

## Part I - History of Cayucos, CA

The central coast of California was home to Chumash and Salinan Native American Indian tribes for thousands of years before explorations by European cultures began. The voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542-1543, during which he claimed Alta California for the King of Spain, is the first written account of the California coast. As he sailed northwest along the Southern California coast,



Indians from many seaside villages paddled their canoes out to sea to greet these strange people in even stranger ships. His ships passed by the future town of Cayucos in November 1542. In September 1565, the log of the *San Pablo*, the first China ship of Manila galleons (1565-1815), recorded a position about thirty-two miles (8 leagues) from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County. Later Manila galleons often reached the California coast as far north as Cape Mendocino. When this occurred, the

Cayucos shoreline profile and Morro Rock would almost certainly have been a landmark guiding galleons south to Acapulco or Navidad, Mexico.

The first land party to explore the California central coast was the Gaspar de Portola expedition of 1769-1770. The party passed through Cayucos on September 8-9 and December 25-26, 1769. Subsequent expeditions by Portola, De Anza and others continued the Spanish settlement of California. In the 1790's, explorer George Vancouver conducted a survey of Spanish settlements on the California coast for King George III of England. His expedition sailed south off Cayucos in 1793 as he was mapping the coast. Ranching generated a vigorous trade with ports on the east coast of America, mainly trading cattle hides (also referred to as "California banknotes") for goods not available in frontier California. Richard Henry Dana vividly described his experiences in this trade in his classic literary work, *Two Years Before the Mast*, as he crewed aboard the trading ships *Pilgrim* and *Alert* (passing Cayucos) during 1834-1836.

Mexico ceded Alta California to the United States in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. San Luis Obispo County, including Cayucos, was one of the original twenty-seven counties of California when California was admitted to the union in 1850.

Gold had been discovered at Sutter's Fort near Sacramento in 1849, drawing thousands of immigrants to the Golden State to seek their fortune. Some did, most did not. Cattle drives to the gold country to feed the hordes of newcomers soon became a surer way to prosper than toiling to discover gold. Trading in hides and cattle came to an abrupt end - caused by diminishing gold discoveries and the Great Drought of 1862-1864. It is estimated that 300,000 head of cattle and 100,000 sheep died from lack of water and forage during this devastating period for California Ranchos. Many of these were intentionally destroyed in an attempt to save even a few animals for sustenance and commerce. The Great Drought brought an end to the hey-days of cattle ranching on the central coast.

In the aftermath of the collapse of large herds of cattle, small dairy farms became an important agricultural pursuit in the latter 1860's. Production of butter, cheese, and milk increased rapidly, so much so that Captain James Cass founded the town of Cayucos in 1867. He built a warehouse and wharf where coastal steamers docked on a regular basis to transport dairy products to large population centers in northern and southern California. The dairy farmers were primarily Portuguese and Swiss-Italians, of whom some descendants still ranch or reside in Cayucos in the twenty-first century. *Cayucos* is derived from Native American names for "canoe" or "kayak". third Sunday.



View of Cayucos Landing during "steamer and butter" days at pier and James Cass & Co. General Store, circa 1870-1879. (Courtesy of the Friends of the Cayucos Library—Maxine Hillyard Collection).



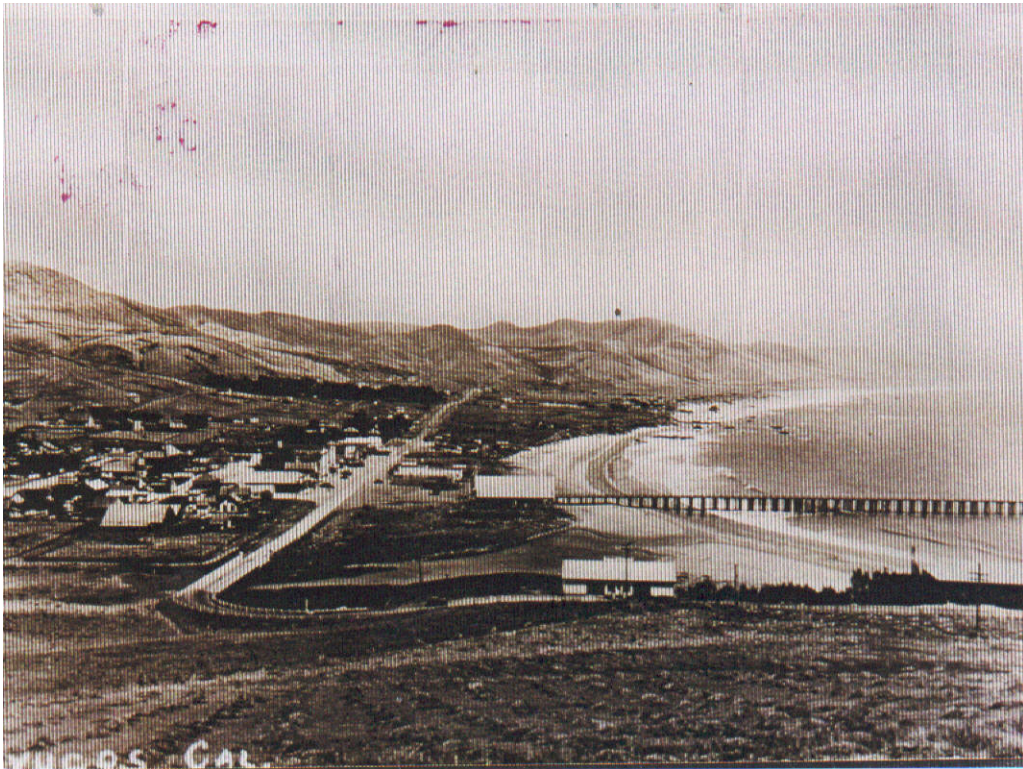


View to southeast showing 1878 wooden bridge over Cayucos Creek, Cass Landing and pier, circa 1878-1890. (Courtesy of the Friends of the Cayucos Library—Sam Borradori Collection).



View to north from Cayucos pier showing early development, circa 1880-1890. (Courtesy of the Friends of the Cayucos Library—Bobbie Canet Collection).



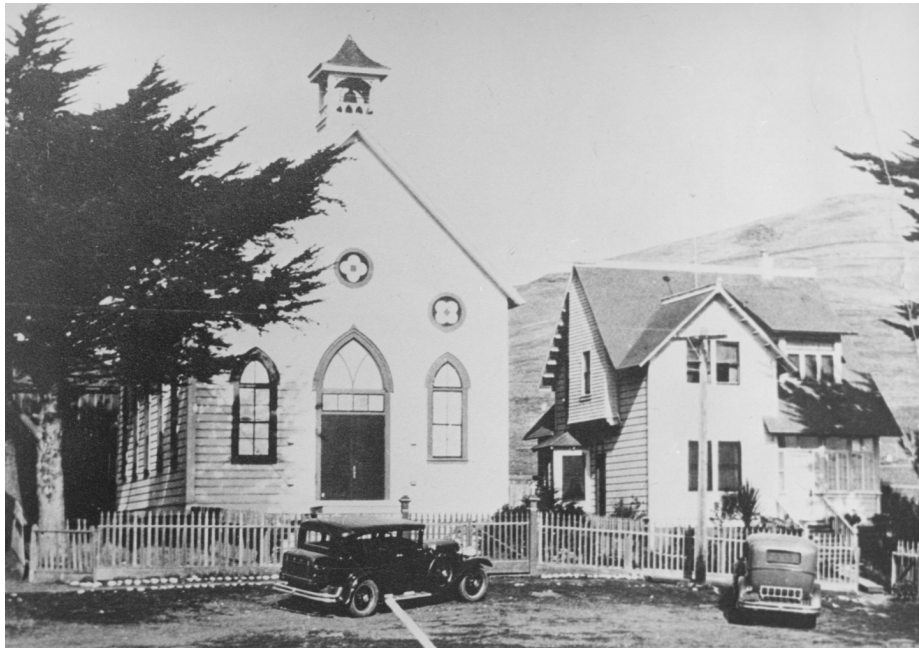


View to southeast showing Ocean Ave., pier and original St. Joseph's Church at NE corner of E St. and Ocean Ave. (center of photo), circa 1900-1920. (Courtesy of the Friends of the Cayucos Library).



Aerial view of Cayucos, circa 1950's, showing original St. Joseph's Church (center of photo, north side of Ocean Ave.), circa 1952-1960. (Courtesy of the Friends of the Cayucos Library—Bobbie Canet Collection).





## **Part II - History of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Cayucos, CA**

Cayucos had two churches around the beginning of the Twentieth Century. A Presbyterian church was built on the present site of the Cayucos elementary school on Cayucos Drive adjacent to Highway 1. Catholic Mass was celebrated in Cayucos on an irregular basis as early as 1885. The first St. Joseph's Church was constructed in 1900 at the northeast corner of Ocean Avenue and E Street. The first Mass in that church was offered in July, 1900. At that time, Cayucos was a mission church of San Luis Obispo, from which a priest would come to celebrate Mass each third Sunday.

In January 1904, the Diocese of Monterey-Los Angeles recorded a vote to separate the Cayucos, Cambria, San Simeon area from the Old Mission Parish of San Luis Obispo. The first pastor of the newly established parish was Fr. Joseph Wanner. He arrived in June 1905 and performed the first baptism on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Over the next fifty-five years, the parish switched back and forth between being a separate parish and a mission station. In 1961 St. Joseph's regained separate parish status for good.



Rev. Joseph Wanner,  
Founding Pastor





1935

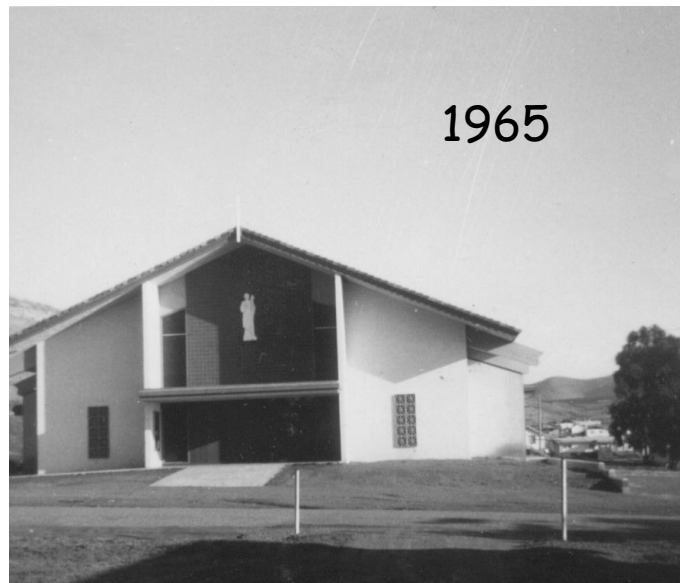


1911





The current building was erected in 1965. The church from 1900 at Ocean Ave. and E St. burned down in 1970 from unknown causes. As of 2008, the site of the first church remains vacant land.



The bell from the bell tower of the burned church has been retained, though weather and disuse for 40 years have not been kind to its physical condition nor appearance.

St. Joseph's Parish celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on May 22, 2005 with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Sylvester Ryan, Bishop of Monterey, assisted as concelebrant by the late, long-time pastor (1995-2003), Fr. Tony Gurnell.





Since 2003, St. Joseph's has had several priests in residence serving the Cayucos community. The present resident priest is Monsignor Charles Fatooh. Fr. Edward Holterhoff, pastor of St. Timothy's Church in Morro Bay, is the current parish administrator.

St. Joseph's Parish continues to be a vital community member of Cayucos, a haven for vacationing families from the Central Valley and more distant locales. It continues to serve as a spiritual home for Catholics living on the Central Coast and others pausing on their journey through our beautiful town.

