# Why Arago?

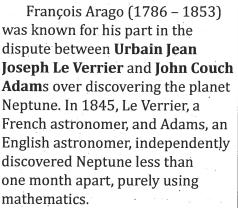
## By Richard Whitwer

The original naming of Cape Gregory made sense since it was discovered and named by **James Cook** on March 12, 1778, the day commemorating St Gregory. However, the Cape was renamed in 1850 in honor of Arago.

## But who was "Arago"?

- When he was seven years old, he tried to stab a Spanish soldier with a lance
- When he was eighteen, he talked a friend out of assassinating Napoleon
- He once angered an archbishop so much that the holy man punched him in the face
- He negotiated with bandits, was chased by a mob, and broke out of prison
- He is François Arago, the most interesting physicist in the world

And all this before age 23!



As Director of the Paris
Observatory, Arago had asked Le
Verrier, a young astronomer, to
explore anomalies in the orbit of
Uranus - resulting in Le Verrier's
discovery of Neptune. Arago
supported naming the newly found
planet after Le Verrier. He lost to
Le Verrier himself, who wanted
to remain with the standard
nomenclature of naming planets
after Greek and Roman mythology.

Arago was also a French mathematician, physicist, astronomer, Freemason, supporter of the French Revolution and a politician. After the French Revolution he was named minister of the navy and the army, and President of the shortlived Executive Committee which held executive power in France following the provisional government. He is one of 72 scientists whose names are inscribed on the Eiffel Tower. For over 40 years Arago was friends with Alexander von Humboldt who was a Prussian geographer, naturalist, and explorer of the Americas.

# Renaming Cape Arago William Pope McArthur

was a hydrologist and Lieutenant



Commander in the American Navy. He was in command of the first survey of the Pacific Coast for the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey between 1849 and 1850. Commanding the U.S. Survey schooner *Ewing*, he mapped the West Coast from San Francisco to the mouth of the Columbia River.

Following the mapping of Humboldt Bay, which had already been named by a group of miners, the survey moved north. There he charted and mapped what was then called Fort Orford, naming the harbor for the schooner Ewing. MacArthur knew that Arago and Humboldt were friends and contemporary scientists, so changed the name of Cape Gregory to Cape Arago in his honor when he arrived there.

Unfortunately, McArthur

didn't survive the voyage and died of dysentery on the way home. He was buried in Panama, later to be reburied on Mare Island near San Francisco in 1867.

#### References:

- 1. Oregon Geographic Names, Lewis McArthur, 7th Edition, 2003
- 2. https://skullsinthestars. com/2012/01/16/francois-aragothe-most-interesting-physicist-inthe-world/ François Arago: the most interesting physicist in the world! Posted on January 16, 2012 by skullsinthestars
- 3. https://www.wonders-of-the-world. net/Eiffel-Tower/Pantheon/Francois-Arago.php
- 4. https://www.google.com/search?client=firefoxb-1-d&q=William+Pope+McArthur
- 5. https://www.obspm.fr/the-discovery-ofneptune.html?lang=en



CHM volunteer Richard Whitwer gave a lively talk about the Cape Arago Lighthouse in December. Seventy-three people attended the discussion which featured a PowerPoint presentation with dozens of photos from the museum's collection. Photo by Steve Greif

# Membership Roll Call October-December 2019

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Kerriden, Kay Luebberke, Elizabeth Major, Vonnie Wheeler, Mary Sue

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Recken, Maria

Recken, Sarah &

Robert Sasanoff

Roblan, Arnie & Arlene

Rocha, Judy Sharp, Gary Slack, Joe & Claudia Taylor, Barbara Terwilliger, Nora Whitty, John & Teri Williams, David & Marilyn

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Renewed Historian Farr, Linda & Jay

**Renewed Business** Koontz Machine & Welding