

CAYUCOS PORTAL

Spring 2024

Issue 17

James Cass: A True Pioneer



JAMES CASS, a true pioneer

BORN - May 7, 1824, Somerset, Bristol, England

DIED - March 15, 1917, Cayucos, California

James Cass was a man of immense talent, adventurous spirit and ingenuity. At the young age of 12, he traveled unaccompanied from his home in England to America. He was always learning from experience and would retain that knowledge to use in his future. Cass traveled halfway around the world before the age of 25. He worked the rough life of an early gold miner in the foothills of California and then as a farmer in the Sacramento area. By the age of 42, with a wife and 5 children, he started over again in San Luis Obispo County where he contributed to the establishment of the successful village of Cayucos and helped develop it into one of the four major seaports of California.

By the age of 53, Cass had his own shipping business, as well as cattle, dairy and fruit ranches. He later set up a stage line between Cayucos, Paso Robles and San Miguel.

Cass was always developing local resources. He was involved in the formation of the Cayucos school district, was member of the first school board, and helped build the first schoolhouse. He was altruistic and donated the land for the Catholic Church, even though he was not Catholic. Through the years, Cass belonged to several fraternal organizations, working his way through their

various offices. He was also a justice of the peace and a notary.

Cass was known throughout the state and was highly esteemed by all who knew him. He was always considered an honorable man, as well as a mover and a shaker. There has never been an ill word written about him. It can easily be said that the future of Cayucos was due in a large part to James Cass. Today, the Cass warehouse, pier and house serve as a reminder of the pioneer spirit that settled the West.

Cass was a true pioneer of his time, a man whose entrepreneurial spirit and sharp business acumen drove him to great accomplishments. Although he was known as “Captain Cass;” in reality, he never attained that rank. The title was most likely a sign of respect.

By the time of his death, Cass had already witnessed a major decline in his business. Unfortunately, during this era of California’s economy, shipping as a mode of transportation was destined to become a memory. By 1915, the development of extensive road systems connecting northern and southern California ushered in a change. It is worth mentioning that the last shipment to unload at the pier was cement used in the building of the bridge over Cayucos Creek.

James Cass died on March 15, 1917 at the age of 92 after a useful and productive life in his community. His wife, Mary McMurray Cass preceded him in death by 7 years. The Cass family finally sold the dying business in 1923. The pier and warehouse are now owned by the State, but maintained by the County.

PLEASE VISIT THE CAYUCOS SURF CO., 146 NO. OCEAN AVE. TO SEE THE CAYUCOS HISTORICAL SOCIETY’S NEW EXHIBIT FEATURING JAMES CASS, A TRUE PIONEER.



Cass House



James Cass, (Wife) Mary, (Children) Sarah, Charles, Emily, Henry & Rosa



Cass Warehouse

PO Box 143
 Cayucos CA 93430

**READY TO RENEW
OR JOIN?**

You can join or renew today!

Fill out the form at the bottom.

Your renewal date is:

Cass Warehouse/Vets Hall Renovation Update!

UPDATE ON THE CASS WAREHOUSE/VETS HALL

In 1871, the wharf (which expanded to become our pier) was the first structure ever built in Cayucos. After Cayucos was established in 1875, Cass added the warehouse to his business. This building was 50 by 90 feet and attached to it was an annex. This annex housed Cass' store, which fronted the street. Inside the warehouse was a telegraph office and a bank. Later the post office was added. The warehouse eventually became the Cayucos Vets Hall, a landmark that is the center of our town and has been for many years.



The renovation of our Vets Hall is progressing. The unusually heavy winter rains and storms have slowed construction a little, but it's easy to see that the building is really taking shape. Once construction is completed, it will be available for community activities and meetings. CHS hopes to occupy the restored annex with a History Museum, which will contain information and pictures of our town's colorful history.

CHS is grateful to the County for finding the funds to make this renovation possible and to the hundreds of people who donated to keep the project moving forward. Soon we'll have our Vets Hall back and ready to meet the needs of Cayucans and visitors alike.

To donate, please go to: restorecayucosvetshall.org

Please become a member.

Your generous gift will help the society continue in our efforts to preserve our community's history.

Name: _____

Date of Contribution: ____ / ____ / ____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

- Gold Member \$100**
- Cayucan \$50**
- Trailblazer \$25**
- Other \$ _____**

Please make checks to Cayucos Historical Society
 Mail to: PO Box 143, Cayucos, CA 93430

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR A
 NEW EXHIBIT OPENING RECEPTION
 & GENERAL MEETING**

*Continuing exhibit is a CASS-cade
 of information, Pictures -
 Artifacts about James Cass,
 pioneer of our town.*

MAY 17TH @ 5:00PM

*Cayucos Surf Co. Mezzanine
 146 N. Ocean Avenue, Cayucos, CA*

Museum
 146 N. Ocean Ave
at the Cayucos Surf Co

Website
[cayucoshistorical-
society.com](http://cayucoshistorical-society.com)

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society](https://www.instagram.com/cayucoshistorical-society)