

Village Memories: A Photo Essay on La Jolla's Past

Jeremy Hollins

La Jolla is a part of the city of San Diego with a strong community identity. Henry Fitch of Old Town mapped the area in his survey of 1845 as “pueblo land,” containing about sixty lots. John C. Hayes mapped it again as part of the pueblo, then city of San Diego, in 1858. Long known for its spectacular coastline and enchanting rock formations, La Jolla remained sparsely settled during the early American period. In 1870, Charles Dean received pueblo lots 1283 and 1284 from the city trustees and, after acquiring several more lots, subdivided an area that became known as La Jolla Park. Even though Dean promoted La Jolla’s “charming rocks and their caves with the attractions of moss, shells and beautiful nooks,” he was unable to develop his land.

In December 1880 he advertised La Jolla Park “For Sale to the Highest Bidder,” and, still unsuccessful, left San Diego for St. Louis in 1881. The “Boom” of the 1880s nevertheless brought speculators such as Frank T. Botsford and George W. Heald to La Jolla and they again scheduled a public auction in 1887. Heald bought a one-fourth interest in La Jolla Park and worked to carefully lay out the community. La Jolla began to “take off” and by the turn of the twentieth century, it boasted 350 residents and some one hundred buildings. It became a popular resort area and a perfect location for the founding of The Bishop’s School in 1909.



Cows at the Beach, 1906. At the beginning of the twentieth century, La Jolla Shores was an enjoyable resting place for Holstein cows that were part of the nearby Long Beach Dairy run by the family of early resident Jeremiah Lee Holliday. The shores were used at times to grow lima beans and grapes. Photo courtesy of the La Jolla Historical Society, VM001.0104.

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The real estate "boom" of the 1880s brought speculators to La Jolla. Frank T. Botsford, a New York stockbroker, and George W. Heald bought a considerable amount of property, subdivided it, and scheduled a public auction. This photo shows Robert Pennell, auctioneer and manager of the Pacific Coast Land Bureau, 1887. ©SDHS #5511.



The Mills family. Anson Mills (third from left), his daughter Ellen Mills (fifth from left), and wife Eleanor Mills (seventh from left) are shown fishing and having a picnic in the La Jolla Shores area, ca. 1895. The Mills family first came to La Jolla in 1890 following Anson's retirement. Eleanor "Nellie" Mills became one of La Jolla's first real estate brokers and property managers. ©SDHS #4998.



Tourists and La Jolla residents enjoyed the Cove's picturesque surroundings, enhanced by rock formations like Alligator Head and Sphinx Rock (foreground), pictured here in 1895. Ocean erosion and storms caused the formations to deteriorate significantly. Alligator Head's arch collapsed in 1978 and the rest of the landmark fell in 1983. ©SDHS #3344-1.



As early as 1890, Scripps Park became home to a "Tent City" that housed vacationers, guests, and people from inland areas eager to escape the summer heat. The tents, pictured here in 1899, were raised each year around Memorial Day and taken down at the end of the summer. The bathhouse and swings seen above the Cove were built in 1894 by the San Diego, Pacific Beach, and La Jolla Railway. The company also built a dance pavilion and belvederes to encourage visitors to the area. ©SDHS #80:8104-130.



The bathhouse and swings above the Cove, pictured here ca. 1900, were early tourist attractions at Scripps Park. The bathhouse had a short-order restaurant that served lunch, coffee, and cold drinks. On August 28, 1905, a small fire, caused by an exploding gasoline stove, destroyed the building. The swings remained part of the park's landscape until ca. 1906. ©SDHS #1282.



Modest, single-family cottages and bungalows above La Jolla Cove provided accommodations for summer visitors. ©SDHS #22403.



Prospect Hill Golf Camp in front of the Green Dragon Colony, ca. 1910. The first tee was located at what is now the corner of Exchange Place and Prospect Street. ©SDHS #88:16848.



La Jolla's first library, known as the Reading Room, was built on the northeast corner of Wall and Grand (Girard) Streets in 1898. It is now located on The Bishop's School property on the corner of Prospect and Cuvier Streets. ©SDHS #17468-2.



A McKeen Motorcar known as the “Red Devil” parked in front of Hotel Cabrillo (1909). The gasoline motor car made a loop around the village, heading north on Ivanhoe, west along Prospect Street, and south on Fay Avenue before returning to San Diego. The Hotel Cabrillo was incorporated into the La Valencia Hotel in 1956. ©SDHS #4506.



Diving from La Jolla’s seaside bluffs, seen here in 1914, was a popular activity in early La Jolla. Local teens organized diving groups throughout the early twentieth century and earned an appreciation for La Jolla’s unique coastal location. ©SDHS #7222.



Panoramic view of the La Jolla Shores area, ca. 1921, prior to the construction of the La Jolla Beach and Yacht Club in 1927 (which became the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club in 1935). Seen in the right-hand corner is the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, which relocated to La Jolla Shores from the Cove in 1907, and the southern portion of Torrey Pines State Reserve. ©SDHS #15320.



The bathhouse pictured here, ca. 1923, was the second bathhouse built at the Cove. It was completed in 1906 and featured a bowling alley, a pool (covered in 1907 and used as a dance floor), cafe, 180 dressing rooms, and lockers. Plans for the removal of the bathhouse began in 1919 due, in part, to its unsanitary condition. It was finally removed in 1925. Seen in the background are the Red Rest and Red Roost bungalows which have been above Scripps Park since 1894 and are two of the oldest remaining bungalows in La Jolla. ©SDHS #90:18138-94.

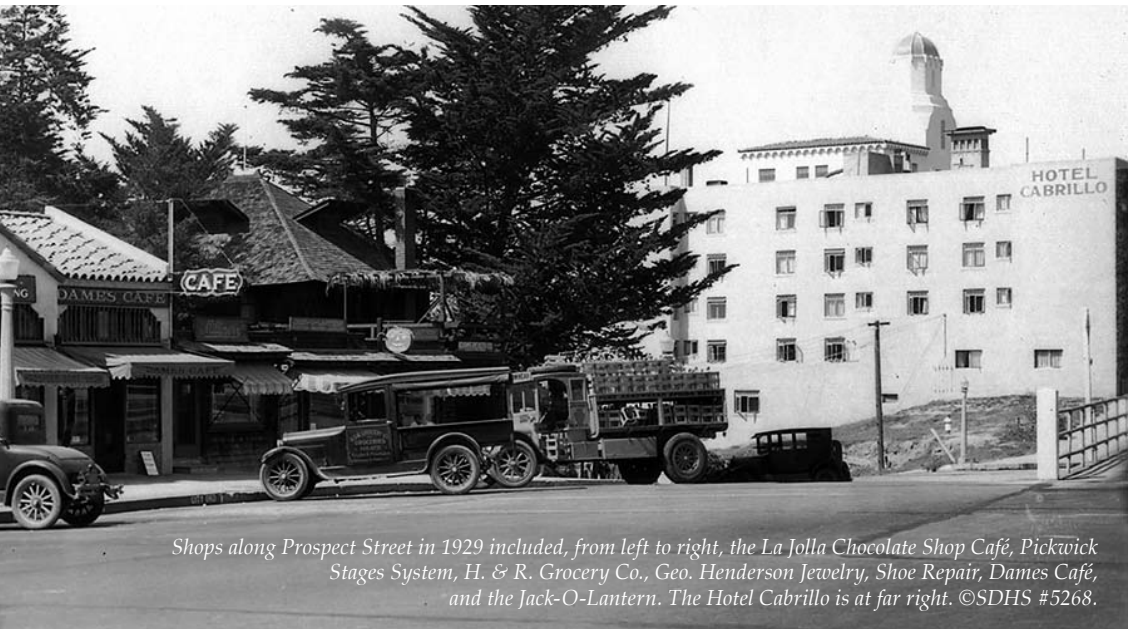


The present-day Colonial Hotel opened in 1929 with ninety apartments and rooms. The original Colonial, designed in 1911-1912 by Richard Requa, was relocated to the rear of the new hotel. The hotel advertised itself as fire-proof (evidenced by its penthouse) after recent fires at the Dining Car restaurant, the La Jolla Garage, and five major fires in 1915 devastated the community. ©SDHS Sensor #32-44.





Horseback riding on La Jolla Shores, ca. 1920. La Jolla residents enjoyed swimming, golf, tennis, and horseback riding, among other activities. ©SDHS #5736.



Shops along Prospect Street in 1929 included, from left to right, the La Jolla Chocolate Shop Café, Pickwick Stages System, H. & R. Grocery Co., Geo. Henderson Jewelry, Shoe Repair, Dames Café, and the Jack-O-Lantern. The Hotel Cabrillo is at far right. ©SDHS #5268.



In 1926, the San Carlos Electric Railroad Station of the La Jolla and San Diego Electric line stood alone in the virtually undeveloped La Jolla Hermosa area. The San Carlos station was completed in 1924 and remained in service until 1940 when the "Last Car" took its last trip. The La Jolla United Methodist Church acquired the building in 1953 and, after extensive alterations, converted the former station into a home for its congregation. ©SDHS #9199.



The San Diego Electric Railway named stations along the La Jolla and San Diego Electric line after California's missions, according to the December 12, 1924 edition of the La Jolla Journal. It adopted the Spanish Colonial architectural style for the San Carlos Electric Railway Station in La Jolla. In 1929, the railway planned an upscale restaurant for the San Carlos station with the intention of attracting locals and out-of-towners. ©SDHS #92:18728.



In the background of this photograph, ca. 1927, is the Scripps Institution of Oceanography's one-thousand-foot pier, dedicated in 1916. In the foreground are three of the first residences built in La Jolla Shores, constructed during a building boom in the early 1920s. ©SDHS #5269.



Aerial view of La Jolla, 1921. Ellen Browning Scripps' home, South Moulton Villa II, and her landscaped gardens, open to the public, appears in the foreground at the corner of Prospect and Silverado Streets. ©SDHS #S-20A.