

# HISTORY CENTER


SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

We're Off to the Races!

*Sunday Amusements*

# Races!

## PIONEER RACE COURSE



**Sunday, June 12th.**

### PURSE \$500.

Free for all Trotting and Pacing Horses in California—three mile and repeat in Harness. Weight 145 lbs.  
*To be governed by Rules of UNION COURSE, Long Island.*

D. S. CAMPBELL, enters - - DOMINICK BURNETT, pacer.  
JOHN CROOKS, enters - - - - b. g. NEW YORK, trotter.

Entrance to the Gate and Public Stand, - - - - \$2.00

Horses to start at half-past 2 o'clock, precisely.

**WM. H. BELL & Co., Proprietors.**

By Joe Carotenuti

Not all history is devoted to weighty matters of local, national and global impact. Most often, humans rarely consider any activity as being of historical importance... certainly not racing and betting on horses. Yet, in any attempt to understand the fabric of life, recreation speaks of daily life.

Undoubtedly, whose horse was the fastest entertained generations of riders with bragging rights the only reward. However, in 1874 the local newspaper reported Gerhart Leff (yes, Leff Street) had provided a track for more organized races dubbed



The only known image containing the Pioneer Race rack. You can see the oval highlighted in yellow, to the southwest of

the Pioneer.

town.

It was not long before another race track is noted in the vicinity of Santa Rosa and Marsh Streets owned by one Charley Wood. Also, prominent locals had more than a casual interest in the steeds as notice was given of purchases as well as contests elsewhere. Finally, in 1887, San Luis Obispo attempted to join the wider arena of racing with a new track, seating and, of course, a brisk business in betting. Groves of eucalyptus trees were planted to shield from the wind along the railroad track entering the community of 3000 residents from the terminal in Avila.

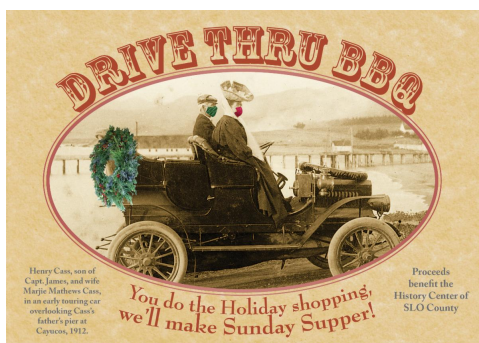
Few remnants of the venture remain along Madonna Avenue in what has become the future mini-community of San Luis Ranch...more popularly known as the Dalidio property. As protests to gambling and increased governmental regulations increased, the days of horse racing seemed numbered. A Driving Club was formed in 1911 to use the track as the center of a community recreation park and only "local" horses would race with no betting. All were reminded that "the gambling feature of the race track is the road to hell." The venture would fade into community memory.

However, a new horse – horsepower – gained momentum and in 1923, Exposition Park opened with some notable races and personalities revving the motor of local and far-reaching enthusiasm for the raceway located along South Street.

*Joe was the recipient of the History Center's 2020 Award for Historic Preservation Advocacy. You can read more about Joe's research on local racing in the November 2020 edition of the Central Coast Journal, found online at [www.centralcoastjournal.com](http://www.centralcoastjournal.com)*

## Upcoming Events

### December



#### Holiday Drive Thru BBQ

Fill your mind with the diverse history of the Brooks Street/Eto Park neighborhood, and fill your belly with delicious tri tip with all the fixings!

You do the holiday shopping, we'll make Sunday supper.

A feast for four - or lots of leftovers.

Join us on Sunday, December 6th for our Covid-safe drive-thru barbeque.

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

### November 18 through December 11



In ordinary times, we would be inviting you to attend our annual fundraising gala.

Unfortunately, we are not in ordinary times. In fact, now more than ever, folks are aware of the fact that we are living through history - which makes it all the more important that we have an institution like the History Center to preserve the history of San Luis Obispo County for future generations.

With items and experiences from the

finest local people and businesses, you're sure to find something that catches your eye. Whether you check off your holiday shopping or decide to treat yourself, you'll be helping the History Center.

[See what we have on offer by clicking here!](#) We'll be adding more items all the time.



Enjoy a holiday virtual tour of the Jack House.

December 10th at 1:00 pm

[Visit our website](#) for more information or to sign up.

Thomas Kessler  
Executive Director

