

# Monterey State Historic Park



## Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

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**Sacramento, CA 94296-0001**

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(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

**[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)**

### **Monterey State Historic Park**

**20 Custom House Plaza**

**Monterey, CA 93940**

**(831) 649-7118**

*Let the tantalizing fragrances  
of the many historic gardens  
in Monterey State Historic  
Park transport you back to  
early California, and  
experience the birthplace of  
California's government.*



**O**n the ruggedly picturesque Monterey Peninsula sits Monterey State Historic Park—California’s earliest capital and the site of the state’s first constitutional convention. A varied array of preserved buildings in Historic Monterey captures the cultural diversity that guided California’s transition from a remote Spanish outpost to an agrarian Mexican province, to U.S. statehood.

Known for its mild Mediterranean climate, the Monterey Peninsula has a year-round average temperature of 57 degrees. Coastal fog is common during the summer months, as is rain in the winter. Late fall offers the most sunny days.

## BRIEF HISTORY

### Native Americans

Inhabited by the Rumsien Indians for thousands of years, the Monterey Peninsula’s rich animal and plant life supplied life’s necessities. The Rumsien people moved their villages seasonally throughout their territory to fish, hunt and collect plants. Skilled artisans crafted twined baskets, often decorated with abalone pendants, quail plumes and woodpecker feathers. The arrival of Europeans in California drastically changed the native lifestyle as traditional food sources were depleted by livestock, and the two cultures clashed over native traditions and beliefs. Diseases to



*View of Monterey State Historic Park from Monterey State Beach*

which the Rumsien people had no resistance wiped out entire villages, decimating the population.

### Spanish Settlement

In 1542 Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the first European explorer to chart the California coast, sailed past the fog-shrouded entrance to Monterey Bay. This rare, protected harbor on California’s central coast remained hidden for another 60 years, until Sebastian Vizcaíno, searching

for a safe harbor for richly-laden Spanish galleons returning from the Philippines, entered the bay on December 16, 1602. Naming Monterey Bay after the Viceroy of New Spain, Vizcaíno reclaimed Alta (Upper) California for Spain.

In 1769 Spain finally began colonizing Alta California, 167 years after Vizcaíno’s landing. On June 3, 1770, Captain Gaspar de Portolá, with Franciscan Father Junípero Serra, arrived on the shores of Monterey Bay to establish the Presidio of Monterey and Mission de San Carlos Borromeo de Monterey (moved one year later to its present site in Carmel), the second of the Spanish missions in Alta California. In 1775 Monterey became the capital of California, a title it would hold under both Spanish and Mexican rule.

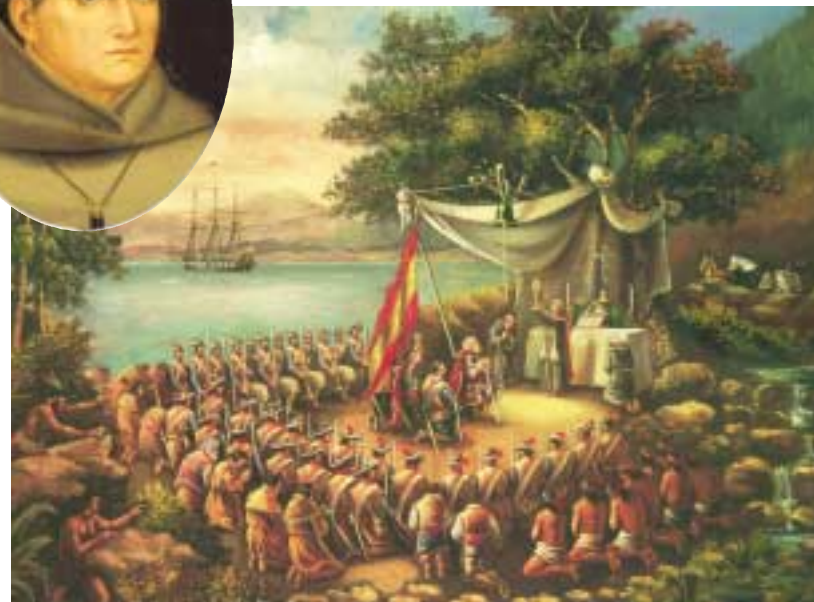


### The Mexican Period

Mexico obtained independence from Spain in 1821 and for nearly 25 years, the Mexican flag flew over Monterey. Under Mexican rule, trade restrictions were lifted, and coastal ports were opened to foreign trade, drawing British, American and South American traders. To collect custom duties—a principal revenue source for Alta California—from the burgeoning foreign shipping trade, the Mexican government built the Custom House, the oldest government building in California and California’s first State Historical Landmark.

The opening of Monterey’s port quickly drew seafaring men, such as John Rogers Cooper. He arrived in California in 1823, built what is now the Cooper-Molera

*Image courtesy of the California Historical Society*



*Inset: Father Junípero Serra. Bottom: Dedication of the second mission in Alta California at Monterey, by L. Trousset, 1870*

*Image courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley*



*Front view of Mission San Carlos Borromeo, by Edwin Deakin, ca. 1900*

Adobe, and became a merchant and a prominent landowner. In 1832 he convinced his half-brother Thomas O. Larkin to join him in business. Larkin soon became the most influential American in Monterey, serving as the first and only United States consul to Mexico in Monterey. Many foreigners, drawn by trade, settled in California, married into leading local families, and worked closely with the upper class of native-born Californios—men like Mariano Vallejo, Juan Bautista Alvarado and José Castro.

Monterey soon expanded beyond the old Spanish presidio walls, with picturesque white-washed adobe buildings lining the streets and dotting the hillsides. Many leading citizens erected substantial residences using sun-dried adobe bricks, a traditional and abundant building material. The Larkin House, home of

Thomas O. Larkin and his family, combined Spanish building methods with New England architectural features, creating a pattern for the popular “Monterey Colonial” style of architecture. In 1847 California’s First Brick House was built by Gallant Duncan Dickenson, who produced his own kiln-fired bricks and introduced American brick building techniques to Monterey’s architectural mix.

#### **American Period**

On July 7, 1846, during the Mexican-American War, U.S. naval forces, under Commodore John Drake Sloat, landed in Monterey to take formal possession of Alta California for the United States. The American flag was soon flying from the Custom House flagpole, realizing the American government’s goal of creating a nation that stretched “from sea to shining sea.”

News of the discovery of gold on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada on January 24, 1848, motivated California’s leading citizens to push for statehood. In 1849 a new state constitution was drafted at Colton Hall, and in 1850 California became the thirty-first state. San Jose was chosen as the first permanent seat of

California state government, ending Monterey’s years as California’s capital.

As the center of commerce and politics moved to San Francisco and Sacramento during the gold rush, Monterey was isolated socially and economically. The Old Monterey Whaling Company began shore whaling operations in 1855, using the Old Whaling Station as a headquarters and whaler’s residence. Made of whale vertebrae, the front walkway is a reminder of this unique economic activity in California’s history. In the early 1900s, Monterey became the center of a thriving fishing and canning industry.

Monterey has continued to appeal to those seeking a pastoral retreat. Over the years, Monterey’s beautiful coastal setting has inspired artists and writers like Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson. Staying in the French Hotel, now



*Thomas O. Larkin*

*Image courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley*



*View of Monterey looking inland, by Bayard Taylor, ca. 1850*

known as the Stevenson House, he wrote articles for the local Monterey newspaper that captured the essence of the “Old Pacific Capital.”

### **MONTEREY STATE HISTORIC PARK TODAY**

Today the historic buildings of Monterey State Historic Park retain their rich heritage, preserving an often forgotten part of California and American history. Explore the park’s interpretive center—the Pacific House Museum—or take a State Parks guided tour through sturdy adobe residences, such as Casa

Soberanes and the Cooper-Molera Adobe, for a taste of this rich history. Let the tantalizing fragrances of the many historic gardens transport you back to early California, and experience the birthplace of California’s government.

### **ACCESSIBLE FEATURES**

- Assistive listening devices and other materials for guided and self-guided tours are available upon request.
- The Pacific House Museum, the Stevenson House, the Custom House, the First Brick House and much of the Cooper-Molera Adobe Complex are generally accessible. However, a number of structures that may be accessible are only open to guided tours at specific times.



*Entrance to the Pacific House's Sensory and Memory Gardens*

- Accessible restrooms are behind the Pacific House Museum in the Casa del Oro Garden and at the Cooper-Molera Adobe.

Accessibility is continually improving. For current accessibility details call the park, or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### **NEARBY STATE PARKS**

- Monterey State Beach, Del Monte Ave. at Park Ave., Monterey, (831) 649-2836
- Carmel River State Beach, from Hwy. 1 in Carmel via Ocean Ave. and Scenic Road, (831) 624-4909
- Point Lobos State Reserve, 3 miles south of Carmel on Hwy. 1, (831) 624-4909

### **NEARBY HISTORY MUSEUMS**

- Colton Hall Museum, City of Monterey, Pacific Street (between Jefferson and Madison Streets), (831) 646-5640
- Stanton Center/Maritime Museum, Monterey History and Art Association, 5 Custom House Plaza, (831) 372-2608

### **PLEASE REMEMBER**

- Visit the Pacific House Museum to start your guided walking tour. If the museum is closed, pick up a “Path of History” brochure and map at the Maritime Museum.
- Parking is available on the street and in public and private parking lots.
- The law prohibits removal of any natural, cultural or historical object.
- Only service dogs are permitted in buildings. Pets are not allowed on the grounds of park buildings. Service dogs are permitted anywhere visitors are allowed.
- The park provides tours of the historic houses and museums for the general public. Check the current schedule of interpretive programs at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).
- The park provides third and fourth grade school programs on Native Americans and Mexican California history for a fee. Free self-guided tours are available for kindergarten through twelfth grade classes at the Custom House and Pacific House Museum. For reservations call (831) 649-7118.
- The park is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day.



*Custom House*



*Pacific House Museum*



*Casa del Oro*

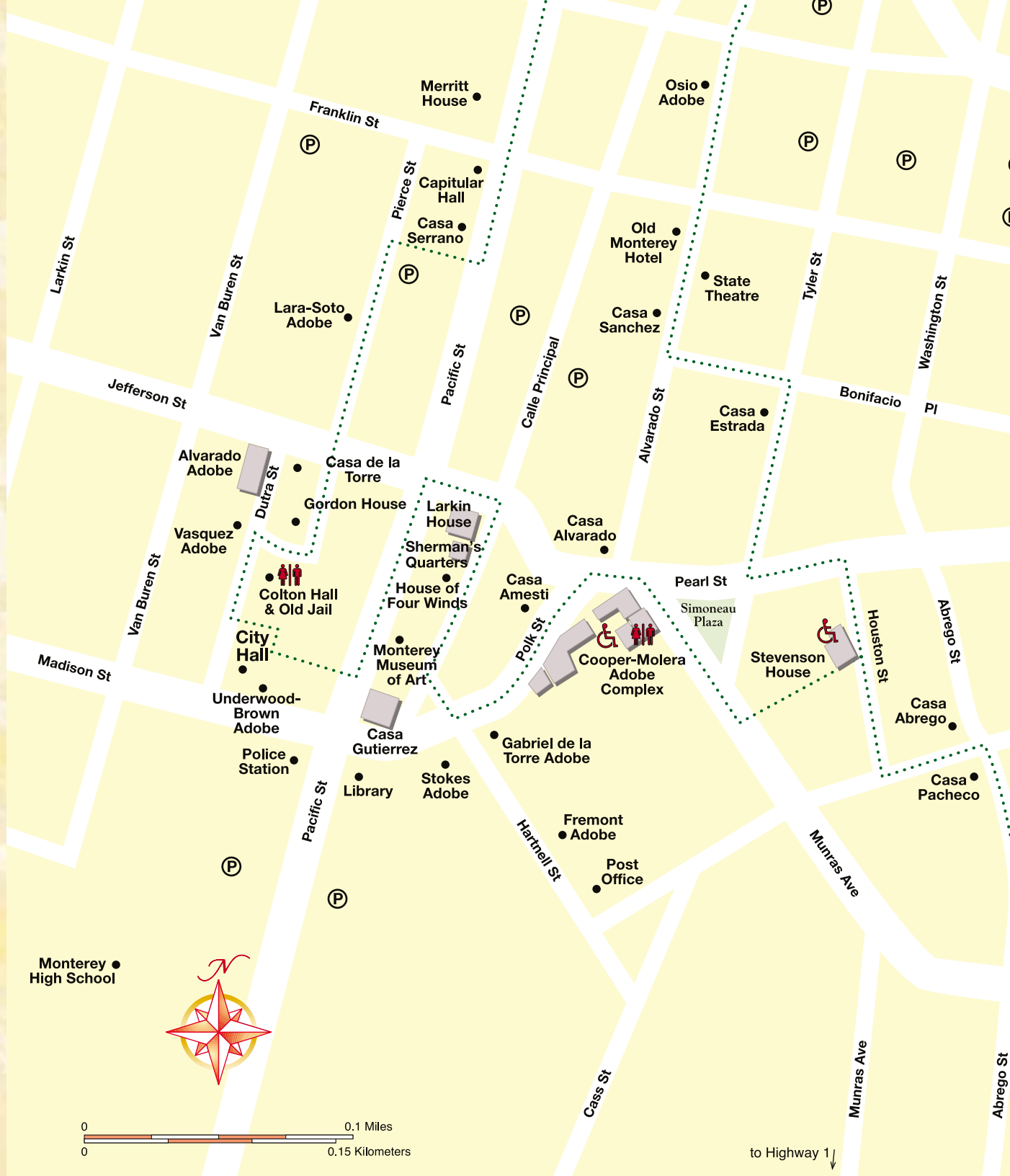




First Brick House

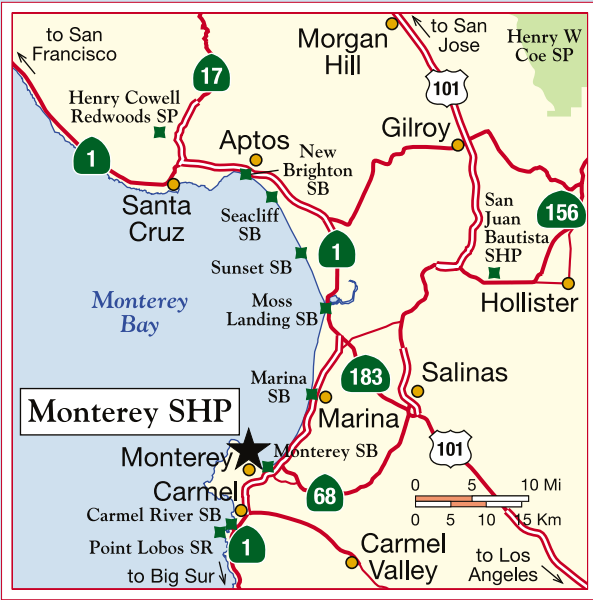


Old Whaling Station



# Monterey

## State Historic Park



### Legend

	Paved road
	Path of History
	City of Monterey
	City Park
	Military Property
	Accessible Feature
	Footbridge
	Marina
	Park Building
	Parking
	Restrooms



Follow the markers for a self-guided walking history tour.



*First Theater*



*Casa Soberanes*



*Colton Hall (City of Monterey)*

This park is supported in part by a nonprofit organization. For more information contact:  
Old Monterey Preservation Society • 525 Polk Street  
Monterey, CA 93940 • (831) 649-7111



*Larkin House*



*Cooper-Molera Adobe*



*Stevenson House*

