
South Bay Historical Society Bulletin

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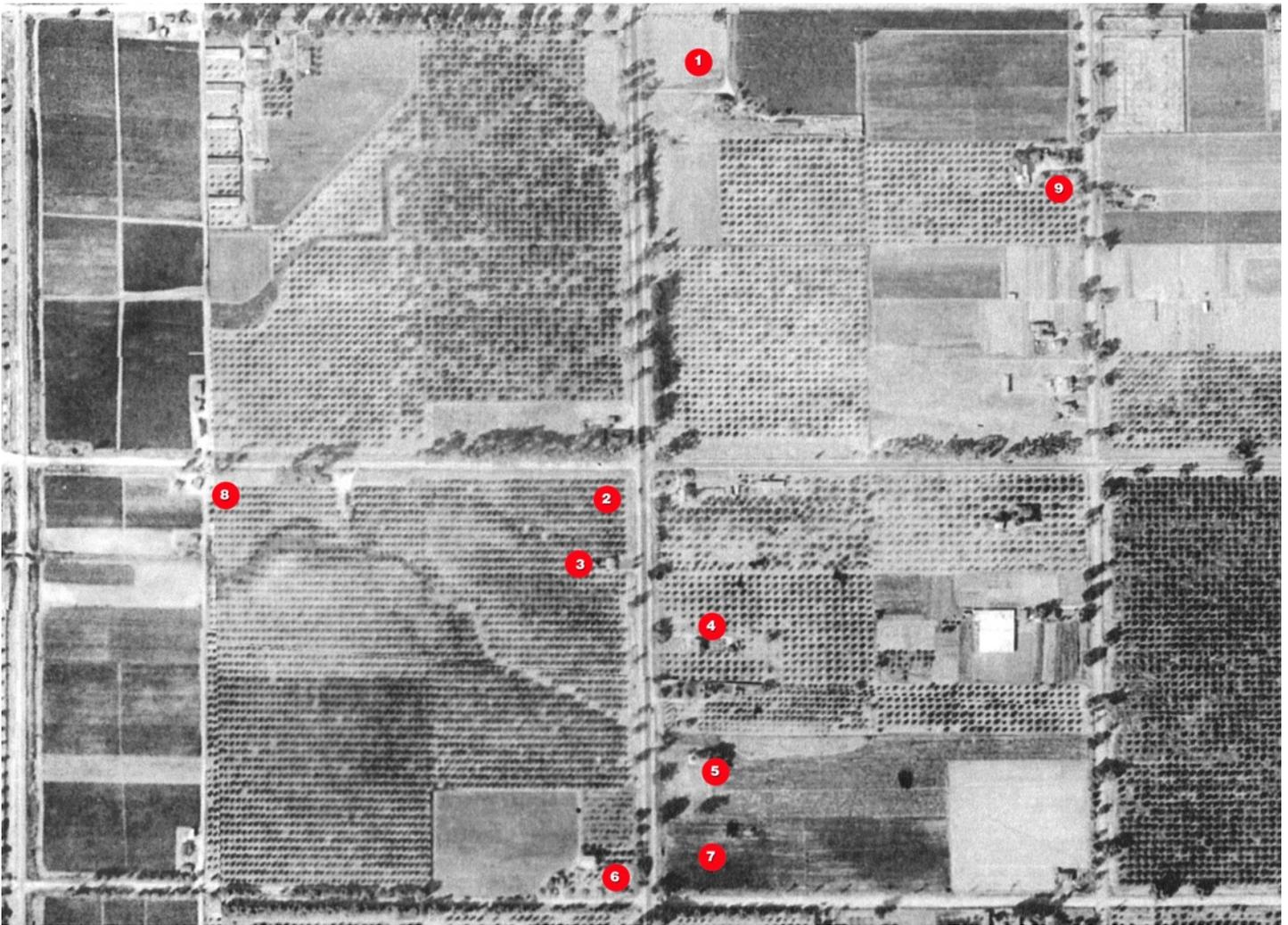
A new building is rising at the corner of Broadway and J Street in Chula Vista. It will be a large Goodwill retail store on land where lemon trees once stood. The history of this middle stretch of Broadway, between I Street and K Street, symbolizes much of what has happened in the South Bay in the last hundred years. From lemons to subdivisions, lonely dusty roads to busy thoroughfares, fruit stands to retail stores, the march of progress has dramatically changed the character of this region.

Middle Broadway

by Steve Schoenherr

When Frank Kimball surveyed his Rancho de la Nacion in 1868, he envisioned the National Road to be his "Main Street," running through the center of National City north to San Diego and south to La Punta. In the 1870s he widened the road to 100 feet and arranged for surveyor Myron Wheeler to label it

as County Road No. 1. It was along this road that he sold his first lots in 1875 south of the Sweetwater river. The first buyers were George Woods around what would become E Street and Samuel Baird around F Street. In 1885 he sold a 5-acre lot at K Street to Payne Brown that today is the site of the Vista Palms Car Wash. Two blocks south of Payne Brown, James Griffin developed a pioneering orchard in the early 1880s. "Here oranges, figs, apricots, olives and lemons are in full growth, clean,



On this 1928 aerial photo, Broadway (old National Avenue) runs down the middle between I street at the top, J Street in the center, K Street at the bottom. The numbered sites are: (1) George Clyne ranch and house at National and old 1st Street (today, the McDonald's at Broadway and I); (2) The 5-acre lemon orchard of Art Spencer at National and old 2nd Street (today the Goodwill store at Broadway and J); (3) The Markey house on National (today, Courtney Tire at 626 Broadway); (4) William Montgomery house on National (today the Funeraria del Angel Humphrey at 753 Broadway), and Montgomery's ranch buildings east to old First Ave. (today Fifth Avenue); (5) Henry Fischer house on National (today the Siry Auto Group at 769 Broadway); (6) Price house and ranch at National and 3rd Street (today, the 7-Eleven at 796 Broadway and K Street); (7) Payne Brown lot at National and old 3rd Street (today the Vista Palms Car Wash at 795 Broadway and K Street) ; (8) Japanese farmers Kajiro Oyama and Otokichi Kushino between 2nd and 3rd Streets (today Woodlawn Avenue between J and K Streets) ; (9) Fred Stafford house on old First Avenue (today, Historic Site No. 11 at 640 Fifth Avenue).

free from smut and healthy as the healthiest in the world." ¹

When the Land and Town Company of Colonel William Dickinson took over the development of Chula Vista in 1887, the homes of Woods and Brown and Griffin were the only ones on the National Road between the Sweetwater and Otay rivers. Dickinson quickly promoted the area by building company homes and company orchards. Within ten years, he planted 5000 acres of lemon trees, turning Chula Vista into the "Lemon Capital of the World."

Anyone who wanted to buy land or a house from the Company had to agree to plant a 5-acre orchard and build a house "of approved taste and plan to cost not less than \$2,000." This was a sizable investment, affordable only to wealthy gentlemen farmers that Dickinson hoped to attract. ²

Charles Mohnike was one of these wealthy gentlemen who came from Iowa and in 1894 bought a 5-acre lot at the southeast corner of National and Second Street (today, Broadway and J Street). Not only did he grow lemons, but he also built a packing

plant on Third Avenue and opened a real estate office, becoming one of Chula Vista's biggest developers.³



This photo of Charles and Ruth Mohnike with eight of their nine children was made about 1908.

The “Shepherd’s House” at 760 Broadway is the only survivor on the block from early days of the Land and Town Company. It was built in 1890 for \$2000 by Henry Fischer and became the residence of the Preston family for several decades. After the Prestons, the lemon trees were replaced by sheep and goats, and by a chicken farmer who committed suicide in 1931 when the price of chickens fell in the Great Depression. In World War II it was a school for airplane welders. In 1945 it was purchased by Olen and Louise Hoy who sought to promote the economic growth of Broadway. Louise became a founding member of the Broadway Division of the Chamber of Commerce in 1957.⁴



The Henry Fischer House.

Neighbors of the Fischer house on the north were William and Lillie Montgomery who came to San Diego in 1888 to start a livery business (no relation to the glider pioneer John J. Montgomery). Instead,

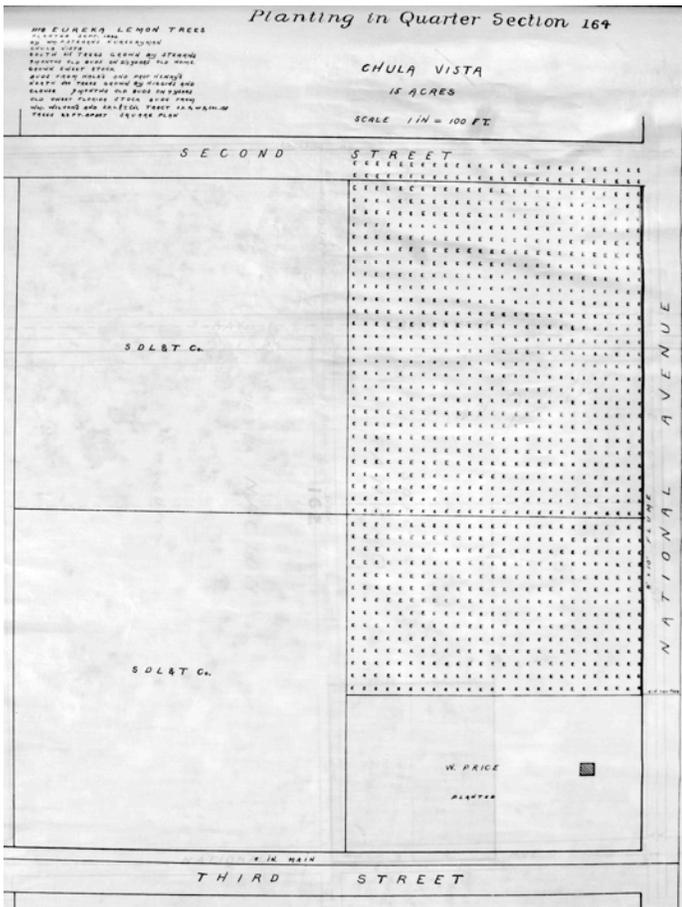
they moved to Chula Vista in 1894 and bought the orchard and house at 751 Broadway. After they moved to a new house one block east in 1904, the Derthicks took over the orchard. Hugh Derthick ran the Ajax auto agency in National City in the 1920s but retired to run the ranch. During the 1930s, Alice Dethick ran a fruit stand on Broadway in front of their house.⁵

Next to Montgomery was an old house from the 1890s that became the home of Charles Moore after his discharge from the Army in 1899. He had served in the Philippine-American War with the 4th Cavalry that was sent in 1898 to garrison Manila. When the garrison was attacked by Filipino insurgents in Feb. 1899, Moore’s Troop L fought in the Battle of Manila and marched toward the insurgent capital of Malolos. Moore was discharged in August, and returned to San Diego where he married Bessie Hill in 1900. Together they moved to Chula Vista and settled down on the orchard at 753 Broadway, the address today for a modern mortuary built in 2000.⁶



Charles Moore about 1898.

On the northwest corner of Broadway and K Street was the five-acre orchard of Walter Price and the house that he built in 1892. It became known as the “old Robbins house” in the 1950s, after the ranch was bought by Harry Rauch in 1934 and was passed on to his daughter Louise Robbins. It was demolished when a 7-Eleven took over this corner after 1964. The Robbins house was the only one built on the west side of Broadway between F and L streets during the orchard era of the Land and Town Company.⁷



The planting maps of the company show nothing but fruit trees covering the hundreds of acres between Broadway and Bay Boulevard. The orchard at the north end of the block, on the southwest corner of Broadway and J Street, was planted by the company in September, 1892. The company took care of this orchard and others like it through the Orchard Operating Company. David Arthur “Art” Spencer started working for this company in 1914 as a pest control foreman. When the company was dissolved after 1932, Art purchased the 5-acre orchard at Broadway and J and a company house at Fourth Avenue and K Street. He operated the orchard until it was replaced with celery and beans in the late 1940s. In 1954 he leased the corner of 706 Broadway to a Standard Oil station, then in 1962 to Mickey’s Chevron Station and in 1967 to Jim Steele Chevron Service. ⁸

At left is an 1892 planting map of the west side of Broadway between J and K Streets. The 5 acres sold to Art Spencer is at the top right. The Walter Price house is at the bottom right.

Below is a photo of Art Spencer supervising fumigation of lemon trees about 1930.



August and Mayme Grihalva owned a celery ranch at 713 National Avenue from 1919 through the 1920s. In 1946 he opened a cafe at 197 Second Avenue in Chula Vista called Grihalva's Dining Room. In 1948 he moved to Phoenix and opened a cafe there for a while. His son Richard Grihalva owned a Buick and Chevrolet dealership in San Diego. His daughter Millie was a schoolteacher and married Henry F. Schnell, a well-known local dairyman in 1941. ⁹



Across the street at 720 National was the cottage of Louis Markey, standing alone in the lemon orchards from J to K Streets. Markey bought the house from an unknown rancher in 1927 when he came here after serving in World War I to take a job as a Border Patrol inspector. His wife Lorena taught music at her studio on Third Avenue. ¹⁰

Most of Chula Vista's early development was shaped by the National City and Otay railroad that ran down Third Avenue. The automobile changed this pattern in the 1920s. Old National Street suddenly became a busy thoroughfare for Tijuana-bound traffic. Gas stations and motels replaced orchards and ranches. In 1923 Edwin E. Wilson opened a gas station on the northwest corner of Broadway and J Street. He called it the "Midway" because it was midway between San Diego and Tijuana. That same year the Chula Vista City Council voted to pave National and install traffic signs. Additional motorcycle cops were hired to enforce the 35 mph speed limit. ¹¹



Sidney E. "Sid" Clyne was City Marshall from 1924 to 1932. He lived at 630 Broadway and was a veteran of World War I. After leaving the police force, he joined Millard E. "Bill" Barsch to open a Richfield



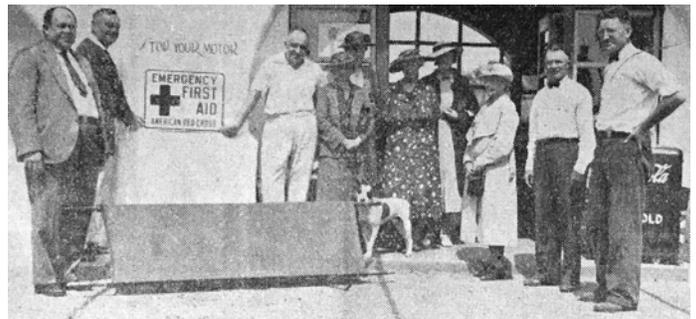
The Midway gas station of Edwin and Annie Wilson in 1923.



The Clyne and Barsch station was the same Mission style as this Richfield station at San Juan Capistrano photographed in 1928.

Oil station at the southeast corner of Broadway and I Street. Barsch was a mechanic at the Helms Brothers garage on F Street and was a volunteer fireman. He was married to Tonita Floersch, the widow of the son of the wealthy dairyman in Nestor. Barsch was an expert in first aid with the fire department, and arranged for his Richfield station to become an official highway emergency first aid station. This Mission-style station was the same design as the 26 Beacon Tower stations built by Richfield along the Pacific Coast to guide aviators. The original tower station in San Diego was built near Palm City in 1929 but the tower station project was discontinued when Richfield went bankrupt in 1931. However, by 1936 Richfield was back in business and moved part of the 125-foot Palm City tower to the Clyne and

Barsch station at 601 Broadway. The station and tower were demolished for a new gas station in 1963.¹²



The Clyne and Barsch station was named an official first aid station in 1937. Note the same arched entrance as in the Capistrano station photo above.



Curren's was built in 1955 across the street from the Clyne and Barsch service station. Its original name was O.K. Rubber Welders founded by Leroy E. "Roy" Curren as a tire recapping and repair service. The name changed to Curren's in 1957, then was sold to "Laughing" Larry O'Leary and was known as Chula Vista Tire in 1963. It became a branch of Lutz Tire in 1968, and has been a branch of Discount Tire since 2002.¹³

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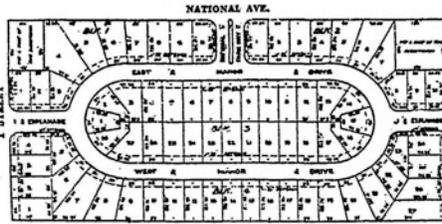
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Home now occupied in Bay Manor subdivision.



Still another choice home in Bay Manor.



PLAT OF BAY MANOR, CHULA VISTA



Bird's-eye view across Bay Manor subdivision, Chula Vista.

Built by R. J. WELTON
of Victory Lumber Company



One of Bay Manor homes at entrance from National Ave.



Another Bay Manor home.

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A fireplace in every home.
PRICES
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Observing and appreciative workers have already taken one third of these homes prior to this, the first announcement.

Call at Tract Office, 628 National Avenue to be shown, or phone C. V. 1020 or C. V. 1135 for appointment or call at Victory Lumber Company, 352 Center Street, Chula Vista. If you prefer see your favorite Chula Vista Realtor.

World War II brought increasing development of Broadway. The Bay Manor subdivision was built in 1942 by Richard J. Welton and his Victory Lumber Company. Building materials were scarce at the beginning of the war, and Welton got started by chopping down the lemon trees of Old Orchard No. 80 for the wood to build his first 25 houses. When the government released vital materials for the construction of the Hilltop Village and Vista Square defense housing projects, Welton was included to receive materials for Bay Manor, as long as he met the requirement to give first choice in housing to defense workers.¹⁴

Eugene Smith still lives in the Bay Manor house that he bought in 1952. He began a 21-year Navy career in 1942, volunteering for one of the first Underwater Demolition Teams that later became SEAL teams. At Iwo Jima he swam ashore from the USS Virgo with only flippers, mask and swim trunks to map obstacles on the beaches. During the Korean War he served as a boatswain's mate on the USS Currier. He met Pauline Faber at her family's Malt Shop in Palm City and they were married in 1949. With Gene's Navy salary of \$300 per month and a reenlistment bonus of \$740, they were able to buy their Bay Manor house for \$10,000 and afford the mortgage payment of \$30 per month. Pauline remembers walking across J Street to the bean field on the Art Spencer lot and picking string beans for supper.¹⁵



Pauline and Eugene Smith in 1952 with baby daughter Arden.



Veterans returning from the war opened businesses on Broadway. George Callahan opened a service station at 804 Broadway and K, ran unsuccessfully for city council in 1952, advertised himself as the “Mayor of Broadway.” Fred Temple started Home Craft Industries in a building he constructed at 836 National Avenue. The newspaper described his unique business: “Fred W. Temple, after serving overseas in the first World War with the army engineers, joined the original Carlson Raiders in their famous campaign on Christmas Island and did five years of service in the South Pacific with the

months in a hospital he was able to get about affectively with the aid of a cane. He learned to make plaques and molds for figurines and statuettes in the long stay in the hospital. This business, started as a hobby during his recuperation, became so fascinating that he came to Chula Vista and opened the Home Craft Industries in a building which he had erected at 836 National Avenue. Orders poured in from Los Angeles and he has developed a thriving wholesale business. His first model, "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima" sold unpainted by the thousands all over the country and won him an international reputation. He has built up over 200 designs in plaques, figurines, statuettes, busts of famous men, novelty book ends, ash trays, string holders and religious figures.”¹⁶

Jeanne Barahura who lived around the corner on K Street looks at the Home Craft figurines in 1956.



navy engineers. His pelvis was crushed by a huge tank and the doctors wanted to amputate his limb at the hip but he insisted he could get well without the loss of his limb, and with a silver hip socket, constructed for him and grafted into the flesh. After

After Temple’s business closed in 1962, Navy chief Charles DeBaun took over the building for his Aztec TV Sales and Service. DeBaun had a long military career, starting with a coal-burning Navy supply barge in WWI, then serving in the Army in Panama in the 1920s. He returned to the Navy during WWII and Korea, serving on experimental mine sweepers and on invasion fleet cargo ships in 1944 and 1945.



El Toro Grill at 856 Broadway is the building of Home Craft industries and Aztec TV. The Formosa Club at 840 Broadway is the building of Bella Venezia in 1956 and the Golden Slipper in 1959 and the Gold Dragon in 1975.

DeBaun and his son-in-law Richard Schuricht enlarged and remodeled the Home Crafts building and their business prospered until 1990. It is now the El Toro Grill. ¹⁷

The old lemon orchard of Charles Mohnike at Broadway and J Street finally came to an end after the war. It had been kept in production by rancher Austin Smith in the 1920s and Herbert Beach in the 1930s, but in 1949 the five-acre lot was purchased by Fred C. Wilson. He had been operating his trucking company at Fourth and J since 1927, but he needed more room and wanted to be closer to the main thoroughfare that Broadway was becoming. His primary business was hauling Mexican produce from Lindbergh Field to Los Angeles. On his new lot at 705 Broadway he also opened a grocery store. After his death in 1952, his son Charles C. Wilson took over the company and owned the corner lot until 1958. The Ken Wheeler Union 76 Service Station bought part of the corner in 1953, and the Park Marina apartments were built on the east half of the lot in 1964. ¹⁸

Wheeler had to move his service station from across the street due to the construction of what was called "Chula Vista's New Shopping Center" on the east side of Broadway north of J Street. Jack Davis opened the first business on this side of the block south of the Clyne and Barsch station at I street when he built Davis Food Center at 685 Broadway in 1950. This area had been lemon orchards owned by several Greek farmers since the 1920s. Tragically, one of them, Sam Kostakis, was murdered by one of his tenants, James Thomas Williams, in 1943.

Kostakis was the cousin of James Mazomenos who owned several orchards between Broadway and Bay Boulevard. After the murder, the Greek farmers left the area. ¹⁹



DAR today occupies the same building built in 1953 as Bagnall Owl Drug store.

Adding to the Davis Center by 1953 were a series of new businesses on the east side of Broadway, including Bagnall's Owl Drug at 645, Larry's Shoe Repair Shop at 667, the National Laundromat with 20 machines owned by Neil McLeod at 669, Al's



The Park Marina apartments at Broadway and J Street are located on part of the 5-acre lot used by the Wilson trucking company. The green Craftsman house at far left was built in 1924 when Austin Smith owned the Mohnike orchard.

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<p>BOB'S WAFFLE SHOP</p> <p>Plenty of FREE Parking</p> <p>EASTER BREAKFAST</p> <p>Ham Steaks and Eggs \$1.00</p>	<p>WASH</p> <p>At Your Newest Westinghouse Laundromat</p> <p>Complete Washing Service</p> <p>20 Machines -- Soft Water</p> <p>NATIONAL AVE. LAUNDROMAT</p> <p>687 National Ave. H2-4158</p>
<p>JOHN'S PLACE</p> <p>683 National Avenue</p> <p>Where All Good Friends Meet</p> <p>Lucky Lager Beer On Tap</p> <p>Bottled Beer</p>	<p>Larry's Shoe Repair Shop</p> <p>667 National Avenue</p> <p>MEN'S AND LADIES SHOE REPAIR</p> <p>Quick Service, Expert Leather Work of all kinds, Low Prices.</p>
<p>AL'S BARBER SHOP</p> <p>EXPERT HAIR CUTTING</p> <p>671 National Avenue</p>	<p>BILL, THE ARAB</p> <p>All Popular Brands of Liquor, Beer and Wine</p> <p>BILL'S LIQUOR STORE</p> <p>C.V. 9870 671 1/2 National Ave.</p>

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Barber Shop at 671, Bob's Waffle Shop at 679, Jack's Toggery at 681 for one year, and then it became M & H Apparel owned by Henry and Madge Farris. The building at 683 was moved from Bay Boulevard in 1950 due to freeway construction, and remodeled by Macey McMillin, father of Macey "Corky" McMillin, Jr., one of the earliest jobs of the family construction firm that became the largest builder in the South Bay. John and Lee Merling opened John's Place at 683 in March of 1950, "the congenial tavern" with Lucky Lager beer and shuffleboard. The Davis Food Market was replaced in 1959 by the Buy and Save Market until 1962 when the first Fed Mart Franchise moved from 366 F Street to 685 Broadway. ²⁰

The new store owners joined the National Avenue Businessmen Association, formed in 1952 to save the boulevard from abandonment by the state highway commission. The designation of Highway 101 was shifted to the new four-lane Montgomery Freeway being built from San Diego to the border. The Association persuaded the Chula Vista City Council to zone most of the boulevard for business, a final blow to the disappearing lemon orchards. In 1955 the name of the boulevard was officially changed

from National Avenue to Broadway, and widened from two lanes to four. ²¹

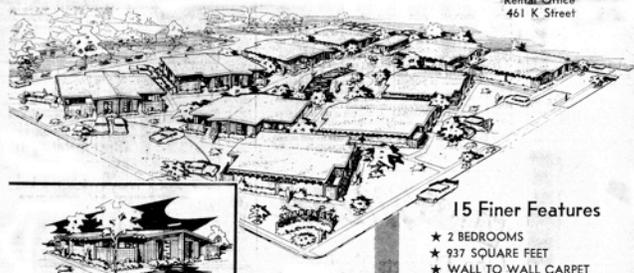
The Association promoted Broadway with contests to bring in the shoppers. Merchants gave out free tickets for jackpot drawings awarding free cash to winning tickets. The Gay Nineties Days event in 1956 featured a street carnival, parade, and a Miss Broadway beauty contest. ²²

Residential development followed commercial development. Fred Stafford and John Gardner opened the first of several Kenwood Village subdivisions along J Street in 1948, creating new streets named after trees: Ash, Beech and Date. The Pepper Tree Lane subdivisions after 1952 added 1200 homes west of Broadway and south of J Street, including the new street of Riverlawn Avenue. The South Bay subdivision of Thomas J. McCann and Cecil H. Phillips was also south of J Street along Woodlawn and Colorado Avenues. The Bay Vista subdivisions of Warren Thomas were along Oaklawn and Jefferson west of Bay Manor and north of J Street. ²³

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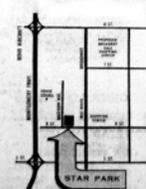
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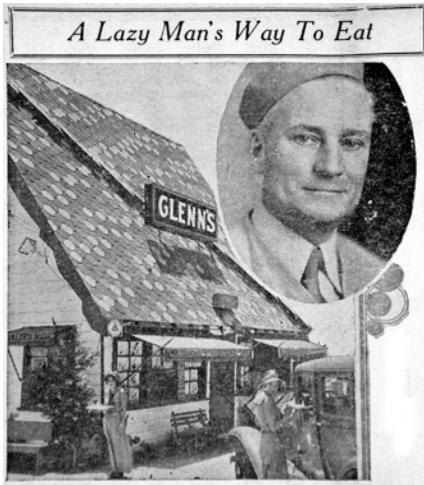
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Star Park was built in 1959 next to the Pepper Tree Lane subdivision

More homes meant more kids in these new neighborhoods. In 1955 the Robert Mueller school opened on Sept. 12 at 715 I Street, named for the man who was a member of the school board for 28 years, and who recently died May 22. ²⁴



It was on National Avenue that the first drive-in restaurants opened in the South Bay. In 1931 Glenn Glassford opened Glenn's "Drive-In Refreshment Park" at 1st and National in National City. This was followed in 1941 by Keith's at 2nd and National and Oscar's in 1945 at 4th and National. Further south in

Otay where Highway 101 crossed Main Street, Ted Geringer in 1946 built his circular restaurant with a tall sign on top proclaiming "Ted's Drive-In." ²⁵

Starting in 1952, a cluster of drive-ins opened within two blocks of Broadway and J street intersection in Chula Vista. Jon's Drive-In at 655 Broadway was owned by retired Navy Lt. Commander Kurt Schmuckal, and sold hamburgers for only 10 cents. Oscar's opened a second South Bay drive-in in 1962 at Broadway and L Street. Louie's Round-up drive-in was built by Louie Harmon on the site of Edwin Wilson's old Midway Service Station at 698 Broadway. It was purchased by George Freeman and was open from 1952 to 1961. Freeman decided to change the image of the place in 1961, following President Kennedy's dramatic speech the previous May announcing his goal of "landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth." He replaced the cowboy and horse sign with a tall rocket ship sign for the "Space Station Drive-In." A big model of the planet Saturn was put on the roof, with other planets on poles, and his menu had out-of-this-world items (Pluto Dog Deluxe, Martian Special, Saturn (onion) rings, Solar Sundaes). The national trade magazine Drive-In Restaurant considered Freeman's design an outstanding "way out" motif that other drive-ins around the country might emulate. ²⁶



By the mid-1950s, Broadway was filling up with new businesses. Frank and Mary Humphrey joined with Howard Heath from National City to build the Humphrey-Heath Mortuary at 855 Broadway. North of the mortuary, at 841 Broadway, was the S & M Nursery. Shigeru Masumoto immigrated from Japan in 1915 and founded the nursery in National City with his wife Yuki and son Fred in 1936. After returning from the WWII relocation camps, the family repurchased the nursery they had lost in 1942. Shigeru with his third son George and son-in-law Shigenori Tsurudome moved the S & M Nursery in 1956 from National City to Broadway and became a wholesale nursery selling plants to other nurseries in the South Bay. ²⁷



Standing in the parking lot of the Lazy U are Jack's wife, Evelyn, her mother Mary Gusmeri, and Evelyn's sister Florence Gusmeri.

The Lazy U Motel was built at 772 Broadway by Warren "Jack" Weimer in 1954. After Jack retired, it became the Moana Court Motel in 1981, and was demolished when the Spotlight on Broadway project at 760 Broadway was built in 2004. Today, only a wall and empty lot remain. ²⁸

In 1960, Bob's International Family Restaurant was built by Bob Crowther next to the Lazy U Motel at 778 Broadway. It became a Christies in 1972 and several others until it was demolished in 1987 for a Rodeway Inn, and today is a Best Choice Inn. The corner lot at 796 Broadway became a Midget Market strip mall in 1959. In 1962 it was sold to the Speedee Mart chain started by Henry Boney, who then sold it to the Southland Corp. and today is a 7-Eleven store. ²⁹



William D. Bowlin built his Safety Service station in 1955 at 850 Broadway. He joined several businesses that had been on the west side of lower Broadway for a number of years. The Bay Breeze Motel was built in 1947 by Claude C. Newton as an Arts and Crafts Center at 864 National. The four small bungalows are still there as the Bay Cities Motel. Also in 1947, Thomas Butcher moved his South Bay Lumber company from 160 Broadway to the corner of L Street and Broadway, closer to the new subdivisions that were planned for lower Broadway. Riverlawn Avenue would have to curve west around the lumber yard when the Pepper Tree Lane subdivisions were built in the 1950s. ³⁰



Broadway was a prime candidate for anything to attract the attention of motorists. The city at that time allowed almost any style of architecture or height of signage for roadside businesses. Shakey's Pizza sign at 825 Broadway towered over the small but distinctive cactus sign of Cafe Ole. The Humphrey Mortuary put up a 94-foot flagpole in 1963, the tallest in the county with a flag 12 by 15 feet. ³¹



The largest new business on the block was Fuller Motors at 760 Broadway, taking up most of the southern half of the 700 block. Glenn Fuller came to California after the war from Detroit where he built B-24 bombers at Henry Ford's Willow Run plant. He was a skilled engineer who started selling cars in Oceanside and then in 1946 bought half interest in the Cherry Motors Corp. in National City. In 1948 he started Fuller Motors in Chula Vista at 359 Third Avenue, across the street from the popular Seville Theater. In 1956 Fuller decided to move to Broadway, and held his grand opening on Feb. 1, 1956.³²

Fuller was not alone in seeing the potential of the 700 block of Broadway. In 1958, Ira Skinner moved his tire retreading business from San Diego to a new building at 726 Broadway, next to the old house at 732 Broadway that was part of Fuller Ford. Tom Spencer remembers that the house belonged to William Cook who worked the lemon orchard next to his dad's orchard in the 1920s.³³

Skinner had been in business since 1938, and he soon decided to retire after moving to Broadway. On

Dec. 26, 1961, he sold his company to Bill Courtney who continued to use the name Skinner Tire Company. In 1969, Courtney expanded and remodeled the Skinner building, providing a new showroom and eight complete service bays. He also erected the tallest sign in the city at 69 feet, taller than the 58-foot Richfield tower sign at the Clyne and Barsch Service Station.³⁴



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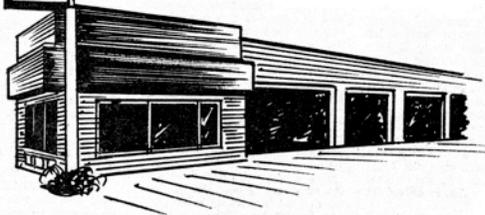
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 ago!

Our customers tell us that's because they KNOW
 they'll find the finest tires and the best service—both before
 and after the sale—at SKINNER.

We're mighty proud to add our name to the list of
 Chula Vista "old-timers". What's more, we expect to be
 even bigger and better in the future.

As they used to say in the early days of motoring,
 "Excuse Our Dust!" We're really going places!



Here's Skinner's new \$35,000 addition with air-conditioned and heated waiting
 room, more parking, and more space (8 service bays) for working on your car.

Skinner Tire Co.

726 BROADWAY • CHULA VISTA

PHONE 420-5575 FOR TIRE SERVICE

Instant Credit

All major Credit Cards Accepted



"O" of the new Courtney sign. For years after, Bill
 and Jim won many bets with people who swore they
 had misspelled their own last name.³⁶

In 1970, Bill Courtney sold Skinner Tire and retired
 to his home in Bonita. However, his son Jim wanted
 to stay in the business and in June opened his own
 tire store at 377 E Street under the name of Courtney
 Tire Service. Bill wanted to come back into business
 with his son, and, together, Bill and Jim repurchased
 Skinner Tire at 726 Broadway. Jim sold his store on
 E Street and changed the name of the Broadway
 store from Skinner Tire to Courtney Tire.³⁵

The new tire company ran into a problem in 1971
 when Bill and Jim attempted to change the tall sign
 of Skinner with seven letters to the eight letters of
 "Courtney." The city of Chula Vista would not allow
 the new sign to be built. This was the time when the
 City Council had banned all billboards in the city and
 had passed a strict sign ordinance limiting the height
 of new signs. The 69-foot Skinner sign had been one
 of the tallest in Chula Vista, and the city refused to
 allow a taller one. Bill and Jim decided on a bit
 trickery, keeping the seven-letter height of the old
 Skinner sign but adding a small "u" under the big





The success of Fuller and Courtney attracted more auto dealers to this part of Broadway. DeWitt Tyson built a long rectangular building next to Skinner that opened as a Plymouth dealership on St. Patrick's Day 1960. Tyson had retired to La Jolla after owning Pontiac dealerships from 1949 to 1957 on El Cajon Boulevard and in National City, but decided to return to business in Chula Vista. Compact cars were becoming more popular and the Plymouth Valiant was his best seller.³⁷

graduated in 1952 from Mar Vista High School, started selling cars 1958 at Acme when it was owned by George Hamilton, becoming sales manager at Acme in 1960. In 1982 Neil moved up the block and bought half ownership in Courtney Tire, and continues to manage the business today.³⁸



Bob Daily opened Balboa Datsun in 1964 at 720 Broadway on the southwest corner at J Street, where Art Spencer's lemon grove once stood. Daily came to San Diego in 1946 after serving with the Navy Seabees during World War II. When Ray Lemke of San Diego became the first Datsun dealer in the United States in 1958, Daily decided to open his own dealership. With his wife Margaret, he founded Balboa Datsun in National City in 1960, and moved to Chula Vista in 1964.³⁹

In 1974 Balboa Datsun moved from Chula Vista to the Christman redevelopment site in National City that doubled the size of the Mile of Cars. Daily kept his Alba Motors lot at 720 Broadway selling Peugeots, but the lot closed in 1981 following the death of Daily in 1980.⁴⁰

In 1994 Fuller Ford and South Bay Chevrolet (renamed People's Chevrolet) moved to the Auto Park on Otay Valley Road just east of Interstate 805. The Chula Vista Redevelopment Agency acquired Fuller's lot on Broadway, demolished the buildings in 1995 and planned to build the Broadway BusinessHomes Village with Joelen Enterprises of Josef and Lenore Citron. When that plan fell through, another project was finally built in 2004, the Spotlight on Broadway development by Concordia Homes. In 2008, Fuller bought the People's dealership and it became Fuller Honda. In June, 2017, the Penske Auto Group purchased the Fuller dealerships on Auto Park Drive.⁴¹



South Bay Chevrolet was started by Lou Reneau in 1946 on Third Avenue, but moved to 801 Broadway in December 1960. Neil Bonner became fleet manager for South Bay Chevrolet in 1965. He

Jim Courtney leased the corner lot at Broadway and J Street for 20 years from Tom Spencer. Various auto dealers used the lot, including K-C Motors in 1962, Alba Motors in 1974, Stocker's Foreign Cars in

1978, Bill's Automotive in 1990, and R & R Auto in 2002. ⁴²

A Standard Oil Service Station was on the corner of Spencer's lot at 706 Broadway from 1954 to 1962. It later became Mickey's Chevron station, owned by Harold M. LaMere. After 1967 it was the Jim Steele Chevron Station. In 1970 a large L-shaped building was constructed at 706 Broadway, replacing the Chevron station. This building was

used for a Carpet Town from 1970 to 1991, then Harbor Freight Tools after 1992, followed by Fox Tool Sales. ⁴³

Recently, Spencer sold his 5-acre lot at the corner of Broadway and J Street to a Dallas church, and the church sold it to Goodwill in 2016. The Freight Tools building was demolished, and the Goodwill retail store construction began in the summer of 2017. ⁴⁴



This Google Earth view of the intersection of Broadway and J Street shows the southwest corner lot recently sold by Tom Spencer still occupied with the buildings that would soon be demolished for the construction of the Goodwill store. The large L-shaped building built in 1970 for Carpet Town was leased to Fox Tool Sales, and on the left side of the parking lot next to Courtney Tires is the rectangular building built in 1960 for Tyson Plymouth.

Footnotes

1 "Subdivision Map of Rancho de la Nacion," surveyed by George S. Morrill, 1868, Map #166 filed May 11, 1869, National City Public Library, Morgan Local History Room. On this map, the National Road was originally called "National Street." Phillips, Irene. "Diaries of Frank A. Kimball, California Pioneer, Excerpts and Comments." unpublished mss, n.d., Morgan Local History Room, National City Public Library. Real Estate transactions list, Title Claims Vertical File, Bonita Museum. Griffin quote is from the National City Record, Apr. 7, 1887.

2 Subdivision Map 505, filed March 13, 1888. The streets of Chula Vista would get named in this subdivision map when Colonel William Dickinson laid out the subdivision for the San Diego Land and Town Company. Quote from Karna Webster, *Chula Vista Heritage 1911-1986*. City of Chula Vista, 1986, p. 7.

3 Mohnike is in the National City News, Feb. 9 and Aug. 24, 1907. The photo of Charles and Ruth Mohnike with eight of their nine children was made about 1908; courtesy of Susan Walter.

4 Early homes are on the "Plat of Chula Vista" by the San Diego Land and Town Co., 1894. The Fischer House is in Karna Webster, "Historic Resources Inventory," City of Chula Vista, 1985. The Chula Vista Star, Dec 25, 1931 and Jan. 24, 1957. Derthicks are in The Chula Vista Star, Jan. 26, 1940, and June 20, 1947.

5 The Montgomery lot is shown on the plat of 1894. Derthicks at The Chula Vista Star, Jan. 26, 1940, and June 20, 1947.

6 Moore's military history from U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, ancestry.com; also 1910 Federal Census. The photo is from Eric Maul Family Tree, ancestry.com.

7 Walter Price, 1892 city directory and 1894 plat map. Rauch and Robbins are in The Chula Vista Star, Feb. 23, 1934; May 24 and June 7, 1940. Also, Harry Orgovan interview, Nov. 13, 2009.

8 The planting map is from San Diego Fruit Company Map Book #2, Box 40EN-42, Sweetwater Authority Archives. Photo is from Tom Spencer, interview, March 2, 2017. "Spencer Family," Family, Friends, and Homes, 1991, p. 350.

9 Grihalva is in The Chula Vista Star, Feb. 12, 1943; Jan. 30 and Mar. 5, 1948; The Los Angeles Times, Jun 17, 1988; The San Diego Union Tribune on Dec. 30, 2011; U.S. Merchant Marine Applications for License of Officers, 1914-1949, ancestry.com; Interview JoAnn Grossaint-Boyuls, July 23, 2017.

10 Markey is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Aug 6, 1964.

11 Edwin Wilson is in The Chula Vista Star-News, July 15, 1965. City Council Minutes Aug. 1, 1922 and Sept. 25, 1923 and Mar. 10, 1925.

12 Clyne and Barsch are at The Chula Vista Star, Mar. 26 and Oct 16, 1936; The San Diego Union, Jan. 1, 1928. "History Of The Chula Vista Police Department 1911 - 1956," *Chula Vista Historical Society Bulletin*, June 1984. The Capistrano photo is from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. The first aid station is in The Chula Vista Star, July 23, 1937.

13 Curren is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Aug. 12, 1954; Feb. 3, 1955; Nov 1, 1956.

14 Welton is in The Chula Vista Star Mar. 6 and July 17 and Nov. 13, 1942. Subdivision map 2274 for Bay Manor was filed by Richard and Elizabeth Welton on June 9, 1942.

15 Eugene and Pauline Smith interview, Aug. 13 and 17, 2017. Smith photo courtesy of Bernadette Smith Clowers.

16 George Callahan is in Chula Vista Star-News, April 8, 1952, and June 21, 1973. Photo from Chula Vista High School *Scroll* Yearbook of 1961. Fred Temple quote is The Chula Vista Star, July 16, 1948; Barahura photo from The Chula Vista Star-News, June 21, 1956.

17 DeBaun is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Oct 15, 1964 and Nov 9, 1969.

18 Wilson is in The Chula Vista Star, Apr 29, 1949, Page 13

19 Jack Davis is in The Chula Vista Star, Feb. 16 and Apr. 13, 1950 and Apr. 2, 1953. The Kostakis murder is in The Chula Vista Star, Aug. 20, 1943. Mazomenos is in The Chula Vista Star, June 7, 1946; Mar. 16, 1950; Jan. 4, 1951; Nov. 1, 1973.

- 20 New business is in The Chula Vista Star, Apr. 2, 1953. Corky McMillin interview recording June 28, 2005, Bonita Museum.
- 21 National Avenue Businessmen Association and jackpot drawings are in The Chula Vista Star, July 17, 1952. Zoning is in Chula Vista Star, May 20, 1954. Road widening is in Chula Vista Star-News, June 20, 1955.
- 22 Gay Nineties in The Chula Vista Star-News, Nov. 1, 1956
- 23 Kenwood Village is in Chula Vista Star, Jan. 21 and Feb. 18, 1949. Subdivision Maps 2443, 2526, 2893, 2898, Engineering Department, City of Chula Vista.
- 24 Mueller School is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Jan. 27, 1955. Robert Mueller obituary is The Chula Vista Star-News, May 19, 1955.
- 25 Glenn's Drive-In is in The Chula Vista Star, Aug. 28, 1931. Ted's is The Chula Vista Star-News, Dec. 7, 1945; May 3, 1946.
- 26 Kurt Schmuckal is in The Chula Vista Star, June 16, 1960. Louie's is in The Chula Vista Star, July 31, 1952. George Freeman is in Chula Vista Star-News, Dec 20, 1962; Nov 14, 1963. Kennedy's Special Message to Congress was May 25, 1961. The Space Station is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Nov 14, 1963, and photo is from *Drive-In Restaurant* trade magazine, Oct. 1963.
- 27 Humphrey Mortuary is in The Chula Vista Star, June 27, 1955, and Dec 18, 1999. S & M Nursery is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Feb 8, 1992.
- 28 Weimer is in The Chula Vista Star, July 22, 1954; Interview, Patti Weimer Blackwell, Aug. 27, 2017. Photo courtesy of Patti Weimer Blackwell.
- 29 Bob's is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Jan. 24, 1960; Mar. 16 and May 4, 1961. Midget Market is in The Chula Vista Star-News, May 21 and Sept. 3, 1959; Jan. 21, 1962; The San Diego Union-Tribune, December 17, 2005.
- 30 Bowlin is in The Chula Vista Star-News, June 2 and Sept. 22, 1955; Photo from the Chula Vista High School *Scroll* Yearbook of 1963. Bay Breeze is in The Chula Vista Star, Nov. 14, 1947; Mar. 19 and May 7, 1948. Butcher is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Feb. 14, 1947.
- 31 Shakey's photo is from the Chula Vista High School *Scroll* Yearbook of 1968. The Humphrey flagpole is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Aug 3, 1963.
- 32 Doug Fuller interview, Feb. 16, 2017. Fuller Ford photo courtesy of Doug Fuller.
- 33 Tom Spencer, interview, March 2, 2017.
- 34 Skinner is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Oct 23, 1958; Jim Courtney interview, Feb. 16, 2017. Skinner and Courtney photos courtesy of Neil Bonner and Courtney Tire.
- 35 Jim Courtney interview Feb. 16, 2017.
- 36 Neil Bonner interview Feb. 6, 2017; Jim Courtney interview Feb. 16, 2017.
- 37 Tyson Plymouth is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Mar. 26, 1961.
- 38 South Bay Chevrolet from Neil Bonner interview, Feb. 6, 2017.
- 39 Bob Daily from The Chula Vista Star-News, Sept. 11, 1980.
- 40 Balboa Datsun is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Aug 20, 1972. Photo from The Chula Vista Star-News, Oct. 5, 1972.
- 41 Spotlight on Broadway is in The Chula Vista Star-News, July 30, 1994; Apr. 8, 1995; Dec. 17, 2004.
- 42 Tom Spencer, interview, March 2, 2017.
- 43 Standard station is in The Chula Vista Star-News, Sept. 8, 1955; the Chevron stations are Nov. 8, 1962 and Feb. 23, 1967. Tom Spencer, telephone interview, Arlington, Texas, March 2, 2017.
- 44 Tom Spencer, interview, March 2, 2017.

ROHR EXHIBIT.....

The exhibit on the history of the Rohr Aircraft Corporation will continue at the Chula Vista Heritage Museum in the Chula Vista Civic Library through the end of the year. Visit the exhibit any time during the regular library hours, M-Th 10am - 8pm, Fri-Sat 10am - 5pm, Sunday 1-5 and speak to one of our docents on one of the following days: Peter Watry each Thursday from 2-4; Patti Huffman the last Friday of each month from 1-2; Harry Orgovan the third Tuesday of each month from 1-2; Shelley Rudd will substitute on the third Tuesday; Caesar Castro the second Tuesday of each month from 1-3.

ELINOR OTTO.....



Elinor Otto was one of the first women to work at Rohr in 1942, and today at age 97, she is considered one of the last "Rosie the Riveters." She was interviewed by the Los Angeles Times in 2013: "Otto was beautiful, with bright blue eyes and dark hair piled high, when

she joined a small group of women at Rohr Aircraft Corp. in Chula Vista during World War II.

The bosses threatened to give demerits to the men who stood around trying to talk to her, so Otto's suitors left notes for her in the phone booth, where she



called her mother every day. Otto joined the war effort with her two sisters, one who worked alongside her at Rohr, the other a welder in a Bay Area shipyard. She was newly single with a young son. "During those days, we could hardly find an apartment that would let you rent with kids. My goodness, they're going to go to war someday and they can't even live in an apartment," says Otto, who had to board her son out during the week. "It cost \$20 a week, and it was hard because I made 65 cents an hour." At the plant, she would make the others laugh at how fast she could rivet, she says, quickly moving her hands and stomping her feet to demonstrate. The

men resented the women at first — smoking was banned and shirts had to stay on — and doubted that they could get the job done, she says. "It turned out we worked better than them, faster, because they were so sure of themselves." (Los Angeles Times, Sept. 18, 2013)

FAMILY HISTORY DAY.....

Join us for Family History Day at the Chula Vista Civic Library on Saturday, September 30. This event is sponsored by the Chula Vista Genealogical Society and is open to public free of charge. The South Bay Historical Society will have a table on display during the day. Please visit with us. Caesar Castro will give a presentation in the auditorium at noon on the family history of Chief David Bejarano. For more information, see the CVGS web site at <https://chulavistagenealogysociety.wildapricot.org/>

South Bay Historical Society

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