
South Bay Historical Society Bulletin

April 2014

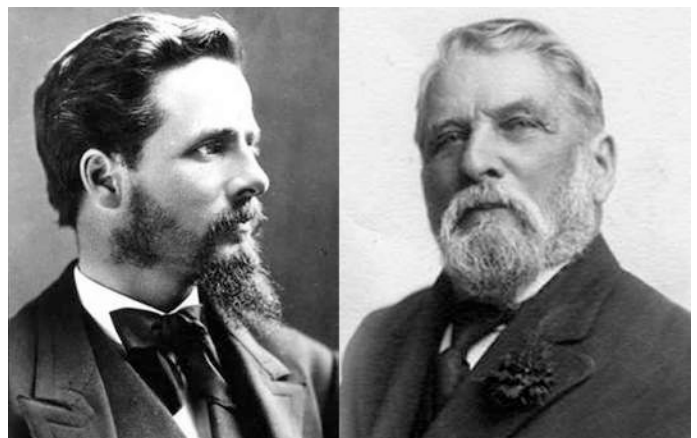
Issue No. 2



Eucalyptus Park

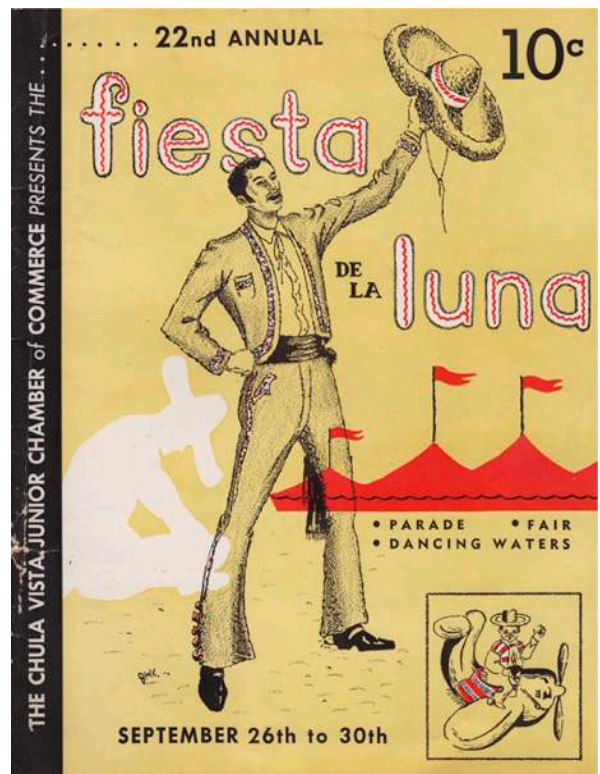
Eucalyptus Park is Chula Vista's second city park, established in 1926 at 4th and C Street. The first eucalyptus trees in the South Bay were planted by Frank Kimball in the Sweetwater River valley soon after he purchased Rancho de la Nacion. Kimball reported in his diary on April 10, 1875, that he planted 10 acres of "blue gum" in the valley.¹ The many groves of eucalyptus in the valley today came from Kimball's trees, including the grove on the hill just south of where National Avenue crossed the Sweetwater river. This hill, in the northeast corner of Quarter Section 150, was owned by Frank Kimball's brother, Warren, and remained undeveloped to the 1920s. The city in 1926 bought the eastern lots of this section from an "unknown person" who had placed the land in escrow "some years

ago" to eventually become a public park.² This person probably was Warren Kimball who died in 1913. The first city park was Library Park in 1916 behind the old Carnegie Library, now the site of Norman Senior Center. The third park



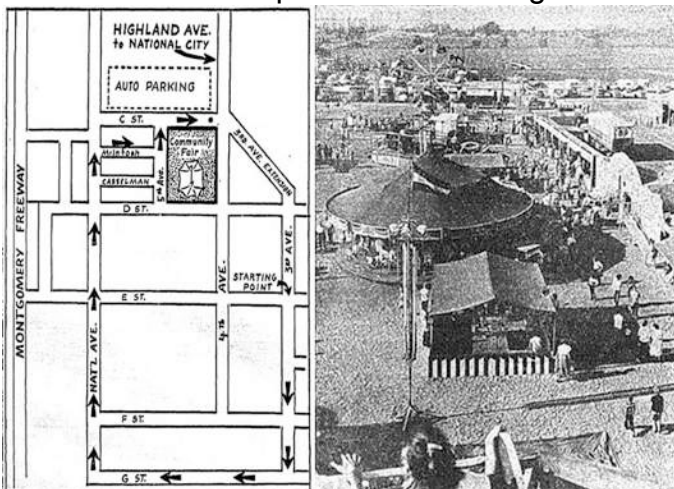
Frank and Warren Kimball

was Memorial Park built by the WPA in 1939. No other parks were built by the city until the 1960s: Greg Rogers Park in 1960, Loma Verde Park in 1964, Rohr Park in 1966. Eucalyptus Park was originally an athletic field, and Chet Norman remembered ball games being played there in the 1920s. Norman began working for the city in 1926, became superintendent of parks in 1946. The old Library Park was renamed in his honor when Norman Adult Recreation Center and Park was built and dedicated Aug. 31, 1961. Eucalyptus Park was called Athletic Park in the 1920s and 1930s and was also used by the Boy Scouts after a small building was erected in 1930 in a corner of the park for the Scouts.³ The park was called Rancho de la Nacion Park when it was used by the Fiesta de la Luna in 1938. The city erected bleachers around the sides of the hill for the pageant called "The Pathfinder" written and directed by Miss Sybil Eliza Jones, head of the San Diego State College drama department.⁴ The next year the Fiesta pageant was moved to the new city park along Alma Street between Third and Forth Avenues where the WPA built a civic bowl that seated 1000 spectators (In 1941, Alma Street was changed to Parkway, and in 1944 the city park became Memorial Park).⁵ The construction of the American Legion Hall began in 1941 on the northwest corner of the old athletic park at 5th and C Street, and the park became known as Legion Park. Due to the war, the hall became an emergency hospital and construction was not completed until late 1944 and it was finally dedicated in 1945 as Jean Loba Post 434. Comfort stations were built in 1944 that were connected to the septic tank at the Legion hall.



Fiesta de la Luna program of 1957 included image of the big tent at the Fair in Eucalyptus Park.

After the war, the park became known as Eucalyptus Park (although it was never officially dedicated as such) and came to be used for many purposes. Fill dirt was added to level the ground for a baseball and a softball diamond in 1948 and Rohr contributed light poles for Little League games. In 1948 a National Guard Armory leased a portion of the park, and public exhibitions were held with tank and half-track rides for the children.⁶ A model airplane club held a regular Flying Circus in the park after 1949, and riding clubs held horse jumping events after 1953. When the Fiesta de la Luna was taken over by the Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1954, the park was used for a five-day Community Fair that included a giant 420-foot tent, with carnival, baton twirling and pie eating and whiskeroo contests, cooking schools, a chuck wagon breakfast for \$1, and two horse shows. 17 local clubs and community organizations participated in midway concessions.⁷ The Fiesta was held for 8 years at the park, but in 1962 it moved to the Civic Center parking lot. The park was used for midget car racing from 1957 to 1960. The San Diego Union reported, "This new type of auto racing for children 4 to 12 years of age is the sport's answer to Little League baseball. Rather



Fiesta de la Luna 1954 map, 1956 Fair.



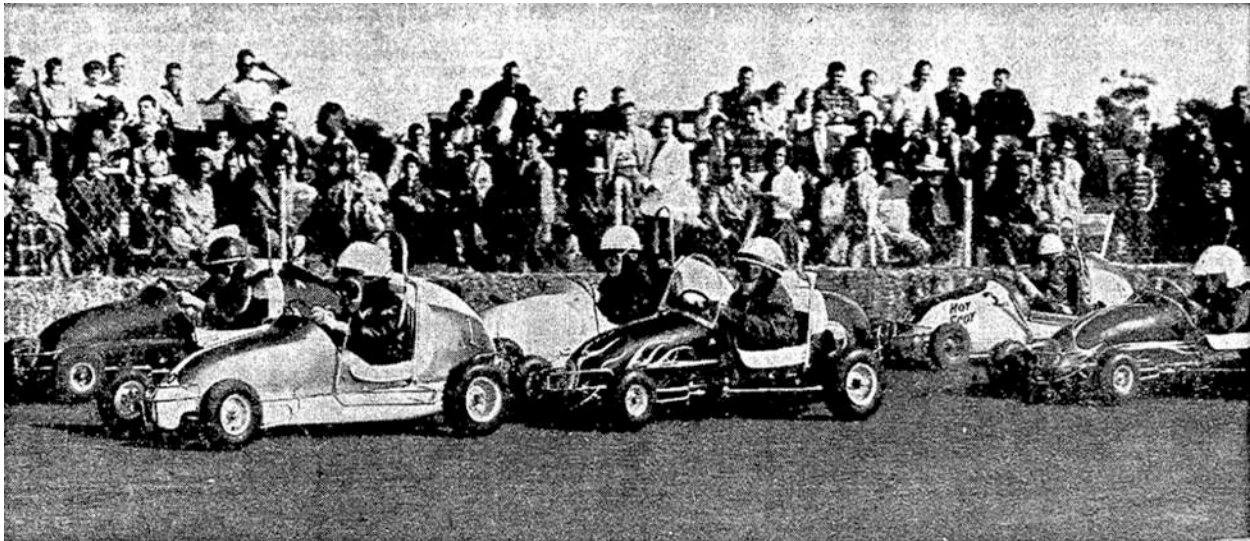
Kindergarten school was moved from F Street school in 1964 to become the YMCA today.

than measuring off the distances of a shortened baseball diamond, parents and members of the Quarter Midget Racing Association have developed a 1/20th of a mile clay surface speedway. The tiny race cars compete every second and fourth Sunday. No admission is charged but young drivers pass the helmet for donations toward the Optimist Youth Fund. Average cost of a racing kit is \$385. Wheel base for these cars must be between 40 and 60 inches. A baby gas engine such as that in lawn mowers with total piston displacement of eight cubic inches is used for the power-plant. Average speed is around 25 miles an hour. However, safety is an important factor and drivers and cars must pass a stringent examination. Roll-bars, safety belts, helmets and shatter-proof goggles are mandatory safety equipment.”⁸ Improvements were added to Eucalyptus Park in 1960, including a chain link fence, ornamental bricks at entrance, playground, picnic tables, barbecues and lighting poles. Cement bleachers were built for a

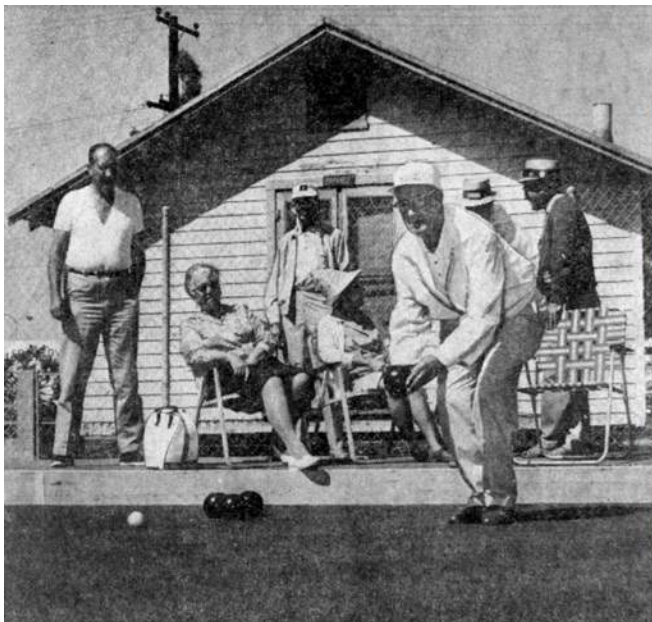
new Pony League ball field at the request of City Councilman Keith Menzel. In honor of the man who served seven years on the City Council and four years as mayor, the Pony League field was named Menzel Field after his death in 1968. A new Chula Vista Tennis Club was organized that used the two tennis courts built in 1964. The old F Street kindergarten building was moved to the park in 1964 and became the city’s first YMCA. A lawn bowling field was dedicated in 1967 with a small building moved from the renovation of Rohr Park. The local Lawn Bowling Association had 46 members and claimed that most of the tourists who came to the South Bay from Canada were lawn bowlers. The Association president was 73-year-old Lynn Schofield, Mayor Robert McAllister's father-in-law and the 1957 U. S. national lawn bowling singles champion.⁹ The bowling field was removed in the 1980s but the Association office building still stands in the northeast corner of the park. In honor of Chula Vista’s sister city in Argentina, the park was renamed General Roca Park from 1969 to 1981. The city planned to demolish the American Legion post in 1984 because it did not meet earthquake standards, but the post remodeled the building with steel beams and extra concrete in the walls to meet state standards in 1991 and its lease with the city was renewed for another 25 years. The city received a grant in 2013 from the California Housing Related Parks Program to rehabilitate some of the older parks in the city, including Eucalyptus Park.

NOTES:

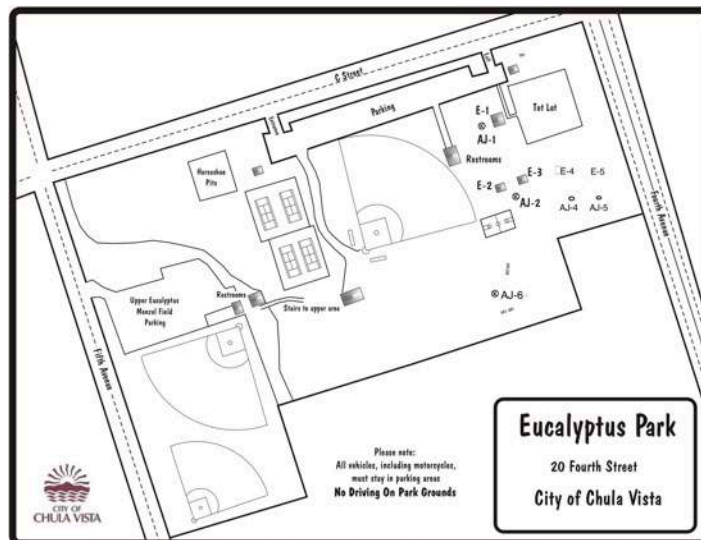
¹ Irene Phillips, "Diaries of Frank A. Kimball," National City Public Library.
² *The San Diego Union*, May 19, 1927.
³ City Council Minutes, Feb. 4, 1930.
⁴ *Chula Vista Star*, Sept. 16, 1938.
⁵ *The San Diego Union*, Sept. 17, 1939.
⁶ *The San Diego Union*, Feb. 25, 1957.
⁷ *Chula Vista Star-News*, Sept. 23, 1954.
⁸ *The San Diego Union*, May 12, 1957.
⁹ Lawn bowling photo and newspaper clippings from the Robert McAllister Papers.



Quarter-midget racing began in Eucalyptus Park in 1957, but due to complaints about the noise, it moved to Cajon Speedway in 1961. (*San Diego Union*, Feb. 8, 1959)



Lynn Schofield dedicated the lawn bowling green in 1967, left, in front of the clubhouse salvaged from the renovation of Rohr Park. The building is still in the northeast corner of Eucalyptus Park today.



Eucalyptus Park plan in 1995. The Tot Lot is where the bowling green was located.

THE JAPANESE COMMUNITY IN THE SOUTH BAY 1880-1948 - PART II

by Harry Orgovan

When Tsuneji Chino's arrived in Chula Vista, he would develop a plan which would "Change an anti-Japanese town into a friendly town." From Chino and others in the Japanese community came donations of cash, flowering cherry trees, gifted to schools, churches and parks.

He presented books on Japan to the Chula Vista Public Library. Chino was nominated for director of the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce and received moral and monetary support from Claus Spreckels. Spreckels who was President of the Spreckels Trading Co., felt the celery union should be made up of both Japanese and Caucasian members rather than each having a separate union. Chino was elected as director of the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce and also director of the North American Chapter of the Agricultural Association of Greater Japan. Chino's knowledge and skills as a farmer improved the quality of the locally grown celery. He received the California Agricultural Departments certificate of prime quality "US Number One." His high quality celery put Chula Vista on the map nationally, carrying the label "Pride of Chula Vista." The Japanese Government awarded Chino with the Agricultural Medal of Merit. His celery was sent to Japan to the palace of the Japanese Emperor. At this point, the San Diego County Celery Growers Union was formed.

Fred Stafford, who Chino had that historic meeting with, in Stafford's field, became the Union's first President. Suekichi Ogino became the first Vice-President. Within a year of the union's founding celery became the leading cash crop in San Diego County. This model of cooperation between Japanese and American farmers became the inspiration for groups like the "Chula Vista Growers Association", the "South Bay Vegetable Union" and the "South Bay Farmers Cooperative."

This era of cooperation ended abruptly on December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was attacked. A war inspired hysteria combined with misinformation produced fear, hostility and suspicion towards all Japanese regardless of their standing in the community. The next day December 8, the FBI began arresting all Japanese leaders in the community. Leaders of the Vegetable Growers Association on K Street, teachers and facilities of all Japanese schools, the Strawberry Growers Association, religious ministers and fathers of all Japanese families were arrested and placed in the County Jail. Fear of a Japanese attack on the California coast mounted. All leaders and fathers were taken to County Jail where they were chained together forced to walk about three blocks through downtown to be interrogated. It was a shameful thing for these fathers and once respected leaders in the South Bay.

Joseph K. Sano a veteran of World War I and a member of the local American Legion Post spoke before the city council in Chula Vista with a resolution of allegiance. "Our action today is to prove our sincere allegiance to the country which we have lived for many years. Our assistance and our lives if necessary, will be offered to the United States if it needs us". Many South Bay leaders who were held in County Jail for two weeks were sent to confinement in Montana and other areas in the interior of the United States. Their families didn't even get a letter from them for 6 months. Once thriving Japanese centers simply ceased to exist.

On February 19, 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the urging of groups, including senior West Coast military authorities, federal, state and local elected officials, issued Executive Order 9066. The order required all people of Japanese ancestry, even if born in the United States to be evacuated from the western United States military zone and placed in camps in the interior of the country.

On April 1, 1942 the Western Defense Command of the United States Army issued Civilian Exclusion Order Number Four, part of the Presidential Order. All Japanese families south of Del Mar California were required to register with the local office of the Wartime Civil Control Administration, located at 1919 India Street San Diego.

The April 2, 1942 issue of the San Diego Union reported that there were 2076 people of Japanese ancestry living in San Diego County at the time of the 1940 census. Chula Vista had 173 of whom 103 were citizens. National City had 57 Japanese of whom 38 were citizens and Coronado had 38 of whom 25 were citizens of America. The United States Army cited for the entire South Bay 594 people of Japanese ancestry, of which 375 were citizens.

On April 8, 1942 Japanese farms were shut down, with many spring crops left to be harvested. Families were forced to sell or abandon everything. Most of the 77 Japanese families living in Chula Vista were sent to the Santa Anita racetrack in Arcadia, California. They were ordered to board trains leaving from Santa Fe Depot. They were allowed to take only what they could carry on the train. Leaving behind Homes, farms and automobiles, lost forever. Anything left behind was burglarized, stolen or embezzled. The families were forced to live in barns at the racetrack which had been turned into a military prison.

August of 1942 the Japanese families were sent to Poston relocation center near Parker, Arizona. Poston was one of ten camps built by the War Relocation Authority for the 110,000 Japanese removed from their homes. Poston camp held 20,000 people. Many of the Japanese farms were taken over by the government as were the 3 farms located on Gunpowder Point. The majority of the South Bay Japanese were assigned to camp III at Poston. They arrived August 26, 1942.

People were born, lived, worked, educated, died and were buried within the barbed wire of these camps. The camps lasted for over 3 years. While some could have left after 2 years to live in the interior of the United States, most decided to stay till the wars end for the safety of their families. Once the war was over, some Japanese returned to the South Bay. Most Japanese could not return to an area, which harbored many memories of those hard times.

From 1943 to 1948 the Attorney General of California confiscated 80 properties of Japanese ownership. In 1946 Fred Oyama, an American citizen at birth, whose property had been confiscated went to the courts to regain his property. His property was located between K and J Streets, west of Broadway and east of the railroad tracks. After losing in San Diego Superior Court and the California State Supreme Court, Oyama took his case to the United States Supreme Court. He was victorious. Despite his victory his land was never returned. In 1956 through a California State ballot 43 years of racially biased Land Laws were reversed.





Memorial plaque at Broadway and Palomar reads: "South Bay Issei Pioneers. Initially arriving in 1885, these immigrants from Japan, through their intellect, diligence, and tenacity made numerous major contributions to the agricultural development of this area. These accomplishments were achieved at the same time as the issei were fighting discrimination, unfair land laws, and ultimately, the mass removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast of the United States during World War II. This site marks the final location of the Chula Vista Gakuen or Japanese School, which was originally dedicated on October 6, 1925. The school helped nisei children to better understand and honor their heritage. Japanese American Citizens League San Diego Chapter. Japanese American historical Society of San Diego. September 1996."



The Poston Memorial is located near the Colorado River south of Parker, Arizona. In the base of the 30-foot concrete tower are bronze plaques that explain the significance of the relocation camp in World War II. The text of one of these plaques reads: "Poston was one of the ten (10) WRA centers constructed in 1942. It was planned in cooperation with the U.S. Indian Service, as it was sited on the Colorado River Indian Reservation, a hot and arid area of Arizona. Poston was built as three separate units (Poston Unit I, II and III). The facility was named after Charles Poston, a government engineer who planned an irrigation system to serve the needs of the Indian people along the Colorado River. Wade Head, the superintendent of the Papago Indian Reservation of Arizona, was appointed Poston Project Director. The internees with their limited baggage began to arrive on May 6, 1942 and by August 1942 the population peaked at 17,867. Almost overnight Poston became Arizona's second largest city.



LEARN MORE

The best source for the history of the Japanese in the South Bay is *South Bay Monogatari: Tales of the South Bay Nikkei Community*, by the late Donald H. Estes. It is out of print but used copies can be purchased from amazon.com and it is available at the libraries in Bonita and El Cajon, and at the San Diego Public Library downtown and at San Ysidro. Susan Hasegawa's *Japanese Americans in San Diego* is published by Arcadia and is available from the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego <http://jahssd.org/>. The excellent quarterly newsletter of the JAHSSD is *Footprints* and has carried many stories about the experiences of the Japanese families living in San Diego. Information about the Poston Camp Updates: Preservation Project is at <http://postonupdates.blogspot.com/>



Don Estes taught at San Diego City College from 1967 to 2003

and was the author of six books about the history of the Japanese, as well as numerous articles and exhibitions and films. He collected many oral histories, and the word “Monogatari” in the title of his 1992 book means “tales” in Japanese, or “to tell about things.”

NEWS



Congratulations to Harry Orgovan for winning the 2014 Clean Champion Award from the Chula Vista Resource Conservation Commission in recognition of his efforts to improve water quality of San Diego Bay. Harry is the owner of Chula Vista Kayak and is a docent at the Living Coast Discovery Center.

COMING ON TV

A story on the National City Railroad Depot was filmed by “About San Diego with Ken Kramer” and will air on KPBS Thursday, May 8, and Sunday, May 11.

EVENTS

We have planned the following dates for the rest of 2014. This year, all meetings will be held in the Auditorium of the Chula Vista Main Library, Monday evenings at 6:00.

May 19. Speaker: Lowell Blankfort. Topic: His experiences as editor of the Star-News.

July 27. Field trip. National City Train Depot, Sunday 2 pm.

September 29. Speaker: TBA

November 17. Speaker: TBA

We hope you will arrive a little earlier to visit! The Auditorium will be open by 5:30. We will have a table set up at the entrance for check in. We will also have a suggestion box for you to submit comments and questions.

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