



Morro Elementary School

Historic Review (September 15, 2025)

Presentation Contents

- Evaluation Criteria
- Buildings on Morro Elementary School Campus
- Research Collected
- Findings Summary
- Next Steps



National Register of Historic Places/ California Register of Historical Resources

National Register Criterion A / California Register Criterion 1

Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history and cultural heritage

National Register Criterion B/ California Register Criterion 2

Is associated with the lives of persons important to our past

National Register Criterion C / California Register Criterion 3

Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual or possesses high artistic value

National Register Criterion D / California Register Criterion 4

Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

City of Morro Bay General Plan / Certified Environmental Impact Report

Policy C-2.1: Historic Resources Strategy

Develop a plan to address historic and cultural resource issues in Morro Bay, which may include conducting and updating inventories, exploring certification options, and developing context statements.

Policy C-2.2: Interagency Cooperation

Work with the Historical Society of Morro Bay and other local groups on historic objectives.

Policy C-2.3: Protection of Cultural Resources:

Ensure the protection of historic, cultural, and archaeological resources during development, construction, and other similar activities. Development shall avoid, to the maximum extent feasible, adversely impacting historic, cultural, and/or archaeological resources, and shall include adequate BMPs to address any such resources that may be identified during construction, including avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures sufficient to allow documentation, preservation, and other forms of mitigation. If the resource(s) in question are of Native American origin, develop avoidance or minimization measures in consultation with appropriate Native American tribe(s).

Policy C-2.4: Cultural Resources Overlay

Develop a cultural resources overlay to protect historic, cultural, archaeological, and paleontological resources in Morro Bay.

City of Morro Bay General Plan / Certified Environmental Impact Report

Implementation Action C-1

Become a Certified Local Government (CLG) by developing a historic preservation ordinance, establishing a historic preservation committee, and maintaining a system to regularly update cultural resources.

Implementation Action C-2

Conduct inventories of historic and cultural resources in Morro Bay. Update these inventories as needed to ensure up-to-date information

Implementation Action C-3

Establish a local register that mimics requirements of the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places, but focuses on locally important historic themes, such as Morro Bay's legacy as a fishing village.

Implementation Action C-4

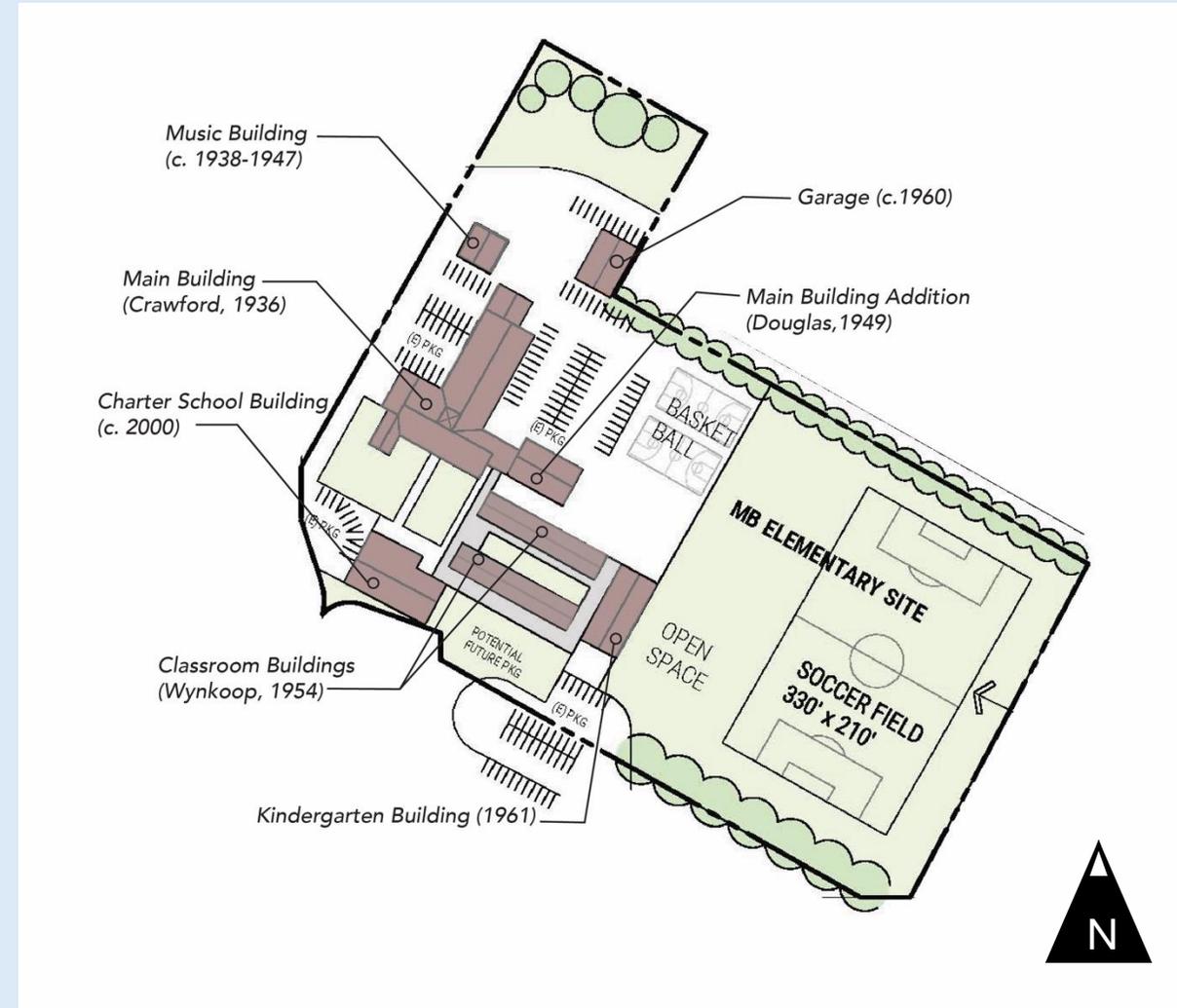
Identify historical themes and develop a historic context statement that is used to identify significant historical themes within a community that are often represented in the built environment, such as houses and infrastructure.

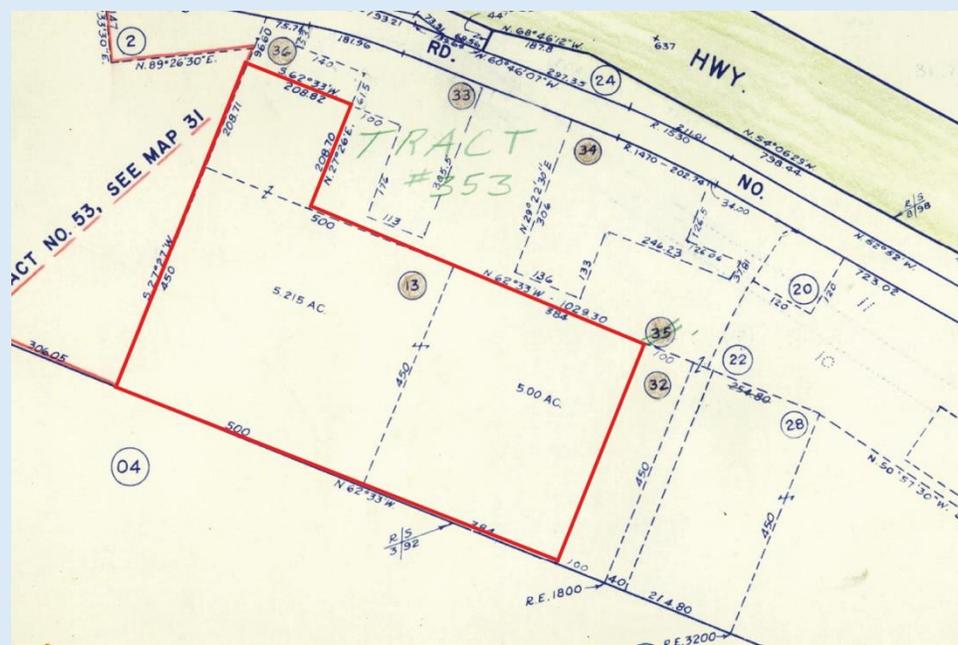
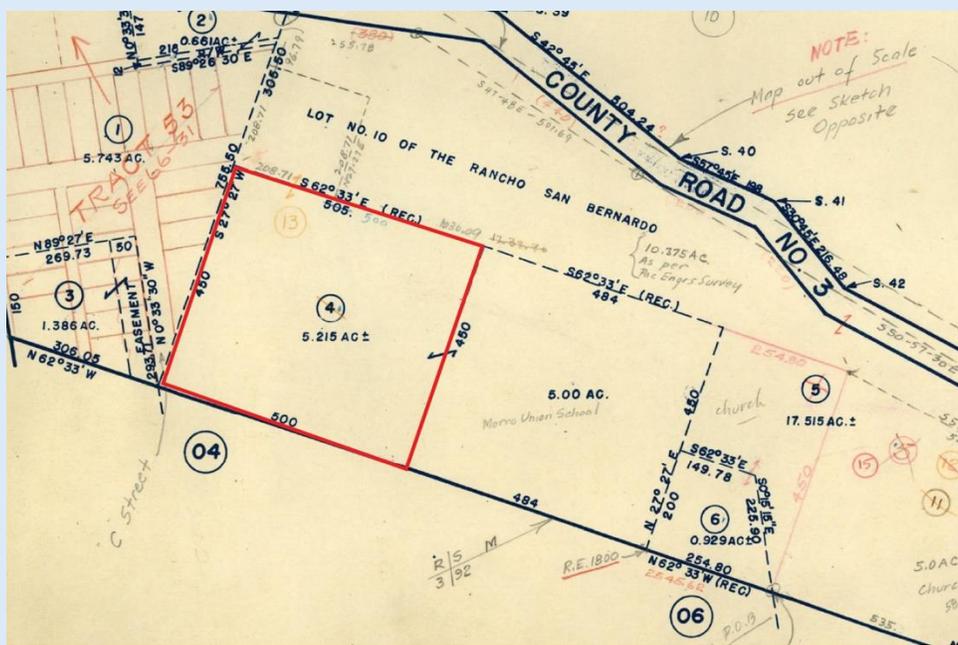
Implementation Action C-5

Require all discretionary proposals within the cultural resources overlay to consider the potential to disturb cultural resources. If preliminary reconnaissance suggests that cultural resources may exist, a Phase I cultural resources study shall be performed by a qualified professional meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standard for archaeology and/or architectural history, as appropriate (NPS 1983).

Morro Elementary School Timeline

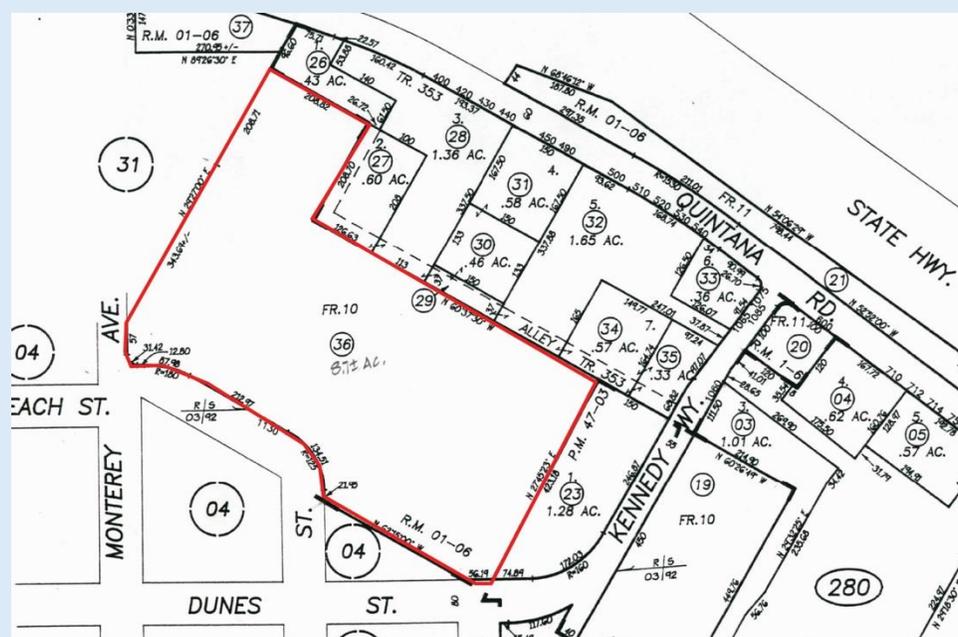
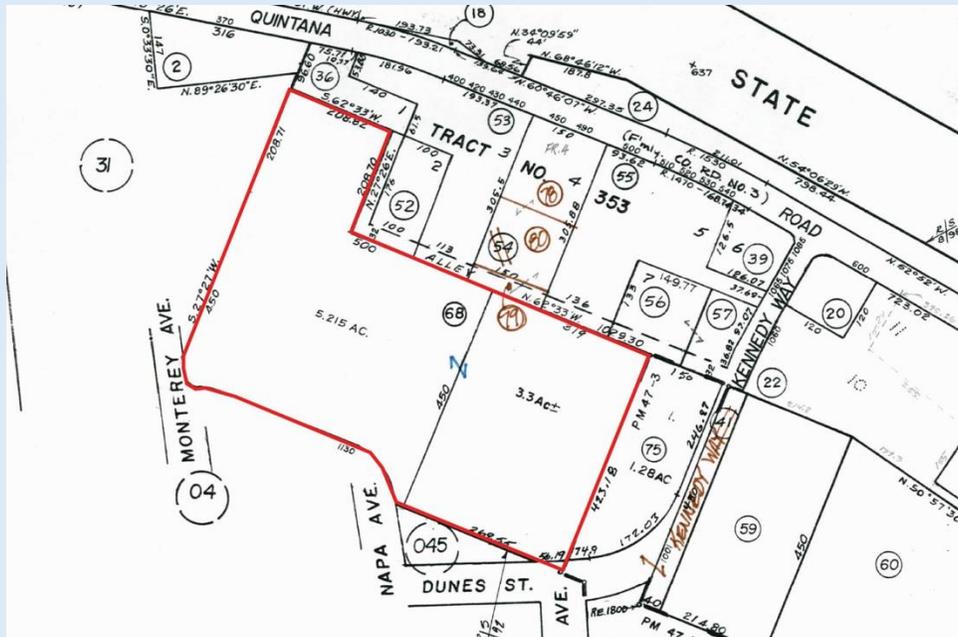
- 1936** Refugio Herrera transfers site to Morro Union School District
- 1936-7** Main Building and ancillary building constructed, and school opens in January for grades 1-8
- 1938-1947** Music Building constructed
- 1949** Addition on Main Building constructed
- 1954** Two Classroom Buildings “Butterfly Roof Buildings” constructed
- 1959** Morro Bay High School opens for grade 7-12
- 1960** Garage constructed
- 1961** Kindergarten Building constructed
- 2000** Charter School Building constructed
- 2001** San Luis Coastal Unified School District closes Morro Elementary School





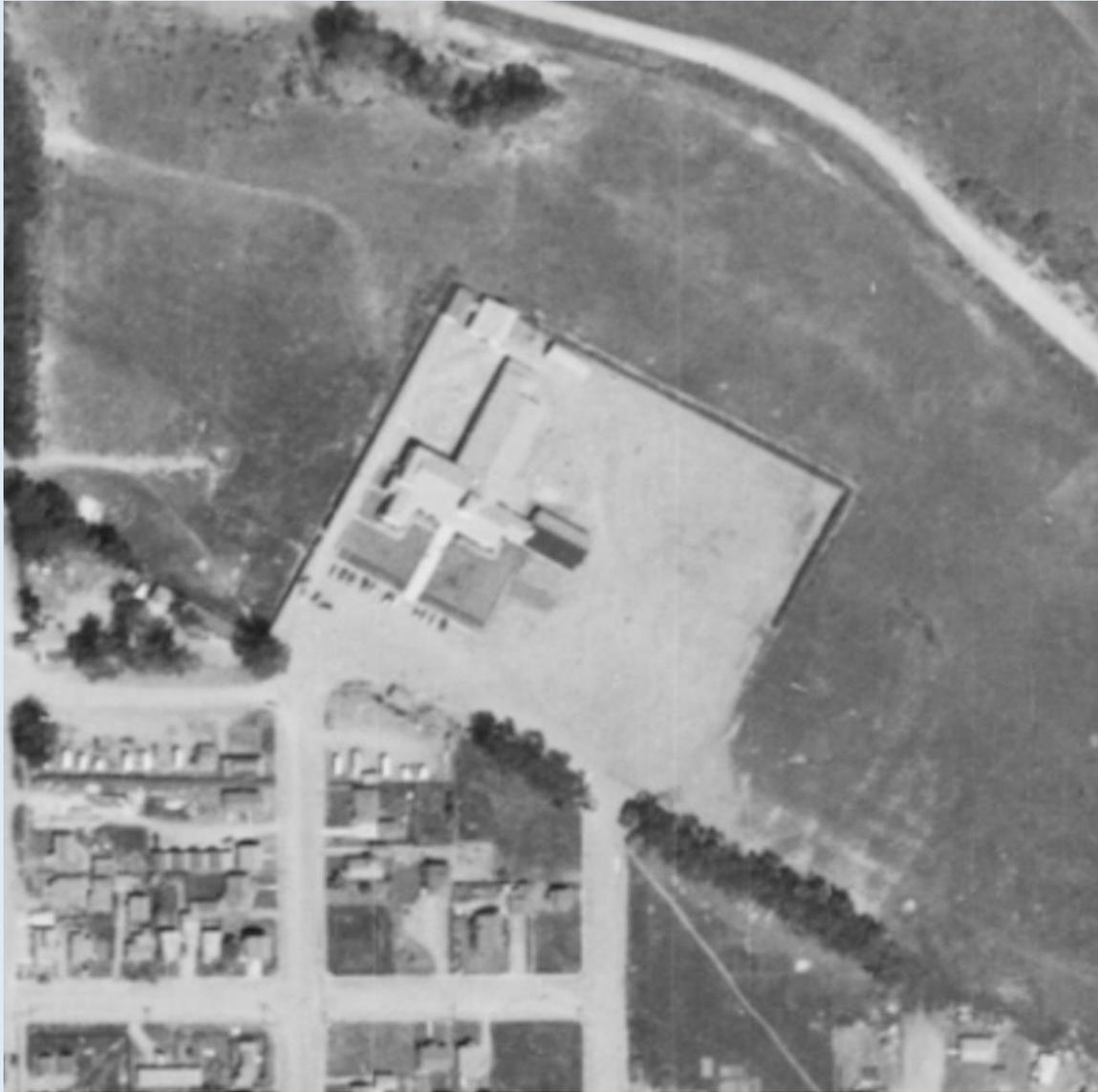
1936

1993



1966

2000



1949



1959



1963



1978



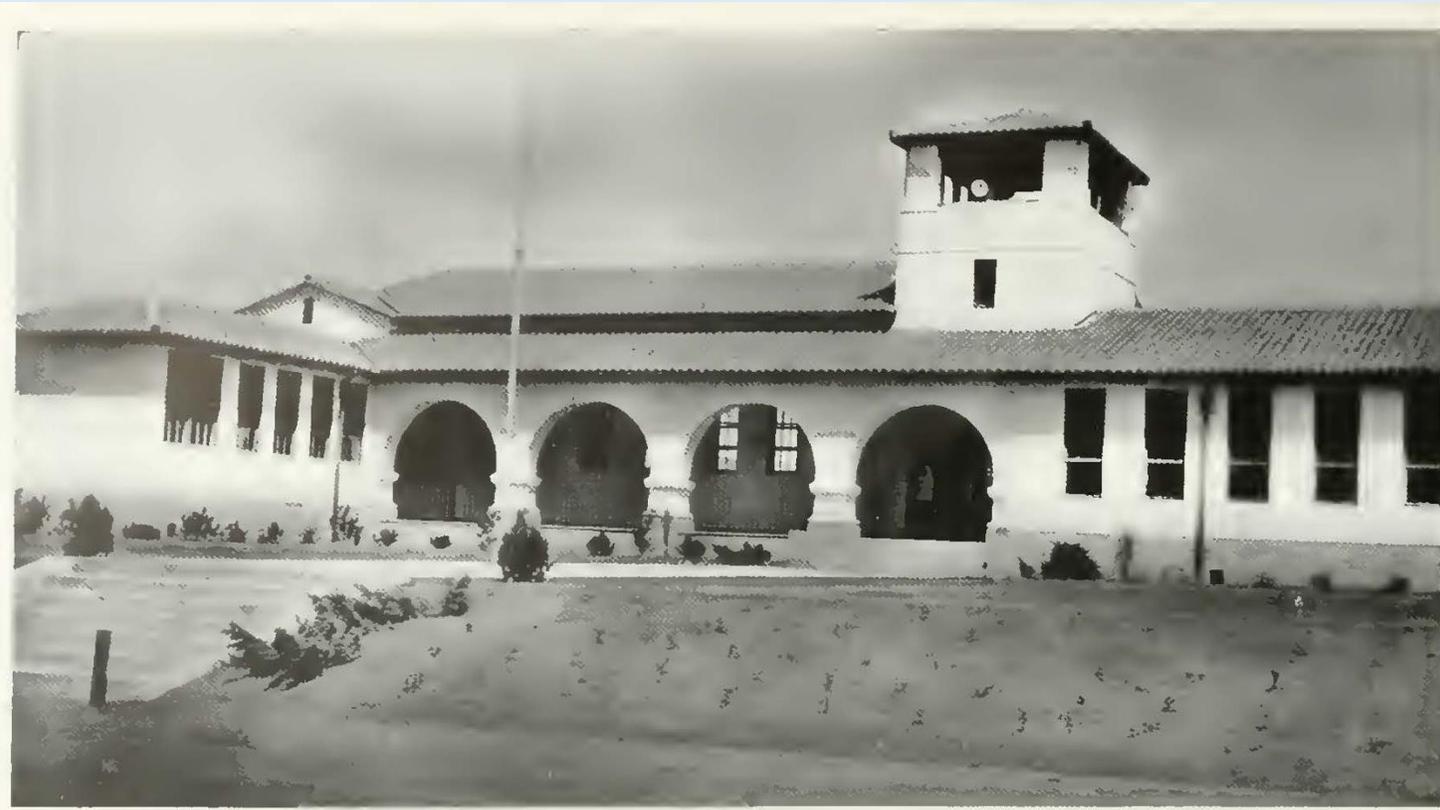
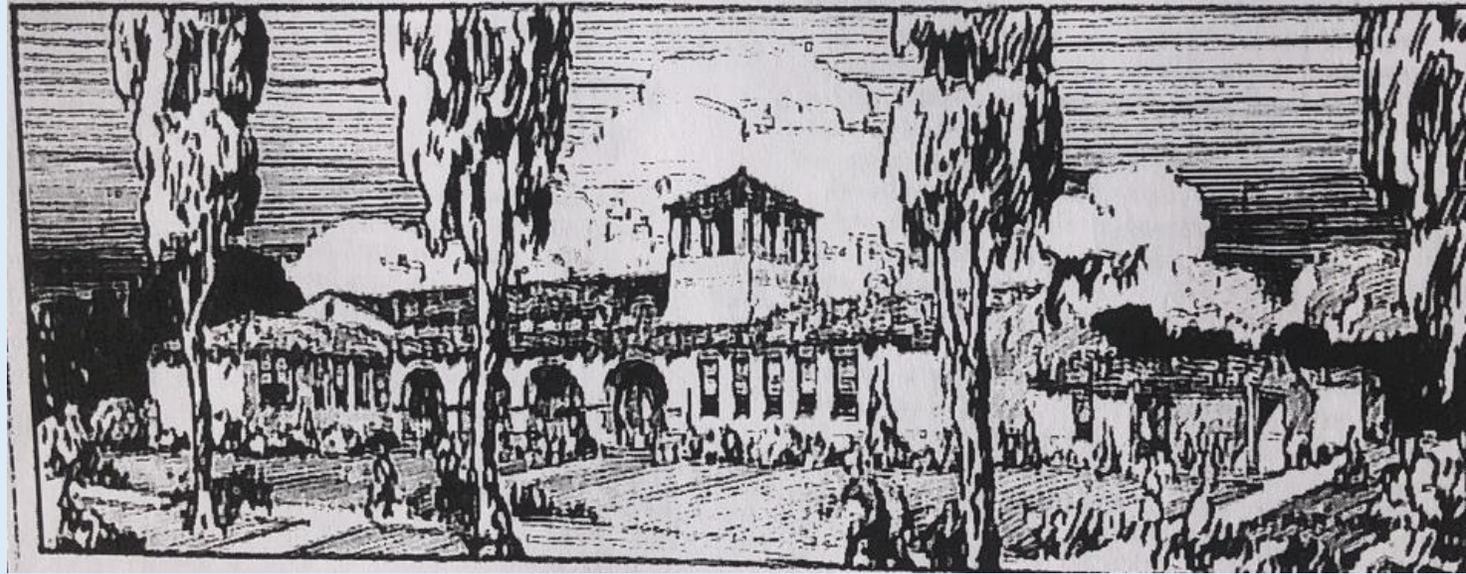
1987



2001

MAIN BUILDING

- Architect: Louis N. Crawford
- Year Built: 1936
- Funding Source: 45% Public Works Administration (PWA)
- Contractor: F.C. Stolte Co., with all labor performed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA)
- Construction Type: Wood frame, partial basement crawl space
- Architectural Style: Mission Revival





LOUIS N. CRAWFORD (1890-1946)

- Santa Maria based architect
- Notable for designing school and public buildings
- Regionally significant architect
- Published in *Architect and Engineer of California* and *The Architectural Forum*



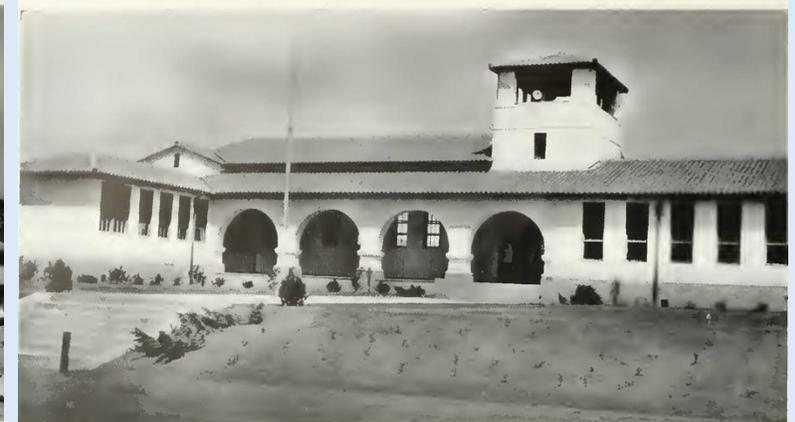
LOUIS N. CRAWFORD (1890-1946)

Notable Published Works

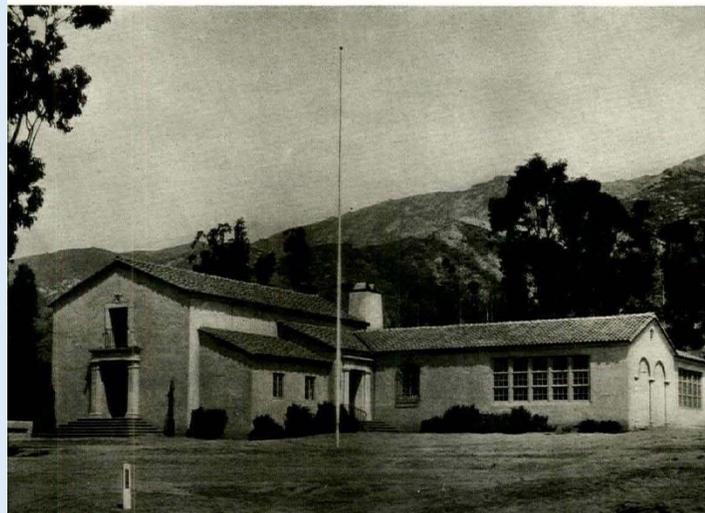
- San Luis Obispo High School Gymnasium
- Morro Elementary School
- Vista Del Mar School
- Santa Maria City Hall



*San Luis Obispo High School Gymnasium, 1936
(City Landmark)*



Morro Elementary School in Morro Bay, 1936



Vista Del Mar School in Gaviota, 1931



Santa Maria City Hall, 1934 (City Landmark)

PWA FUNDED SCHOOL PROJECT (1935-1936)

- Cambria Elementary School
- Cayucos Elementary School
- Morro Elementary School
- Paso Robles High School Gymnasium (Not Extant)



Cambria Elementary School, Louis N. Crawford



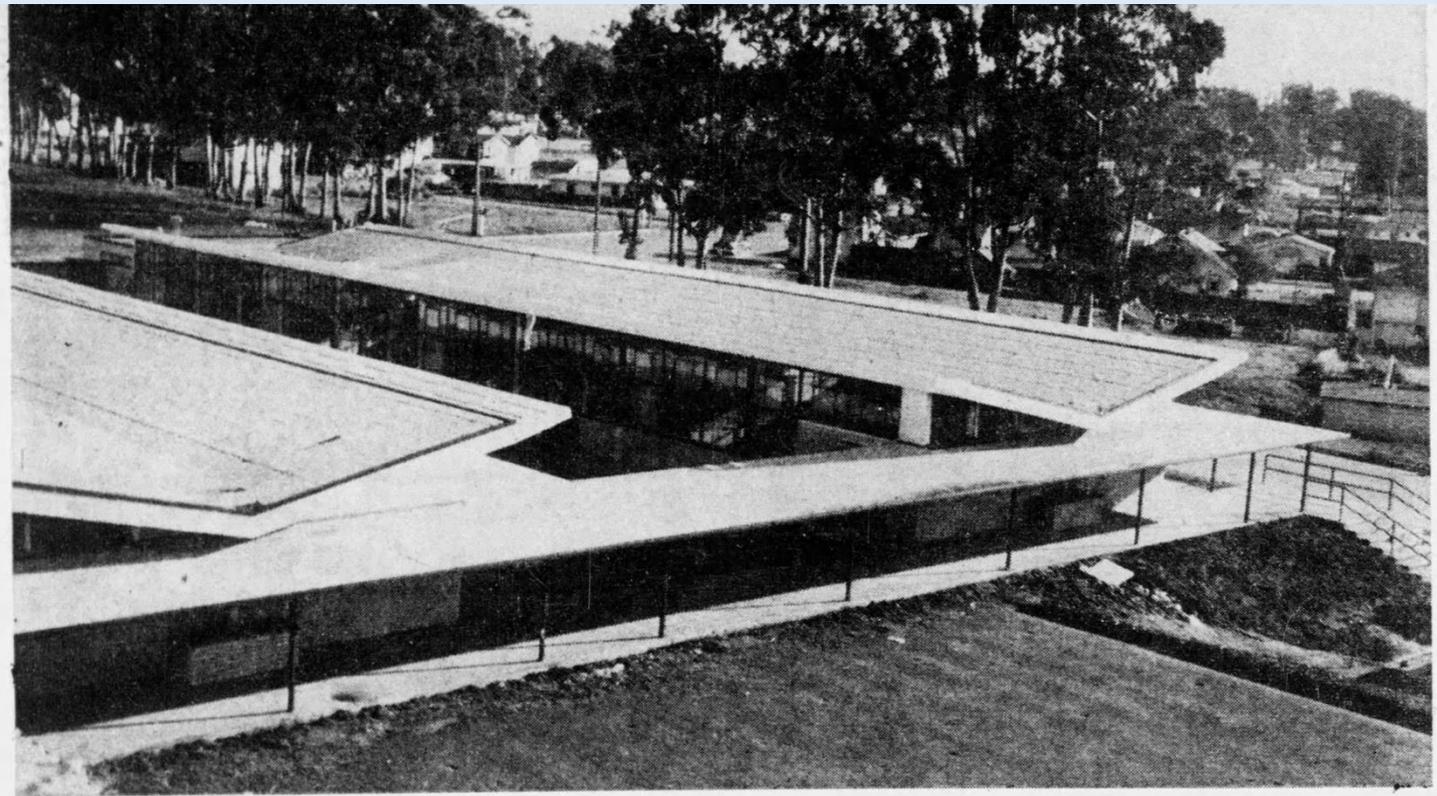
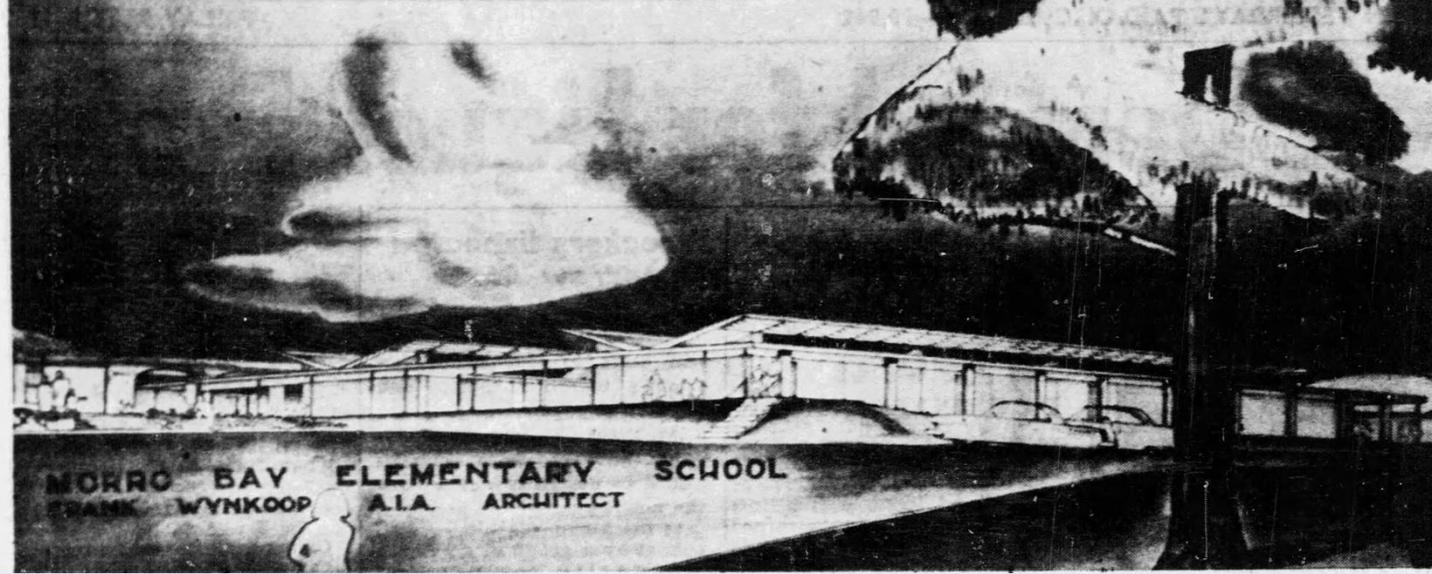
Cayucos Elementary School, Louis N. Crawford



Morro Elementary School, Louis N. Crawford

CLASSROOM BUILDINGS

- Architect: Frank Wynkoop
- Year Built: 1954
- Funding Source: Federal grants and City-issued bonds
- Construction Type: Steel frame with glass and concrete masonry unit infill, concrete slab on grade
- Architectural Style: Mid-Century Modern
- Layout: Finger-plan school design with bilateral lighting for classrooms





FRANK WYNKOOP (1902 – 1978)

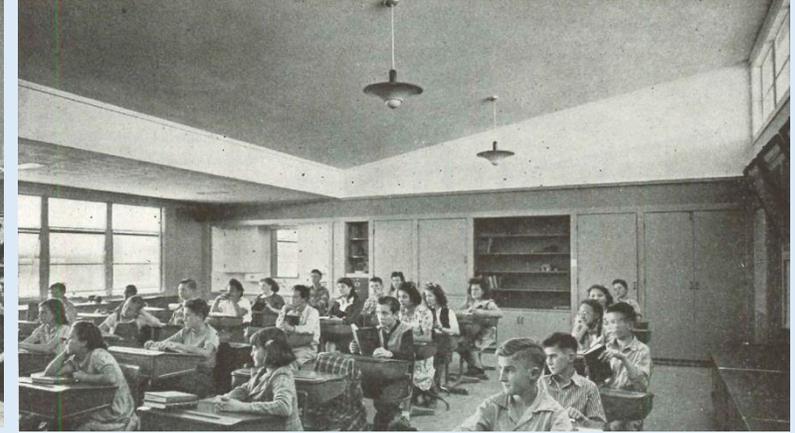
- California based architect
 - Offices in Fresno, Bakersfield, San Carlos, San Francisco, and Carmel
- Regionally significant architect
- Master architect in City of Carmel
- Notable for designing school and public buildings with bilateral lighting and radiant floor heating
- Authored “*Advances in the Art of School-Room Daylighting*” in *Architectural Record*



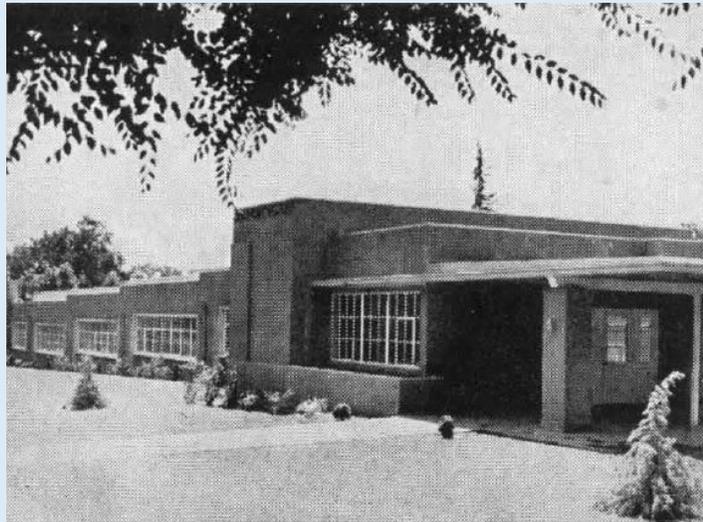
FRANK WYNKOOP (1902 – 1978)

Notable Schools

- Morro Elementary School
- Lakeside Union Elementary School
- Paso Robles Elementary School



Lakeside Elementary School, Bakersfield, 1945



Paso Robles Elementary School, Paso Robles 1945

FRANK WYNKOOP (1902 – 1978)

- Butterfly House, 26320 Scenic Road, Carmel vicinity, 1952
- Designed by Wynkoop as his personal residence
- One of few residential buildings designed by Wynkoop
- Regional Expressionist Style as referred to in City of Carmel Historic Context Statement



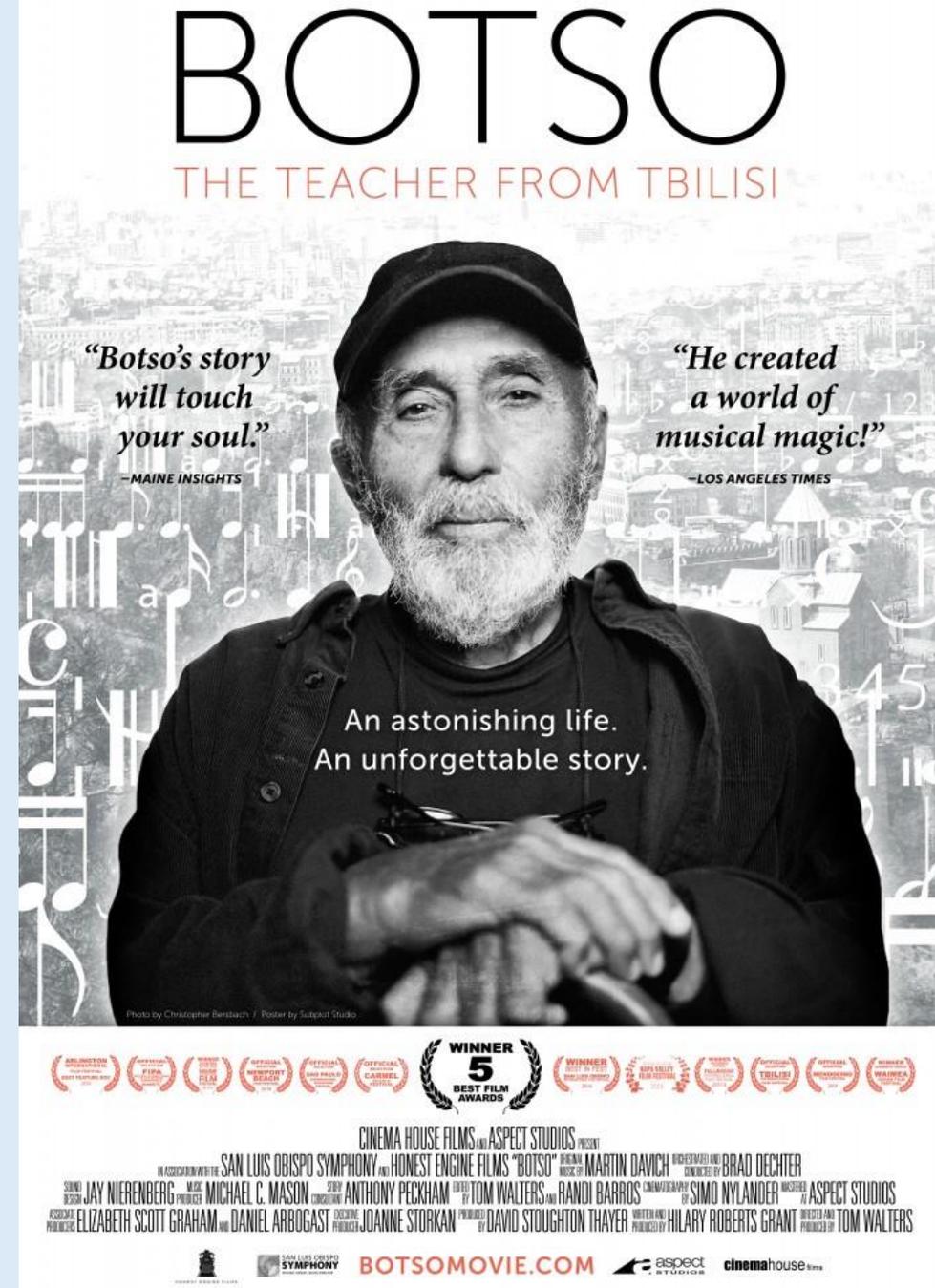
MUSIC BUILDING

- Architect: Unknown
- Contractor: Unknown
- Year Built on Property: c.1937-1948
- Architectural Style: Vernacular
- Renovated by music teacher Wachtang “Botso” Korisheli in 1957
- Used as school music room from 1957-unknown



WACHTANG “BOTSO” KORISHELI (1922 -2015)

- Born in Tbilisi, Georgia; earned degrees in music from UCSB (B.A.)
- Founded Morro Elementary music program (1957), Morro Bay High School string orchestra (1966), and SLO Youth Symphony (1967)
- Created public artworks in Morro Bay, including *Pelican Family* (1975), *City Chessboard*, *Library Sculpture* (1983), and *Entrance Installation* (2005)
- Taught at Mission College Prep after retirement; mentored students until his passing
- Subject of the award-winning documentary *Botso: The Teacher from Tbilisi*
- *Each property associated with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions*



GARAGE

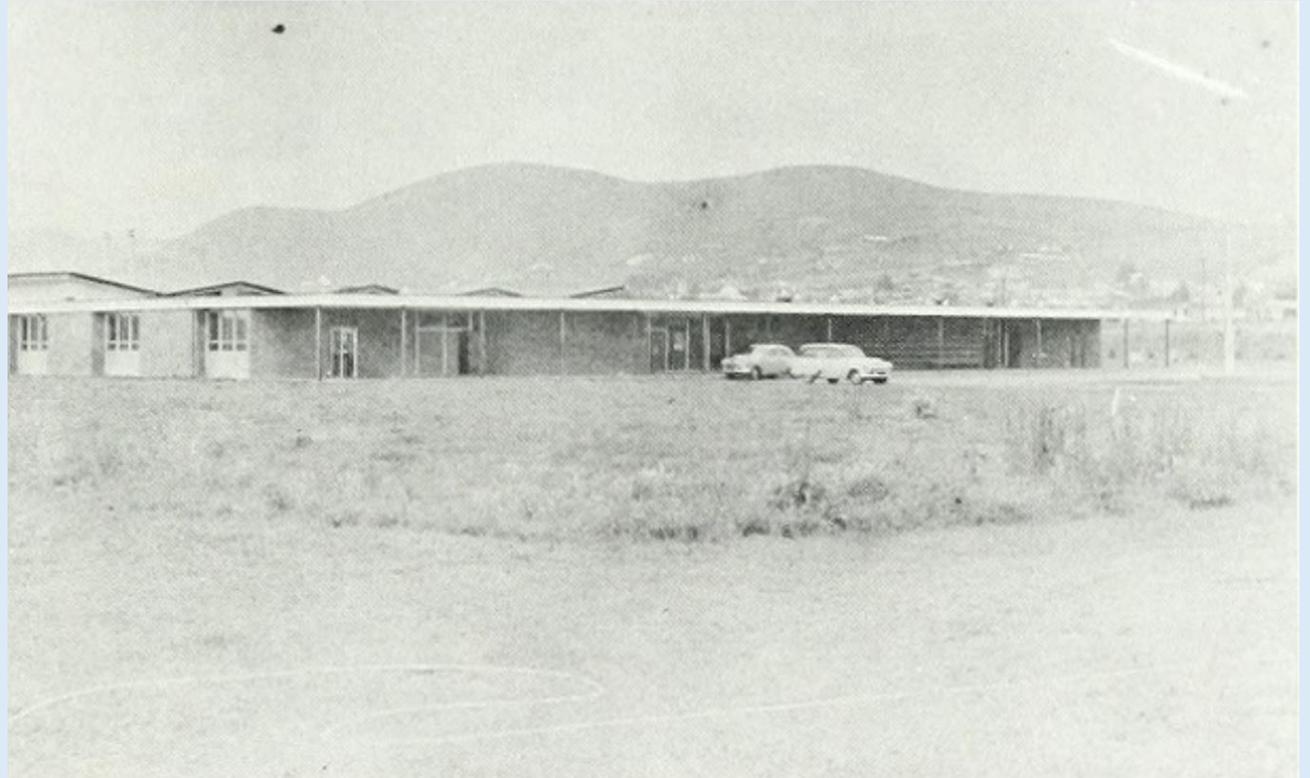
- Architect: Unknown
- Contractor: Unknown
- Year Built: c.1960
- Architectural Style: Utilitarian



MORRO BAY HIGH SCHOOL (1959)

- Morro Bay High School opens, 1959
- Grades 7-12 move to the new high school
- Morro Elementary School now is dedicated to grades K-6

This change redefined the role of Morro Elementary School, transforming it from a comprehensive 1-8 school into a dedicated K-6



Morro Bay High School (Morro Bay High School Yearbook, 1960)

KINDERGARTEN BUILDING

- Architect: Unknown
- Contractor: Loperena Construction Co.
- Year Built: 1961
- Architectural Style: Mid-Century Modern
- Layout: Two classrooms and adjoining teacher workroom



CHARTER SCHOOL BUILDING

- Architect: Unknown
- Year Built: c. 2000
- Architectural Style: Mission Revival



National Register Criterion A / California Register Criterion 1

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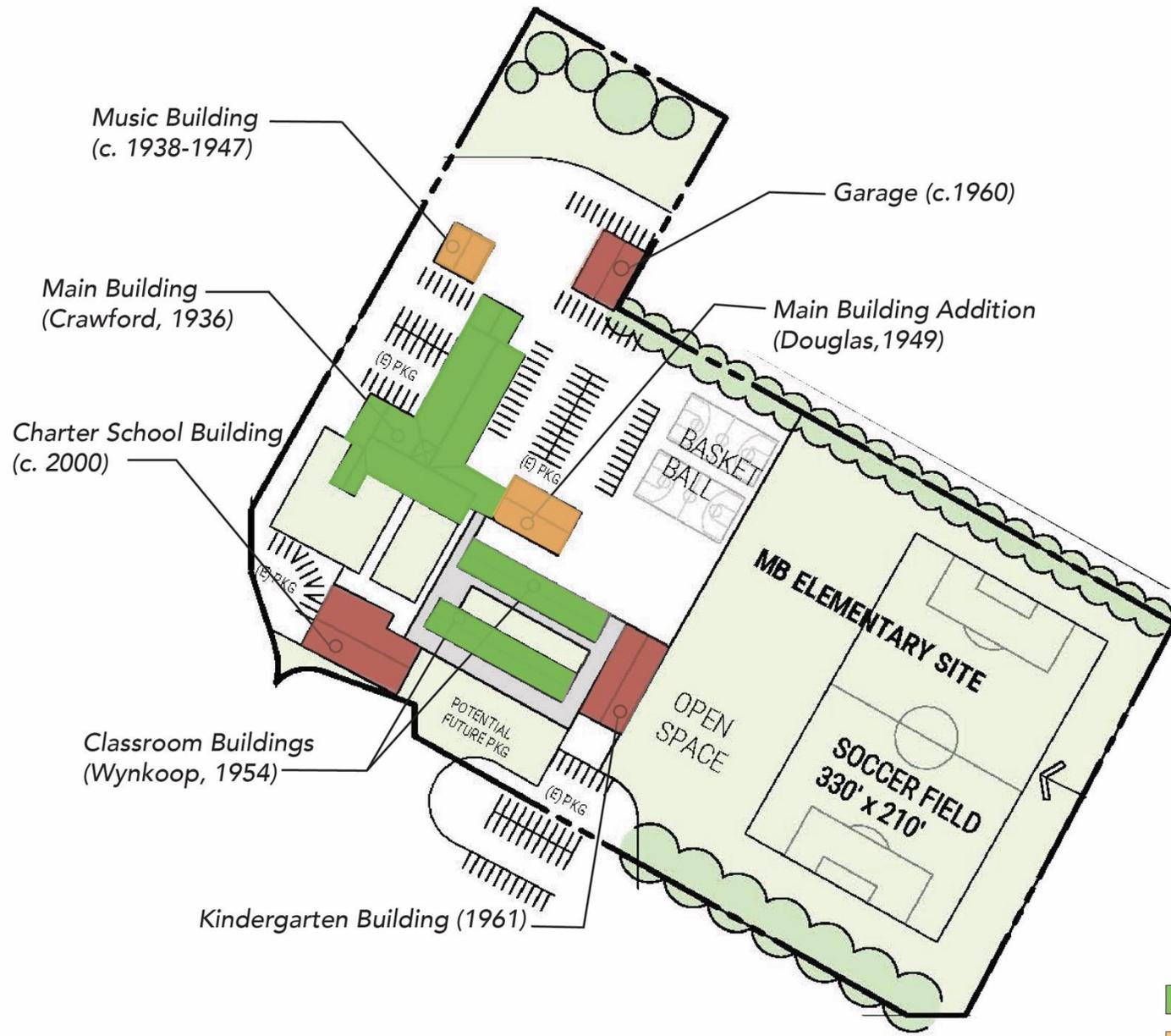
SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION A: EDUCATION , NEW DEAL INVESTMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- First comprehensive 1-8 school in Morro Bay, representing the consolidation of scattered one-room schoolhouses.
- Constructed in 1936 with PWA funding and WPA labor, one of four school projects funded in the County that year.
- Served as a key civic and educational center during period of growth in Morro Bay, with continuous use through Depression-era, WWII, and Postwar expansion.
- Concludes with the opening of Morro Bay High School and the transfer of upper-grade students.
- Period of Significance: 1936-1959

SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION C:

ARCHITECTURE

- **Main Building & Addition (1936-1948):** Designed by Louis N. Crawford, a regionally significant architect active during New Deal era school projects in San Luis Obispo county. The Main Building is representative of the Mission Revival style as applied to educational and civic architecture.
- **Classroom Buildings (1954):** Designed by Frank Wynkoop, a regionally significant architect known for his work in school building and campus design. The Classroom Buildings embody Mid-Century Modern style and incorporate innovative design features such as V-shaped (butterfly) roofs, bilateral lighting, and radiant floor heating. They are early local examples of finger-plan school design, which was part of a broader movement in postwar educational architecture.
- Periods of Significance: 1936-1948 and 1954



- High Significance
- Moderate Significance
- Low/No Significance



Main Building, 1936

Architect: Louis N. Crawford

Significance: Contributor Criterion A and C



Main Building Addition, 1949

Architect: H. B. Douglas

Significance: Contributor Criterion A and C



Classroom Buildings, 1954

Architect: Frank Wynkoop

Significance: Contributor Criterion A and C



Music Building, c. 1937-1948

Architect: Unknown

Significance: Contributor Criterion A



Garage, c. 1960

Architect: Unknown

Significance: Non-contributor



Kindergarten Building, 1961

Contractor: Loperena Construction Co.

Significance: Non-contributor



Charter School, c. 2000

Architect: Unknown

Significance: Non-contributor

HISTORIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

Morro Elementary School
1130 Napa Avenue
Morro Bay, California



Prepared for:
Friends of Morro Elementary
979 Las Tunas Street
Morro Bay, CA 93443

Prepared by:
Chattel, Inc. | Historic Preservation Consultants
13417 Ventura Boulevard
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

2025|

Next Steps

- Additional research
- Preparation of a Historic Resource Assessment describing the findings
 - Physical description of campus and buildings
 - Applicable historic contexts
 - Evaluation under National Register, and California Register
 - Attachments including contemporary photos, historic images, and other documentation