

The Rotunda Building in Atascadero, the heart of the Colony. Over the entrance facing the creek, E.G. Lewis had carved: "For lasting happiness, we turn our eyes to one alone, and she surrounds you now. Mother Nature." The building is now California State Historical Landmark 958.

# BOULEVARD to the SEA

In 1913, E.G. Lewis began developing the Atascadero Colony. One incentive for prospective home buyers was the promise of access to the Pacific Ocean. At the time, people traveling from Atascadero had to go south to San Luis Obispo then westward to the coast, a trip that took nearly all day.

Two years later, work began on the 17-mile road to connect Atascadero and Morro Bay. Building a road through the Santa Lucia Mountains was no easy task in 1915. Workers used dynamite, steam-driven shovels, and a steel "scoop" pulled by mules called the Fresno scraper to widen narrow horse trails that meandered alongside a creek through deep forest.

The original road was built at a cost of about \$60,000. Atascadero Colony residents could now get to the beach in two hours instead of the long drive over the steep Cuesta Grade. Some stretches of the E.G. Lewis' highway were too narrow for two-way traffic, so visitors were advised to travel west in the morning and east in the afternoon.

In 1994, the section of State Highway 41 between Atascadero and Morro Bay was officially named the "E.G. Lewis Highway", but over one hundred years ago it was known as the "Boulevard to the Sea".



## Atascadero to Morro Bay



In 1919, development began on The Cloisters in Morro Bay by the Colony Holding Company. Small lots were sold between Morro Rock and Cayucos. In 1925, The Cloisters Inn was built along with a nine hole golf course.

The Cloisters Inn fell on hard times, remaining vacant for many years. In the early 1960s, transients set fire to the old inn, burning it to the ground. Tall eucalyptus trees still stand, marking the entrance to the former Cloisters Inn.



HWY 101

ATASCADERO  
E.G. LEWIS HIGHWAY

The Atascadero Colony by its very plan has enlisted a great body of people of more than average intelligence and courage and its creed is: "We will keep our faces to the sunshine and we will not see the shadows."

E.G. Lewis January 22, 1916  
Atascadero News Vol. 1, No. 1



A steam shovel excavates rock and dirt and drops it in the wagon.

DEVIL'S GAP  
MISTLETOE  
FALLS

Devil's Gap is the high point at 1,438'. Water that runs off the mountain either flows westward into Morro Creek or eastward into Atascadero Creek. A waterfall at the top of the grade was a favorite place to rest before starting down the other side.



A Fresno scraper is used to flatten and level the ground. Here, the scraper gang gets a fresh mule team.

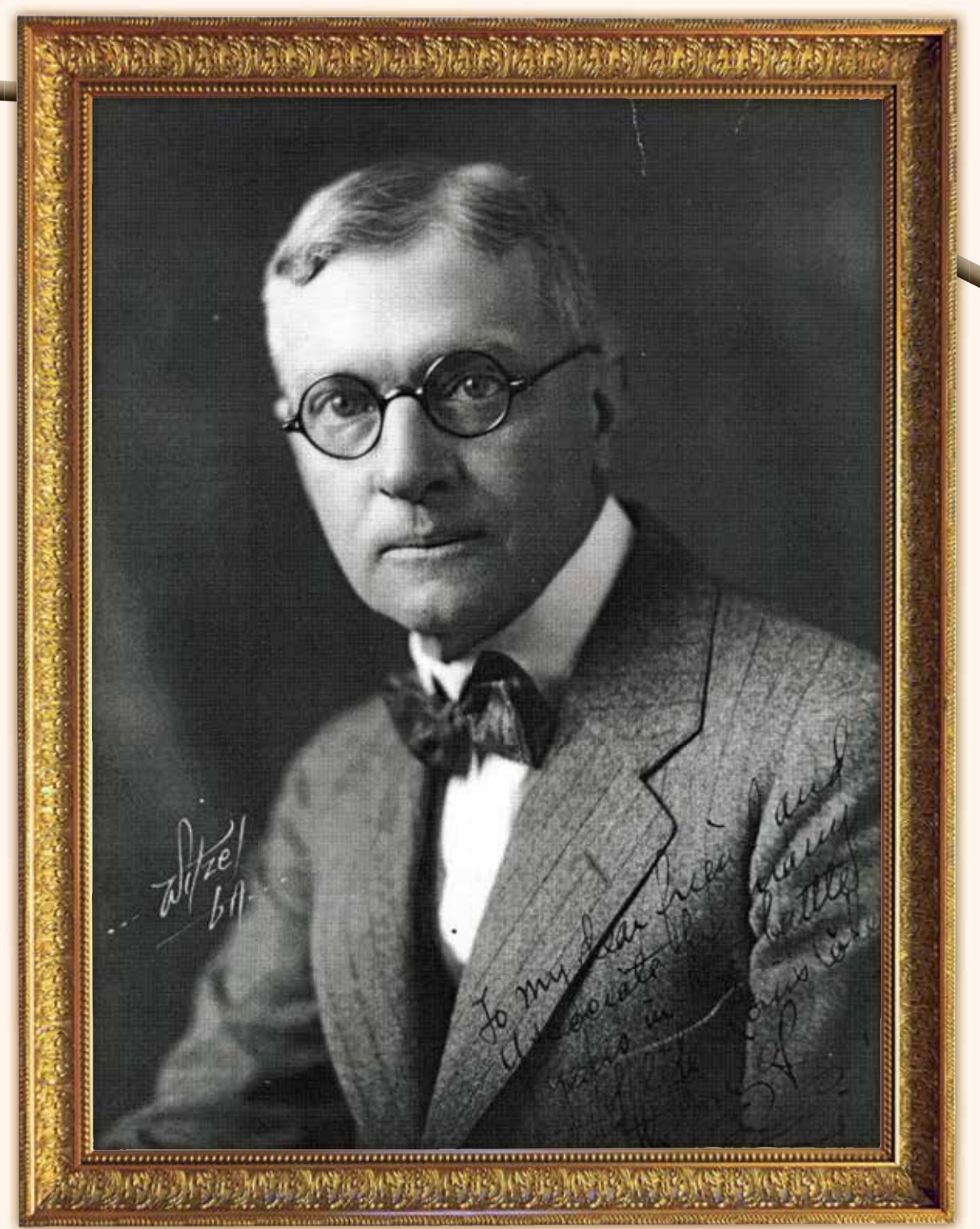


A grading blade is used to create drainage ditches and perform finishing touches to the road.



A roller smooths the surface.

Parts of the old road still exist, including Old Morro Road West, Old Morro Road and Old Morro Road East. In the Three Bridges area, the original road alignment crossed over Atascadero Creek just before the trailhead area, on the north side of Atascadero Creek.

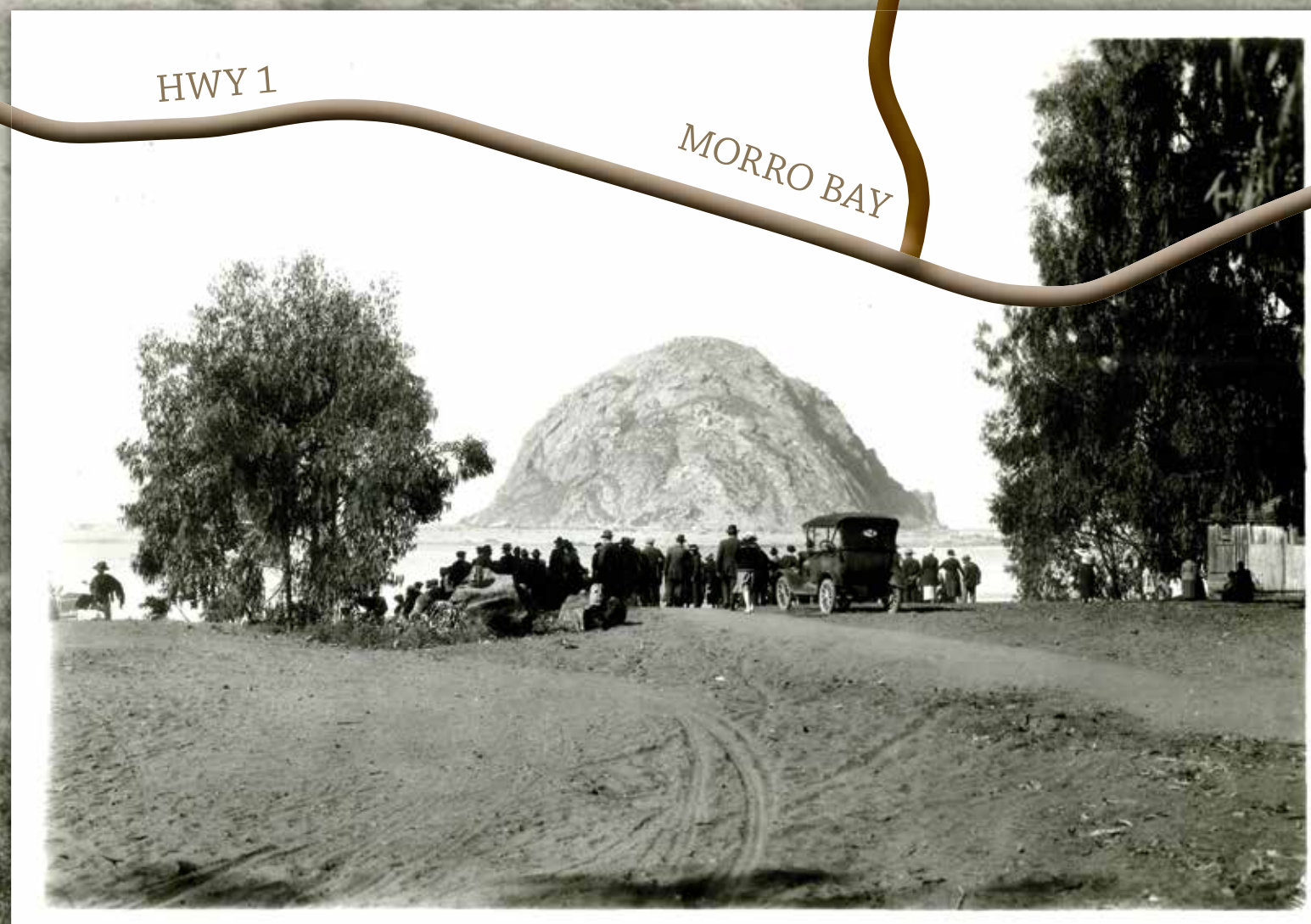


Edward Gardner Lewis (1869-1950)

was the artistic, idealistic founder of two utopian colonies: University City in Missouri, and Atascadero. E.G. Lewis went to St. Louis in the late 1890s, bought a small magazine called "Winner" and renamed it "Woman's Magazine". He sold annual subscriptions for 10¢ and took full advantage of favorable postage rates, including free rural delivery. E.G. Lewis quickly built his magazine's circulation to the largest in the country, amassing a fortune in the process. His vision was influenced by the City Beautiful movement, with its emphasis on nature and open space.



Atascadero Colony settlers looking over available lots in 1913.



HWY 1

MORRO BAY

Photographs courtesy of the Atascadero Historical Society. For more information please visit the Atascadero Historical Society Museum at 6600 Lewis Avenue, Atascadero.



ATASCADERO LAND PRESERVATION SOCIETY