

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!

François Arago (1786 – 1853) was known for his part in the dispute between **Urbain Jean Joseph Le Verrier** and **John Couch Adams** over discovering the planet Neptune. In 1845, Le Verrier, a French astronomer, and Adams, an English astronomer, independently discovered Neptune less than one month apart, purely using mathematics.

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 short-lived 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-arago-the-most-interesting-physicist-in-the-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=firefox-b-1-d&q=William+Pope+McArthur>
5. <https://www.obsfm.fr/the-discovery-of-neptune.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

Renewed Individuals

Archerd, Sandra
 Arnold, Glennora
 Black, Roberta
 Blake, Kathy
 Chilla, Barbara
 Cummings, Heide
 Dixon, Judy
 Gerkman, Laurel
 Gonzales, Linda
 Hagge, Janet
 Heap, Katie
 Hodgins, Katherine
 Kinnaird, Marshall
 Koreiva, MJ
 Lyman, Donald
 Martin, Georgia
 Messerle, Annie
 Raper, Elaine
 Shoji, Crystal
 Sisk, Russ Ann
 Tinker, George
 Wilskey, Joanne
 Worthen, Francine

New Individuals

Ferrara, Pamela

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

Renewed Households

Benward, Curt
 Boise, Ron & Linda
 Chadwick, Jerry & Sarita Southgate
 Clarke, Jim & Nancy
 Close, Larry & Pat
 Cross, Pat
 Fischer, Suzanne & Al Rumsch
 Graham, Steven & Debra
 Graybill, Mike & Jan Hodder
 Groben, Elizabeth
 Hoffman, Jack & Lucy
 Mahaffy, Bob
 Maxfield, Lloyd & Kileen
 Messerle, Ken & Lola
 Miranda, Roland
 Mohr, Ralph
 Morrison, Leonard & Diane

Nowlin, Thomas & Susan
 Ryan, Margie & Jamie Fereday
 Short, Linda
 Smith, George & Laura
 Stickler, Barbara
 Wahl, Jim & Kathryn Newhouse
 Willis, Janet
 Woods, Allen

New Household

Duke, Becky

Renewed Friend

Beebe, Deryl & Chris
 Bloom, Melanie
 Cornell, Charles & Barbara
 Dieu, Ron
 Fox, Rick & Joan Goodman
 Gant, George T
 Gehlert, Gary & Janet
 Golder, Lee and & Sharon

Gould, David & Donna
 Groom, Debra
 Halvor, Paul & Marilyn
 Hayner-Thompson, Jill
 Helske, R.E.
 Honda World
 Hutchinson, Bill & Susi
 Jansen, Nicholas & Joyce
 Johnson, Monita & Gary
 Johnson, Roger & Ellen
 Kendrick, Wm & Joan
 Mendizabal, Cristina
 Metzger, Ron & Kathy
 Mikowski, Judy
 Moffitt, Christine
 Moore, Christopher & Mary
 Orsi, Thomas
 Pennington, Kristi
 Prouty, Sally J
 Pruhsmeier, Karen
 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

New Friend

Hart, Marcia & Bob
 Scavera, Jim

Renewed Benefactor

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 Douthit, Nathan & Eva
 Greif, Steve & Joan
 Janke, Patty
 Littlefield, Jon & Lee

Renewed Historian

Farr, Linda & Jay

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