

HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Happy 4th of July!



The Ah Louis store seen with its neighbors in Chinatown

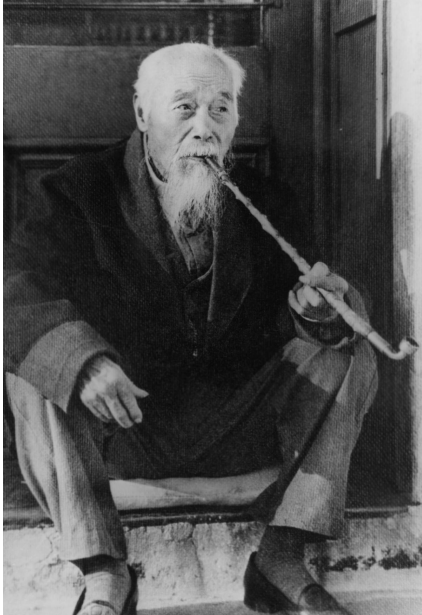
Fireworks from the Ah Louis Store

We must not forget the part our Chinatown of San Luis Obispo played in those early 4th of July's when fireworks were allowed in the city limits. So many fabulous fireworks came from there. The writer got a description of the activity from Howard Louis, son of Ah Louis. Ah Louis' Store specialized in them and made a big event of the sales. The counters and shelves were cleared of all other merchandise at that time and only fireworks were displayed. Many came from China, but oddly enough, about half came from Germany. Sales started two weeks before the Glorious Fourth.



Main Street in Morro Bay is decked out for the 4th in the late 1930s

There were firecrackers, called Sizzlers, and they came in bundles of 50 to 1000. Mr. Louis said they sometimes lighted a whole bundle of 1000, opened the door and tossed them out. That accounted for the paper in the streets, gutter high, and remember, there were only wooden sidewalks in Chinatown. Sometimes they caught on fire



Ah Louis photographed in the 1920s smoking his pipe

and Howard Louis remembers frantically pulling the 2 x 12 boards up to extinguish the fire.

There were individual firecrackers, called SALUTES, which were 9 to 10 inches long and 2 inches in diameter. They were beautifully wrapped, individually, in Chinese glossy paper. When they went off, the noise was deafening and dogs barked all over town.

The store specialized in Roman candles that shot 50 balls of fire. There were Daylight bombs, so called, that were powerful enough to split manhole covers in two. They came in Sizes 1, 2, and 3 and were called Bamboo bombs because they were wrapped in bamboo. They were three inch cubes up to 5x5 bricks, 10 inches long. They were real blockbusters.

Then there were skyrockets, mounted on tall sticks eight feet in length. They came from Germany and weighed six pounds each. The Louis boys used to tie them by a loose rope to their awning supports and slant them towards the Southern Pacific depot because there was "nothing much over that way". The brilliant explosives went as far as Terrace Hill. Laughing and reminiscing about the gay, happy times, Howard Louis said: "And you know, Chinatown was all built of wood but nothing ever caught on fire during the 4th of July except the sidewalks".



San Luis Obispo City Firemen with flags and bunting, ready for a 4th of July parade in the 1890s.

Written by Louisiana Clayton Dart in 1978.

We wish our readers a safe and happy 4th of July.

A Correction

Last week's email contained some incorrect information, and neglected the spiritual importance of the Nine Peaks to the Salinan people. We apologize for this error.

To help correct the narrative and provide more complete knowledge to our readers, Patti Dunton, the Tribal Administrator of the Salinan Tribe, has graciously shared this further information with us. We thank her for her contribution.



Sha moos' (Greetings),

As many of you I enjoy reading the great articles in this newsletter. June found me enjoying the article "The Nine Peaks" written by Louisiana Clayton Dart in 1978. Although I enjoyed the article, I noticed a couple statements she made were not correct.

When portraying history, one should never presume. For many years historians in San Luis

Obispo presumed that prehistorically the native people of San Luis Obispo County were of Chumash descent. When in fact the Playano Salinan People were here thousands of years before the Chumash. In the 1930's the Bylon Family, Salinan Indians at the Toro Creek reservation just north of Morro Bay, told Ethnographers from Washington D.C. that their land extended to the Santa Maria River and the valley beyond. So, when Louisiana stated that "Islay" was a Chumash word I could understand why. When in fact "Islay or Isley" is a Salinan word meaning choke cherry. Even today there are still Islay plants on Islay Hill. This fruit was mostly seed. The Salinan people would grind these seeds and make a type of flour. My personal Playano Salinan ancestry traces back to Islay Hill in San Luis Obispo.

The Nine Peaks are considered sacred to the Salinan People. In ancient times the Salinan People would ascend these peaks for ceremonies. I have personally hiked most of these peaks to identify and document cultural sites and sacred places for the cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay. Because of many of the peaks being on private property we no longer have access to some of them. In fact, it was not until the 1980's until California Indian Tribes had their religious freedom rights returned to them. Once again with special permits the Salinan People are again able to have access to some of these peaks to perform ancient ceremonies.

Le sa mo (Morro Rock) is one of these ancient places and one of the most western peaks that can be seen, because there is another peak farther west covered with the waters of Estero Bay. Le sa mo is registered with the California Native American Heritage Commission as a Salinan Sacred Site. We have many Salinan Legends connecting us to this peak. Our Tribe is once again able to access the peak, but only during the Summer and Winter Solstice. We give thanks to Raven and Falcon for saving the people from the giant serpent "Tele eka te pelta". During a great chase and battle and after Raven was killed Falcon was able to secure his magic charm and kill the serpent. During the Summer Solstice you can still see Raven's spirit there.

When it comes to more Salinan place names connected to these peaks you have "Turtle Rock" a small peak just east of Black Hill and "Eagle Rock" a small peak between Black Hill and Le sa mo (Morro Rock). Eagle Rock is also recorded with the CNAHC as a Salinan sacred site.

If you would like to learn more about the Salinan Language and Ethnology there are two books written by J. Alden Mason in 1918 that can be ordered online. You can also go to our website at SalinanTribe.com.

Xayatspanikan (Thank You),
Patti Dunton, Playano Salinan



Dallidet Gardens Opening

As San Luis Obispo County finds itself in Stage 2 of reopening, we are starting to stretch our legs and we have an exciting announcement to make: we will be opening the incomparable beauty of the Dallidet Gardens to the public.

Starting Sunday, July 5th, and continuing every Sunday throughout July, the gardens will be open from 11 am to 3 pm. The State's [guidelines for Outdoor Museums](#) will be strictly

followed, so please wear your mask.

Tour the Dallidet Adobe

Even as we prepare to open the Gardens, the house is still closed for now. That doesn't mean you can't tour the Adobe: we're giving virtual tours every Thursday at 1:00 pm.

The Dallidet family lived in San Luis Obispo from the 1850s through the 1950s. Hear their stories while visiting the family home.

Please register by noon on Thursday, and we will email you a Zoom invitation to join that week's tour.

[Click here for more information or to register](#)



Elsie Louis, granddaughter of Ah Louis

Online Research Workshop

Are you looking for new ways to learn about local history and research while our institutions are closed? Join Kaylee Scoggins Herring, History Center's Collections Manager, and Laura Sorveti, Reference Specialist at Cal Poly's Special Collections and Archives for a FREE webinar on July 7, 2020, from 6pm-7:30pm.

We'll be discussing the various ways to learn about our county's history from your very own home, with time for your questions at the end!

If you are not able to attend the webinar, go ahead and register and we will send out a link to the recording.

[Click here for more information or to register.](#)

Looking for more to do?

- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#). With posts like Mystery Monday and Throwback Thursday, we'll be sharing photos from our collection.
- Take a [virtual walking tour](#) of historic San Luis Obispo. These video series feature short vignettes about significant local landmarks.

If you have any ideas of content you'd like to see, share it with us! And if you enjoy what we share with you, and if you are able to, would you please consider [supporting us](#)?

Thank you for being a part of our community. Everybody stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Thomas Kessler
Executive Director

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