

South Bay Historical Society Bulletin

March 2014

Issue No. 1

Welcome to the first issue of the Bulletin of the South Bay Historical Society. We first came together in August 2013 in the home of Susan Walter to form the Society. Our mission is:

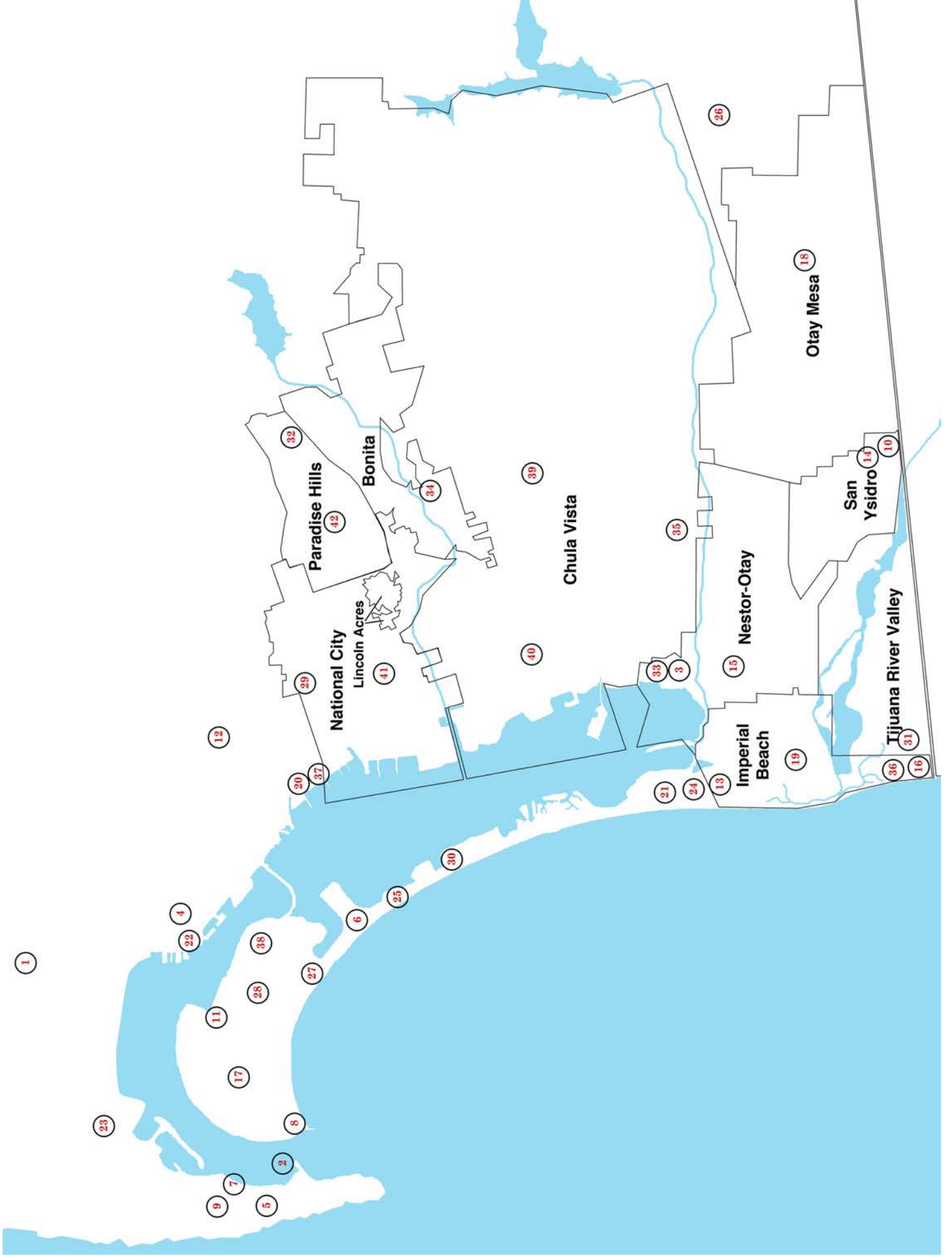
- To form a nonprofit educational organization with bylaws and a board of directors that serve the needs of its membership.
- To preserve and promote the history of the region of San Diego from National City to the border.
- To hold regular meetings that will allow all members to participate in historical discussions and join in activities that promote the mission of the Society.
- To publish a regular Bulletin and maintain a database of resources useful to the understanding the history of the region.
- To act as a clearinghouse for the many organizations in the region that are involved in education and historic preservation, and to promote the sharing of information about historic sites, family artifacts and photographs, exhibits and oral histories.

Military Bases in the South Bay

San Diego has always been a military town, from the establishment of the Presidio in 1769 by the Spanish to the present day. The map inside this issue notes the location of military bases in the South Bay, both large and small. One of the largest bases was Brown Field on Otay Mesa whose control tower pictured below was built in World War II and has been designated an Historic Landmark by the city



of San Diego. Ream Field in Imperial Beach was another large base where many local residents served and worked. Capt. Jack Evans, pictured above, lived on Emerson Street in Chula Vista and belonged to the local Masonic Lodge. In the 1960s he was commander of helicopter squadron HS-8, one of the many squadrons that gave Ream Field its reputation as the “Helicopter Capital of the World.”



1. Presidio 1769.
2. Fort Guijarros on Ballast Point 1797.
3. Camp Riley by Maj. William H. Emory 1849.
4. San Diego Barracks 1850.
5. Fort Rosecrans 1852.
6. Coast Artillery site on the Strand 1896.
7. Navy Coaling Station at La Playa 1901, on site of old Quarantine Station built 1888.
8. Army fort on North Island at Zuniga Shoal 1901.
9. Point Loma Naval Radio Station 1906; became Naval Electronics Lab 1945.
10. Tia Juana Border Camp by Army 1911.
11. Glenn Curtiss aviation school Spanish Bight 1911.
12. Chollas Heights Naval Radio Station 1916.
13. Camp Hearn by Army in Imperial Beach 1916.
14. San Ysidro Border Camp by Army 1916.
15. Palm City Border Camp by Army 1916.
16. Border Field Camp by Army 1916.
17. Army's Rockwell Field and Navy's North Isl. 1917.
18. Brown Field originally Army's East Field 1918; In 1943 the Navy took over the field of 805 acres and it was commissioned March 17 as as NAAS Otay Mesa; on Aug. 25 the name was changed to Brown Field; closed and given to the city of San Diego in 1962.
19. Ream Field originally Army's Oneonta Gunnery School 1918; the Navy took over in the 1920s and it was designated as Outlying Field Imperial Beach; in July 1943 was expanded into a Naval Auxiliary Air Station; in 1950 became helicopter base and was known as the "Helicopter Capital of the World"; in 1968 became a full Naval Air Station; in 1974 was again an auxiliary landing field; in 1976 it was named Outlying Field (OLF, Imperial Beach).
20. Concrete shipyard 1918 on 35 acres dredged from the harbor; in 1922 it became the Destroyer Repair Base, then Fleet Repair Base, then the U. S. Naval Station; in 1954 it became the Naval Repair Facility with a mothball fleet of 200 destroyers; since 1965 has been known as 32nd Street Naval Station and the mothball fleet has been removed for piers serving modern Navy ships.
21. Navy Radio Compass Station 1920; in 1932 became a Navy Direction Finder Station; in 1940 became a Direction Finder Station with a unit of 112 WAVES assigned to SIGINT operations. In 1947, it became Naval Radio Receiving Station Imperial Beach, and in 1965 it received a Wullenweber Circular Antenna Array.
22. Naval Supply Depot, HQ 11th Naval District 1922.
23. Naval Training Center commissioned 1923.
24. Fort Emory established by the Army in 1941 by taking over the 412 acres of Coronado Heights. In 1950 the Navy took over all 412 acres of old Fort Emory and it became Naval Radio Station, Imperial Beach.
25. Naval Amphibious Base expanded 1941 on both the bay and ocean sides of the Strand south of Coronado. The South San Diego Bay Seadrome was a seaplane landing and takeoff area on the San Diego Bay adjacent to the Amphibious Base. The Seadrome had two runways in the bay marked by amber buoys, one parallel to the Strand, another east across the bay.
26. Target Area 32 in 1941 was a 45 acre site south of the Otay Reservoir between Brown Field and the Lower Otay Reservoir, used by the Navy for bombing training.
27. Most of the Hotel del Coronado was taken over by the Navy for enlisted and officers housing in 1942.
28. National Guard Armory in Coronado 1942.
29. National Guard Armory in National City 1942.
30. Battery Cortez coastal defense gun station 1942.
31. Auxiliary Landing Field, Border Field 1942.
32. Navy Landing Strip Sweetwater 1942, on the north side of Paradise Valley Road and west of Briarwood.
33. Army lookout station in old La Punta adobe 1942.
34. Army lookout camp in Bonita 1942.
35. Camp Weber in Otay at Main and Albany in 1942, for the Army's the 140th Infantry Regiment.
36. Fire Control Station and observation posts and machine gun range, east of Border Field auxiliary landing field 1942.
37. The U. S. Destroyer Base became the U. S. Naval Repair Base 1943.
38. Navy housing project built in Coronado at 2nd St. and Prospect Place 1943 (Sharp Hospital site today).
39. Hilltop Village defense housing project in Chula Vista 1943 (Hilltop Middle School today).
40. Vista Square defense housing project in Chula Vista 1943 (Chula Vista Shopping Center today).
41. Olivewood defense housing project in National City (National City Park Apartments today) 1943.
42. Bayview Hills Navy housing in Paradise Hills 1954.

column 1

column 2

column 3