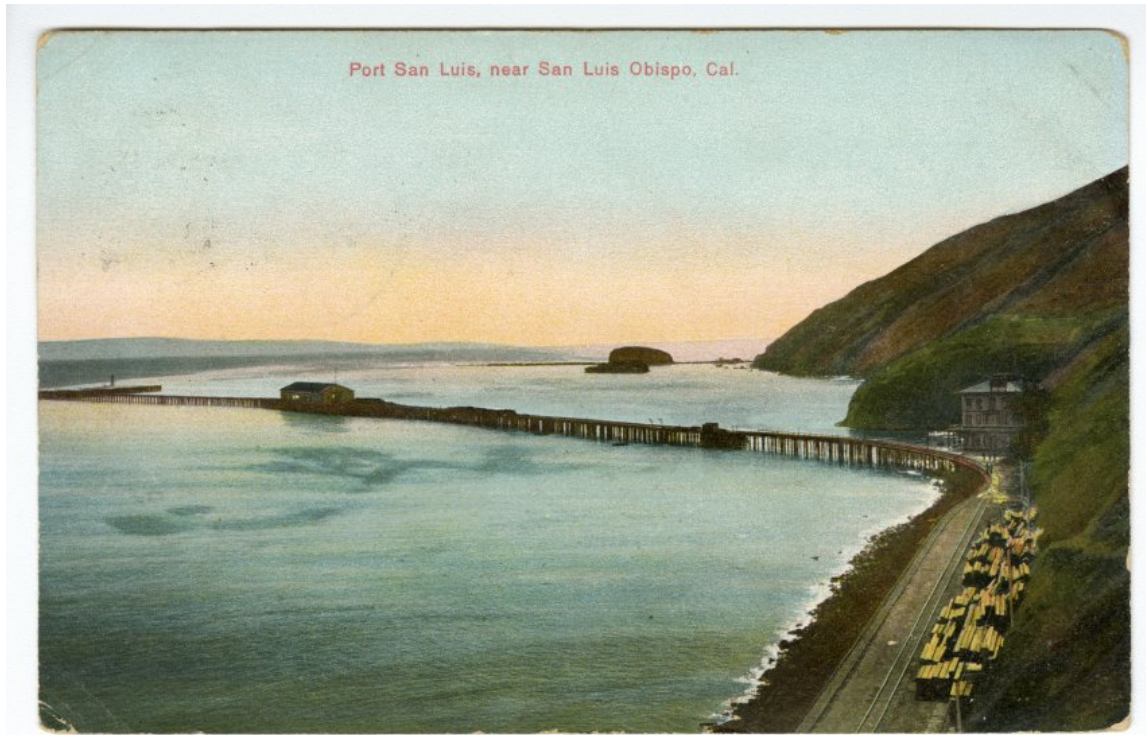


HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Harford Pier and the Hotel Marre

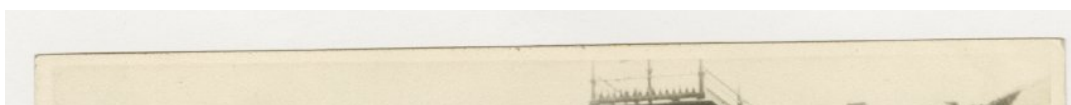


A Fine Spot for a Stay!

Prior to the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad Coast Route in 1901, the major and easiest means of transportation along the Pacific coast were the coastal steamers. San Luis Bay was ideally located as a stop for these steamers, and a number of wharves were built.

The last and most successful of these general cargo wharves was built by John Harford between 1871 and 1874. It was originally connected to the flats of San Luis Creek by a narrow-gauge horse-drawn and gravity railroad. The other wharves in the bay were built in later years and for other purposes.

In 1876 a steam railroad between the wharf and San Luis Obispo was opened and by this time the Ocean Hotel, catering to steamship passengers waiting for delayed ships or trains had been built on the edge of the wharf.



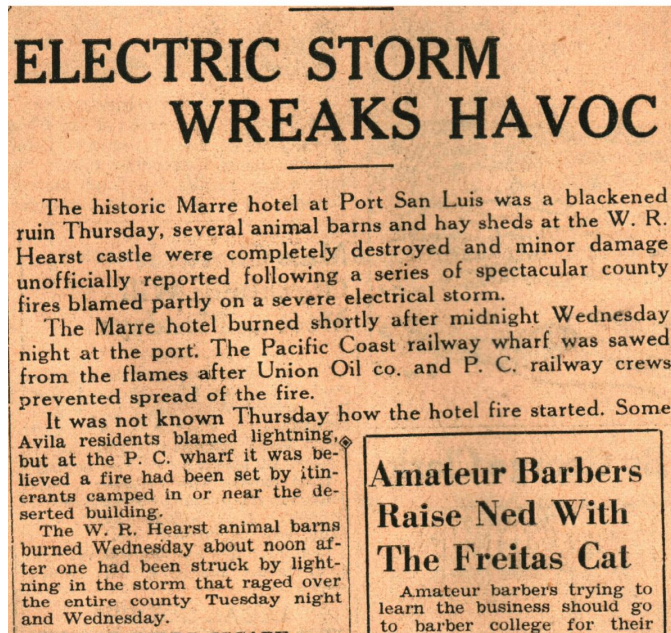


John Harford's holdings, including the hotel as well as land ringing the bay at Port San Luis was bought by Luigi Marre in 1882. Marre would go on to add thousands of acres to the ranch and ran a successful cattle operation.

The hotel was largely rebuilt in 1884. The redwood lumber was selected with care - it was boasted that no board contained a knothole. A dance floor was built over the ocean and the hotel quickly became the place to go. Marre had a young Italian artist paint frescos in the lobby, dining room, and bar.

In 1903, while driving cattle through Gaviota Pass, lightning spooked the cattle and Luigi Marre was caught in the stampede and died.

On September 19, 1934, the hotel burned to the ground. There had been a rash of costly fires in the county supposedly caused by lightning, but Hotel Marre was equipped with the latest in lightning rods. Arson was suspected.



This text was adapted from two sources.

The first was *Discovering San Luis Obispo County*, published in 1971, written by an uncredited group of 230 students from Cal Poly's School of Architecture and Environmental Design. Edited by Louisiana Clayton Dart.

The second was an article dated April 12, 1989 written by Jean Hubbard and published in the *Five Cities Times-Press-Recorder*.

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Thomas Kessler
Executive Director



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