



## WHAT'S HAPPENING

February 1, 2021



*Valentine's Day is February 14 so you still have time to plan something nice for the loved ones in your life. This year, with all that has happened, it is especially important to let them know how much they mean to you.*

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The following is a reprint of another great article by **Tom Marshall** that was recently published in the San Clemente Times.

### **North Beach Makes History!**

By Tom Marshall



The federal government has now recognized what all of us in San Clemente have known for decades. Last month it officially designated North Beach a National Historic District. The area includes The Ole Hanson Beach Club, Casino San Clemente entertainment/event center and the Miramar Theater/Bowling Alley structure currently being revitalized as an event center and food court. These are three of the most historic

buildings in town. In the future you will see prominent signs proclaiming the historic nature of the area.

“This is a high honor for the city and an opportunity to bring revitalization and tourism to North

Beach while highlighting the historic significance of this area,” commented Jonathan Lightfoot, Economic Development Officer for the city. GPA Consulting shepherded the project through the state and national government, an unenviable task.

The San Clemente Historical Society has pushed for this district for decades. “Besides the historic and aesthetic aspects of the designation, we expect this to positively impact the property values of the surrounding neighborhood,” said Larry Culbertson, President of the Society.

So, one down; two to go. What? There’s more, you ask?

Absolutely. At least if the Historical Society gets its wish. We have on the drawing board two more Historic District plans for San Clemente. The pier bowl area just screams for designation. The pier was built by town founder Ole Hanson in the late 1920s and really marks the beginning of our Spanish Village by the sea.

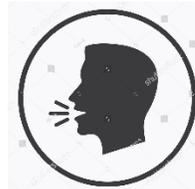
“It is the signature feature of the city’s earliest days along with the beach itself,” Culbertson said. It was the magnet that drew the crowds of fishermen, surfers and swimmers. The buildings along Avenida Victoria at the foot of the pier are historic in their own right. They housed the services beach crowds relied upon for their fun in the sun.

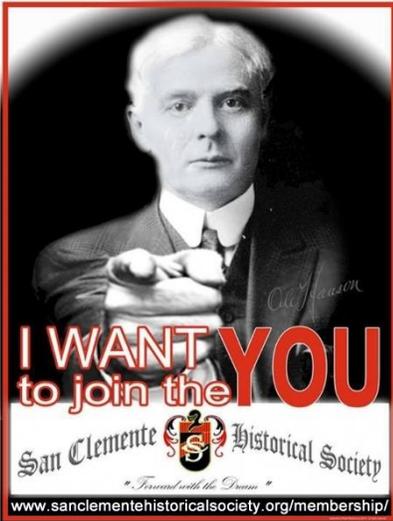
Our second proposed historic district would encompass San Clemente’s original “downtown” along Avenida Del Mar and the adjacent areas of El Camino Real. The Bartlett Building and the former Hotel San Clemente at the top of Del Mar, along with the Easley Building (now named the Old City Hall) are three outstanding examples of the Spanish Revival architecture required by Hanson’s original planned city. The area also encompasses several examples of mid-century architecture prevalent across America during the 1950s and 60s.

By getting these additional two areas designated Historic Districts, the essence of San Clemente’s history will be preserved for future generations to experience the original dream of Ole Hanson.

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**We will be making a presentation at the February 16 City Council Meeting regarding the Historic District designation. The presentation will be aired live on YouTube and may be streamed thereafter.**





# YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

The response to our move away from mailing hardcopy membership renewal material has been less than enthusiastic. The cost of printing that material, coupled with the cost of postage to send it, and the effort to put it all together is considerable. And we do not have a Membership Chair. For those reasons, the Board of Directors decided to try to rely on electronic payment for renewal. Please renew today, we need everyone's help in preserving San Clemente's history!

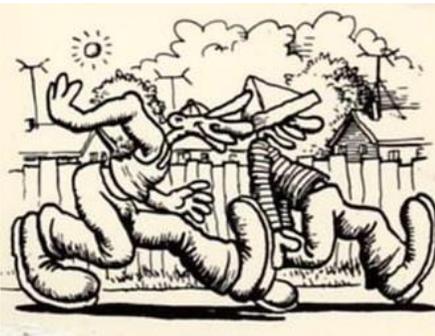
You can visit our website at [sanclementehistoricalsociety.org](http://sanclementehistoricalsociety.org) where you can renew online, or send you renewal check to:

**San Clemente Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 283**  
**San Clemente, CA 92674-0283**

We need more than just money. We need more volunteers. Most of the Board of Director's are NOT youngsters. We need prospective Directors to become involved NOW to insure the continuation of the Society. We need a Membership Chair, a Webmaster, help with social media, a newsletter team and more. Please contact Larry Culbertson, [larryculberston3@gmail.com](mailto:larryculberston3@gmail.com) or 949-412-7682. You can attend one of our Board of Directors meeting to see where you might fit in.

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## Walking Tours of Avenida Del Mar!



Can you believe it? It was 11 months ago, in our February 2020 *What's Happening*, that we announced the kickoff of regularly scheduled Walking Tours of Avenida Del Mar. They have been on hiatus, but now, due to popular demand, they are back! Tour guide extraordinaire Jim Hamilton has agreed to again offer those fun and educational walks, free of charge, on the first Sunday of each month beginning next month.

The next walk is Sunday, March 7, 2021. We will present to you the historic buildings on Avenida Del Mar and those nearby.

During the narration of the architecture and history of these sites there will be some time for shopping. The tour will begin at 9:15 a.m. in front of the Hotel San

Clemente. Some of the historic buildings on the tour include: #98, Ole Hanson's Administration Building, #100, Bartlett Building, #101 ECR Easely Building, #101-103 Latham Building #104 Taylor & #106 Berg Buildings, #114 Hotel San Clemente, #228 Abode, #100 Seville, #415 Granada Casa Romantica.

For more information or to RSVP., contact Jim at [jimehamiltonschs@gmail.com](mailto:jimehamiltonschs@gmail.com).

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*Historical Society Board Member **Jim Hamilton** continues his in-depth study of the downtown businesses and the people who make our historic downtown so interesting. Last month we ran Part 1 of Russell Stationers, about the business. This month, we have Part 2, Recollections of San Clemente from David Russell*

## Life as A Kid in San Clemente

Recollections of San Clemente from David Russell of Russell Stationers

By Jim Hamilton



“For a kid, this town was fantastic. The bus station had pinball machines. It is where B of A is now. Nearby was a foosball table at Luigi's pizza parlor. I liked the Boy's Club. It was much smaller and just called the Boy's Club, not like today's Boys' & Girls' Club. Sunday, if there was a good movie, we went to the Miramar Theater. At times, I would go from work to Orange Julius located at the Miramar, to drink an Orange Julius and eat a hamburger. I skateboarded there and many other places,” Recalled David Russell of Russell Stationers of San Clemente.

“I had a Hobie skateboard, I also made them. In the summer we would take our skateboards and go to “T” Street where Rick Cropley would cook us burgers at his stand. He rented inflated matts before there were boogie boards. If you used them too long you would get a rash. This was before Boogie Boards and rash guards. I used to ride motorcycles in the backcountry area east of the 5. There was plenty to do for kids but not much for the 20 somethings and older. There was little to no nighttime entertainment. A few bars, but not much of what you would call entertainment today. School, days at the beach with friends, afternoons working at the store, nights at home. It was a small town that was growing. This pretty much sums up my youth in San Clemente,” Russell reminisces.

“There were not any currently existing, locally owned restaurants that we would go to as a family. Carrows & the Swiss Chalet were favorites but are now gone. Denny's is one that is

still around. La Siesta was the Bird Cage back then. Today's Mr. Pete's has a history and I do remember when McDonald's was built. That was a big event. There was a year of open campus at San Clemente High School and McDonald's did not want us high school students having lunch there. It could get crowded and I suppose noisy at lunch. The SCHS open campus experiment did not last.

I worked my way through high school in the store. I would go to the Friday night SCHS football games. There was not much to do here at night. Driving home, I would travel along El Camino Real the signal lights were all set to blinking yellow. The cross streets had red lights. If you saw a meeting of our three cops you could speed. I did not participate; but up Pico Avenue by TRW was an illegal, informal, but marked drag race area.

For years, we received five TV channels. That all changed with Dimension Cable's 13 channels. We signed on early for cable because being between LA and San Diego our reception was marginal. For rock on the radio, we had KLOS, KMET, KRLA and we could also tune in rock radio broadcast from Mexico. A station located in San Clemente at that time was KWAV. It played rock music.

Dana Point Harbor completion affected this town. The Hanson Fishing Fleet moved from here to the harbor. My dad owned a boat. He was a leader with the Dana Point Yacht Club. We would cruise to Avalon all the time; see dolphins and sharks along the way. To see sharks, it needs to be calm to notice their fin. Sharks are usually solitary making them hard to spot. Dolphins are in pods and on the surface viewing them is much more common," David notes.

His son CJ, adds, "It is a real advantage to have friends with boats. My parents signed me up for every activity including the Boy's & Girl's Club, Jr. Lifeguards, AYSO soccer, all the surf activities and this continues with my family. Raising my kids, I have enjoyed surfing. We enjoy this as a family, then come downtown to eat and enjoy ourselves. We take advantage of what San Clemente offers families."

My dad, granddad, sons, and I have always felt privileged to live and work in San Clemente. Our family legacy leads us to the future right here."



## Preservation

We were disappointed with the decision by the Planning Commission to allow a 7-foot wall to be built at the front property line of the former San Clemente Art Supply. A big thank you to those of you who took the time to write to the

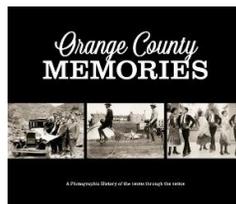
Commission. While the wall will not be directly in front of the historic building, it will enclose the garden adjacent to it. The garden will be turned into a hardscaped courtyard for outdoor events. Sliding pocket gates built into the wall will allow the courtyard to be partially opened. We fear that even with these peek-a-boo gates, the best remaining view of the historic building will be partially blocked. This unprecedented high wall will be in direct conflict with San Clemente Design Guidelines which call for “low garden walls.” Walls 36 or 42 inches tall with a couple of feet of decorative wrought iron fencing on top would provide all the privacy a courtyard needs without creating the exclusionary feel of a high wall. Something like we have at the Hotel San Clemente, for instance. That is also what has been approved for the Miramar Event Center.

Several commissioners valiantly argued that the wall should be lowered, or pushed back, or have wider gate openings. But the majority opinion was that a wall will be okay. There will be some minor adjustments to the gates in the wall, but it will remain a 7-foot wall.



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## **Orange County Memories: A Photographic History of the 1800's through the 1930's**



Sales of this book exceeded our expectations, but we do have a few left. It contains hundreds of high quality rare photographs of Orange County, including many of San Clemente. . We are offering the book for \$35 regularly \$45. Contact **Mary Ann at 949-280-4960** if you wish to purchase one. Great gifts for anytime!

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**That's all for now, see you next month.  
Please Stay Healthy!**

