primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.⁵⁹

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare example of civic or institutional development from the period. For its association with an important religious, social, cultural, or civic institution. For its association with a particular cultural or ethnic community in San Luis Obispo. A property may be associated with migration or community formation in San Luis Obispo, a community-serving or religious organizations or intangible cultural heritage. 	Civic and institutional properties significant under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

⁵⁹ National Register Bulletin 15.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a good or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with its period. 	Civic and institutional properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Extant Examples: Late 19th Century Civic & Institutional Development



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1344 Nipomo Street, built 1873. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Hageman Sanitarium, 1716 Osos Street, built 1885. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Late 19th Century Agricultural & Industrial Development



Long/Bonetti Ranch, 3897 South Higuera Street, established 1880. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

The Mexican ranchos were used for farming and raising cattle, a tradition that continued as Americans settled in the area through the mid- and late-19th century. San Luis Obispo County was an important agricultural center in California, with farming, including vineyards, and ranching forming a significant part of the local economy.

In 1858, a French Army “soldier of fortune” named Pierre Hippolyte Dallidet settled in San Luis Obispo. He built an adobe home on the grounds of the Mission San Luis Obispo and purchased the failing vines of the Mission San Miguel Arcangel. Dallidet is credited with revitalizing the wine industry in San Luis Obispo County that had begun during the Mission era.

Wool, flour, and dairy products were important income-producers for the region, and beans were also a valuable crop, grown primarily to the south of the city. However, wheat and barley were the most significant agricultural crops for the region in the late 1800s. Several mills were constructed to process the grains from nearby ranchos and increase the area’s cultivation of wheat. The first mill outside the mission was constructed by the Branch Brothers around 1854. The grist mill was located on the Arroyo Grande and processed grain from the southern ranchos. As San Luis Obispo was the only major settlement in the area, many ranchers would bring their grains into the city to be milled, at times traveling from up to forty miles away. In 1868, Pollard, Childs, & Sauer constructed the El Chorro mill, a water-powered mill with a much greater capacity than the Arroyo Grande, which the proprietors hoped would encourage wheat cultivation in the region. At the same time, recent technological innovations allowed new mills to be designed using steam power, which allowed for a more efficient method of milling and did not require the mill to be located near a water source. The technology was widely adopted in San Luis Obispo in response to the increased demand for milling,

and by 1883 there were two water-powered grist mills in the city, four steam-powered grist mills, and two steam-powered sawmills. Sawmills, including the Pacific Steam Sawmill, were introduced in San Luis Obispo as early as 1869 to meet the building and construction needs of the city's growing population. Both the grist and sawmilling industries continued to flourish throughout the late 1800s as rail transport and coastal access expanded the market for regional goods.

A severe drought in 1862 marked a dramatic shift in the agricultural development of San Luis Obispo. The drought lasted for three years, killing most of the rancheros' cattle and destroying the majority of the crops grown in the region. Many rancheros could not afford to replenish their livestock and replant their crops and many sold their ranch land at a loss to dairy farmers seeking grazing land for their herds. The first dairy farmers to capitalize on the deal were the Steele Brothers, who moved their herd from Marin County to the Corral de Piedra rancho in 1864. A dairy boom was ignited and several prominent creameries and cheese factories were established in San Luis Obispo. Many of these operations continued to flourish throughout the early 1900s.

From the 1870s to the 1890s, much of the agricultural workforce of the San Luis Obispo region consisted of Chinese laborers, many of whom had originally come to California to help build the state's system of railroads. Between 1870 and 1890, the number of Chinese residents in San Luis Obispo County jumped from 59 in 1870 to 153 in 1880 and then more than doubled to 386 in 1890, 297 of whom lived in the city of San Luis Obispo.⁶⁰ After the completion of the railroads, these workers dispersed around the state in search of work. Many Chinese immigrants had been farmers in their homeland and migrated to rural areas, including San Luis Obispo, where they became agricultural laborers, helping to drain swamps, dig irrigation ditches, plow, plant, and harvest much of the grain and, later, vegetables, produced in the state.⁶¹ In the 1880s, Ah Louis, one of the founding figures of San Luis Obispo's Chinatown who had initially gained wealth helping to build the Pacific Coast Railway and wharves at Avila Beach and Port San Luis, leased more than 1,000 acres of land in the Edna Valley and began cultivating vegetable and flower seeds for sale.⁶² Following the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and decline in Chinese immigration, Chinese agricultural workers were replaced by Japanese workers, who became the largest proportion of California's agricultural labor force by the start of the 20th century.⁶³

During the same period, the number of Black residents in San Luis Obispo County also exploded from 23 in 1880 to 457 in 1890 before dropping precipitously to 77 in 1900. Census records show that many of these individuals came to the area from states in the South and worked as day laborers⁶⁴. The large increase of Black residents in the San Luis Obispo County area between 1880 and 1890 coincided with the extension of the Southern Pacific Railroad to San Luis Obispo and the passage of the first Jim Crow laws in the South, which may have driven many Black families to the region in search of work, both in the railroad and agricultural industries. The completion of the Southern

⁶⁰ United States Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census*; United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900*.

⁶¹ Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 60-63.

⁶² "Ah Louis in San Luis Obispo," Central Coast Asian American History, March 14, 2022, <https://www.centralcoastasianhistory.org/post/ah-louis-in-san-luis-obispo>.

⁶³ Page & Turnbull and Donna Graves, "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1970," E-203; Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 71.

⁶⁴ United States Department of the Interior Census Office, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1882); United States Department of the Interior Census Office, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I – Population* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1892).

Pacific Railroad to San Luis Obispo in 1894 may have led Black residents to leave the area in search of other work opportunities by 1900.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Agricultural and industrial property types include remnant rancho properties, farmhouses, grain and other warehouses, mills, barns, and other related agricultural or industrial outbuildings.

Period of Significance: 1846-1900

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare example of early agricultural or industrial development in San Luis Obispo. 	<p>Agricultural properties significant under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.</p> <p>Remnant outbuildings may remain eligible in the absence of the original farmhouse or other related buildings.</p>
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare example of adobe construction, or a good example of a vernacular, wood frame farmhouse, agricultural building (such as a barn, tank house, or equipment shed), or industrial structure. 	<p>Due to the rarity of this type, a greater degree of alteration may be acceptable.</p> <p>Agricultural properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. In general, the exterior should be relatively unaltered, and the building should retain the majority of the character-defining features associated with its style and/or construction method. It is expected that the setting may have been compromised by later development.</p>

Extant Examples: Late 19th Century Agricultural & Industrial Development



Long-Bonetti Ranch, 3897 South Higuera Street, built 1880. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Oasis Associates (2012).



Barn at Froom Ranch. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Barn on Granada Drive. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Late-19th Century Transportation and Infrastructure Development



Southern Pacific Railroad, Horseshoe Curve near San Luis Obispo.
Source: San Luis Obispo Profile, epondunk.com (no date).

There were significant advances in transportation during this period, enabling the local economy and allowing for increased access to the region. Transportation-related development was centered on the completion of the rail lines from northern and southern California through San Luis Obispo, improvements to the harbor, the construction of roadways, including a road through the Cuesta Pass in 1876, and the implementation of the streetcar system downtown. Significant civic improvements included the construction of the first bridge across San Luis Obispo Creek in 1868, followed by additional bridges across the creek at Mill, Court, Morro, Chorro, Nipomo, and Broad Streets by 1871. The City also installed sidewalks and planted street trees. The horse-drawn street car system was established in 1887, which provided important access between the Southern Pacific Depot, downtown hotels such as the Ramona Hotel, and the Pacific Coast Railway.

Although San Luis Obispo had gained prominence as a regional hub for civic and economic activity by the mid-1800s, the area's overall economic growth was restricted due to its geographical isolation. Due to the surrounding mountain ranges, transportation for goods and passengers was limited to horseback, stagecoach, and wagon. In the 1850s and 1860s, wharfs were established at Avila Beach, facilitating the transport of goods via steamship. However, the region still lacked an efficient method of ground transportation to connect the economic activities of the coast with those further inland.

In 1873, businessman John Harford organized the San Luis Obispo Railroad Company, which established a new wharf, Point Harford, at Point San Luis and constructed a narrow-gauge, horse-powered railroad connecting the new wharf to the mouth of San Luis Obispo Creek. The local railroad, which was constructed on a 30-inch gauge, was one of the first narrow-gauge railroads in the state. The development of the railroad and the growth of the harbor are intimately connected, as the new rail line allowed farmers access to steamships for the export of goods. In 1874, Harford's facilities,

including the railroad, were purchased by the Pacific Coast S. S. Company. The Pacific Coast Company re-graded the land and relocated the railroad closer to the water, constructing a new, wider-gauge track that could accommodate a steam engine. The company also extended the new track all the way from Point Harford to San Luis Obispo, where a new rail depot was constructed at the southwest corner of Higuera and South Streets. Completed in 1876, the extension of the local line ended the land locking of San Luis Obispo's economy, opening the area to trans-regional trade with other ports along the California coast and increasing the marketability of the region's agricultural products. In 1881, the rail line was extended to Arroyo Grande; in April, 1882, it reached Santa Maria, which was then called Central City; in October, 1882, it reached Los Alamos; and in 1883 it was built to Los Olivos.

The Pacific Coast Depot was established at the lower end of Higuera Street in the 1870s. As a result, the area around the depot was developed with other railroad-related facilities, including storage facilities, freight sheds, and lumber yards. Despite having a major impact through the Central Coast Region, the Pacific Coast Railway was a relatively small operation. It could not match the resources of larger competitors and the company did not offer a direct link to major trade centers, such as San Francisco or Los Angeles. The railroad's reliance on an increasingly obsolete, non-standard gauge rail also hastened the demise of the company, as it could not connect with other railroads using the standard gauge, such as the Southern Pacific Railroad. Following the completion of the trans-continental railroad in 1869 and the merger with Central Pacific Railroad in 1870, the Southern Pacific Railroad dominated the California landscape, with a network of railways stretching across the state.

By 1886, the Southern Pacific Railroad terminated at Santa Margarita, just north of San Luis Obispo. For many years, expansion into San Luis Obispo was considered unlikely due to the costly and dangerous prospect of constructing tracks across the Cuesta Grade, which called for the construction of seven tunnels, a horseshoe curve, and a long steel trestle across Stenner Creek Canyon. However, prominent San Luis Obispo businessmen formed a Board of Trade and lobbied strongly for a track extension into the city.

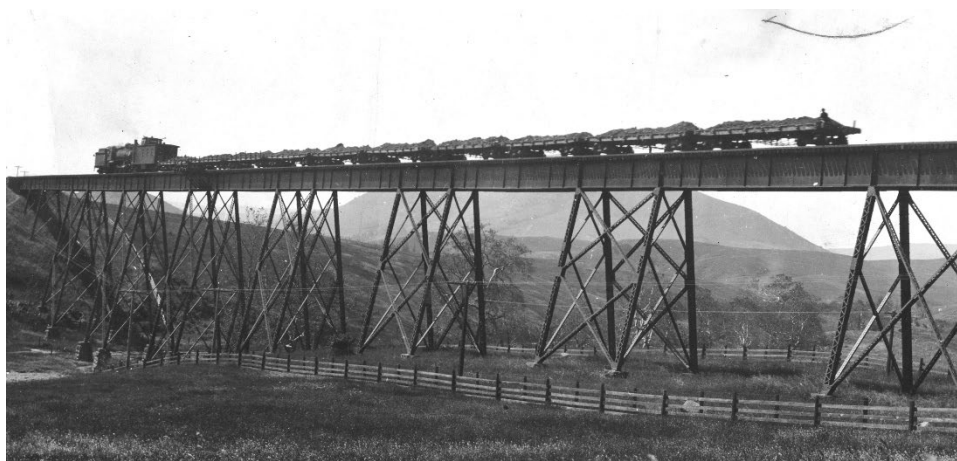
Although an agreement between the Southern Pacific Company and San Luis Obispo was not officially reached until 1890, the prospect of the railroad's expansion was enough to spur speculative land development across the city throughout the late 1880s. In 1888, Southern Pacific began to purchase land for a depot and machine shops as well as acquire property for a railway right-of-way through the city. The Andrews Hotel, the Ramona Hotel, and the Central Addition subdivision in which they were located were speculative ventures based purely on the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad, which created an "instant tourism industry" in San Luis Obispo. The upscale Ramona Hotel in particular relied heavily upon the presence of the railroad, constructing its own Southern Pacific Train Depot. The hotels' successes were short-lived: the Andrews Hotel was completely destroyed by fire only seven months after opening in 1886; the Ramona Hotel, which opened in 1888, also burned to the ground in 1905.⁶⁵ Its depot was relocated to the grounds of the Dallidet Adobe and Gardens at 1185 Pacific Street in the 1960s.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ The Ramona Hotel and its grounds originally occupied an entire City block bounded by what is now Higuera, Marsh, Johnson, and Pepper Streets. When the Ramona Hotel was destroyed, the property was subdivided into residential lots.

⁶⁶ "Ramona Depot Move Approved by City," *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, 12 May 1964: 1.



The Ramona Depot on the grounds of the Dallidet Adobe and Gardens. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



Southern Pacific Trestle Bridge across Stenner Creek. Source: Cal Poly Special Collections (c. 1900-1940).

Construction on the extension of the Southern Pacific Railroad began in 1892 and was completed in 1894. The depot, roundhouse, and other facilities were completed by 1895. The first steam engine arrived in San Luis Obispo on May 5, 1894, finally linking the city to San Francisco. A passenger depot was established across town from the Pacific Coast Depot near the Southern Pacific Railroad main line. At the same time, the road from the south was underway, and on March 31, 1901 trains could

finally run all the way from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The arrival of the railroad transformed the landscape of the city, shifting the city's economic center away from the historic core.⁶⁷

In order to continue railroad expansion during the late 19th-century, many prominent land-holders along the railroad route granted rights-of-way; this included the Dana family in San Luis Obispo. Establishing a right-of-way for the railroad significantly impacted the landscape of San Luis Obispo. While many new subdivisions were developed, existing subdivisions were drastically altered and streets and other access routes were destroyed to create at-grade crossings. The existing configuration of the city was essentially cut in half, and several subdivisions had to be re-platted, including the Central Addition and the Loomis tract.

Although there were numerous buildings and structures associated with the development of the railroad in San Luis Obispo, remnant examples are increasingly rare. The Pacific Coast Railway grain warehouse is the lone surviving building from the company's headquarters. The building was the trans-shipment port from farm wagon to local narrow gauge trains which led to steamer wharves at Port Harford (now known as Port San Luis/Avila Beach). The grain storage warehouse was in continuous use by the Pacific Coast Railway from its construction in the late 19th century through the closure of the railroad in 1942. It is the only remaining grain storage warehouse in San Luis Obispo.

In 1872, Dr. Hays, C. W. Dana, and M. Benrino obtained a franchise for water works; the next year A. M. Loomis and Alfred Walker bought the franchise and started to work on improvements. A small reservoir was built on Murray Hill, about a mile and a half north of the town, and water was brought in a flume from the upper San Luis Creek. In 1874, the San Luis Obispo Water Company was formed. Water was transported by a 2-mile open flume that brought water to the City's reservoir; from there it was distributed to properties in the town center via pipes that ran beneath the primary streets in the City. In 1876, a large reservoir was built in the Stenner Creek canyon.⁶⁸ In the late 19th century, the City embarked on significant upgrades to the sewer system, which previously had largely been accommodated by San Luis Obispo Creek. In 1892, a sewer system was installed, which was upgraded in 1899. At the same time, the City embarked on improvements to San Luis Obispo Creek. Concrete retaining walls were added to help control the creek, allowing for the expansion of commercial development along Higuera Street.

⁶⁷ Dandekar and Jordan, "The Railroads and San Luis Obispo's Urban Form," 51.

⁶⁸ Subsequent reservoirs were built to increase capacity in the mid-1880s and again in 1910.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Transportation and infrastructure-related property types from this period include rail stations and their ancillary buildings, warehouses, rail yards, rail lines, and rail spurs. Some early industrial buildings that were constructed in immediate proximity to rail lines and designed to take advantage of rail technology may also be significant under this theme. This theme also includes buildings associated with public infrastructure agencies such as those providing power and water.

Period of Significance: 1846-1900

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rare, intact example of railroad or other transportation-related development from the late 19th century. • As an industrial property directly associated with the development of the railroad in the area (e.g. railroad warehouse). • As an infrastructure-related property directly associated with the operation of early water and utility systems in the city. 	Transportation- and infrastructure-related development significant under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rare or unique property type associated with the railroad. • As the work of a significant architect or designer 	Transportation-related development significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Extant Examples: Late-19th Century Transportation and Infrastructure Development



Pacific Coast Railway Company Grain Warehouse, 65 Higuera Street, built late 19th century. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Left image source: City of San Luis Obispo (no date). Right image source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Southern Pacific Railroad Warehouse, 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue, built c. 1895. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

EARLY 20TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT (1900-1929)



Panorama of San Luis Obispo from Terrace Hill. Source Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections (1907).

In the early 20th century, the development of San Luis Obispo was characterized by three major factors: the introduction of the Southern Pacific Railroad line, the founding of California Polytechnic School, and the widespread use of the automobile. The former factors spurred a considerable increase in population, but it was the latter factor – the automobile – that allowed urban planners to respond to the increased population growth by expanding development outside of the central city. By 1920, the City population had grown to 5,805 residents.⁶⁹

The establishment of California Polytechnic Institute (now Cal Poly) at the beginning of the 20th century and its continued growth is an important component of this theme. The Polytechnic School was the realization of Myron Angel's vision that was supported by Assemblyman Warren Johns and Senator S.C. Smith. In 1896, Angel published a letter in the *Breeze* urging the establishment of a normal school in San Luis Obispo. After several years of political maneuvering, the bill to establish a normal school was finally passed in 1901. Land for the school was donated by Mr. Lowe. Early in 1903 the corner stone of the main building was laid, and in October of that year the first students were welcomed.

In the early 20th century, San Luis Obispo's population of ethnic communities continued to grow. The decline in Chinese laborers left a vacuum that other immigrant groups quickly filled in the early 20th century to meet the continuing demand for low-wage workers. Starting in the late 19th century,

⁶⁹ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume III – Population: 1920* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1922).

Japanese workers began arriving in the United States in search of work. The end of Japanese isolationist policies and opening of Japan to trade with the United States in 1853, followed by the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and the annexation of Hawaii in 1898, which had a large Japanese population, contributed to the influx of Japanese people into California in the late 19th century. Japanese immigrants arrived in California in two phases, first following the Chinese Exclusion Act, and second following the signing of the 1907-1908 Gentlemen's Agreement between the U.S. and Japan, which restricted the entry of male workers but allowed wives and certain classes of professional workers to enter.⁷⁰



Tameji Eto. Source: History Center of San Luis Obispo County (no date).

Steamship lines and labor contracting companies recruited Japanese workers initially from Hawaii and later directly from Japan. Japanese immigrants arrived in port cities, such as San Francisco, and migrated to rural areas along the coast, including the Central Valley, in search of agricultural work.

By 1890, 2,038 Japanese people lived in the United States, more than half of whom lived in California. No Japanese people were recorded as residents of San Luis Obispo County until 1900, at which time 16 Japanese residents lived in the county. In 1910, that number skyrocketed to 154, and by 1920, it grew to 434.⁷¹ Japanese residents of San Luis Obispo worked primarily along the Southern Pacific Railroad route as farm laborers, until they were eventually able to purchase their own land.

Other important advancements during this period include the establishment of a Carnegie Library in 1904 (completed in 1905). Designed by architect William Weeks, the library was located adjacent to the Mission. William Weeks was the most prolific

designer of Carnegie libraries in California, responsible for twenty-two libraries throughout the state, eighteen of which are extant.⁷² Weeks designed numerous buildings in San Luis Obispo, including the original campus of the Polytechnic School.

⁷⁰ Page & Turnbull and Donna Graves, "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1970," E-36.

⁷¹ United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913); Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*.

⁷² Carnegie Libraries of California Project, "By Architect - Who Built the Libraries," accessed December 2, 2024, <http://www.carnegie-libraries.org/california/architect/index.html>.



Carnegie Library, 696 Monterey Street. Source: carnegielibraries.org (1905).

The Southern Pacific Railroad continued to thrive in San Luis Obispo through the early years of the 20th century, diversifying the economy and expanding the city's potential trade market. By the 1920s, however, railroad activity began to decline due to the expansion of automobile use and improvement of road networks.

In 1915, the first state highway came through San Luis Obispo County. During this period, automobile tourism became popular in California. During the 1920s newly paved roads, affordable cars, aggressive promotional campaigns directed at tourists, and new roadside conveniences (including gas stations and auto camps) were a boon to seaside communities and kept local boosters optimistic. In the early 1920s, Southern California architect Arthur Heineman opened the world's first "motel," the Milestone Mo-tel, in San Luis Obispo, pioneering a new type of accommodation that became popular with travelers worldwide. The leading San Luis Obispo newspaper carried the hopeful masthead, "California's Next Big City."⁷³

With the city's government firmly established, influence in San Luis Obispo in the early 20th century shifted to those individuals who operated businesses in the city or were involved in community affairs. Individuals active in civic affairs during this period included Benjamin Brooks, who was an esteemed journalist and owner/editor the *San Luis Obispo Tribune* from 1886 to 1922. Dr. Richard Bradbury was a prominent local physician who established the Bradbury Sanitarium next door to his personal residence. Another successful doctor, William Stover, constructed the San Luis Obispo Sanitarium around 1912 and later served as mayor. Grace Barneberg, early president of the ladies' Monday Club, was instrumental in expanding the organization and securing the services of architect

⁷³ "California's Next Big City' is Slogan," *San Luis Obispo Daily Telegraph*, 14 April 1926.

Julia Morgan to design the organization's new clubhouse. In 1925, Father Daniel Keenan established "La Fiesta de las Flores," a community celebration to raise funds for the restoration of the mission that continued annually for the next seventy years.



Muzio's Grocery, 868 Monterey Street, built 1912. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Muzio's moved from its original location to a new storefront in the Wineman Hotel on Higuera Street in 2010; it has since closed.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

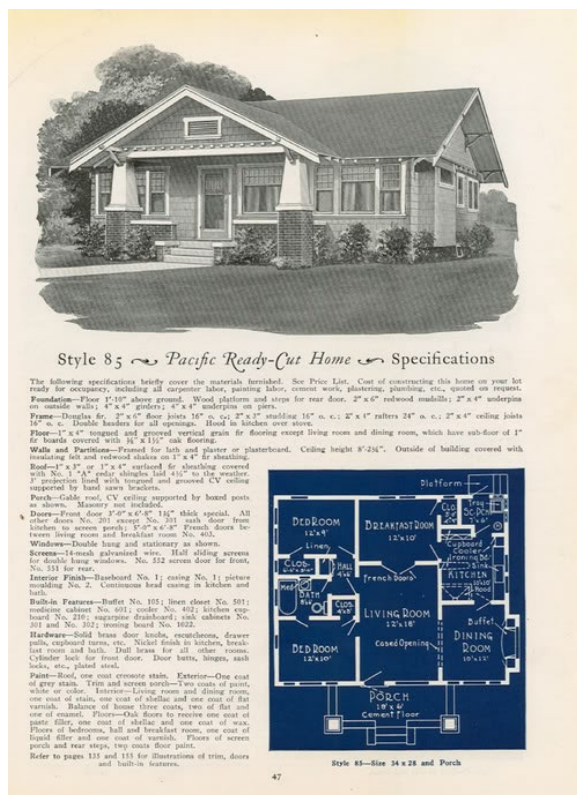
Early 20th Century Residential Development

San Luis Obispo's population continued to grow in the early 20th century. Residences from this period range from small, vernacular cottages to more elaborate two-story residences. There are few examples of multi-family residential development in the City built during this period. Toward the end of this period there was an increasing accommodation for the automobile. A prominent example of this is the J.J. Dunne House on Benton Way, which was constructed in 1927 when the area was considered suburban. Dunne was a local car dealer, and he had his house and garage constructed to accommodate several automobiles.

During this period, residential architecture began to shift from the Victorian-era styles imported from the east and new regional styles began to emerge. In California, the most notable new residential architecture was inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement and the development of the California bungalow, which was a simple, garden-oriented house uniquely suited for the climate and lifestyle of the region.

Designs for the bungalow were promulgated throughout the country through popular magazines like *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. Pattern books with a wide variety of bungalow designs and complete mail order house kits soon followed, allowing the style to spread quickly across the country. The three largest manufacturers of kit homes in the United States were Aladdin, Sears, and Pacific Ready Cut Homes, which was based in Los Angeles. Kit homes were sold from 1908 until 1940. Shipped by boxcar, each kit contained framing members and all architectural details.

Architectural styles during this period are more eclectic than those represented in the late 19th century. Residential architecture from this period in San Luis Obispo includes American Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Storybook. The dominant type of single-family residence in the early 20th century is the one-story bungalow. Some Craftsman houses in San Luis Obispo feature clinker brick. Named for the distinctive sound they make when banged together, clinker bricks are the result of wet bricks placed too close to the fire. Overbaking produced rich, warm colors as well that ran the gamut from reds, yellows, and oranges to deep, flash-burned browns, purples, and blacks. In the early 20th century clinkers became popular when avant-garde architects started building houses with them precisely because they were so unusual. During the Arts & Crafts era, clinker bricks were used to create visual interest in focal



Pacific Ready Cut Homes, Style #85. Source: Internet Archive.

points such as chimneys, porch supports, and garden walls. There are examples of clinker brick in Monterey Heights and near Broad and Chorro. A prominent example is the 1928 Faulstich House at 2243 Santa Ynez Avenue, constructed for Paul and Mary Faulstich of the Faulstich Brothers brickyard.

There are intact residential neighborhoods that developed during this period. While some are located in proximity to downtown, during this period neighborhoods also developed in what was considered the outskirts at that time, in areas newly accessible by the automobile. One example is found along Murray Street, a wide street with a center median with mature landscaping. Houses in the neighborhood were constructed in the 1920s and are primarily one-story; architectural styles include several Period Revival styles and some Minimal Traditional examples.

Architects whose work is represented in San Luis Obispo during this period include: Abrahms & Simms, Santa Barbara; E.D. Bray; John Chapek; Orville Clark; W.H. Crias, W.E. Erkes, San Francisco; G.A. Meuss-Dorffer, San Francisco; G.M. Eastman; Thorton Fitzhugh; John Davis Hatch; Alfred and Arthur Heineman, Los Angeles; J.P. Krempel; Fred Logan; Charles McKenzie, San Francisco; Parkinson & Bergstrom; Righetti & Headman, San Francisco; William H. Weeks; James Wetmore; and K.C. Wilson.



Context View, Murray Street. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

From approximately 1910 to 1950, the area roughly bordered by South Street, Eto Street (now Brook Street), Higuera Street, and Madonna Road developed into a *nihonmachi*, or Japantown, where Japanese residents found community, safety, welcome, and access to commercial businesses and services that catered to their needs. A small commercial strip of Japanese businesses developed on Higuera Street between South Street and Madonna Road in the late 1920s. By the early 1930s, the area was commonly referred to in local newspapers as the “Nippon Tract,” reflecting its association with the Japanese community. Homes specifically for Japanese residents were introduced to the Nippon Tract by 1931, when Tameji Eto, a prosperous farmer with a successful farm in Los Osos, built or relocated several small wood-framed cottages to the one-block stretch of Eto Street south of

South Street and to the west of the commercial strip on Higuera Street.⁷⁴ Other former sites associated with the Japanese population in San Luis Obispo include the Buddhist Temple and Japanese School, which occupied ten acres near the Madonna Inn from the 1920s to 1960.



Cottages on the east side of Brook Street, reportedly built or relocated by Tameji Eto. Source: Page & Turnbull (2024).

During this period there was also a significant Italian and Swiss/Italian population in the City, with activities centered on the area referred to as “Little Italy.” This area was generally located along Broad Street, in what was originally part of the Imperial Addition subdivided in the late 1880s. Most of the men worked for either the Southern Pacific Railroad or the Union Oil Company. Among the early residents of this section of the city were Andrew Yager, a carpenter living at 2231 Broad Street; James Genovini, a Southern Pacific boilermaker living at 2231 Broad Street; James Margaroli, a Union Oil truck driver living at 2315 Broad Street; Frederick C. Macha, a Pacific Coast foreman living at 2344 Lawton Avenue; J. D. Duchesi, a Southern Pacific engineer living at 2502 Victoria Avenue; and John Luini, a Southern Pacific foreman living at 2546 Victoria Avenue.

⁷⁴ History Center San Luis Obispo County, “Eto Park and Brook Street in San Luis Obispo,” accessed June 19, 2024, <https://www.historycenterslo.org/uploads/1/2/5/3/125313011/walkingtourhandout-v8.pdf>.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	Residential property types include single-family residences; multi-family residences (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, apartment buildings, bungalow courts, etc.); and residential neighborhoods
Period of Significance:	1900-1929
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an excellent example of a significant or influential turn-of-the-20th-century residential development or pattern of development in San Luis Obispo. As a rare example of multi-family residential development or an excellent example of a particular multi-family residential property type from the period. A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. 	Residential properties from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in local history. 	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association , at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an excellent or rare local example of particular architectural style. Houses with a proven association to a specific kit home model may also be eligible under this criterion. • As a rare example of multi-family residential development or an excellent example of a particular multi-family residential property type from the period. • As the work of a significant architect or designer • A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. 	Residential properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Extant Examples: Early 20th Century Residential Development



Muscio House, 1330 Mill Street, built 1909. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Sandercock House, 535 Islay Street, built 1910. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Payne House, 1144 Palm Street, built 1911. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Crossett House, 896 Buchon, built 1914. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Faulstich House, 2243 Santa Ynez, built 1928. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

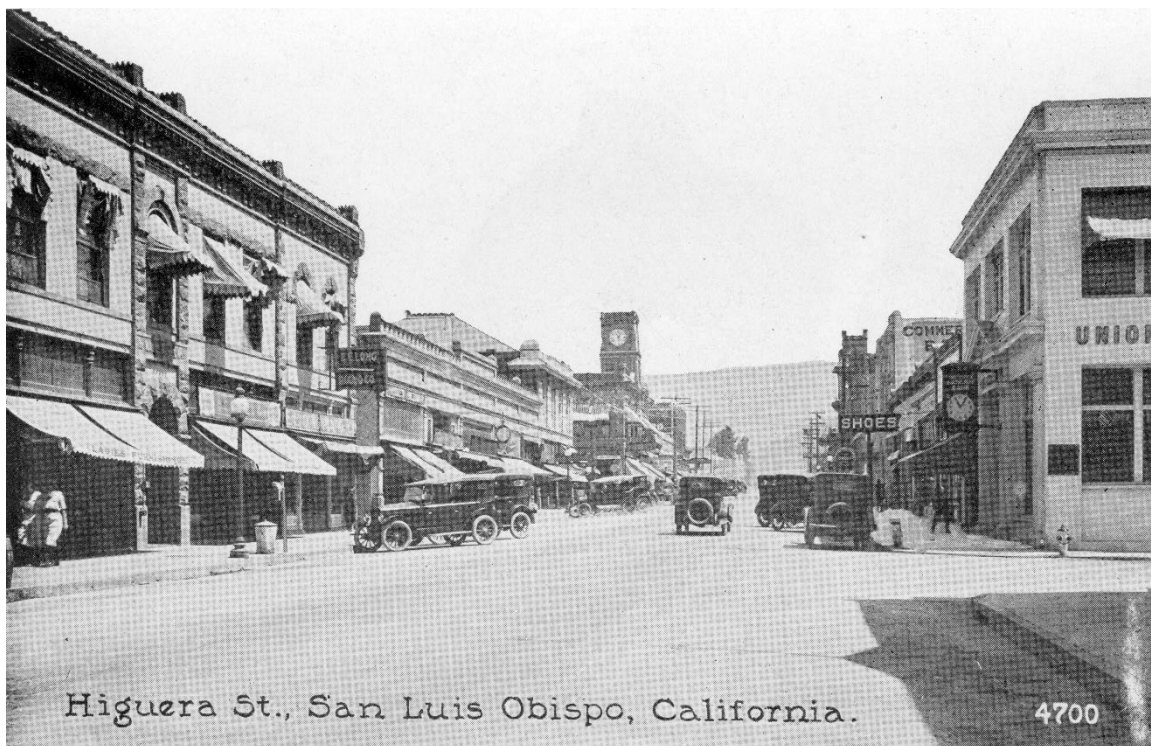


Righetti Apartments, 1305 Palm Street, built 1929. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Dunne House, 59 Benton Way, built 1927. Designated as a City of San Luis Obispo Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Early 20th Century Commercial Development



Higuera Street. Source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections (c. 1910-1919).

During the early 20th century, the commercial center continued to flourish, and there were numerous commercial enterprises established during this period. By this period, the downtown commercial core had grown significantly, and there were numerous commercial establishments organized on several business blocks; the downtown commercial core is recognized by the City as a historic district. Commercial development continued particularly in the years between World War I and the arrival of the Great Depression.

One of the city's earliest 20th-century businessmen was W. H. Schulze, who opened the W. H. Schulze Haberdashery in 1904 as one of the first tenants of the Johnson commercial block; Schulze continued to operate his store for the next forty years. East Coast dairyman August Jensen opened the Central Creamery in 1910. In 1912, Italian immigrant David Muzio and Italian-Swiss immigrant Fernando Chiesa constructed a building to house Muzio's Grocery and Chiesa's Restaurant. Entrepreneur Jefferson Anderson operated the men's clothing company J. L. Anderson before closing the store to build the upscale Anderson Hotel in 1923. A. F. Fitzgerald, the president of the San Luis Brick Company, was also involved with several local oil companies, as well as serving as president of the Chamber of Commerce and lobbying to establish the California Polytechnic School.

Local theaters also hosted minstrel and vaudeville performances. Some of these theatres—including the Elks Theater, Monterey Theater, and Elmo Theater—featured male or female impersonators in the 1910s, actors who portrayed members of the opposite gender on stage. These performances

represented early instances in which non-conformance with traditional gender norms occurred publicly anywhere in San Luis Obispo.⁷⁵

Commercial development in San Luis Obispo during the first decades of the twentieth century also included the establishment or expansion of commercial centers that catered specifically to individual ethnic groups. In the 1920s and 1930s, a *nihonmachi* or Japantown, with Japanese-owned or operated commercial businesses and services emerged along Higuera Street between South Street and Madonna Road. Yoroku Watanabe and Tameji Eto are credited as key figures in the development of San Luis Obispo's *nihonmachi* in the 1920s and 1930s. Between 1923 and 1928, Watanabe leased a one-acre site at 158 Higuera Street, located across from passenger depot, freight sheds, and shops of the Pacific Coast Railway. Due to the 1913 Alien Land Law, Watanabe could not purchase the property himself and had to lease it from the estate of a Prussian immigrant. Watanabe's development included a one-story hotel, rooming house, pool room, restaurants, commercial garage, fish market, and a wholesale and retail grocery, Y&M Grocery at 198 Higuera Street. With the selection of Higuera Street as part of the newly designated route of Highway 101 in 1925, the *nihonmachi* became the southern gateway to the city.⁷⁶ In 1929, Watanabe's complex was acquired by a young Japanese-American man named Robert Fukunaga, who upgraded the buildings and expanded the hotel into a two-story brick building.⁷⁷ By the 1930s, the area included two hotels, a barber shop, two groceries, and a fish and meat market. Although geographically small in size, San Luis Obispo's *nihonmachi* was not just the center of commercial businesses and services for local Japanese residents but also for Japanese farming communities in the surrounding rural areas, including Arroyo Grande, Los Osos, Pismo Beach, Nippomo, and the port at Avila Beach.⁷⁸

This period also saw a marked increase in automobile use; by 1916 there were five automobile service stations in San Luis Obispo. New commercial construction directly tied to the automobile increased in the early 1920s. Liveries were converted into automobile showrooms that sold specific brands. Purpose-built showrooms were built on commercial streets in the central business district and typically featured large entrance doors and windows to show off the automobiles waiting to be purchased inside.

⁷⁵ "Putting One Over on the Elks' Minstrels by Printing the Criticism in Advance," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 5 May 1913; "Cavazos, Genuine Top Liner Pleases Large Audience," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 25 June 1914.

⁷⁶ History Center San Luis Obispo County, "Eto Park and Brook Street in San Luis Obispo," accessed June 19, 2024, <https://www.historycenterslo.org/uploads/1/2/5/3/125313011/walkingtourhandout-v8.pdf>.

⁷⁷ "Japantown - San Luis Obispo," LocalWiki, accessed Jun 19, 2024, <https://localwiki.org/slo/Japantown>.

⁷⁸ "Japantown Atlas - Central California - San Luis Obispo," 2022, accessed June 19, 2024, <http://japantownatlas.com/map-sanluis.html>.



Yoruko Watanabe's fruit and vegetable grocery (1928). Source: History Center of San Luis Obispo County. Courtesy of Shizue Seigel.

Auto-tourism and recreation spurred new types of commercial development in San Luis Obispo. The Exposition Park Race Track, with a one-mile course that was billed as the fastest in the world, opened at the south end of the city in 1922. Early automobile tourists camped along the roadside on the outskirts of towns across the country, including San Luis Obispo. Auto camping as an idyllic, anti-establishment pursuit dwindled by World War I, as farmers, schools and other property owners grew tired of the increasing numbers of tourists who camped for free on their land, creating pollution, damaging property, stealing produce, and leaving trash and debris in their wake. In response, private and municipal camps were established to capture the romantic essence of the roadside camps, while offering more conveniences and amenities. Usually consisting of a group of modest cabins and tents for camping, early examples of auto camps in San Luis Obispo included a municipal auto camp and private auto camp at the intersection of Monterey, Palm, and Grand streets.⁷⁹ These camps were also short-lived, as increasing numbers of motorists overwhelmed the sites, and more affluent travelers sought upgraded accommodations.

⁷⁹ Sanborn Map Company, "San Luis Obispo," 1926, Library of Congress.



Exposition Park Race Track, built 1923. Left image: 1923, Right image: Filming in 1926; source for both Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections.



Milestone Mo-tel, 2223 Monterey Street, built 1925. Source: Huntington Library, San Marino.



1926 Sanborn Map Company fire insurance map, showing parcels containing auto-related development (highlighted in blue) near the intersection of Monterey and Santa Rosa streets (1926).
Source: San Francisco Public Library.

In the early 1920s, Southern California-based architect Arthur Heineman proposed a solution for the automobile traveler that would become the roadside motel. Based on the concept of the bungalow court, Heineman proposed eighteen motels from San Diego to Seattle, each approximately one day's drive apart. The motels would be located on the outskirts of the cities, with easy access on and off the main highways along the Pacific coast. This new venture would be called the Milestone Mo-tel, based on the term "motor hotel." San Luis Obispo was selected as the inaugural site, as it was a logical stopover between Los Angeles and San Francisco.⁸⁰ The Milestone Mo-tel was situated on the northern end of San Luis Obispo, immediately off of the Pacific Coast Highway. Mission Revival imagery was co-opted for the motel to "recapitulate to a marked degree the history of the Franciscan Friars and the early lore of California."⁸¹ A 1925 article in *Pacific Travel* announcing the construction of the Milestone Mo-tel directly tied the route of the missionaries with the location of the motels:

If Junipero Serra is looking down today on the California he loved so well, he is noting the fact that King's Highway, with its old missions a day's horseback ride apart, has become a thoroughfare for teeming millions, and that along this shining pathway

⁸⁰ "Milestone Company to Build San Jose Motel," *Mercury News*, November 24, 1925.

⁸¹ Charles Estey, "Hotel for Motorists," *Pacific Coast Travel*, October 1925.

through an earthly Paradise there is now being established a chain of remarkable hotels for motorists, which has been given the names ‘Milestone Mo-tels.’⁸²

Motels and “motor courts” with cabins or buildings arranged in rows, or U- or L-shaped configurations replaced the earlier auto camps with tents in the 1930s.

Architectural styles represented in local commercial architecture during this period include Mission Revival, Mediterranean Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival. There are also modest vernacular commercial buildings that may have minimal stylistic detailing and do not represent a particular style.

Architects whose work is represented in San Luis Obispo during this period include: Abrahms & Simms, Santa Barbara; E.D. Bray; John Chapek; Orville Clark; W.H. Crias, W.E. Erkes; San Francisco; G.A. Meuss-Dorffer, San Francisco; G.M. Eastman; Thorton Fitzhugh; John Davis Hatch; Alfred and Arthur Heineman, Los Angeles; J.P. Krempfle; Fred Logan; Charles McKenzie, San Francisco; Parkinson & Bergstrom; Righetti & Headman, San Francisco; William H. Weeks; James Wetmore; and K.C. Wilson.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	Commercial properties include one- and two-story commercial blocks; hotels; low-rise storefront buildings; and historic districts
Period of Significance:	1900-1929
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an intact example of a significant or influential early 20th century commercial development For its direct association with as automobile-related development in San Luis Obispo 	Commercial properties from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association.
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in San Luis Obispo’s early history 	A commercial property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association , at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.

⁸² Estey, *Pacific Coast Travel*.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an excellent or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with the period The work of a significant architect or designer As a rare intact example of an early commercial property type. 	Commercial properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Extant Examples: Early 20th Century Commercial Development



Johnson Building, 796 Higuera Street, built 1903-1904.
Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Park/Reidy Hotel, 1815 Osos Street, built 1907.
Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Union Hardware, 1119 Garden Street, built 1912.
Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Anderson Hotel, 955 Monterey Street, built 1922-1923.
Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Early 20th Century Civic & Institutional Development



Postcard of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Source: historyinslocounty.org (no date).

In 1901, the California State Legislature authorized “An Act to Establish the California Polytechnic School,” with the express stipulation that the school focus on agricultural and vocational training. Construction began in early 1903, and in October of that year, California Polytechnic opened its doors to welcome the first students. Initially, the school offered a secondary-level, three-year Course of Study. By 1904, enrollment at the school had already tripled from twenty students to sixty. Enrollment at the school continued to increase, and by the end of its first decade Cal Poly’s student body had grown to 176 students. The 1910s proved to be a challenging time for the school, as the compulsory military training and the Selective Service Act saw 147 students join the armed services. Enrollment dipped as many students went off to war, and those who remained behind participated in war relief projects.

In the years following World War I, many veterans relocated to the area to take advantage of Cal Poly’s vocational training. Faced with growing enrollment after the war, Cal Poly focused primarily on developing its academic plan. The Course of Study program was extended from three years to four years, and an Academic Department for college preparatory work was added to the original Agriculture, Mechanics, and Household Arts Departments. In 1921, however, the school’s board of trustees was disbanded and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction assumed direct supervision of the institution. Although a course of study in printing was introduced in 1923, drastic budget cuts that same year reduced the available programs to agriculture, mechanics, and printing. Classes were not restored in other departments until 1926.

In 1905, a Carnegie Library was constructed in San Luis Obispo, which was the first dedicated library building in the County. In 1906, a new building for San Luis Obispo High School, which previously was held in the Court School, was constructed on Marsh Street. Other institutional buildings were constructed during this period, including a new church for the Methodist Episcopal Congregation on the corner of Morro and Pacific Streets.

In 1920, a fire in the Mission Church Sacristy broke out which destroyed most of the Mission roof. The structures themselves were saved by the original oak rafters, which prevented the adobe walls from caving in. In 1925, Father Daniel Keenan established *La Fiesta de las Flores* (“Festival of the Flowers”), a community celebration intended to raise funds to repair the Mission’s roof. *La Fiesta* became an annual fundraising event which continued for seventy years until 1995. The funds raised during the early years of *La Fiesta* helped renovate the Church in 1933 when, under the stewardship of Father John Harnett, the Church was restored to its original Spanish-style appearance. The wooden clapboard siding was removed, and the Mission roof was replaced with clay tile. The original portico and belfry were reconstructed of reinforced concrete and plaster, and in 1937, the colonnade lining the *convento* was rebuilt to resemble the original. A final addition made to extend the annex in 1948 was funded by the Hearst Foundation, a longtime supporter of *La Fiesta*.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Civic property types include city hall, courthouses, post offices, libraries, and schools. Non-governmental institutional buildings include churches, meeting halls, and other buildings associated with social organizations.

Note on intangible cultural heritage: Civic and institutional properties, including social halls, religious buildings, and other community gathering spaces, may also be associated with intangible cultural heritage, such as annual festivals, parades, and/or other cultural events and practices.

Period of Significance: 1900-1929

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rare example (first, last remaining, only) of civic or institutional development from the period • For its association with an important religious, social, cultural, or civic institution • For its association with a particular cultural or ethnic community in San Luis Obispo. A property may be associated with migration or community formation in San Luis Obispo, a community-serving or religious organizations or intangible cultural heritage, or civil rights activism. 	Civic and institutional properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an excellent or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with its period • As the work of a significant architect or designer 	Civic or institutional properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Extant Examples: Early 20th Century Civic & Institutional Development



Stover's Sanitarium, 1160 Marsh Street, built 1911. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Carnegie Library, 696 Monterey Street, built 1905. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

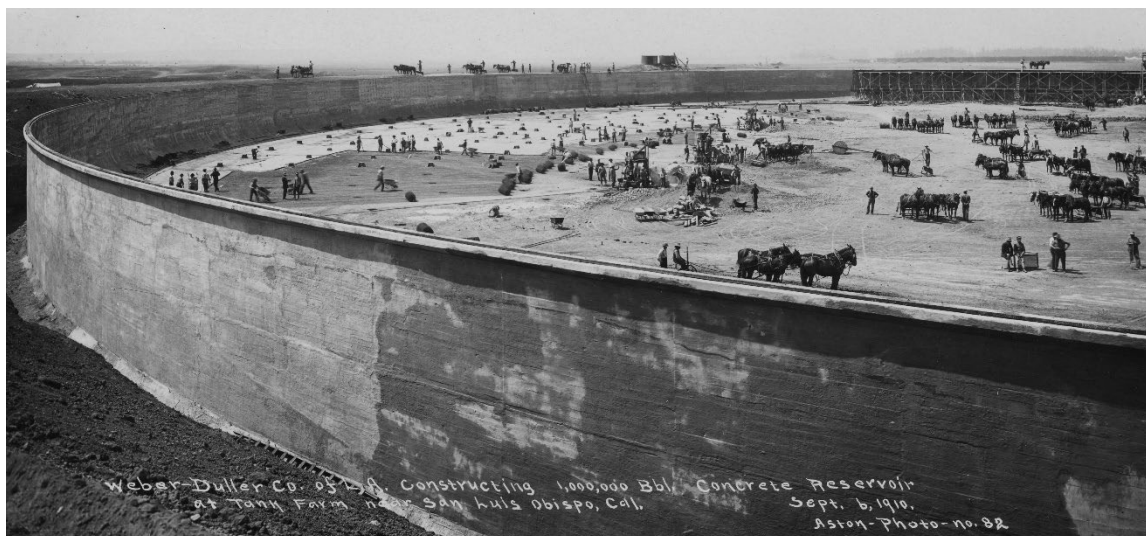


Masonic Temple, 859 Marsh Street, built 1913. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



U.S. Post Office, 893 Marsh Street, built 1925. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Early 20th Century Agricultural & Industrial Development



San Luis Obispo Tank Farm Source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections (c. 1910).

The development of ranching and agriculture as the region's main commercial enterprises influenced the development of San Luis Obispo. California's agricultural industries expanded in scale and production at a rapid rate in the early 20th century. San Luis Obispo County farms contributed to the California Central Valley's emergence as one of the largest agricultural producing regions in the United States. In the early 20th century, the primary agricultural crops in San Luis Obispo County ranged from flower seeds to winter peas, bush beans, pole beans, and celery.⁸³ As these industries continued to grow, so did the demand for cheap labor. The majority of this labor need was met by immigrants from regions around the world, resulting in the continued diversification of the San Luis Obispo's population.

Due to the decline of Chinese immigration and reduction in Chinese laborers that followed the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, other groups stepped in to meet the demand for agricultural labor. By 1910, a majority of agricultural workers in San Luis Obispo County were of non-European descent. More than half of agricultural workers were Japanese.⁸⁴ Japanese farm laborers arrived in San Luis Obispo in notable numbers in 1904 after finishing work on the Pacific Coast Railway in Guadalupe.⁸⁵ Many became known for their skill at growing green vegetables, sugar beets, grapes, fruits, and nuts, though Japanese farmers gained particular success and a high reputation for growing peas.⁸⁶ Japanese farmers followed a graduated strategy to move up the agricultural employment ladder, often starting as contracted labor-for-hire, then rising through the ranks as sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and finally for a small number of individuals, as landowners of their own farms. However, like Chinese immigrants before them, racism again reared its head in the first decade of the 20th century to tamp down the surge of Japanese immigration. In 1907, the United States and Japan enacted the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement, in which Japan agreed to stop the

⁸³ Stan Harth, Dan Krieger, and Liz Krieger, *War Comes to the Middle Kingdom, 1939-1942* (San Luis Obispo: EZ Nature Books, 1998).

⁸⁴ Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 71.

⁸⁵ Ann Fairbanks, "Historical Moment for Japanese Sites," *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, 7 July 1980, B-1.

⁸⁶ Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 74-75.

immigration of laborers into the United States. Six years later, passage of the 1913 Alien Land Law made it illegal for Japanese immigrants to own property or lease agricultural land for more than three years, largely cutting off these pathways to landowning. However, some families evaded the law by forming corporations in the names of their American-born children or friends and purchasing property through these corporations.⁸⁷ The Eto family, which was responsible for developing much of San Luis Obispo's Japantown, provides such an example. The family, led by Tameji Eto, purchased farming land in Morro Bay under the name of a white friend. There, the Eto family became the first to grow winter peas in the San Luis Obispo area and introduced truck farming to the region. Tameji Eto became a founding figure in the local vegetable industry and was a leader in the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce and county farm bureau.⁸⁸

With the United States entrance into World War I in 1917, there was an enormous demand for agricultural products, which proved an economic boon to Central California. During the War, many farmers turned to the production of navy beans, since these were subsidized by the War Relief Administration. Before reliable refrigeration, beans could be shipped to the troops in Europe without spoiling, and San Luis Obispo County's economy boomed. With anti-immigration laws limiting the influx of workers from Asia, the United States initiated the first Bracero Program to recruit agricultural workers from Mexico. The program lasted until 1921 before being reinstated during World War II. These programs brought a new wave of Mexican immigrants to the San Luis Obispo area.⁸⁹ By 1930, nearly 2,000 Mexican people lived in San Luis Obispo County.⁹⁰

Passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 further cut off the flow of immigrants from Europe and Asia into the United States in the early 20th century. California's farms and agricultural industries, which were rapidly expanding during this period and depended heavily on immigrant labor, faced a shortage of workers. While Mexican Bracero workers helped meet the demand, labor contractors turned primarily to the Philippine Islands—which became a United States territory following the Spanish-American War in 1898 and were, therefore, not subject to anti-immigration laws—to fill the void. After arriving by ship in San Francisco, Filipino workers were dispersed to work in farms across the state, including San Luis Obispo County. Filipino labor encampments formed in Pismo Beach, Ocean View Drive, along Highway 1, Avila Beach, Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, and the Edna Valley. By the 1930s, Filipino workers overtook Japanese workers as the largest proportion of the county's agricultural workforce, comprising 46% of the total number of farm laborers. The cycle of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment again repeated itself in response to the rapid influx of Filipino workers. In 1934, the United States divested of its possession of the Philippine Islands, giving the island its independence. Filipinos went from being considered U.S. nationals to aliens, making them subject to immigration restrictions.⁹¹

In the early 20th century, oil derricks were erected in the San Luis Obispo area and drilling for oil began. The most lucrative oil fields were located south of San Luis Obispo and were controlled by families from outside of the region, including the Doheny family from Los Angeles. The Producers Transportation Company represented the largest oil interest in San Luis Obispo County,

⁸⁷ Page & Turnbull and Donna Graves, E-37; Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 74.

⁸⁸ Emily Pan, "Take Eto's Story up to World War II, Told by her Daughter," Central California Asian American History, January 4, 2021, <https://www.centralcoastasianhistory.org/post/take-eto-s-story-up-to-world-war-2-told-by-her-daughter>.

⁸⁹ Sarah Linn, "Rooted in Struggle: Meet Mexican Americans Working in the Wine Industry," PBS SoCal, September 27, <https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/the-migrant-kitchen/mexican-americans-working-in-the-wine-industry>.

⁹⁰ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Volume III, Part 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1932).

⁹¹ Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 77-81.

accommodating the transport of oil from the Union Oil Company and the Independent Producers Agency via 500 miles of pipeline to the Port of San Luis. Pumping stations in San Luis Obispo County were located in Shandon, Creston, Santa Margarita, Tank Farm, Avila and Port San Luis. There was a 250-acre Tank Farm just south of San Luis Obispo, which was constructed for the storage of oil while it awaited transport to the port for shipment. The oil business of the Producers Transportation Company made of Port San Luis the greatest oil shipping port in the world and provided employment to hundreds of men in the county. At Port San Luis the Pacific Coast Railway built a special wharf to handle the oil shipments.



Channel Commercial Company, 1880 Santa Barbara Avenue. The Channel Commercial Company was a wholesale grocery outlet that facilitated shipment of produce via the railroad. Photo date unknown. Source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Special Collections (c. 1912).

Industrial buildings may be associated with agriculture and are likely located in areas with easy access to transportation corridors, with earlier examples clustered along the railroad. There may be some remnant agricultural-related buildings and structures, such as remnant chicken coops and other utilitarian structures. There are likely few remaining properties directly associated with the oil industry, although it had an effect of the development of the area, and in particular the importance of Port San Luis. There may be some remnant industrial and agricultural properties that were initially located outside of the City limits but have since been annexed. In the late 19th and early 20th century, it was illegal to accommodate “noxious” businesses such as brick works and slaughterhouses inside City limits.

In general, agricultural and industrial properties are not associated with particular architectural styles. Vernacular industrial buildings of brick and reinforced concrete are the predominate form, and significance is frequently derived from historic association rather than from aesthetic qualities. Agricultural and industrial resources from this period may be eligible under several early 20th century themes.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	Agricultural and Industrial properties
Property Type Summary:	Industrial types include warehouses, factories, ice houses, and other light industrial types. Agricultural property types include warehouses, farmhouses, and related outbuildings.
Period of Significance:	1900-1929
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare, intact example of a particular type of agricultural or industrial development For its association with the development of an important local industry 	Agricultural and industrial properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare example of a specific agricultural or industrial property type As the work of a significant architect or designer 	Agricultural and industrial properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling

Extant Examples: Early 20th Century Agricultural & Industrial Development



Golden State Creamery, 570 Higuera Street, built 1910. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



Channel Commercial Company, 1880 Santa Barbara Avenue, built 1912. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Harmony Creamery, 991 Nipomo, built 1929. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.
Source City of San Luis Obispo.(2013).

Early 20th Century Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation-related development in San Luis Obispo in the early 20th century was dominated by a marked increase in automobile use. Although the Southern Pacific Railroad continued to thrive and constructed some of its most significant buildings during this era, including the Signal Repair Shop (non-extant) and the Transportation Company Building, railroad activity began to decline by the 1920s due to the advent of the automobile and advances in technology for commercial transportation, such as refrigerated trucks. Americans embraced the freedom and personal mobility that accompanied traveling by car, and the creation of the interstate freeway system increased access and created more direct travel routes.

Road improvements and auto-oriented development accompanied the growing popularity of automobiles. In 1912, San Luis Obispo was chosen as the location of the district headquarters of the California Highway Commission for the counties of San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Barbara, making the city a center for regional highway planning and construction.⁹² The first state highway in the area, Legislative Route 2, came through San Luis Obispo County in 1915. Within one year, there were five service stations in San Luis Obispo, and by the 1920s all the major roads in town were paved. The original wood bridges over the creek were also replaced with a series of concrete bridges, and alleyways were improved to accommodate the automobile.⁹³

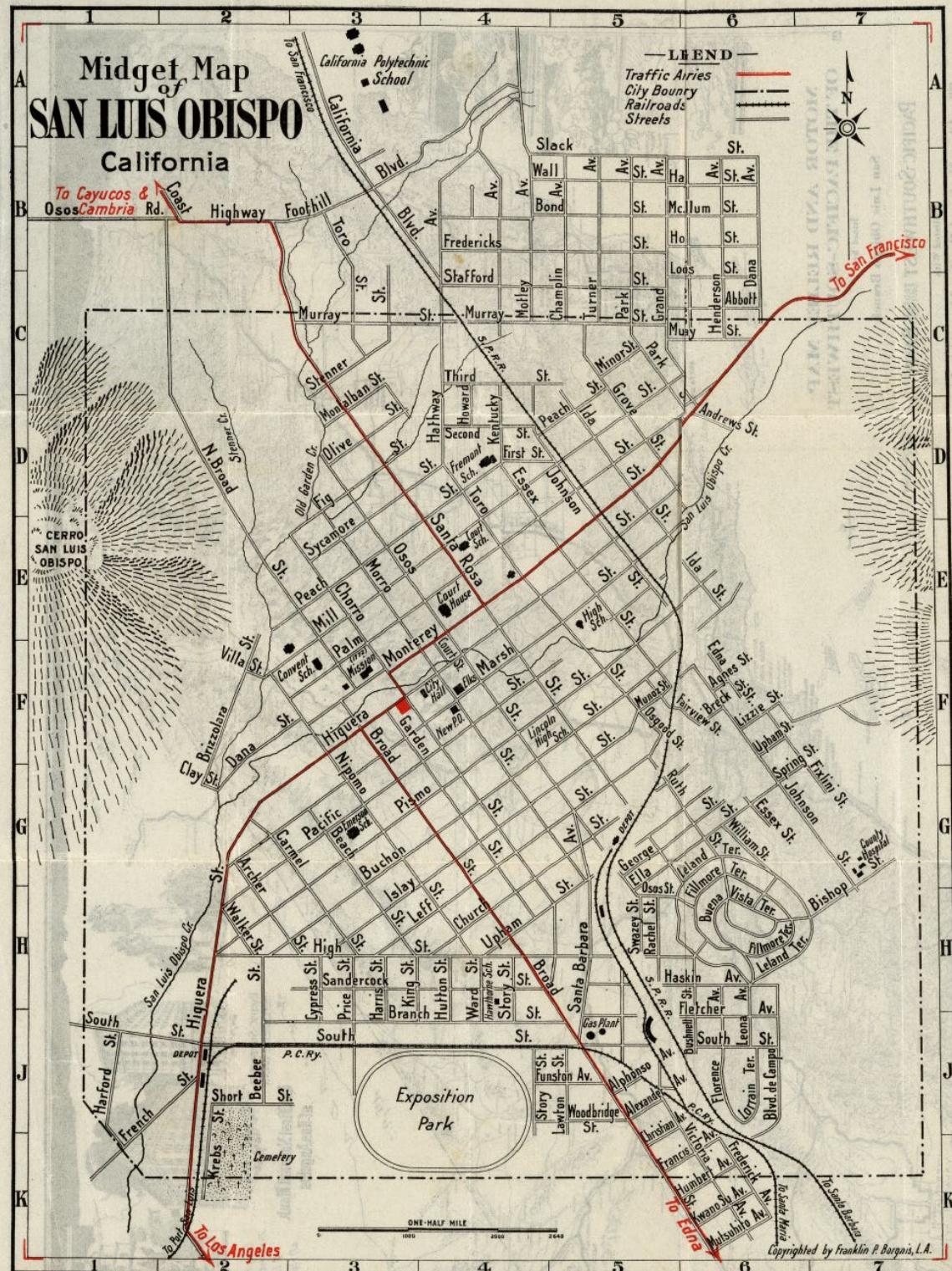
In 1925, Legislative Route 2 was designated U.S. Highway 101. The original highway route ran through San Luis Obispo on Higuera Street to Chorro Street, before jogging one block over to Monterey Street and continuing north along Santa Rosa Street.⁹⁴ By the late 1920s, clusters of auto-related development existed along the route of the highway through San Luis Obispo. Fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Company in 1926 show garages, gas stations, automobile service and repair shops, and used car lots on Higuera Street where it was intersected by Carmel, Nipomo, Walker, and Pacific streets; on Monterey Street between Osos Street and Toro Street near the County Courthouse; and on the block between Palm, Moro, Monterey, and Chorro streets. Gas stations, often small one-story buildings with an office and a roof that extended over a driveway with a pump, were built, often at street corners along the route.⁹⁵

⁹² Galadriel Bree Highhouse, "Madonna Inn: A Hotel in Context," Master of Arts thesis, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, 2011.

⁹³ City of San Luis Obispo, "Completion Report: Historic Resources Survey," July 1983, 22.

⁹⁴ "US Highway 101," California Highways, accessed October 4, 2024, <https://www.cahighways.org/ROUTE101.html>.

⁹⁵ Sanborn Map Company, "San Luis Obispo," 1926, Library of Congress.



1923 map, showing the original routing of U.S. Highway 101 (red line), streets, and railroads through San Luis Obispo. Source: David Rumsey Map Collection (1923).

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Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	<p>Transportation-related property types include rail lines (including spur lines and switches); railroad company-owned freight or storage buildings; support structures, such as turntables, equipment mounts, and crossing structures; vestiges of demolished railroad buildings; bridges and culvert crossings; and other transportation-related infrastructure.</p> <p>Infrastructure-related property types include buildings and features associated with public infrastructure agencies such as those providing power and water.</p>
Period of Significance:	1900-1929
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an example of an important transportation- or infrastructure- related property that influenced the development of San Luis Obispo. • As an early and/or influential transportation-related development. • For historic districts, as a cohesive group or collection of properties developed for or used by the transportation-related commercial businesses or industries. 	<p>Transportation-related properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.</p>

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare or unique example of a particular type of transportation- or infrastructure-related development. As a rare or unique example of transportation-related type or method of construction. As the work of a significant architect or designer 	<p>In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under the Early 20th Century Transportation-Related Development theme.</p> <p>Transportation-related properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling</p>

Extant Examples: Early 20th Century Transportation & Infrastructure



Southern Pacific Warehouse, built c. 1900. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo, Master List Properties Story Map.



Southern Pacific Transportation Company Building, 1021 Railroad Avenue. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark.



Old Gas Works, 280 Pismo Street, built 1902. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II (1930-1945)

The stock market crash of 1929 precipitated an economic depression in the United States that would last until the Second World War. San Luis Obispo County's agricultural diversity shielded it from the worst of the Great Depression of the 1930s; however, there was little residential or commercial growth in the area during this period. The County benefited from the domestic policies of the administration of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt – popularly called the “New Deal” – which marshaled direct government investment to alleviate the problems of poverty, unemployment, and the disintegration of the American economy during the Great Depression.

The Public Works Administration (PWA), which began in 1933 and the Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration (WPA), which began in 1935, funneled significant financial resources to communities across the United States for the construction of roads, bridges, parks, and civic and institutional buildings. Through the involvement of these agencies, the County received a new Courthouse, flood-control projects, and highway improvements.⁹⁶

During this period, architect Julia Morgan spent a great deal of time in San Luis Obispo while working on Hearst Castle in nearby San Simeon.⁹⁷ In the 1920s, Morgan was commissioned by the local Monday Club to design a new clubhouse for the rapidly growing membership. Morgan inspected the lot on Monterey Street that the club had purchased and consented to designing a clubhouse without charge, in return for Monday Club members arranging her room and board when she came to San Luis Obispo. The clubhouse was dedicated on May 11, 1934.⁹⁸

Cal Poly went through several reorganizations during this period, until 1940 when the school was granted collegiate status by the California State Board of Education and began to offer Bachelor of Science degrees in agriculture and engineering. During World War II, the campus played a part in the war effort by serving as the site of a Naval Flight Preparatory School, which graduated more than 3,600 cadets. By 1945, civilian enrollment had skyrocketed from eighty to just over 800 students, primarily returning veterans studying under the G.I. Bill. Just four years later, enrollment had increased to over 2,900 students.

There are several military establishments near San Luis Obispo, the most significant of which is Camp San Luis Obispo (formerly Camp Merriam). The site now known as Camp San Luis Obispo was first established in 1927, when the state of California secured a 25-year lease for 2,000 acres of ranch land, known as the Jack Ranch, located along Highway 1. The lease marked the establishment of a formal training camp for the California National Guard, which had previously been forced to conduct their summer training sessions on private ranches, in state parks, or in some cases, on land belonging to other federal military installations.

Construction began on Camp San Luis Obispo in 1928, and the first official encampment took place in 1929. That same year, the state exercised its power of eminent domain and purchased the camp lands it had been leasing up to that point. By 1932, the camp had grown to 5,800 acres and had been renamed Camp Merriam, after then-Lieutenant Governor Frank F. Merriam, who had campaigned vigorously for the establishment of the camp while serving as Speaker of the California State

⁹⁶ Living New Deal Project, “San Luis Obispo Sites,” accessed December 2, 2024, <https://livingnewdeal.org/?s=san+luis+obispo>.

⁹⁷ Julia Morgan designed a playhouse in San Luis Obispo for the driver who took her to San Simeon each day. The house has been relocated to Mill & Johnson Street and is not visible from the public right-of-way.

⁹⁸ “The Monday Club, San Luis Obispo, California,” Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Robert E. Kennedy Library, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://lib.calpoly.edu/search-and-find/collections-and-archives/architectural/julia-morgan/>.

Assembly. The site proved ideal for military training purposes, as it was equidistant to both Los Angeles and San Francisco, adjacent to both major railroads and a major highway, and featured rugged terrain that allowed for the creation of realistic military training exercises. Many soldiers stationed at Camp Merriam (and, later, Camp San Luis Obispo) found the area so appealing that they returned to settle in the area following their release from active duty.

Activity at Camp Merriam increased sharply in the late 1930s as war broke out across Asia and Europe. To accommodate the increased training efforts, the camp was divided into an artillery camp and a separate, larger infantry camp. In 1940, in anticipation of further military engagement, the United States government exercised its preemptive right to lease Camp Merriam from the state of California, at which point the site was re-christened as Camp San Luis Obispo in honor of the nearby Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa.

In the 1940s, the pace of development increased dramatically in San Luis Obispo, in large part due to the expansion of Camp Merriam into Camp San Luis Obispo in 1940. A property tax increase was approved to fund the construction of a United Service Organization (USO) center. Many former agricultural workers relocated from the San Joaquin Valley and other farming areas in search of employment at the camp and other military manufacturing sites along the coast, which offered federally guaranteed wages. Expansion efforts during this period were directed towards mitigating the strain placed on existing facilities and services by the sudden influx of residents, as there was still little new residential development.⁹⁹

The United States' entrance into World War II effectively ended the Depression in California and boosted the regional economy. California received almost 12% of the government war contracts and produced 17% of all war supplies.¹⁰⁰ California also acquired more military installations than any other state by a wide margin, and military bases were opened throughout the state. Aircraft, shipbuilding, and numerous other industries were booming due to the war effort, and unemployment was virtually eliminated.

During World War II, Camp San Luis Obispo was expanded to serve as a training base for multiple combat divisions deployed to both Europe and the Pacific, and much of the site's development took place during 1940-1941. The site was also expanded to over 15,000 acres, and camp construction transitioned from the erection of temporary structures and tents to more permanent buildings. Extant structures from this period consist entirely of artillery camp facilities; there are no remaining extant infantry camp facilities. At its peak during World War II, Camp San Luis Obispo housed approximately 20,000 soldiers.

A second, off-post facility, the Baywood Park Training Camp, was also acquired during World War II. The Baywood Park Training Camp was located approximately thirteen miles northwest of the City of San Luis Obispo and consisted of about 8,800 acres used primarily as a maneuver area and as a site

⁹⁹ The USO building was constructed on the site of the Court School, which by that time was vacant and in disrepair. By 1944, there were 3,000 USO buildings strategically located throughout the world. After the war, the City of San Luis Obispo leased the property from the Federal government until acquiring title in 1957.

Source: Patti Taylor and Suzette Lees, *75 SLO City Sites: An Informative Self-Guided Architectural Tour in Historic San Luis Obispo*. San Luis Obispo, CA: Graphic Communication Institute at Cal Poly, California Polytechnic State University, 2010.

¹⁰⁰ State of California Capitol Museum, "California's Infrastructure," accessed December 3, 2024, <https://capitolmuseum.ca.gov/exhibits/called-to-action-californias-role-in-ww2/californias-infrastructure/>.

for bivouacs, or campsites. In 1946, the site was declared as excess by the government, and all of the Baywood Park lands were returned to their original owners in 1947.

World War II had a significant impact on the population and demographics of San Luis Obispo. The city's Japanese community continued to grow until the outset of the war. In 1931, officers of the Guarantee Building and Loan Association created a small subdivision known as the Nippon Tract around what is now known as Brook Street. From 1934 to 1942, Brook Street was known as Eto Street, after the Tameji Eto family, who, along with the Tsutsumi family, helped develop San Luis Obispo's Japantown along Higuera Street between South and French streets. On the eve of the United States' entrance into World War II, there were seven homes on the 32 lots of the Nippon Tract.¹⁰¹ In 1942, after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which forced all people of Japanese descent living in California into internment camps, based on the fear that they posed a security risk to the United States. It is estimated that approximately 800 Japanese American residents from San Luis Obispo County were sent to internment camps around the country during the war.¹⁰² San Luis Obispo's Japantown was erased virtually overnight. The Tsutsumi family was compelled to sell their property along Higuera Street, which was worth an estimated \$150,000, to a local realtor for \$2,000. Concurrently, Eto Street was renamed Brook Street in 1942.

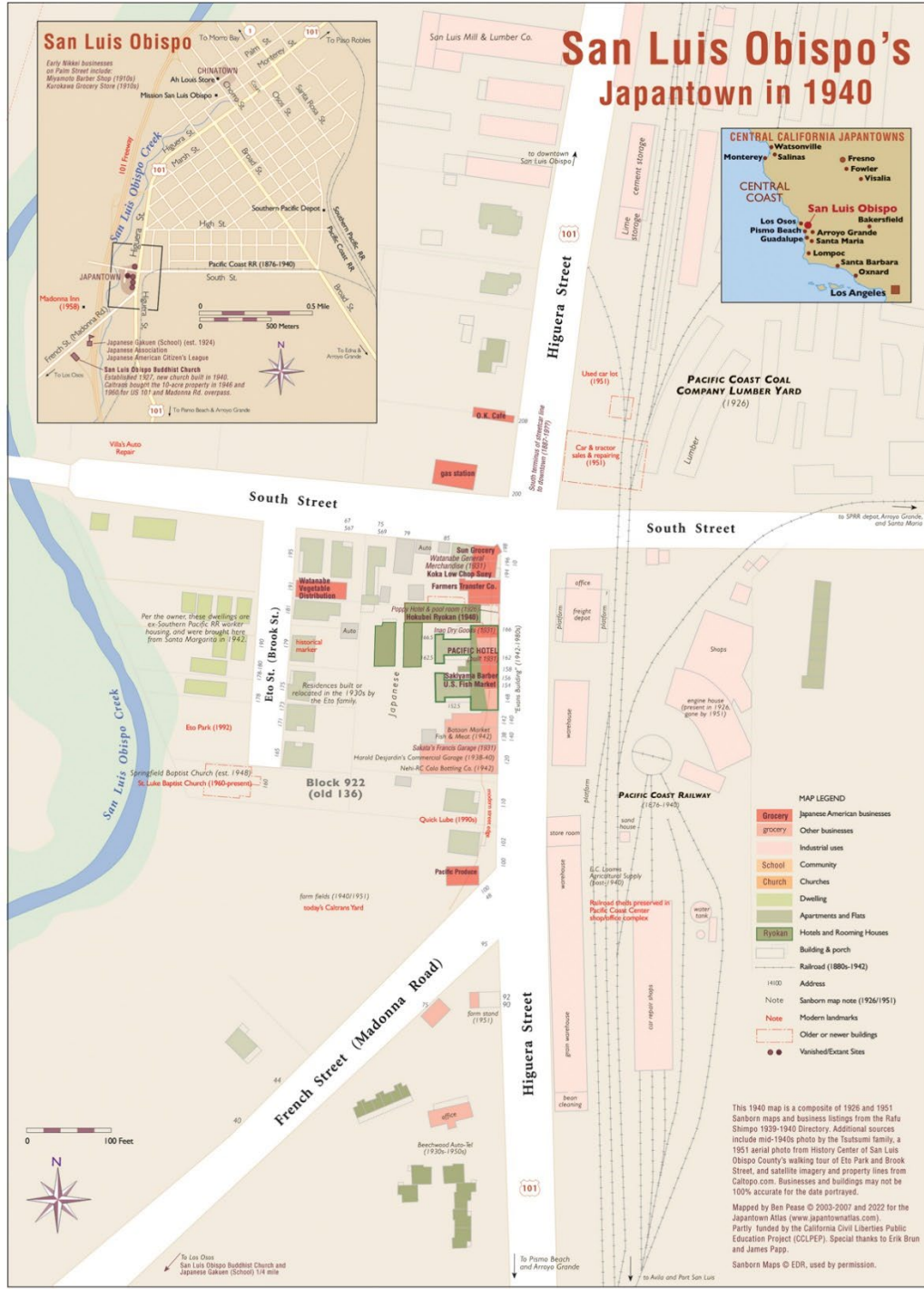
While the war resulted in the expulsion of one community, it was the major driver in increasing the population of others. World War II brought thousands of African American military servicemen and their families to the San Luis Obispo area. Most African American servicemen were assigned to the Corps Area Service, Unit 1947 (renamed the Service Command Unit in 1942), stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo, or the 54th Coast Artillery Battalion, which was stationed at Morro Bay State Park to protect the coastal oil terminals in Morro Bay and Port San Luis.¹⁰³ A Filipino battalion was also stationed Camp San Luis Obispo in 1942. So many men enlisted that a second Filipino regiment was formed at Camp Cook (now Vandenberg Air Force Base).¹⁰⁴ The infusion of these African American and Filipino servicemen into the San Luis Obispo region changed its demographics, particularly in the postwar period as many veterans chose to permanently settle in San Luis Obispo.

¹⁰¹ Harth, Krieger, and Krieger, *War Comes to the Middle Kingdom, 1939-1942*; History Center San Luis Obispo County, "Eto Park and Brook Street in San Luis Obispo."

¹⁰² Ryan Cooley, "Imprisoning Our Own: SLO County Families and Executive Order 9066," *San Luis Obispo New Times*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.newtimeslo.com/news/imprisoning-our-own-slo-county-families-and-executive-order-9066-2978896>; History Center San Luis Obispo County, "Eto Park and Brook Street in San Luis Obispo."

¹⁰³ Daniel M. Sebby, "San Luis Obispo's 'Colored' USO, 1941-1945," *Historic California Posts, Camps, Stations and Airfields*, February 8, 2016, <https://www.militarymuseum.org/SLOAAUSO.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Jenzen, *Growing Conflict*, 97.



Map of San Luis Obispo's Japantown. Source: Japantown Atlas (2022).

Important people during this period in San Luis Obispo's history include several individuals who were instrumental in the expansion of military establishments in the area. Major General Richard E.

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Mittelstaedt, State Adjutant General; Major General Walter P. Story, Commanding General 40th Division; and State Senator Chris N. Jespersen were all influential in persuading the California State Legislature to establish Camp Merriam near San Luis Obispo. Frank F. Merriam had also lobbied vigorously for the camp while serving as Speaker of the California State Assembly, and the camp was named in his honor.

Julian A. McPhee was instrumental in the growth of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo during this period. McPhee was the school's longest-serving president, holding the position from 1933 to 1966. He used his influence in the state's Board of Agriculture to prevent the struggling school from being closed by the state, and he played a key role in the reorganization of the school during the Depression. He served concurrently as both university president and as the head of the Bureau of Agricultural Education for the California State Department of Education. He continued to hold positions in California's educational bureaus throughout his time at Cal Poly, including serving as chief of California's War Food Training Program and later, as director of Vocational Education for the state.

Residential Development, 1930-1945

Most residential construction projects were halted during the Great Depression and many residents faced layoffs and foreclosures. Land use was focused on re-purposing existing properties in more useful ways, such as utilizing vacant lots and yards to create gardens and raise rabbits and chickens. When residential development did occur, it was on an individual basis rather than on the massive scale seen in the post-World War II era. Through most of the 1930s, the average contractor in California built no more than four homes per year.¹⁰⁵ In San Luis Obispo, there were no annexations and only three subdivisions during the 1930s: the Nippon tract, recorded in 1931; the California Park tract, recorded in 1938; and the Escuela Alta tract, recorded in 1939. All told, less than 200 additional residential lots were created during the entire decade.

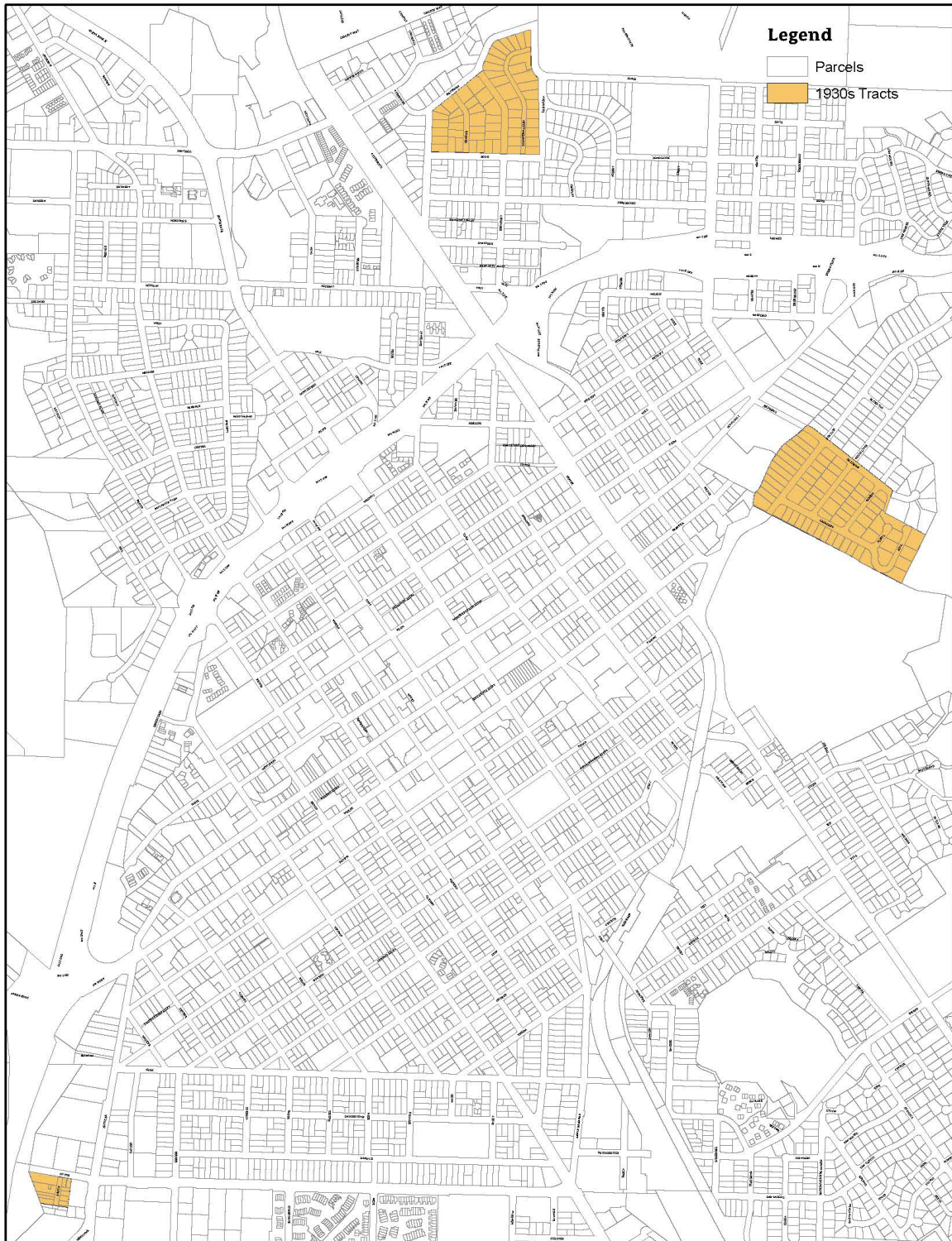
After the forced removal of Japanese American residents to internment camps after the United States' entrance into World War II, family members of the Black military unit, the 54th Artillery Battalion, moved into the cottages and Pacific Hotel along Brook and Higuera streets that had belonged to interned Japanese Americans.¹⁰⁶ The Pacific Hotel became the only hotel that was run by and welcomed Black people.¹⁰⁷ San Luis Obispo's former Japantown, thus, evolved into a primarily African American neighborhood, starting in the 1940s.

Residences from this period range from small, one-story Minimal Traditional houses, to one- and two-story residences designed in popular architectural styles. Residential architecture from this period in San Luis Obispo includes American Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival.

¹⁰⁵ California Department of Transportation, *Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation*, Sacramento, 2011, 4

¹⁰⁶ History Center San Luis Obispo County, "Eto Park and Brook Street in San Luis Obispo."

¹⁰⁷ Liz and Dan Krieger, "Blacks, Blues and Blood," *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, 19 January 1991: 23.



Map indicating the three subdivisions recorded in San Luis Obispo in the 1930s.
Source: San Luis Obispo GIS data.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	Single-family residences; multi-family residences (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, apartment buildings, bungalow courts, etc.); and residential neighborhoods
Period of Significance:	1930-1945
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an excellent example of 1930s residential development in San Luis Obispo As a rare example of a multi-family residential development or a particular multi-family residential property type from the period A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. 	<p>There was minimal residential development during this period; therefore, there are likely relatively few eligible properties related to this theme.</p> <p>Residential properties from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.</p>
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in San Luis Obispo's history. 	<p>A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.</p>
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a rare example of a multi-family residential development or a particular multi-family residential property type from the period As an excellent or rare local example of particular architectural style associated with the period. A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. 	<p>There was minimal residential development during this period; therefore, there are likely relatively few eligible properties related to this theme.</p> <p>Residential properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.</p>

Extant Examples: Residential Development, 1930-1945



822 Murray Street, built 1930. Listed on the San Luis Obispo Inventory of Historic Resources. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



752 Mission Street, built 1931. Listed on the San Luis Obispo Inventory of Historic Resources. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Commercial Development, 1930-1945

There was little new commercial development in the years leading up to and during World War II. A notable exception is the Fremont Theater, designed by nationally-prominent architect S. Charles Lee and located in downtown San Luis Obispo. The Fremont Theater retains its original neon sign, one of a small number of neon signs in the city which date from the 1940s through the post-World War II era. Architectural styles from this period include Mediterranean Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Streamline Moderne, and Art Deco. Architects whose work is represented in San Luis Obispo during this period include S. Charles Lee, Walker & Eisen, and Julia Morgan.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Associated property types include one- and two-story commercial blocks, theaters, low-rise storefront buildings, and other commercial properties.

Period of Significance: 1930-1945

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an intact and significant or influential example of 1930s commercial development 	Commercial properties from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association.
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in San Luis Obispo's history 	A commercial property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association , at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a good or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with the period As the work of a significant architect or designer Historic signs may also be eligible under this theme, as excellent or rare examples of commercial neon signs 	Commercial properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Extant Examples: Commercial Development, 1930-1945



Doton Building, 777 Higuera Street, built 1931. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Fremont Theater, 1035 Monterey Road, built 1942. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).



Gas station at 311 Higuera Street, built 1937. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).

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Civic & Institutional Development, 1930-1945



San Luis Obispo County Courthouse, 976 Osos Street, built 1941. Source: courthousehistory.com (no date).

Civic and institutional development in San Luis Obispo continued in the 1930s, some of which was the result of New Deal programs and funding. This theme also encompasses military-related properties constructed during this period, including buildings used by the United Service Organizations (USO) during World War II. The Edward G. and Ida E. Ludwick Community Center at the corner of Santa Rosa Street and Mill Street was the USO for white soldiers from Camp San Luis Obispo. The city also had two USOs for Black soldiers. Unlike in most cities in the United States, the Black USOs in San Luis Obispo were not relegated to an outlying or segregated part of town. One was located in the city center at 879 Morro Street, one block from Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, the County Courthouse, and City Hall and adjacent to Chinatown. A second Black USO was located on the 900 block of Higuera Street.¹⁰⁸

Properties significant under this theme may also be significant examples of a particular architectural style. Architectural styles associated with this period include Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, PWA Moderne, and period revival styles including Mediterranean Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival. Architects whose work is represented in San Luis Obispo during this period include S. Charles Lee, Walker & Eisen, and Julia Morgan.

¹⁰⁸ Sebby, "San Luis Obispo's 'Colored' USO, 1941-1945."

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Civic and institutional property types include city halls, post offices, fire stations, auditoriums, and office buildings for public agencies. Non-governmental institutional buildings include churches, meeting halls, and buildings associated with social organizations. Infrastructural improvements and other civic amenities may also be eligible under this theme, as roadways, bridges, and other improvements were funded by the WPA and the PWA during this period. This theme also encompasses military-related properties constructed during this period.

Note on intangible cultural heritage: Civic and institutional properties, including social halls, religious buildings, and other community gathering spaces, may also be associated with intangible cultural heritage, such as annual festivals, parades, and/or other cultural events and practices.

Period of Significance: 1930-1945

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For its direct association with New Deal funding or employment programs • For its association with the military establishments in the area • For its association with an important religious, social, cultural, or civic institution • A property may also be significant for its association with a particular cultural or ethnic community in San Luis Obispo. A property may be associated with migration or community formation in San Luis Obispo, a community-serving or religious organizations or intangible cultural heritage, or civil rights activism. 	Civic and institutional properties from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an excellent or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with the period As the work of a significant architect or designer 	Civic and institutional properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Extant Examples: Civic & Institutional Development, 1930-1945



Sunny Acres, built 1931. Source: San Luis Obispo Tribune (c. 2003).



Monday Club, 1815 Monterey Street, built 1933-1934. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



San Luis Obispo County House, 976 Osos Street, built 1936-1941. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

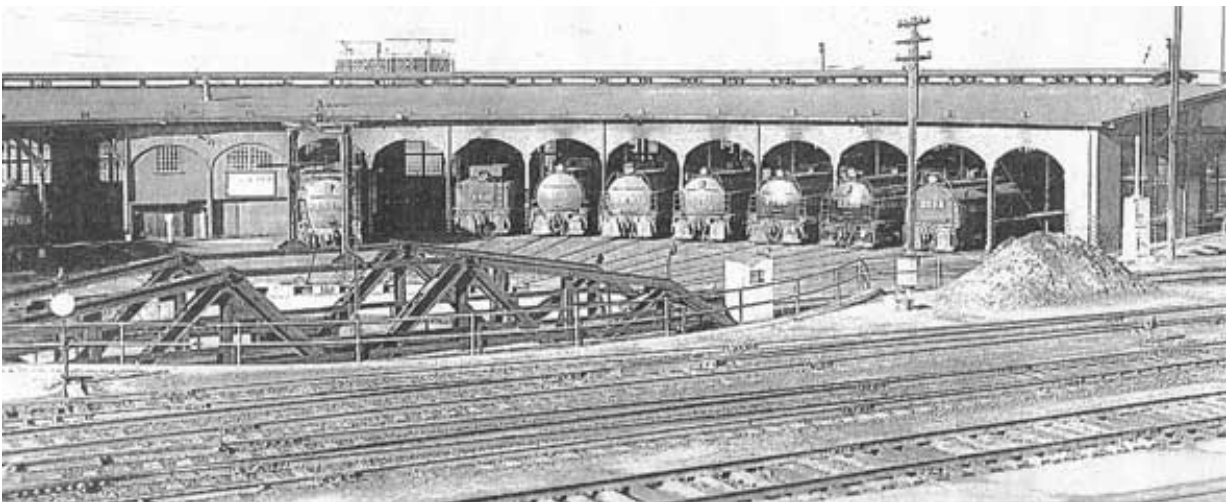


Fire Station, 750 Pismo Street, built 1941. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



San Luis Obispo High School Gymnasium, 1499 San Luis Drive, built 1936. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo (2013).

Transportation and Infrastructure, 1930-1945



Southern Pacific Roundhouse. Source: San Luis Obispo County Historical Society (1953).

Although the Great Depression slowed private development across the country, New Deal agencies, such as the PWA and WPA, pumped federal money into large-scale public works projects to put unemployed citizens back to work during the 1930s. San Luis Obispo County received federal aid for highway improvements. The headquarters of the State Department of Public Works's Highway District 5—which comprised the counties of San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Barbara—were located in San Luis Obispo at 50 Higuera Street, making the city the regional hub of state highway construction during the Depression. President Roosevelt attended the Grand Opening of Highway 1 between Morro Bay and Carmel on June 27, 1938. Originally estimated to cost \$1.5 million, the 139-mile section of Highway 1 included 33 bridges and was completed at a cost of \$10 million. The project to build the highway was begun in 1919 and completed in 1937.¹⁰⁹ In spite of these improvements, most residential streets in San Luis Obispo were still unpaved and lacked street signs in 1940. In 1941, however, the city's first public bus system, operated by Jones Transportation Company, began regular service.¹¹⁰

Other infrastructure projects completed in San Luis Obispo under New Deal programs included laying water pipes to improve the city's water supply (c. 1930s), paving eight blocks of Chorro street between Pacific and High streets, which included construction of the Chorro Street Bridge (1939-1940), constructing the Stenner Creek Bridge (1936-1937, demolished in 1971), and building a stone retaining wall at the west side of Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa (1939).¹¹¹

The railroad industry suffered during the Depression, when many Americans could not afford the luxury of leisure travel. However, World War II drew increased rail traffic on the Southern Pacific as passengers traveled to visit family members stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo. A new Mission

¹⁰⁹ California Department of Transportation, "About District 5," accessed December 3, 2024, <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-5/district-5-popular-links/d5-about>.

¹¹⁰ Dan Krieger, "World War II Brought Changes to Transportation in the County," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 9 September 2014, <https://www.sanluisobispo.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/times-past/article39496002.html>.

¹¹¹ "San Luis Obispo Sites," Living New Deal, <https://livingnewdeal.org/?s=san+luis+obispo>.

Revival-style railroad depot opened for the Southern Pacific Railroad at 1011 Railroad Avenue in 1943 to replace the railroad's outdated 1894 station (demolished in 1971).¹¹²

Despite transporting record numbers of passengers throughout the 1940s, the Southern Pacific Railway suffered another decline in the years following World War II, when automobile ownership increased in the postwar economic boom. Although the company attempted to upgrade their services by replacing steam locomotives with more efficient diesel engines, the new engines required less maintenance and many railroad workers were made redundant. As the demand for skilled railroad labor diminished and ridership declined even further, the area surrounding the now-obsolete Southern Pacific roundhouse (demolished in 1959) began to transform from railroad to other industrial and warehouse uses. Meanwhile, the local landscape began to be transformed by an even newer form of transportation: the airplane. In 1939, the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport opened, with a single hangar and dirt runways. The airport was established by Earl Thomson, who leased land from the County. During World War II, the airport was run by the government as part of the war effort. In 1940 hard surface runways and lights were installed, and from 1940 to 1941 the airport served as a training ground for a federally sponsored Civilian Pilot Training Program for the armed services. The airport was returned to County control in 1946.



San Luis Obispo Airport, established in 1939. Source: *San Luis Obispo Tribune* (1963).

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Examples of transportation -related property types from this period include railroad depots, warehouses, railyards, rail lines,

¹¹² Krieger, "World War II Brought Changes to Transportation in the County."

and rail spurs; highway interchanges and infrastructure; airports, hangars, and air strips; bridges, culverts and other transportation-related infrastructure.

Infrastructure-related property types may include buildings and structures related to operation of municipal services such as water or power utilities.

Period of Significance: 1930-1945
 Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an example of an important transportation-related property that influenced the development of San Luis Obispo. • As an early and/or influential transportation-related development. • For historic districts, as a cohesive group or collection of properties developed for or used by the transportation-related commercial businesses or industries. 	Transportation-related properties from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rare or unique example of a particular type of transportation-related development • As a rare or unique example of transportation-related type or method of construction. • As the work of a significant architect or designer 	Transportation-related properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling

Extant Examples: Transportation and Infrastructure, 1930-1945



Division of Highways District 5 Office, 50 Higuera Street, built 1931. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, built 1943. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: City of San Luis Obispo

MID-LATE 20TH CENTURY GROWTH (1945-1980)

In the immediate post-World War II period, California experienced unprecedented growth as many people who came west to participate in the war effort, including former military personnel, decided to settle permanently. San Luis Obispo's growth during this period was further influenced by the opening of the California Men's Colony correctional facility and the transition of Cal Poly to a co-educational institution.

Between 1940 and 1950, California's population increased by fifty-three per cent, which was partially accounted for by the 850,000 veterans who took up residence after the War.¹¹³ The population of San Luis Obispo grew over 59%, from 8,881 in 1940 to 14,180 in 1950.¹¹⁴ Two new subdivisions were recorded in San Luis Obispo in the 1940s: the Mira Monte subdivision with 83 parcels in 1946, and the Hagen subdivision with 38 parcels in 1949.

Camp San Luis Obispo was returned to the state of California in 1946. For the next several years, the camp served as the primary training site for the 40th and 49th Infantry divisions of the California National Guard. However, when the Korean War broke out in 1950, the site was reactivated by the federal government and the Signal Corps training center was established. The camp was maintained in "inactive" status by the United States government following the Korean War until 1965, when it was returned to the California National Guard and developed in part as an academic complex for the Guard's California Military Academy. In 1972, a portion of the camp land was deeded to the county under President Nixon's "Legacy of Parks" program and now serves as El Chorro Regional Park. Today, Camp San Luis Obispo continues to host large-scale military exercises, as well as provide operational, training, and logistical support to a variety of civilian and military agencies.

Many of the area's wartime visitors became permanent residents in the ensuing decade. Soldiers who had been stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo opted to return with their families and settle in the area following their release from active duty. The G.I. Bill and the proximity of Cal Poly also provided an attractive incentive to veterans thinking of relocating to the area. As a result, development in San Luis Obispo in the 1950s was largely in response to this sudden and substantial need for single-family housing.

Among these new residents were African American military servicemen who had been stationed in the San Luis Obispo area during World War II and chose to permanently settle in the area and start families. Black troops that served in the area included the 54th Artillery Battalion and the Corps Area Service, Unit 1947 (later renamed the Service Command Unit). The scale of African American migration was smaller than other cities across the country due to the comparative lack of large-scale industry and manufacturing that could provide substantial employment bases to attract workers to San Luis Obispo both during and after the war.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, between 1940 and 1950, the number of African American residents in San Luis Obispo County grew from just 25 to 335; in the City of San Luis Obispo, those numbers increased from only four to 144.¹¹⁶ As the number of Black residents

¹¹³ Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 193-194.

¹¹⁴ United States Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, Volume II* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1943); United States Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1950, Volume II* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1952).

¹¹⁵ Joshua Michael Harmon, "'But Not In Vain': The Civil Rights Movement in San Luis Obispo, California 1947-1969," Master of Arts thesis, California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, 2009, 14.

¹¹⁶ United States Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, Volume II*; United States Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1950, Volume II*.

slowly grew, a true community, albeit small in size, developed, which included residential enclaves, churches, and other services. In 1948, a local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formally established at an event at the Madonna Inn to support San Luis Obispo's small community, which needed the broader support network of a national organization like the NAACP to enact change.¹¹⁷

Significant civic improvements were undertaken during this era, most notably in downtown and the Mission Plaza. As early as the 1940s, residents of San Luis Obispo were expressing concern over the dilapidated appearance of the historic mission landscape as well as the layout of some of the city's early streets. The demolition of the Mission Garage at the corner of Monterey and Chorro Streets improved safety conditions downtown and restored the area's early vistas, which spurred further beautification efforts. The Mission Garden Association was formed in 1961 and played a key role in the development of the plan for Mission Plaza throughout the 1960s. Landscape architect Robert B. Taylor was hired in 1968 to design the Mission Plaza, which closed the area surrounding the mission to vehicular traffic, restored and beautified the creek, and created a landscaped public park. The redesigned plaza was dedicated at a ceremony in 1971.¹¹⁸



Mission Plaza during construction. Source: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Special Collections (1970).



Mission Plaza. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).

The presence of Cal Poly also bolstered the local Black and LGBTQ+ communities and became a hotbed for local activism and community organizing. Black students at Cal Poly led much of the push for equal rights in the 1960s in San Luis Obispo. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, the local Black residents and Cal Poly students from the university's Black Student Alliance united to organize a march to the Springfield Baptist Church. Forty students, many wearing the black berets and black armbands of the Black Panther Party, participated.¹¹⁹ Cal Poly was also the birthplace of the city's first visible LGBTQ+ community. Inspired by the Stonewall Uprisings in New York City, which sparked a nationwide Gay Liberation Movement, students at Cal Poly formed some of the earliest known openly LGBTQ+ social and activist groups in the area. In 1971, approximately 30 students collaborated with the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in Los Angeles to establish a local

¹¹⁷ Harmon, "'But Not In Vain': The Civil Rights Movement in San Luis Obispo, California 1947-1969," 14, 18-19.

¹¹⁸ Elliot Curry, "City Flag to Wave at Dedication," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 9 September 1971.

¹¹⁹ Harmon, "'But Not In Vain': The Civil Rights Movement in San Luis Obispo, California 1947-1969," 45, 58-61.

chapter of the GLF at Cal Poly.¹²⁰ A Gay Student Union formed at Cal Poly by the end of the same year.¹²¹ Although the Student Affairs Council and Associated Students Inc. supported formation of the GSU, university administrative officials opposed formal authorization.¹²² The GSU filed a lawsuit against the university that was finally settled by the State Attorney General in 1976, after which the Cal Poly GSU received official university recognition.¹²³

Very few openly LGBTQ+ spaces are documented in San Luis Obispo prior to 1980, though spaces that openly welcomed members of the LGBTQ+ community existed in the city. Most of the cruising locations where gay men could meet were located at Cal Poly, including the men's gym, Fine Arts Building, and Architectural Building. Local beaches—such Diamond Cove, Pirates Cove Beach, and Pismo Dunes—and public parks, including Laguna Lake Park and Santa Rosa Park, were also popular local cruising areas.¹²⁴ The formation of early LGBTQ+ groups and spaces laid the groundwork for further community development and activism in the later decades of the 20th century.

San Luis Obispo's population growth rate reached its peak to date in the wartime and post-war decade between 1940 and 1950, of with 59.7% growth. Growth slowed in subsequent decades. The population in 1960, 20,437, reflected growth of 44.1% over 1950.¹²⁵ Between 1960 and 1970, San Luis Obispo's population grew from 20,437 to 28,036 (a 37.2% increase), 3,930 of which were residents of areas annexed by the growing city.¹²⁶ In 1980, the city's population of 34,252 reflected only a 22.2% increase.¹²⁷

Commercial and residential developments were gradually developed at the margins of the city through the 1970s and 1980s in newly annexed areas as well as some portions of the existing city limits which had previously been undeveloped. Neighborhoods at the south side of the City annexed and developed between 1970 and 1979 included Vista Grande, Prefumo Canyon, and Higuera Street Annexation No. 2 in 1970, Higuera Street Annexation No. 3 in 1972. At the northwest side of the City, annexed areas include the Foothill subdivision and Ferrini Subdivision No. 3 in 1978 (both developed in the 1980s). Also developed in the 1980s was the Exposition Park area near the south end of the City's original limits.

An area prone to flooding since its earliest days of settlement, San Luis Obispo experienced major floods in January 1969, with more than ten inches of rain over two days, and again in January 1973 with over six inches of rain in a single day. Extensive property and infrastructure damage resulted from these events, particularly in areas adjacent to San Luis Obispo Creek and its tributaries.

¹²⁰ "Gay Lib' in SLO," *Mustang Daily*, XXXIII, No. 128, 24 May 1971.

¹²¹ "Gays Explain Themselves to A Curious Radio Audience," *Daily Mustang*, XXXIV, No. 40, 9 November 1971.

¹²² Bruce Kyse, "SAC Backs Gay Students," *Mustang Daily* XXXIV No. 96, 10 March 1972; "The Kennedy Interview II," *Daily Mustang* 40, No. 13 21 October 1975.

¹²³ "Gay Student Union Approved," *Mustang Daily* 40, No. 40, 13 January 1976.

¹²⁴ Mapping the Gay Guides, accessed October 11, 2024, <https://mappingthegayguides.org/viz/map/>.

¹²⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1960* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961).

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, Volume 1: Characteristics of the Population, Part 6: California (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973).

¹²⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, Volume 1: Characteristics of the Population, Part 6: California (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982).

Mid-20th Century Residential Development

There was a great deal of residential development in San Luis Obispo from the 1940s to the 1960s. Development from this period included some infill construction in previously-established neighborhoods, along with new residential subdivisions. The presence of nearby military installations, overall post-World War II growth throughout California, and the continued influence of the California Polytechnic Institute (by this time known as the California Polytechnic State University, or Cal Poly) all played a role in the City's post-World War II residential development. The growth of Cal Poly during this period resulted in custom houses designed for professors (many of whom lived in Monterey Heights), along with the proliferation of work by graduates of the architecture program.

The National Housing Act of 1934 created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which was meant to reignite the construction of single family homes by establishing mortgage terms that were conducive to the average American family and would regulate the interest rates and terms that had ballooned in the aftermath of the stock market crash. During the 1940s, FHA programs also helped finance military housing and homes needed for returning veterans. While the FHA rose to prominence because of these financial incentives, it also influenced how homes and neighborhoods were designed. In particular, FHA guidelines promoted a 624-square-foot dwelling type termed the basic plan or minimum house: "In the design of small, low-priced houses, the principles of efficiency, economic use of materials, and proper equipment, which are important in any class of dwellings, become paramount."¹²⁸

As early as 1936, the FHA embraced the principles of modern community planning, advocating for well-designed comprehensive communities at the neighborhood scale. This development model would become the standard approach for the rapid development of the suburbs after the War. The FHA published a series of informational pamphlets to help spread these ideas and to inform land developers and speculative builders of the economic advantages of good planning in the creation and maintenance of real estate values. These pamphlets also outlined concepts of proper street patterns, planning for parks, playgrounds, and commercial areas, and recommending a buffer zone of multifamily dwellings and commercial buildings between major arterials and minor interior streets."¹²⁹

In 1944, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (more commonly known as the G.I. Bill) helped military families attain the dream of home ownership. The G.I. Bill allowed veterans to purchase a home with no down payment using the FHA mortgage guarantee program. With the FHA's low down payment requirements and attractive loan terms, for many returning G.I.s and other middle-class workers, owning a home became as affordable as renting an apartment.¹³⁰

In spite of the small size of the African American community, Black residents experienced racism, social exclusion, employment and housing discrimination, just as Black people did across the United States. Though not written into law, Black residents experienced informal, de facto, segregation thanks to the housing shortage, high price of homes, and real estate industry's practice of steering residents of color away from desirable neighborhoods. As a result, Arthur Glover, one of the founders of the local branch of the NAACP, stated that 97 percent of San Luis Obispo's Black population lived

¹²⁸ As quoted in Hise, Greg. *Magnetic Los Angeles* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 68.

¹²⁹ Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 34.

¹³⁰ California Department of Transportation, *Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973*, 17.

in a one-square block “ghetto,” presumably the former Japantown around Higuera and Brook streets.¹³¹

Constructing single-family residences in the numbers required by the post-war population boom also necessitated developing large parcels of land, and this led to an increase in both the size and number of subdivisions and annexations recorded in San Luis Obispo in the 1950s; over half of the fifty-four subdivisions recorded between 1935 and 1965 were established between 1950 and 1959.¹³² While annexations extended the city boundary further south along Broad and Higuera Streets, tract development typically remained relatively close to the city’s center and usually tended to be clustered together. Subdivisions were frequently recorded adjacent to each other as larger residential areas developed. There were three tracts subdivided in the 1950s with over one hundred parcels each: the McMillan No. 9 subdivision with 123 parcels, recorded in 1950; the Park View Homes No. 1 subdivision with 139 parcels, recorded in 1952; and the McMillan Manor No. 18 subdivision with 144 parcels, also recorded in 1952.

The city continued to subdivide and annex land in the 1960s and 1970s, usually on a much larger geographic scale than in previous periods. An additional 2.95 square miles was annexed in the 1960s, establishing the San Luis Obispo City boundary recognized today.¹³³ There were also new subdivisions recorded in the 1960s, with development focused on the tracts south of Southwood Street and the Laguna Lake area. The Lakewood subdivision, recorded in 1960, was the largest of the 1960s subdivisions with 196 residential lots. In the 1970s, several new subdivisions of varying sizes were recorded. The largest were Ferrini at the north side of the city, which included 51 acres for residential development and 148 acres for open space, and South Higuera Street and Prefumo Canyon at the south side of the city.¹³⁴

By the mid-1960s, San Luis Obispo faced a serious housing shortage, caused by high prices, the demolition of old housing that did not meet city building standards, Cal Poly’s growing student population, and a limited supply of new housing that did not keep up with the pace of the city’s population growth. A 1967 study showed that approximately 10 percent of the city’s housing stock was not up to code. The following year, the City Housing Authority was created and began constructing new low-income apartment developments with funding from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including two on High Street, on King Street, and one on Los Osos Valley Road.¹³⁵

The housing squeeze within the city limits of San Luis Obispo pushed some people who worked in the city to move to other surrounding communities.¹³⁶ Cal Poly’s student body far outstripped its supply of student housing, prompting the university to build new residence halls in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Still, university-owned housing was inadequate to meet the demand. Students snatched up housing wherever they could find it, including living in their cars, World War II-era military cabins at Camp Ranch El Chorro, spare rooms in family homes, and local motels, which

¹³¹ Harmon, “‘But Not In Vain:’ The Civil Rights Movement in San Luis Obispo, California 1947-1969,” 28.

¹³² Information in this section related specifically to post-World War II subdivisions is drawn from Allison Dean Zike, “Mid-Twentieth Century Residential Development in San Luis Obispo (master’s thesis, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, 2012).

¹³³ The City boundary may continue to change as additional land is annexed.

¹³⁴ San Luis Obispo Local Agency Formation Commission, “History of Annexations,” accessed November 15, 2024, <https://slo.lafco.ca.gov/history-of-annexations>.

¹³⁵ “First Low-Rent Housing to be Open on Saturday,” *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 10 July 1970; David Middlecamp, “1970s Housing Crisis Conditions Worried SLO City Leaders,” *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 28 March 2022.

¹³⁶ “Housing Shortage is More Desperate Than Ever,” *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 18 September 1970.

offered discounted student rates during the tourism offseason. In some cases, parents of Cal Poly students purchased houses for their children to live in during school, rented spare rooms to other students, and sold the houses after their children graduated at a profit.¹³⁷ The demand for student housing attracted private developers, who constructed new apartment buildings near the university's campus.¹³⁸

Postwar subdivisions typically reflect modern community planning principles that grew out of the Progressive Era. These principles were best articulated in 1929 by Clarence Perry's neighborhood unit theory, which proposed a self-contained residential development bounded by major arterial streets to accommodate through traffic, while curvilinear internal streets offered residential access only. The typical postwar subdivision is immediately distinguishable from older city neighborhoods by the street layout, which typically included curvilinear street patterns and culs-de-sac. Nearly all of the tracts developed between 1935 and 1965 in San Luis Obispo, particularly in those areas developed outside the original city boundaries, feature curved streets with elongated blocks and fewer intersections.

Despite the focus on mass housing throughout the 1950s, there were also neighborhoods developed with custom-designed residences. These were usually concentrated away from the city center, located at higher elevations than typical residential subdivisions, and featured greater architectural variety. In San Luis Obispo, the McAllen Heights and Piedmont Estates subdivisions (recorded in 1957 and 1958 respectively) exemplify this trend, with a number of custom homes situated in the low hills lining the eastern boundary of the city. Tract development during this period can be found in the Terrace Hill neighborhood, which includes a cohesive collection of one-story Mid-century Modern houses along Greta Place.

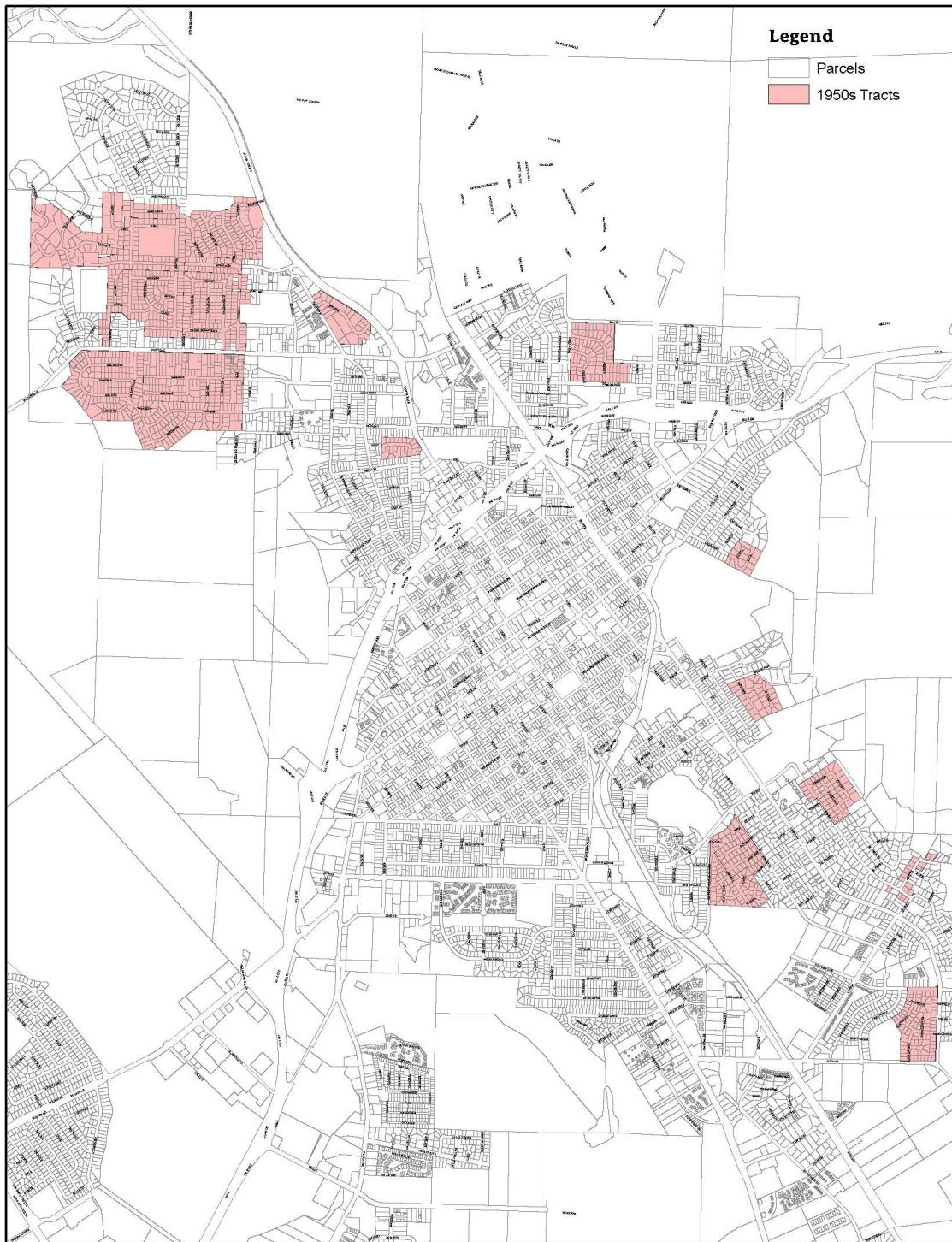
Architectural styles associated with this period include Mid-century Modern, Ranch, and Minimal Traditional. Architects who are represented in San Luis Obispo during this period include Frank Lloyd Wright (Dr. Karl Kundert Medical Clinic at 1106 Pacific Street) and Craig Ellwood, along with local architects Mackey Deasy, Homer Delawie, George Hasslein, Warren Leopold, Paul Neel, and Piercy K. Reibsamen.¹³⁹ Notable local builders include Stan Bell, Leonard Blazer, Roger Brown, Alex Madonna, Patrick Smith, Arnold Volney, and Jack Westerman.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Roger Vincent, "Housing: Rolling Into Town with No Place to Stay," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 25 September 1975.

¹³⁸ "Cal Poly: 12,400 Students, Only 2,400 Beds," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 22 September 1970.

¹³⁹ There are reportedly two works by Richard Neutra in San Luis Obispo. The first is now part of the Ludwick Center on Santa Rosa and Mill Streets, and it has been substantially altered. The second is on the campus of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

¹⁴⁰ Local builders played a significant role in the development of San Luis Obispo in the post-World War II era, developing both custom homes and housing tracts. Stan Bell in Laguna Shores, Leonard Blazer in Cuesta Highlands, Roger Brown with custom homes primarily in the Johnson Heights area, and Patrick Smith, Jack Westerman, and Arnold Volney with custom homes in various areas throughout the City including Ferrini Heights.



Map indicating subdivisions recorded in San Luis Obispo in the 1950s. Source: San Luis Obispo GIS data.



Map indicating subdivisions recorded in San Luis Obispo from 1960-1965. Source: San Luis Obispo GIS data.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Single-family residences; multi-family residences (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, apartment buildings, etc.), and residential subdivision developments

Period of Significance: 1945-1980

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual residential property from this period may be significant for its association with Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. In general, tract houses are not individually significant, but a geographically-linked collection may be eligible as a historic district. A post-World War II residential historic district may be eligible for playing an important role in the post-war suburbanization of San Luis Obispo. 	<p>Resources eligible under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and feeling.</p> <p>In historic districts, some alterations to individual buildings, such as replacement windows in original openings, replacement of roof materials, and replacement garage doors may be acceptable as long as the district as a whole continues to convey its significance. The district overall should convey a strong sense of time and place.</p>
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in San Luis Obispo's history 	<p>A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.</p>

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
<p>C/3/3 (Architecture)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an excellent or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with the period • As the work of noted architect Custom-designed buildings designed or influenced by a Cal Poly professor. • In general, tract houses are not individually significant, but a geographically-linked collection may be eligible as a historic district. A post-World War II residential historic district may be eligible for collectively representing postwar planning and design principles. 	<p>Individual residential properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.</p> <p>In historic districts, some alterations to individual buildings, such as replacement windows in original openings, replacement of roof materials, and replacement garage doors may be acceptable as long as the district as a whole continues to convey its significance. The district overall should convey a strong sense of time and place.</p>

Extant Examples: Mid-20th Century Residential Development



1944 Corralitos, built 1950. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



2554 Greta Place, built 1951. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



314 San Miguel Avenue, built c.1960. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Ken Schwartz House, 201 Buena Vista Avenue, built 1964. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Mid-20th Century Commercial Development



Downtown San Luis Obispo. Source: Hemmings Daily (c. 1950s).

During the post-World War II period, Americans, including rapidly suburbanizing Californians, became ever more reliant on personal automobiles for transportation. Automobiles were more affordable than ever and new housing subdivisions and retail environments such as shopping malls were constructed with personal vehicles in mind. Many existing commercial buildings in the original downtown core were modified with contemporary storefronts during this period. New commercial development during this period included a small number of low-density commercial retail and office buildings located outside of the historic core. Many of these low-density office buildings were developed for use as medical offices and health services. The most prominent of these is the Kundert Medical Building, which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and completed in 1956. During the 1950s, San Luis Obispo saw its share of suburban sprawl within geographically defined borders, and the first mall was built just a few miles from downtown. The Madonna Plaza shopping mall opened at the south side of the city in 1968. In the 1970s, another mall was added. But unlike in other communities in California, the two shopping centers proved to be little competition for downtown San Luis Obispo as the major commercial center.

In 1958, the U. S. Highway 101 was completed, which became a major thoroughfare for automobile tourism in the area. San Luis Obispo's location near California's Central Coast and at the mid-point between San Francisco and Los Angeles continued to make it an attractive destination for automobile tourism. Additional motels were developed around the San Luis Obispo that were easily accessible from the freeway in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1950 Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps show a proliferation of motels, auto camps, and tourist courts at the north end of the city along Monterey Street between the railroad tracks along Pepper Street and the State Highway. These mid-century iterations of the earlier auto camps of the early 20th century typically consisted of connected rows of guest rooms with parking directly in front of each unit, rather than individual cabins. Mid-century motels often used creative architectural elements on their front facades and signs to differentiate them and draw the attention of passing motorists.

The most prominent example is the Madonna Inn, developed by local construction magnate and entrepreneur, Alex Madonna. Madonna opened the Madonna Inn in 1961 and ran the hotel until his death in 2004; the inn is still owned and operated by the Madonna family today. The Madonna Inn exemplifies the eye-catching designs and prominent signage that characterized roadside motel design of the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1950, the Sunset Drive-In opened in San Luis Obispo. The first drive-in theater opened in New Jersey in 1933. The drive-in reached the height of its popularity in the 1950s and 1960s, as over 4,000 outdoor theaters were opened across the country, accounting for 25% of the nation's movie screens. By the late 1980s, more than three-quarters of the country's drive-ins closed as multiplexes proliferated. As of January 2013, drive-ins only accounted for 1.5% of the nation's theaters. In California, fewer than twenty of the state's more than two hundred theaters remain. Of those that are extant, many have been substantially altered or no longer operate as theaters. The Sunset Drive-In still operates as a drive-in theater today, representing a rare remaining example in California.



Detail from 1950 Sanborn Map Company fire insurance map, showing a group of motels and motor courts (parcels highlighted blue) at the intersection of Monterey, Palm, Grand, and Murray streets. Source: San Francisco Public Library.



Milestone Mo-tel under construction, 2223 Monterey Street, built 1924. Source: Huntington Library, San Marino.



Madonna Inn, 100 Madonna Road, 1961-1969. Source: madonnainn.com.

During the postwar economic boom, several San Luis Obispo families established long-running enterprises. In 1947, brothers William and Pino Cattaneo founded the Cattaneo Brothers sausage company, and William Cattaneo's wife, Mary (Piantanida) Cattaneo, worked as the company's bookkeeper. Paul Piantanida built an auto repair shop, Paul's Garage, in 1948 which now serves as the San Luis Obispo Children's Museum. Today, Cattaneo Brothers is run by descendants of the Piantanida and Cattaneo families. The first openly LGBTQ+ business in the city, the Journey's Inn bar and club, opened in 1979 at 2115 Broad Street. In 1982, the local chapter of the LGBTQ+ friendly church, the Metropolitan Community Church was located above the bar.¹⁴¹

Architectural styles associated with this period include Mid-century Modern. Architects who are represented in San Luis Obispo during this period include Frank Lloyd Wright and Craig Ellwood, along with local architects Mackey Deasy, Homer Delawie, George Hasslein, Warren Leopold, Paul Neel, and Piercy K. Notable local builders include Stan Bell, Leonard Blazer, Roger Brown, Alex Madonna, Patrick Smith, Arnold Volney, and Jack Westerman.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	Mid-20 th century commercial development typically includes retail storefronts, I haven't service stations, motels, banks, grocery stores, motels, drive-ins, coffee shops, bowling alleys, car washes, department stores, theaters, retail strips, and office buildings. San Luis Obispo has a collection of low-density commercial/professional buildings that also housed medical clinics and related services.
Period of Significance:	1945-1980
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), B/2/2 (Persons), C/3/3 (Architecture)

¹⁴¹ Mapping the Gay Guides, accessed October 11, 2024, <https://mappingthegayguides.org/viz/map>.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For a significant and/or influential role in post-World War II commercial development 	Commercial properties from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association.
B/2/2 (Persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For its association with a significant person in San Luis Obispo's history 	A commercial property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Persons) should retain integrity of design, feeling, and association , at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an excellent or rare example of a particular architectural style associated with the period As the work of a significant architect or designer As an excellent example of a post-World War II commercial property type Historic signs may also be eligible under this theme, as excellent or rare examples of commercial neon signs 	Commercial properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Extant Examples: Mid-20th Century Commercial Development



Madonna Inn, 100 Madonna Road, built 1961-1969. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Office Building, 84 Santa Rosa Street, built 1967. Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Sunset Drive-In, 225 Elks Lane, built 1950. Source Historic Resources Group (2013).



Kundert Medical Building, 1106 Pacific, built 1956. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).

Mid-20th Century Civic and Institutional Development

The population growth in the post-World War II era resulted in increased demand for civic and institutional buildings, including schools and a new city hall. Cal Poly expanded during this period, as returning veterans enrolled in great numbers under the G.I. Bill. One of the most significant buildings on the Cal Poly campus from this period is the “Weekend House.” The Weekend House was originally designed by Craig Ellwood in 1964; it was constructed by Cal Poly students in 1967-1968 as part of a class led by Ellwood, who was serving as a visiting professor. In the 1970s, the San Luis Coastal Unified School District pursued an extensive building program—which included expanding the facilities of existing schools in the San Luis Obispo area and constructing new elementary, junior high, and high schools— though it was slowed by a nationwide recession.¹⁴²

New institutions formed and were founded to serve the needs of San Luis Obispo’s diversifying population, as well. The Springfield Baptist Church was constructed by the local African American community at 160 Brook Street and began services in 1947. It became an important community gathering place and center for local civil rights activity through the 1960s. Some members split off and formed a second church, St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church at 272 Pacific Street. The congregation of St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church returned to the original church site on Brook Street in the late 1960s¹⁴³ In 1976, a local chapter of the Metropolitan Community Church, headed by lesbian minister Tere Anne Roderick, began religious services at 793 Higuera Street (extant). The MCC welcomed all people but had a special focus on reaching out to and providing a spiritual outlet for the LGBTQ+ community.¹⁴⁴

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types: Civic and institutional property types include schools, libraries, post offices, and fire and police stations. Non-governmental institutional buildings include churches and meeting halls.

Note on intangible cultural heritage: Civic and institutional properties, including social halls, religious buildings, and other community gathering spaces, may also be associated with intangible cultural heritage, such as annual festivals, parades, and/or other cultural events and practices.

Period of Significance: 1945-1980

Criteria for Eligibility: A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

¹⁴² Bob Anderson, “November Vote Likely on \$1 School Tax Hike,” *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 19 June 1974.

¹⁴³ History Center San Luis Obispo County, “Eto Park and Brook Street in San Luis Obispo,” accessed June 19, 2024, <https://www.historycenterslo.org/uploads/1/2/5/3/125313011/walkingtourhandout-v8.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ “Worship in the Church of Synagogue of Your Choice,” *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 10 April 1976.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For its role in post-World War II civic or institutional development • For its association with a particular cultural or ethnic community in San Luis Obispo. A property may be associated with migration or community formation in San Luis Obispo, a community-serving or religious organizations or intangible cultural heritage, or civil rights activism. 	Individual properties significant under Criterion A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an excellent example of a post-World War II property type • As an excellent example of a particular architectural style • As the work of noted architect 	Individual properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Extant Examples: Mid-20th Century Civic and Institutional Development



San Luis Obispo City Hall, 990 Palm Street, built 1951. Designated as a San Luis Obispo Historic Landmark. Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).



George Hasslein, Mount Carmel Lutheran Church, 1701 Fredericks Street, built 1958.
Source: Page & Turnbull (2025).

Mid-20th Century Transportation and Infrastructure, 1945-1980

Transportation and infrastructure-related development in the postwar decades continued to be oriented around the automobile. By the mid-1940s, the city's streets were rutted, pockmarked, and in need of repairs.¹⁴⁵ The city embarked on a program to raise funds for street improvements. In 1948, the City passed Ordinance No. 298, regulating street parking, loading zones, and one-way street traffic.¹⁴⁶ During and immediately following World War II federal legislation, including the Federal-Aid Highway Acts of 1944 and 1956, provided funding mechanisms for a national system of highways. In 1958, the U. S. Highway 101 was completed, which became a major thoroughfare for automobile tourism in the area.

However, by the 1970s, California Governor Jerry Brown encouraged a shift from highway building to mass transit. In 1974, San Luis Obispo Transit (SLO Transit) began operating local bus service. The San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority introduced intercity bus transportation between cities in San Luis Obispo County in the 1980s.¹⁴⁷

In spite of the State's encouragement of public transit, the automobile continued to dominate. Throughout the 1970s, business owners and City officials sought solutions to the lack of sufficient parking in the downtown area through installing parking meters and plans to construct new parking garages.¹⁴⁸ The City also embarked on several projects to widen key arteries through the city, including Broad Street, Santa Rosa Street, San Luis Drive/Johnson Avenue, Prefumo Canyon Road, Los Osos Valley Road, and others. The projects required the demolition of buildings along the streets and realignments of intersections.¹⁴⁹

San Luis Obispo experienced repeated floods that caused millions of dollars in damage, including record-breaking events in 1969 and 1973.¹⁵⁰ The city developed a flood plan that called for enlarging creek channels, culverts, and bridges. Subsequently, many infrastructure projects in the latter part of the 20th century focused on flood control.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ "City Rejects Petition on Street Work," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 7 October 1947: 1.

¹⁴⁶ "Ordinance No. 298 (New Series)," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 16 March 1948: 6.

¹⁴⁷ "San Luis Obispo Transit," Canadian Public Transit Discussion Board, accessed October 24, 2024, https://cptdb.ca/wiki/index.php/San_Luis_Obispo_Transit.

¹⁴⁸ "Easing Pains of Parking," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 21 June 1977; "New Parking Meters Will Go Up in SLO," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 17 August 1977.

¹⁴⁹ "City of San Luis Obispo State of California Notice to Bidders," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 29 March 1975; "City of San Luis Obispo State of California Notice to Bidders," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 19 November 1975.

¹⁵⁰ "Flooding History," Public Works, County of San Luis Obispo, accessed November 18, 2024,

<https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/committees-programs/flood-control-zones/zone-9-%E2%80%93-san-luis-obispo-creek-watershed/flooding-history>.

¹⁵¹ Carl Neiburger, "Study Proposes Floodproof SLO," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 28 June 1977.



Aerial photograph taken in 1947. Source: Fairchild Aerial Surveys, Flight C-11252, University of California, Santa Barbara Libraries.



Aerial photograph taken in 1965, showing the completed route of Highway 101. Source: Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys, Inc., Flight HB-CX, University of California, Santa Barbara Libraries.

Evaluation Criteria

Associated Property Types:	Transportation and Infrastructure-Related Properties
Property Type Summary:	Transportation-related property types include segments of highways, overpasses, bridges, tunnels, traffic management features and roadside appurtenances. Infrastructure-related property types include buildings and features associated with public infrastructure agencies such as those providing power and water.
Period of Significance:	1945-1980
Criteria for Eligibility:	A/1/1 (Events), C/3/3 (Architecture)

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Standards
A/1/1 (Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an example of an important transportation-related property that influenced the development of San Luis Obispo. • As an early and/or influential transportation-related development. • For historic districts, as a cohesive group or collection of properties developed for or used by the transportation-related commercial businesses or industries. 	Transportation-related properties from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/1 (Events) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
C/3/3 (Architecture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rare or unique example of a particular type of transportation-related development • As a rare or unique example of transportation-related type or method of construction. • As the work of a significant architect or designer 	Transportation-related properties significant under Criterion C/3/3 (Architecture) should retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling

Extant Examples: Mid-20th Century Transportation and Infrastructure, 1945-1980

Examples of historic resources associated with this theme may be identified in future survey efforts.

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APPENDIX A: EVALUATION CRITERIA

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places is an authoritative guide to be used by Federal, State, and local governments, private groups, and citizens to identify the Nation's cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment.¹⁵² The National Park Service administers the National Register program. Listing in the National Register assists in preservation of historic properties in several ways, including recognition that a property is of significance to the nation, the state, or the community; consideration in the planning for federal or federally assisted projects; eligibility for federal tax benefits; and qualification for Federal assistance for historic preservation, when funds are available.

To be eligible for listing and/or listed in the National Register, a resource must possess significance in American history and culture, architecture, or archaeology. Listing in the National Register is primarily honorary and does not in and of itself provide protection of a historic resource. The primary effect of listing in the National Register on private owners of historic buildings is the availability of financial and tax incentives. In addition, for projects that receive Federal funding, a clearance process must be completed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. State and local regulations may also apply to properties listed in the National Register.

The criteria for listing in the National Register follow established guidelines for determining the significance of properties. The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.¹⁵³

Standard preservation practice evaluates collections of buildings from similar time periods and historic contexts as historic *districts*. The National Park Service defines a historic district as “a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² 36CFR60, Section 60.2.

¹⁵³ 36CFR60, Section 60.3.

¹⁵⁴ *National Register Bulletin 15*. (5)

CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The California Register is an authoritative guide in California used by State and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify the State's historical resources and to indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change.¹⁵⁵

The criteria for eligibility for listing in the California Register are based upon National Register criteria. These criteria are:

1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
2. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history.
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values.
4. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

The California Register consists of resources that are listed automatically and those that must be nominated through an application and public hearing process. The California Register includes the following:

- California properties formally determined eligible for (Category 2 in the State Inventory of Historical Resources), or listed in (Category 1 in the State Inventory), the National Register of Historic Places.
- State Historical Landmarks No. 770 and all consecutively numbered state historical landmarks following No. 770. For state historical landmarks preceding No. 770, the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) shall review their eligibility for the California Register in accordance with procedures to be adopted by the State Historical Resources Commission (commission).
- Points of historical interest which have been reviewed by the OHP and recommended for listing by the commission for inclusion in the California Register in accordance with criteria adopted by the commission.¹⁵⁶

Other resources which may be nominated for listing in the California Register include:

- Individual historical resources.
- Historical resources contributing to the significance of an historic district.
- Historical resources identified as significant in historical resources surveys, if the survey meets the criteria listed in subdivision (g) of Section 5023.1" of the Public Resources Code.

¹⁵⁵ California PRC, Section 5023.1(a).

¹⁵⁶ California PRC, Section 5023.1(d).

- Historical resources and historic districts designated or listed as city or county landmarks or historic properties or districts pursuant to any city or county ordinance, if the criteria for designation or listing under the ordinance have been determined by the office to be consistent with California Register criteria.
- Local landmarks or historic properties designated under any municipal or county ordinance.¹⁵⁷

LOCAL DESIGNATION

Individual resources and historic districts in San Luis Obispo may be designated according to the following categories:

- *Landmarks* are historic resources which are of the greatest importance at the local, regional, state, or national level in terms of age, architectural or historical significance, rarity, or association with important persons or events in the City's past, which meet one or more of the significance criteria and which retain a high degree of integrity. Individual properties which have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and/or California Register of Historical Resources are automatically included in the Inventory of Historical Resources as Landmarks.
- *Local Register Resources* are historic resources which are important locally for their architectural or historical significance, rarity, or association with important persons or events in the City's past and which retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance.
- *Historic Districts* are discrete areas or neighborhoods with concentrations of buildings, structures, objects, or sites which help define an area or neighborhood's significant architectural, cultural, and historic character or sense of place and which meet one or more of the criteria outlined below, and which retain integrity. Historic districts consist of identified contributors and non-contributors within a defined boundary. Landmarks and Local Register Resources within the boundary of a historic district may be contributors or non-contributors to the district's significance.

To be eligible for designation, a Landmark, Local Register Resource, or Historic District should be at least fifty years old (if less than fifty it must be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand its historical importance), demonstrate significance under at least one of the following criteria, and retain integrity as defined below. These criteria match those used for evaluation for eligibility for the National Register and California Register.

1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
2. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.

¹⁵⁷ California PRC, Section 5023.1(e).

3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect or design professional of merit, or possesses high artistic values.
4. Information Potential: It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

In addition to eligibility under one or more of these significance criteria, Historic Districts should also demonstrate a sufficient concentration of contributing resources (unless the district is discontinuous) and continuity of design or thematic associations to convey their character and significance.

INTEGRITY

In addition to meeting any or all of the designation criteria listed above, properties nominated must also possess historic *integrity*. Historic integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance and is defined as “the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic period.”¹⁵⁸

The National Register recognizes seven aspects or qualities that comprise integrity, which are also referenced in the City’s local ordinance: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. These qualities are defined as follows:

Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event took place.

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ *National Register Bulletin 16A*.

¹⁵⁹ U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 1995.

In assessing a property's integrity, the National Park Service recognizes that properties change over time. *National Register Bulletin 15* provides:

To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. It is not necessary for a property to retain all its historic physical features or characteristics. The property must retain, however, the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity.

A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.¹⁶⁰

For properties which are considered significant under National Register Criteria A and B, *National Register Bulletin 15* states:

A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s).

A property important for illustrating a particular architectural style or construction technique must retain most of the physical features that constitute that style or technique.¹⁶¹

A property that has sufficient integrity for listing at the national, state, or local level will typically retain a majority of the identified character-defining features, and will retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. The required aspects of integrity are dependent on the reason for a property's significance. Increased age and rarity of the property type are also considerations when assessing integrity thresholds.

For example, for properties that are significant for their architectural merit, a higher priority is placed on integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. For properties that are significant for their association with important events or people, integrity of feeling and/or association may be more important.

To convey its historical significance, a property that has sufficient integrity for listing in the national or state register will generally retain a majority of its character-defining features. However, the necessary aspects of integrity also depend on the reason the property is significant. High priority is typically placed on integrity of design, materials, and workmanship for properties significant for their architectural design (Criterion C/3/3), while for properties significant in association with events or people (Criteria A/1/1 and B/2/2), these aspects are only necessary to the extent that they help the property convey integrity of feeling and/or association. Similarly, integrity of location and setting are crucial for properties significant in association with events (Criterion A/1/1) but are typically less important for properties significant in association with people (Criterion B/2/2) or architectural design (Criterion C/3/3).

¹⁶⁰*National Register Bulletin 15.*

¹⁶¹*National Register Bulletin 15.*

For properties significant under any of these criteria, it is possible for some materials to be replaced without drastically affecting integrity of design, as long as these alterations are subordinate to the overall character of the building. For example, minor alterations such as window replacement may be acceptable in residential districts, but not in an individual property designed by a notable architect or builder. Properties that are significant for their association with an ethnic or cultural group may be a rare extant property or may be associated with intangible cultural heritage, and it should be understood that these properties may have been altered over time to meet the changing needs of the community. As such, the aspects of integrity that are most important for these properties include location, feeling, and association, and design to a lesser degree. A property associated with an ethnic or cultural group may have some alteration to its design, but may remain eligible as long as the property has enough of its essential physical features to be able to convey its reason for significance. A rule of thumb is that the property would be recognizable to a community member who was familiar with the property during its period of significance.

Evaluations of integrity should also include some basis of comparison. In other words, the evaluator should understand the relative levels of integrity associated with each property type. Some properties may rate exceptionally highly in all aspects of integrity; such properties should be given high priority in preservation planning efforts and are more likely to be eligible for listing in the National Register, in addition to the California and San Luis Obispo registers. Generally, a property with exceptional integrity will have undergone few or no alterations since its original construction and will not have been moved from its original location. Conversely, increased age and rarity of the property type may lower the threshold required for sufficient integrity.

Where properties have previously been altered, historic integrity can be increased if restoration or rehabilitation projects are conducted accurately based on documentary evidence, such as historic photographs and/or original drawings.

Finally, it should be stressed that historic integrity and condition are not the same. Buildings with evident signs of deterioration can still retain eligibility for historic listing if it can be demonstrated that they retain enough character-defining features to convey their significance.

APPENDIX B: HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN SAN LUIS OBISPO

Introduction

This section describes the predominant construction methods and historic architectural styles represented in San Luis Obispo. This section can be used to supplement or expand the City’s existing Guide to Historic Architectural Styles in San Luis Obispo.¹⁶² The information below briefly describes the origin of each style, provides a list of character-defining features, and includes extant local examples.¹⁶³ A property that is eligible for designation as a good example of its architectural style retains most - though not necessarily all - of the character-defining features of the style, and continues to exhibit its historic appearance. For guidance on the proper treatment of historic resources and appropriate alterations to specific architectural styles, refer to the City of San Luis Obispo Design Guidelines,¹⁶⁴ and the Historic Preservation Program Guidelines.¹⁶⁵

The diverse architectural character of San Luis Obispo reflects changes in popular tastes over time. These include Victorian-era styles of the late 19th-century (Italianate, Gothic Revival, Stick/Eastlake, Queen Anne); the Craftsman style, a distinctly regional style that enjoyed widespread popularity in the first two decades of the 20th century; Period Revival styles of the 1920s and 1930s which made explicit references to their European predecessors (Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Renaissance Revival, Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival); and the Modern styles of the late 1930s through the 1950s (Streamline Moderne, Minimal Traditional, Mid-Century Modern, Ranch).

While some buildings are thorough representations of a particular architectural style, others are more restrained or subtle in their design. Many buildings display certain characteristics of popular styles of a period, but are less elaborated than their high-style counterparts. In some cases, buildings may display characteristics of more than one architectural style or type popular at the time of its construction.

¹⁶² City of San Luis Obispo, Historic Resources Survey Program, “Guide to Historic Architectural Styles in San Luis Obispo,” October, 1982.

¹⁶³ All photographs in the “Architectural Character” section were taken 2012-2013.

¹⁶⁴ City of San Luis Obispo, “Community Design Guidelines,” June 2010.

¹⁶⁵ City of San Luis Obispo, “Historic Preservation Program Guidelines,” November 2010.

Adobe Construction

From the 1820s to the mid-1800s, adobe construction was the primary building type in San Luis Obispo. Early adobe buildings were typically small, single-story structures, with thick adobe walls, low sloping tile roofs, and wood detailing. Adobe construction consists of thick walls composed of large sun-dried bricks, usually made from clay, sand, and straw and covered with whitewash. The unreinforced adobe walls typically vary from one and one-half to six feet thick, resting on a dirt or rock foundation. Roofs are typically tile or wood shingle, resting on wooden roof timbers. Door and window openings are normally surrounded by heavy timbers, often with a prominent timber lintel above the openings. There are examples with second story additions that are referred to as Monterey Style adobes. Adobe construction demonstrates a continuation of indigenous building traditions that were passed down from generation to generation of craftsmen. Adobe construction used locally available resources, and was appropriate for the climate in the Southwest, staying cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

The majority of the extant adobes in and around San Luis Obispo were built in the second half of the 19th century. Following California's annexation to the United States in 1850, there was a migration of settlers from the east. During this period many adobe structures were destroyed to make way for new development. Many were altered during this period, with the addition of wood siding, composition roofing, and exterior finishes that may have obscured the adobe structure beneath. Clapboard siding was commonly used to protect adobe blocks from weathering, or to create a more stylish, ornamental appearance. In some cases, adobes were covered with a stucco or plaster finish.

Character-defining features include:

- Rectangular plan
- Thick masonry walls of adobe brick
- Simple, unadorned exteriors (often with stucco cladding)
- Few, small window openings
- Simple arrangement of interior spaces



Murray Adobe, 747 Monterey Street, built 1850.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.



Butron Adobe, 466 Dana Street, built 1860.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.

Commercial Vernacular

Although not an officially recognized style, “commercial vernacular” describes simple commercial structures with little decorative ornamentation, common in American cities and towns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They are typically brick in construction, with minimal decorative detailing.

Character-defining features include:

- Simple square or rectangular form
- Flat roof with a flat or stepped parapet
- Brick exterior wall surfaces, with face brick on the primary facade
- First-story storefronts, typically with a continuous transom window above
- Wood double-hung sash upper-story windows, often in pairs
- Segmental arch window and door openings on side and rear elevations
- Decorative detailing, if any, may include cornices, friezes, quoins, or stringcourses



1901 Broad Street.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



1401 Osos Street.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Gothic Revival (Carpenter Gothic)

Like the Italianate style, Gothic Revival emerged in England as part of the Picturesque Movement. Often termed “Carpenter Gothic” in the United States, this style commonly was applied to both residences and churches. Buildings may be of wood or masonry construction, but wood-frame predominates in domestic examples.

Character-defining features include:

- Asymmetrical façade
- Vertical emphasis
- Steeply-pitched roof, often with cross gables and overhanging eaves
- Often features a square or octagonal tower
- Typically have horizontal wood exterior cladding
- Tall narrow windows, commonly with pointed arches
- One-story entry or full-width porch, often supported by flattened Gothic arches
- Fanciful wood ornamentation, including decorative vergeboards



McManus House, 639 Pismo Street, built 1901.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.



Biddle House, 552 Pismo Street, built 1889.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.

Stick/Eastlake

The Stick style is an architectural link between the earlier Gothic Revival and later Queen Anne style, all of which are adapted from Medieval buildings traditions. The Stick style is defined primarily by its decorative detailing, where the wall surface itself is treated as a decorative element, frequently with visible stick work. The term “Eastlake” typically refers to the decorative ornamentation found on Victorian-era residences, such as those designed in the Stick style.

Character-defining features include:

- Steeply-pitched gabled roof, usually with cross gables
- Decorative trusses at the gable apex
- Overhanging eaves with exposed rafters
- Wood exterior wall cladding with applied decorative stick work
- Entry or full-width porches with diagonal or curved braces
- May incorporate Eastlake detailing



Shipsey House, 1266 Mill Street, built 1890.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Queen Anne

The Queen Anne style was one of the most popular Victorian-era styles for residential buildings in California. Like the Stick style that it quickly replaced, Queen Anne uses exterior wall surfaces as a primary decorative element.

Character-defining features include:

- Asymmetrical façade
- Steeply-pitched roof of irregular shape, usually with a dominate front-facing gable
- Wooden exterior wall cladding with decorative patterned shingles
- Projecting partial-, full-width or wrap-around front porch, usually one story in height
- Cut-away bay windows
- Wood double-hung sash windows
- Towers topped by turrets, domes or cupolas
- Tall decorative brick chimneys
- Ornamentation may include decorative brackets, bargeboards and pendants, as well as Eastlake details, such as spindle work



Crocker House, 793 Buchon Street, built 1901-1902.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.



Stanton House, 752 Buchon Street, built 1903-1905.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.

Neo-Classical Cottage

The term “Neo-Classical Cottage” is used to describe simple house forms or cottages with fewer decorative features than other styles from the period. While vernacular residences may display certain characteristics of recognizable styles, decorative detailing is typically confined to the porch or cornice line.

Character-defining features include:

- Symmetrical façade
- Simple square or rectangular form
- Gabled or hipped roof with boxed or open eaves
- Wood exterior cladding
- Simple window and door surrounds
- Details may include cornice line brackets
- Porch support with turned spindles or square posts



1203 Pismo Street, built c.1900.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



1211 Pismo Street, built 1908.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Residential Vernacular

The term “Residential Vernacular” is used to describe simple houses or cottages with little or no distinguishing decorative features. These buildings are characterized by their simplicity and lack of any characteristics of recognizable styles.

Character-defining features include:

- Simple square or rectangular form
- Gabled or hipped roof with boxed or open eaves
- Wood exterior cladding
- Simple window and door surrounds



Fitzpatrick House, 670 Islay Street, built 1880.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Anderson House, 532 Dana Street, built 1898.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.

Mission Revival

The Mission Revival style is indigenous to California. Drawing upon its own colonial past, Mission Revival was the Californian counterpart to the Colonial Revival of the Northeastern states. Never common beyond the Southwest, its regional popularity was spurred by its adoption by the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railways as the preferred style for train stations and resort hotels. Features of the California Missions were borrowed and freely adapted, often in combination with elements of other revival styles.

Character-defining features include:

- Red clay tile roofs with overhanging eaves and open rafters
- Shaped parapets
- Stucco exterior wall cladding
- Arched window and door openings
- Details may include bell towers, quatrefoil openings or patterned tiles



Old Gas Works, 280 Pismo Street, built 1902.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Milestone Motel, 2223 Monterey Street, built 1925.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.

Craftsman

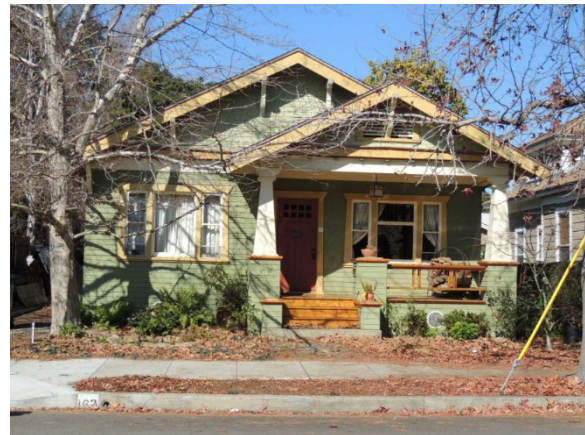
Craftsman architecture in America grew out of the late-19th century English Arts and Crafts movement. It stressed simplicity of design, hand-craftsmanship, and the relationship to the climate and landscape. Craftsman architecture was widely published in architectural journals and pattern books, popularizing the style throughout the country. Affordable and easily constructed from local materials, the mostly one- or one-and-a-half-story homes were often referred to as “bungalows” and dominated middle-class residential design during the first quarter of the 20th century.

Character-defining features include:

- Horizontal massing
- Low-pitched gabled roof
- Widely overhanging eaves with exposed rafters, beams, or braces
- Wood exterior wall cladding (shingle, shake, or clapboard)
- Projecting partial-, full-width or wrap-around front porch
- Heavy porch piers, often of river stone or masonry
- Wood-frame casement or double-hung sash windows, often grouped in multiples
- Widely-proportioned front doors, often with a beveled light
- Wide window and door surrounds, often with extended lintels
- Extensive use of natural materials (wood, brick or river stone)



Burch House, 1333 Mill Street, built 1915.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Residence, 863 Islay Street, built c. 1915.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Tudor Revival

The Tudor Revival style is loosely based on a variety of Medieval English building traditions. In the United States, these traditions are combined freely, but retain the steeply-pitched front-facing gable which is almost universally present as a dominant façade element. The style's popularity expanded dramatically in the 1920s and early 1930s, when masonry veneering techniques allowed even the most modest examples to mimic closely the brick and stone exteriors seen on English prototypes.

The Storybook cottage is a more whimsical version of Tudor Revival. Storybook residences typically feature roofs laid in irregular patterns and rolled eaves to suggest thatching, eyebrow arches over entries and dormers, and exterior walls with irregular plaster finish. The Storybook style was particularly popular in Hollywood where motion picture set designers sometimes moonlighted as architects.

Character-defining features include:

- Asymmetrical facade
- Steeply-pitched gabled roof with a prominent front-facing gable
- Stucco or brick exterior wall cladding, typically with half-timbering
- Tall, narrow divided-light windows, casement or double-hung sash, often arranged in multiples
- May display picture windows with leaded diamond panes
- Small gabled entry porch, often with arched openings
- Details may include stone or brick accents or faux quoining



Dunne House, 59 Benton Way, built 1927.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.



1167 Marsh Street, built 1930.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

American Colonial Revival

The Colonial Revival style proliferated during the first half of the 20th century. This style incorporates traditions from the Georgian, Adam and early Classical Revival styles that were prevalent during the English colonial period. Dutch colonial influences were also incorporated, which often include a gambrel roof. Earlier examples were rarely accurate recreations but were instead free interpretations with details inspired by colonial precedents, while later examples shifted to more historically correct proportions and details.

Character-defining features include:

- Side gable or hipped roofs
- Wood exterior wall cladding, typically horizontal
- Accentuated front entry or portico, featuring decorative pediments supported by pilasters or slender columns
- Wood double-hung sash windows with multi-pane glazing
- Front doors flanked by sidelights with fanlights above
- Fixed wooden shutters



1727 Corralitos Avenue, built c.1940.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



1624 Morro Street.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Classical Revival

The Classical Revival style did not achieve the broad popularity of its closely-related Colonial Revival contemporary. The style is best identified by its symmetrical façade, which is typically dominated by a full-height porch with the roof supported by classical columns. Like the Renaissance Revival, this style was widely used for imposing civic buildings, institutional buildings, and banks.

Character-defining features include:

- Symmetrical façade
- Front- or side-gabled roof
- Wood or masonry exterior wall cladding
- Full-height gabled or pedimented front porch
- Porch roof supported by slender fluted columns with Ionic or Corinthian capitals
- Wood double-hung sash windows with multi-pane glazing
- Details may include dentils, a wide frieze beneath the cornice, and roofline balustrades



Stover's Sanitarium, 1160 Marsh Street, built 1911.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Masonic Temple, 856 Marsh Street, built 1913.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Italianate

The Italianate style began in England as part of the Picturesque Movement. As used in the United States, this style generally followed the informal model of the simple Italian farmhouse, but was adapted into an indigenous style. This style did not enjoy the widespread popularity of other Victorian-era styles, and relatively few Italianate buildings were built.

Character-defining features include:

- Symmetrical façade
- Low pitched hipped or flat roof
- Widely overhanging eaves with large decorative brackets
- Tall narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above
- Elaborated window crowns
- One-story entry porch, often supported by square posts with beveled corners
- Centrally-placed square tower or cupola



Jack House, 536 Marsh Street, built 1880.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Fitzgerald House, 794 Buchon Street, built 1902.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Renaissance Revival

Renaissance Revival buildings were often fairly literal interpretations of the Italian originals, unlike the free interpretations of the preceding Italianate style. Its formal, symmetrical facades and Classical or Beaux Arts details including quoins, roofline balustrades, pedimented windows, molded cornices and belt courses were often used for imposing civic buildings, institutional buildings, and banks.

- Character-defining features include:
- Symmetrical facade
- Tiled low-pitched hip roof, sometimes flat roof
- Boxed eaves with decorative brackets
- Stucco or masonry exterior wall cladding
- Arched window and door openings on the first story
- Wood divided-light casement or double-hung sash windows in the upper stories
- Front entry accentuated with slender classical columns or pilasters



Andrews Building, 998 Monterey Street, built 1893-1906.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Sinsheimer Building, 849 Monterey Street, built 1884.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Spanish Colonial Revival

Enormously popular in Southern California from the late 1910s through the late 1930s, the Spanish Colonial Revival style emerged from a conscious effort by architects to emulate older Spanish architectural traditions, and break with Eastern colonial influences. At the peak of its popularity, design features of other regions of the Mediterranean were often creatively incorporated, including those of Italy, France, and North Africa. The result was a pan-Mediterranean *mélange* of eclectic variations on Spanish Revival styles.

Character-defining features include:

- Asymmetrical facade
- Red clay tile hip or side-gable roof, or flat roof with a tile-clad parapet
- Stucco exterior cladding, forming uninterrupted wall planes
- Wood-frame casement or double-hung windows, typically with divided lights
- Arched colonnades, window or door openings
- Decorative grilles of wood, wrought iron, or plaster
- Balconies, patios or towers
- Decorative terra cotta or tile work



M.F. Avila House, 1443 Osos Street.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Division of Highways District 5 Office, 50 Higuera Street,
built 1931.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.

Art Deco

Art Deco was the first popular style in the United States that consciously rejected historical precedents. Most commonly used in public and commercial buildings, Art Deco was rarely used in domestic architecture. The highly decorative style employed stylized floral, figurative and geometric motifs as decorative elements on the façade. Towers, piers and setbacks were employed to give the buildings a vertical emphasis.

Character-defining features include:

- Smooth wall surfaces, usually of stucco
- Stylized decorative floral and figurative elements
- Geometric decorative motifs such as zigzags and chevrons
- Towers, piers and other vertical elements
- Setbacks as design elements



Doton Building, 777 Higuera Street, built 1931.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



Fremont Theatre, 1035 Monterey Street, built 1941.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Streamline Moderne

Characterized by smooth surfaces, curved corners, and sweeping horizontal lines, Streamline Moderne is considered to be the first thoroughly Modern architectural style to achieve wide acceptance among the American public. Inspired by the industrial designs of the period, the style was popular throughout the United States in the late 1930s, particularly with the Federally-funded projects of the Works Progress Administration; buildings executed under those programs are often referred to as PWA Moderne. Unlike the equally modern but highly-ornamental Art Deco style of the late 1920s, Streamline Moderne was perceived as expressing an austerity more appropriate for Depression-era architecture.

Character-defining features include:

- Horizontal massing
- Asymmetrical façade
- Flat roof with coping
- Smooth wall surfaces, typically clad in stucco
- Curved end walls and corners
- Glass block and porthole windows
- Flat canopy over entrances
- Horizontal grooves or stringcourses
- Pipe railings along exterior staircases and balconies



1259 Palm Street.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



1219 Monterey Street.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Minimal Traditional

The Minimal Traditional style is defined by simple exterior forms and a restrained use of traditional architectural detailing. The Minimal Traditional house was immensely popular in large suburban residential developments throughout the United States during the World War II and postwar periods. The style had its origins in the principles of the Modern movement and the requirements of the FHA and other Federal programs of the 1930s. Its open plan reflected the developer's desire for greater efficiency. Modern construction methods addressed the builder's need to reduce costs and keep homes affordable to the middle class. Conventional detailing appealed to conservative home buyers and mortgage companies.

Character-defining features include:

- One-story
- Simple rectangular plan
- Medium or low-pitched hip or side-gable roof with shallow eaves
- Smooth stucco wall cladding, often with wood lap or stone veneer accents
- Wood multi-light windows (picture, double-hung sash, casement)
- Projecting three-sided oriel
- Shallow entry porch with slender wood supports
- Fixed wooden shutters
- Minimal decorative exterior detailing



Example of a Minimal Traditional House.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Ranch

The Ranch style enjoyed enormous popularity throughout the United States during the late 1950s and 1960s, becoming the predominant domestic style in Southern California’s postwar suburbs. The Ranch style emerged from the 1930s designs of Southern California architect Cliff May, who merged modernist ideas with traditional notions of the working ranches of the American West. The resulting architectural style – characterized by its low horizontal massing, sprawling interior plan, and wooden exterior detailing - embodied the mid-century ideal of “California living.”

Character-defining features include:

- One-story configuration
- Sprawling plan, often with radiating wings
- Low, horizontal massing with wide street facade
- Low-pitched hip or gable roof with wide open eaves and wood shakes
- Wood lap or board-and-batten cladding, often with brick or stucco accents
- Large wood multi-light windows (picture, double-hung sash, diamond-pane)
- Wide recessed front porch with wood supports and balustrades
- Attached two-stall garage
- Details may include wooden shutters, attic vents in gable ends, hipped dovecote, extended gables, or scalloped barge boards
- Common sub-styles include California Ranch and Modern Ranch



1755 Tanglewood.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



1749 San Luis Drive.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Mid-Century Modern

Mid-century Modern is a term used to describe a post-World War II iteration of the International Style in both residential and commercial design. The International Style was characterized by geometric forms, smooth wall surfaces, and an absence of exterior decoration. Mid-century Modern represents the adaptation of these elements to the local climate and topography, as well as to the postwar need for efficiently-built, moderately-priced homes and buildings.

The Mid-century Modern building is characterized by its clear expression of structure and materials, large expanses of glass, and open interior plan.

Character-defining features include:

- One or two-story configuration
- Simple geometric forms
- Expressed post-and-beam construction, in wood or steel
- Flat roof with wide overhanging eaves and cantilevered canopies
- Unadorned wall surfaces
- Exterior panels of wood, stucco, brick or stone
- Flush-mounted metal frame full-height and clerestory windows
- Exterior staircases, decks, patios and balconies
- Little or no exterior decorative detailing
- Expressionistic/Organic subtype: sculptural forms and geometric shapes, including butterfly, A-frame, folded plate or barrel vault roofs



2525 Augusta Street, built 1951.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).



201 Buena Vista Street, built 1964.
Source: Historic Resources Group (2013).

Googie

Googie has been described as Modernism for the masses. With its swooping lines and organic shapes, the style attempted to capture the playful exuberance of postwar America. Named for the John Lautner-designed Googie's Restaurant in Los Angeles, the style was widely employed in roadside commercial architecture of the 1950s, including coffee shops, bowling alleys, and car washes.

Character-defining features include:

- Expressive rooflines, including butterfly, folded-plate, and cantilevers
- Organic, abstract, and parabolic shapes
- Clear expression of materials, including concrete, steel, asbestos, cement, glass block, plastic, and plywood
- Large expanses of plate glass
- Thematic ornamentation, including tiki and space age motifs
- Primacy of signage, including the pervasive use of neon



SLO Coast Diner (former Denny's), 1460 Calle Joaquin, built c. 1960.
Source: City of San Luis Obispo.

APPENDIX C: PROPERTIES DESIGNATED AT THE STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL

National Register of Historic Places

HISTORIC NAME	NR REGISTRATION NUMBER	ADDRESS
Ah Louis Store	08000203	800 Palm Street
Myron Angel House	82000988	714 Buchon Street
Robert Jack House	92000312	536 Marsh Street
Pacific Coast Railway Company Grain Warehouse	88000921	65 Higuera Street
The Powerhouse	93000670	Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, northeast corner of South Perimeter Road & Cuesta Avenue
San Luis Obispo Carnegie Library	95000357	696 Monterey Street
Tribune-Republic Building	93000548	1763 Santa Barbara Street
William Shipsey House	10000115	1266 Mill Street
The Monday Club	16000230	1815 Monterey Street
Pereira Octagon Barn	13001068	4400 Octagon Way

California State Landmarks

HISTORIC NAME	REGISTRATION NUMBER	ADDRESS
Ah Louis Store	802	800 Palm Street
Dallidet Adobe	720	1185 Pacific Street
Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa	325	751 Pam Street

California Register of Historical Resources*

HISTORIC NAME	ADDRESS
San Luis Obispo Southern Pacific Station	1076 Railroad Avenue
Anderson Hotel	955 Monterey Street
Sunset Drive-In Theater	255 Elks Lane
Kundert Medical Building	1106 Pacific Street
Masonic Temple	859 Marsh Street
872 Morro Street	872 Morro Street
Teass House / Carpenter Building	890 Osos Street

* Based on listing in the Office of Historic Preservation Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD), dated September 2022.