Guide to the Andrew Molera State Park Photographic Collection

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Collection number: Consult repository

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McClellan, California 95652

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Date Completed:
2016

Encoded by:
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Andrew Molera State Park Photographic Collection
Dates: 1968-2015
Collection number: Consult repository
Creator: California State Parks
Collector: California State Parks
Collection Size: 225 images
Repository: Photographic Archives.
California State Parks
McClellan, CA 92262

Abstract: The Andrew Molera State Park Photographic Collection contains 225 cataloged images that date from 1968 through 2015. Images depict the property as a state park.

Physical location: For current information on the physical location of these materials, please consult the Guide to the California State Parks Photographic Archives, available online.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
Collection is open for research by appointment.

Publication Rights
Property rights reside with the repository. Copyrights are retained by the creators of the records. For permission to reproduce or to publish, please contact the Head Curator of the California State Parks Photographic Archives.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item including photographer and date when available], Andrew Molera State Park Photographic Collection, [Catalog number], California State Parks Photographic Archives, McClellan, California

Acquisition Information
Images generated by California State Parks staff and transferred from Andrew Molera State Park at various dates.

Accruals
Further accruals are expected.

Park History
Andrew Molera State Park contains roughly 4,766 acres of natural, cultural, and historical resources. Located in Monterey County, the park is bordered to the east by Highway 1, to the west by the Pacific Ocean, and is transected by the Big Sur River; it is roughly 25 miles south of the city of Monterey. The park is accessible by car via Highway 1.

Andrew Molera State Park, named in honor of the early twentieth-century rancher and artichoke popularizer, was originally inhabited by the Rumsen and Esselen tribes. Calling the area “Sargenta-ruc,” the native peoples first arrived in the area at least 4,600 years ago. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Rumsen and Esselen tribes cultivated a vibrant trading
and fishing economy in the area. In the mid-to-late sixteenth century, the Spanish first sighted that portion of the California coastline. By the turn of the nineteenth century, they had virtually cleared the Big Sur area of its indigenous populations, compelling the various tribes (including the Rumsen and Esselen) into La Misión San Carlos Borromeo del Río Carmelo.

In 1834, Governor Jose Figueroa granted “El Sur,” encompassing roughly 8,880 acres, to Juan Bautista Alvarado for cattle grazing. The future governor then leased the land to his uncle-by-marriage, John Bautista Rogers Cooper, before transferring title to him in 1840. Cooper also leased out the land and supplied cattle for butchering and dairying as well as some modest crop production. After the Mexican-American War and a protracted period of disputes with the California Land Commission, Cooper received his final patent for the land in 1866. He died six years later in San Francisco.

Cooper willed the rancho jointly to his widow Encarnacion, his son John B. Henry Cooper, and his trusted associate, George H. Howard, who soon conveyed his interest to Cooper’s daughters. They divided the property into four lots. Cooper’s daughter Amelia managed lots three and four—which contained the modern-day park—with her husband, Eusebius Molera. As early as 1899, Andrew Molera, their son, began managing Molera Ranch before taking formal control in 1915. At that time, the ranch grew more productive than ever. Molera hired several Japanese laborers and, in addition to dairying and cattle-raising, he developed apiaries, bred horses, dogs, and pigs, produced hay, grain, pumpkins, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, beets, and artichokes, and invited his friends from the city to hunt and fish on the property. In 1931, Andrew Molera died unmarried and his estate passed to his sister, Frances M. Molera.

In 1964, Frances Molera began negotiations with the State of California to create a state park out of her property. Upon her death in 1968, per their agreement, the Nature Conservancy, having purchased the land four years earlier, sold it to the State of California Department of Beaches and Parks and named the property “Andrew Molera State Park.” The park was opened to the public in 1972.

California State Parks, coordinating with the Ventana Wildlife Society and the Big Sur Historical Society, maintains various natural, cultural, and historical resources at Andrew Molera State Park. The park includes such diverse geographical features as the Big Sur River, a tidal lagoon, a coastal beach area, inland flats, coastal uplands, and Pfeiffer Ridge. Each habitat hosts a variety of plant and animal species, including seasonal monarch butterflies. In addition to its numerous natural resources, the park also contains seven archaeological sites, the restored Cooper Cabin—the oldest standing structure in Big Sur—and remnants of the old stagecoach road. The park also offers camping, hiking, fishing, interpretive walks, horseback riding, bird-watching, and beach-combing.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The Andrew Molera State Park Photographic Collection spans the years 1968-2015, with the bulk of the collection covering the years 1980-1984 and 2012-2015. There is a total of 225 cataloged images including 68 photographic prints, scans, and negatives, 67 35mm slides, and 90 born-digital images. Photographs originated primarily from California State Parks staff. The collection mainly depicts the park’s landscape. Imagery includes numerous ground views of the Pacific coastline, featuring beaches, bluffs, and the mouth of the Big Sur River. Also depicted is the river at various points along its course; surrounding hillsides with grasses, wildflowers, and other vegetation; dirt roads; Molera Beach; Pfeiffer Ridge; Cooper Cabin; and several aerial views of the park that include such features as the Big Sur River, Pfeiffer Ridge, campgrounds, trees, roads, coastlines, and hills. Additionally documented are the 1980 restoration and dedication ceremony of Molera Cabin.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

- Alvarado, Juan Bautista, 1809-1882
- Big Sur (Calif.)
- California. Department of Parks and Recreation
- Cultural resources
- Esselen Indians
- Monterey County (Calif.)
- Natural resources
- Pacific Ocean.
- Ventana Wildlife Society

**Related Material at California State Parks**

Andrew Molera State Park Collection

**Related Material at Other Repositories**

Cooper-Molera Family Papers, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library