

REVISITING DAYS ON THE WHARF

Monterey to host Japanese American Heritage Days, May 3-4 at the city's Old Fisherman's Wharf.

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The building originally constructed for the Japanese Association of Monterey is now the Japanese American Citizens League of the Monterey Peninsula Hall. (Photos courtesy JACLMP)

Save the date for a fascinating and fun event for the whole family, as Japanese American Heritage Days will be held Saturday and Sunday, May 3 and 4, at Monterey's Old Fisherman's Wharf.

The event will be held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days and is co-sponsored by Monterey's Old Fisherman's Wharf Association and the Japanese American Citizens League of the Monterey Peninsula.

Some of the interactive and educational activities during this special weekend will include a historic photo exhibit of the Japanese fishermen in Monterey, an abalone cooking demonstration, origami demonstrations, ikebana and bonsai demonstrations, gyotaku (Japanese fish printing), taiko drums and other live musical performances, historic walking tours, a “Pop” Ernest photo op, an abalone song competition, an abalone helmet diving demonstration, abalone races, a tea ceremony and much more.

Wharf restaurants will be serving small bites of a variety of delicious Japanese dishes and sweet treats. Ozeki Sake will provide a cask for a traditional Japanese ceremony known as “kagami-wari.”

Whale watching and sport fishing trips will also be available at the wharf.

A highlight of the event will be the presentation of a beautifully hand-crafted and painted Japanese maiwai jacket during a traditional ceremony.

At 4 p.m. on May 3, a colorful procession with dignitaries, lion dancers, and musicians will begin at the wharf and continue to the Japanese American Citizens League Hall, located at 424 Adams St., followed by a reception.



Fishing boats unload their catches of abalone, which became popular in Monterey and introduced the delicacy to many across the country.

Monterey's Japanese sister city is Nanao, and the relationship dates back to 1986, when a group from Nanao first visited Monterey to study the city's economic drivers. Like Monterey, Nanao is a coastal community that repositioned itself as a tourist destination after its fishing industry diminished.

Several delegations visited California in the following years, and local Rotary clubs and non-profit organizations are involved in hosting and leading presentations. Some of the Junior Wings, past and present youth who visited Japan, will also be on hand at Japanese Heritage Days in costume.

The Japanese American Citizens League of the Monterey Peninsula was formed in 1932. This organization grew out of a community group that helped the Issei (first generation) community with the English language, and provided immigration, tax and contract information.

JACL's building on Adams Street is used as an Asian cultural center. The JACL has been a driving force in the community for over 80 years, sponsoring sports and educational activities, health care and social programs, and addressing civil liberties and civil rights.

The JACL also sponsors a Japanese language school and hosts other groups for Chinese language study, music, traditional Japanese dance and martial arts.

Prior to World War II, the Japanese had a dominating presence on Fisherman's Wharf, owning and operating a majority of the businesses. At the beginning of the war, some 119,000 people of Japanese heritage who lived on the Pacific Coast were forcibly removed from their homes and livelihoods and incarcerated in internment camps and federal detention facilities for the duration of the war, thus ending Japanese presence on the wharf. The U.S. government authorized the internment by issuing Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942, shortly after Imperial Japan's attack at Pearl Harbor.

After the war, many Japanese Americans returned to the Monterey Peninsula, encouraged by a welcome-back petition signed by approximately 1,000 local notables, including John Steinbeck and Edward "Doc" Ricketts. These petitions were recently discovered amongst documents housed in the JACL Heritage Museum by Tim Thomas, local archivist and historian.

Faced by the disappearance of the sardines (they run in cycles approximately every 60 years), the returning Japanese Americans ventured into other fisheries, pursued entry-level jobs such as gardening, restarted or opened retail businesses, gained employment with municipal agencies, and established a presence in the medical professions.

In 1988, after a 10-year campaign by JACL and other organizations, the U.S. government acknowledged its error and apologized for violating the Constitution by imprisoning its citizens without due process.



Restaurant workers process mountains of freshly caught abalone.

An entrepreneur and restaurateur at the turn of the last century, “Pop” Ernest Doelter, also known as the “Abalone King,” was renowned for owning the first restaurant that served abalone on the Monterey Peninsula. He developed his abalone recipe around 1908 at his first Monterey restaurant on Alvarado Street, which flourished between 1919 and 1952.

At an important period in Monterey history, Doelter turned abalone into an American delicacy, discovering its many uses and creating an entire industry around the food. For his “abalone and seafood restaurant,” he also enlisted two well-known local artists, Jo Mora and Armin Hansen, who created his attractive menus.

For more information, to volunteer or become a sponsor of this upcoming event, call Bob Massaro at (831) 649-6544 or email bmassaro@bostrommanagement.com and check out the website at www.montereywharf.com.

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