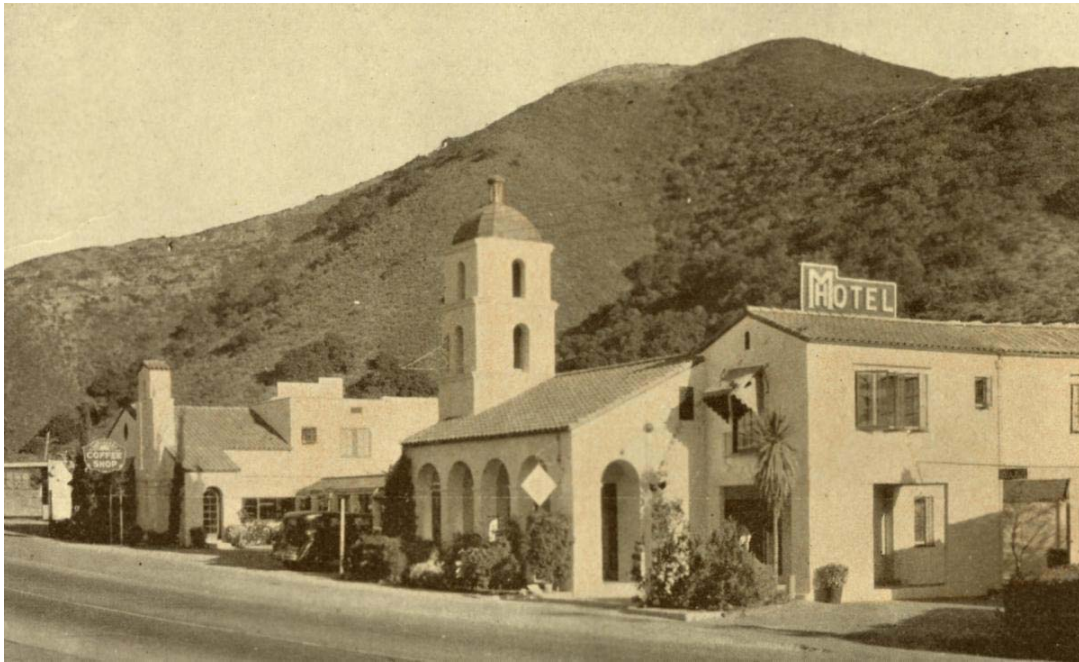




HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Weary Travelers Wanted



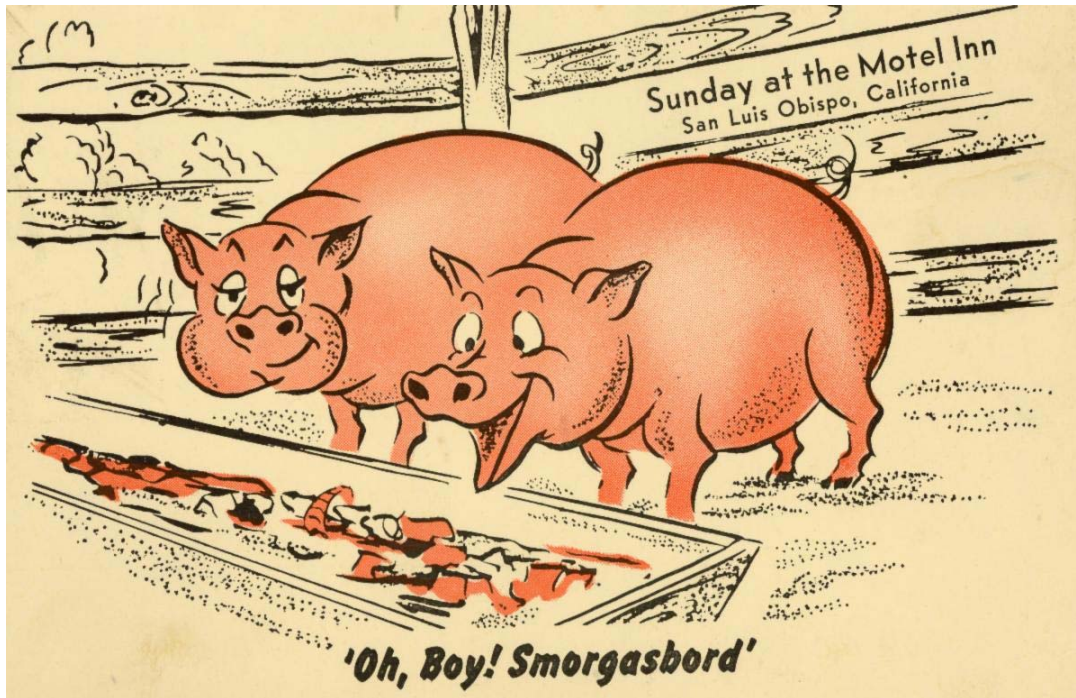
Motel Inn

The first motel in the world, or so it is said, was opened in San Luis Obispo on December 12, 1925.

The architect, Arthur Heineman, came from Pasadena and he adapted the California Spanish revival, then in vogue. It was in those years that California became aware of her early Spanish architecture which she had actually cast aside in favor of American Victorian and what followed it. In and around 1925, builders and architects brought back the arches and the tile roofs and tried to recapture some of our Hispanic past. Santa Barbara leads in this beautiful Spanish architectural revival.

It is said that our Motel Inn was the first motel in the world and that the builders coined the word "MO-TEL" in 1924. If they had patented the word, they would have made a fortune from the name itself. The word entered the dictionary in 1950.

It seems that the builders wanted two words, MOTOR HOTEL, painted on the name sign of a certain length. When the sign painter saw the board, and knowing the size of the letters he was supposed to use, he said "I can't get those two words on that". So the two men started jockeying for space and came up with the word we know today.



The land at the north end of Monterey Street was bought from Neil Cook, and the Milestone Corporation subsidized the construction. The Motel was part of the Hamilton chain of hotels, which stretched from San Francisco to San Diego. It cost \$80,000 to build, a tidy sum in those days.

It was an elegant hostelry and became a favorite stopping place for tourists breaking the long trek from San Francisco to Los Angeles. It became the vogue to spend the night in the City of the Bishop. The motel could accommodate 160 guests.

The rooms were all in separate units and were known as bungalows. Each had its own telephone and complete bathroom. Some rooms even had kitchenettes. There was central heating and garages were furnished for each unit. And besides, there was an orange tree outside of each door and guests were permitted to pick one of the golden fruits and to smell the delicious sweet perfume of orange blossoms, for the two appear together. Imagine what this meant to eastern visitors in the middle of winter.

Then to carry out the Spanish theme, there was a Spanish lantern at each bungalow entrance and the reception desk in the lobby was made of copper and bound with strips of wrought iron like a Spanish chest.

The Motel Inn used to serve a bounteous smorgasbord from Monday through Friday at noon. Many people went on Friday for the delicious enchiladas made by Mrs. Mabel Caligari for over a decade. Even in winter the luncheon guests still seek the area around the patio for dining. In summer, huge lawn umbrellas shade the diners.

In closing, it might interest you to know that the writer attended the opening in 1925 with her husband, Leroy Dart.

Written by Louisiana Clayton Dart in 1978

The View from Your Quarantine

We are living through history, and historians in the future are going to want to know our stories. So, what's life like inside your quarantine? Tell us how your life has been affected. How your family is handling this moment? How has your work has changed? Tell us what you're seeing in your home, on the streets, at the grocery stores, in the parks or beaches where you're walking or running - at an appropriate social distance, of course. What are the sights of this pandemic to you? The sounds? The smells? What's the same?

You can see [an example on our Facebook](#).

Looking for more to do?

- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#). In addition to our regular Theme Monday and Throwback Thursday posts, we'll now be posting every weekday with photos from our collection that will inspire activities you can try in your very own homes.
- 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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