

Grant House



The Ulysses S. Grant, Jr., house was built in 1894 at 5771 Sweetwater Road.

1894 - President U. S. Grant was the first of our traveling presidents. During his terms of office and in his later years he toured many parts of the country. Coming to California, he enjoyed the land so much that he bought a home in Cajon Valley which, unfortunately, burned. The impressions of California's delightful climate received by his son, Ulysses S. Grant Jr., influenced the return of the young Grant family, who purchased attractive "Queen Ann" style mansion on Prospect corner of 7th and Ash street in San Diego. The price paid for the house was \$25,000 though Mr. Havermale who built it, had put \$100,000 in house and furniture but it was getting towards the 1893 depression days and money was hard to get. The site was considered one of the most valuable in the City of San Diego. This beautiful home was dismantled to make way for the El Cortez Hotel. During the time the Grants lived in the house a neighbor, Dr. Arndt who had a ranch in Sweetwater Valley, often took the family for a ride when he came out to supervise the work done on his place. A family such as the Grants, who had been in public eye for so long must have yearned for some seclusion and so it was that on Jan. 24, 1894, the National City Record announced the presence of Mrs. C. Ulysses S. Grant, her son and family, who were purchasing land in the Sweetwater Valley next to the W. W. Whitney Ranch and intended to build a handsome home. The lumber for the house was shipped out by the Russ Lumber Co. via the "National City and Otay Railroad" which ran along the foot of the hill near their lot out 8th street on the Paradise Valley road until it joins the Sweetwater Road. About a mile or so, to the south and on the right, you will see the house. It is Dutch Colonial style, with a gambrel roof and as modern in appearance as any present day dwelling of its type. You can't miss it. The house has had good care. It was sold to Messrs. Laemmle, Van Rankle and Levi of the Universal Studios in Hollywood. They used it as a suburban retreat. The firm sold to G. Louis Farringham, a Conair worker for 19 years who has remodeled the place into a modern home for his wife and 2 attractive little daughters. A brick addition has been built harmonizing shingles cover the original redwood siding. The generous sized living room (parlor, in 1894) has large picture windows that have the unusual view of Sweetwater Dam which looks like a tiny model in the distance. Some of the original furniture remains in the house. A love seat, with tapestry covering, is in good condition. The first kitchen is now the dining room and a modern kitchen is in the new brick addition. Mrs. Grant's cherry bedroom suite is in an upper room. The house has the high headboard which was characteristic of the 90's. The dainty carving at the top is used as a motif on the other pieces of the set. On the hillside is the caretaker's house and across the road there had been a small station on the "Otay" railroad. Both house and station was named, "Aloha" by the Grants. In the original aviary. Landscaping is under way. In front is an unusually attractive eucalyptus tree, tall and straight with its bouquet of foliage high in the air. E. B. (Rhodes) Dyer, who spent her girlhood in Sweetwater Valley wrote me, "Gen. U. S. Grant's son and family lived in that Dutch-style house on the hill opposite Sweetwater Dam during the time we were school children in Bonita. We used to feel sorry for the children when they rode their little burro past the school a wistfully while we were playing at recess. They had a private school, with a tutor, in their house." That Bonita schoolhouse was further east than the present The U. S. Grant Hotel, in San Diego, built by U. S. Grant Jr., is located on land where the Horton House once stood. On January 1, 1870, Alonza Horton began the trench for the foundation for his hotel. In 1905 when it was torn down to make way for the new hotel the first bricks removed were taken out by Mr. Horton, Bowers and E. W. Morse who had laid the cornerstone of the Horton House in 1870. The two artesian wells of the Horton House were considered the best

San Diego. Today, capped, they remain in the basement of the Grant Hotel. One of them is used for grounding the radio station in the building. ("In Old Nat City" By Irene Phillips, Chula Vista Star-News, July 17, 1958)

He was probably the most prominent but the least remembered of San Diego men of the late nineteenth century. His quiet manner, his easy acceptance of the differences of opinion, and his continuing ties with New York and the East, all gave him an air of aloofness. His many friends liked him but few really understood him. Ulysses Simpson Grant, Jr., the son of the eighteenth President of the United States, did much to promote San Diego the world over. Along with Alonzo E. Horton, the founder of New Town, he became one of the outstanding businessmen in Southern California. Born in Bethel, Ohio, July 22, 1852, Ulysses S. Grant, Jr., nicknamed Buck by his family, was the second son of Julia Dent and Captain Ulysses Simpson Grant. When his father became President in 1869, Ulysses, Jr. attended Emerson Institute in Washington for two years and then was sent to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire to prepare for Harvard. After his graduation from Harvard University in 1874, he chose to enter the legal profession and two years later graduated from the Law School of Columbia University in New York City. Admitted to the New York bar, he entered the law firm of Elkins as a junior member. Unlike his father, Ulysses, Jr. never completely yielded to the lure of politics, but he did serve for eighteen months at his mother's urging as private secretary to his father in the White House. The following year he accepted the post of assistant United States attorney for the Southern district of New York during Stewart L. Woodford's administration as governor. At the age of twenty-eight on November 1, 1880, Ulysses, Jr. married Fannie Josephine Chaffee, the only child of Senator Jerome B. Chaffee of Colorado, a wealthy businessman, who had made a fortune in the Leadville mining boom. They were married in the home he had purchased at 26 58th Street, New York City. They had three children: Miriam, born September 26, 1881; Chaffee, born in the "Berkshire," September 28, 1883; and Julia, born at the "St. Cloud Hotel," April 15, 1885. (Banning, 1981)



Ulysses S. Grant, Jr.

1893 - The Reid Brothers of Hotel del Coronado fame designed the home for Oren S. Hubble in 1887, who sold the property within two years to an unknown In 1893, the founder of National City, Ralph Granger, purchased the property. Two months later, Fannie C. Grant, daughter-in-law of former president Ulysses Grant, purchased the land and home. From there, she and her husband, U. S. Grant, Jr., could watch construction of their namesake hotel (the US Grant) and San Diego's downtown on Broadway. In 1926, the U.S. Grant Company sold the property to the Southern Trust and Commerce Bank. Richard R. Robinson, acquired the property from the bank shortly thereafter and tore down the Reid-designed home to make room for the El Cortez. (Ciani, 2000)



Hubble-Grant house in San Diego built 1887 on Prospect Hill where later the El Cortez Hotel would be built.

1894 - William Sterling Hebbard graduated from the Cornell University School of Architecture in 1887. He came to San Diego near the end of the 1880s bo decade and designed the power plant for the San Diego Cable Company. In 1891, Hebbard became an associate with the Reid Brothers and took over their firm when the Reids left for San Francisco. According to Kathleen Flanigan, "Hebbard's early work in San Diego reflected the architectural upheaval experienced by many U.S. architects searching for the American essence. Times rapidly changed and so did architectural styles. No longer could a single format or style for commercial or residential structures be established." In the Florence Heights and University Heights areas, "he used Shingle Style architecture, circular porches, arched entries into rooms and three cornered bay windows in his designs. During 1893, Hebbard also designed the Ramona Town Hall which incorporated the use of two different building materials in its exterior, brick and adobe. In 1894, a total of ten residences and cottages were designed for prominent San Diegans during this year, including the Jesse Grant residence on Sixth Avenue by the Park. Built in colonial design with multi-paned windows and siding on the exterior, the residence found use as a summer home for Mr. Grant, the youngest son of U.S. Grant, the late president. Hebbard built his second church in 1894, the Christ Episcopal Church in Coronado. Constructed of hand-hewn granite, with stone work done by the San Diego firm of Simpson and Pirie on D Street, this magnificent Romanesque-style structure still stands today and shows no time-worn scars." (Flanigan, 1987)



Jesse Grant house

1894 - The U. S. Grant, Jr. house at 5771 Sweetwater Road is a Dutch Colonial Revival two-storied structure with gambrel roof and gabled dormer windows; shingles over the original redwood siding and bricks placed over the cobblestone foundation. The four Ionic columns which support the southeast facing entrance have been moved from the west facing facade which was originally an open porch. The porch entrance has been enclosed. Decorative and plain, fixed and casement windows complement the residence. Mature eucalyptus, pine and Moreton Bay chestnut trees provide shade behind the northwest facing facade. A modified

garage structure rests on the northeast portion of the property. This rare Dutch Colonial Revival style residence, built for Ulysses S. Grant Jr. and his family acre tract in 1894 is one of the few remaining 19th century structures in the Sweetwater Valley area. Located on a knoll overlooking the Sweetwater Lake and the cottage, designed by noted San Diego architect, Will Sterling Hebbard, cost \$1800 to build. Called the Aloha Ranch, the son of the president owned this until 1925. Grant, a graduate of Harvard and Columbia Universities, became a lawyer by profession. He married Fannie Chaffee in 1880, the only child of S Jerome Chaffee of Colorado. In the fall of 1893, the Grants moved to San Diego in hopes that the mild climate would improve Fannie's health. U.S. Grant Jr law in San Diego as well as serving on the Park Improvement Committee with George Marston and others. and was the chairman of the Board of Directors of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. In 1926, Max Rabinowitz, a pioneer San Diego grocer, and his wife Mollie, purchased this property. Carl Laemmle, ass with Universal Studios in Hollywood, bought this tract in 1931 for use as a suburban retreat. In 1945, G. Louis Farrington, a Convair executive and his wife, Olson Farrington, who spent her early years on the Olson Bonita ranch, procured this residence and acreage and continued to reside here through 1990. (Car 1990)

1894 - The U. S. Grant, Jr., Caretaker's Cottage is a two-story clapboard Colonial Revival structure most likely built in 1894 as a caretaker's cottage associated with the U.S. Grant Jr. estate just to the northeast of this property and across Sweetwater Road. A composition gable roof has a dormer projection centered on the facade over the front entrance, which also has a gabled roof. Regular spaced double hung windows are placed symmetrically around the facade and flanked by shutters. A small wooden rail fence and stone wall accent the mature landscaping. This frame caretaker's cottage, associated originally with the Ulysses S. Grant property, housed employees of that family from 1894. Anna Held, governess to the Grant children, companion and attendant to Fannie Grant, and founder of the Green Dragon Colony in La Jolla, most likely resided here while the family was in residence. As the Grant children did not attend school but were tutored by their teachers probably lived here with their school facilities located somewhere within this structure. G. Louis Farrington and his wife Mary, who bought the property in 1945, moved this structure in 1948 to 5761 Quarry Road and remodeled it as a single family residence. Used as a rental until 1968, it was purchased by Norman and Jerilyn Palmer. (Carrico, 1990)

1895/01/01 - U. S. Grant, Jr., is firmly convinced that the city offers a fine field for investment. He has shown his faith by purchasing two of the finest buildings in the city, one 100x100 on Fifth street, just north of D, and the other of the same size at the southeast corner of Sixth and D streets. Plans have been made for a building to be erected on the former site. It will be a three-story modern brick and stone structure, ornately finished outside, and of commodious proportions \$30,000. The basement has already been dug for this building and the foundation will be commenced at once. The building at Sixth and D streets, if present carried out, will cost \$15,000. but Mr. Grant may decide to add another story, making three, which will raise the total cost. It is possible that the Y. M. C. A. will accept Mr. Grant's offer of the entire second floor of the new building designed expressly for the uses of the association, for \$1,000 per year. The lower floor of the building will be devoted to stores. Mr. Grant has also purchased a country home in the Sweetwater valley, a short distance this side of Sweetwater dam, consisting of seven acres, upon which he is building a cosy cottage to cost \$2,000 or \$3,000. The grounds will be planted to all kinds of fruits, and in a short time will be one of the most attractive country places in the suburbs of the city. (San Diego Union, Jan. 1, 1895)

1910/10/15 - On October 15, 1910, with great pomp and circumstance, The US Grant opened her doors. Five years of construction in the heart of San Diego had built up a flurry of curiosity, a storm of excited press, and a staggering cost of \$1.9 million. Thousands of guests flocked from all across the region to take part in the opening ceremonies of this hotel of untold luxury. One of Horton's greatest contributions to the city was Horton House, the city's first major hotel. The 100-room mansion was the city's crown centerpiece. It became a stopping point for tourists, businessmen, and anyone else weary of a bed. Later, Fannie Chaffee Grant, wife of Ulysses S. Grant Jr. and daughter of Jerome B. Chaffee, Colorado's first Senator, saw a great deal of opportunity in the Horton House. Shortly after her husband suffered a financial blow on Wall Street, she made the wise and fateful decision to purchase the property for a price of \$56,000. She deeded it to her husband, the son of President Ulysses S. Grant. What would happen next was nothing short of history. At the turn of the 20th century, Ulysses S. Grant Jr. moved his family to San Diego. Almost immediately, Grant found himself up to his ears with investments - and their complications. He made money, lost money, and occasionally did better than he could even imagine. What the city needed, Grant Jr. believed, was a truly great hotel. THE US GRANT was born the day that Horton House went down. On November 1, 1909, one year before the hotel's opening, the Grant family experienced a personal tragedy: Fannie Chaffee Grant passed away. In 1910, the daunting project was completed. A palace of luxury, the 437 room hotel featured architecture that is both classic and timeless, with top floor arcadia windows, balcony balustrade and imposing dentil cornices. Inside, a white marble staircase capped by a carved alabaster railing led visitors away from the lobby and off to the luxury of their rooms. In 1919, a dapper gentleman from Indiana by the name of Baron Long came to speak with U.S. Grant Jr. It was no secret that the dry days of Prohibition were looming. One year after Long acquired partial interest in the hotel, the Eighteenth Amendment and its bitter cousin, the Volstead Act - which reinforced the prohibition of alcohol, were passed. In an operation that was hardly covert, the hotel's Bivouac Grill was converted into a speakeasy called the Plata Real Ni. In 1939, Long further improved profit margins, literally, by installing the largest radio towers on the West Coast on her roof. In an era where radio, not television, connected the nation with portals in every home and business, the new 11th floor space became the offices for radio station KFVW. It was a great coup when President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered one of his first radio addresses to the nation from the hotel. Towards the end of World War II, the hotel went through another ownership change. During the 1950s, the famous Palm Court, the hotel's second floor Garden Terrace and gathering point for local society, was enclosed to create the Palm Pavilion, and the 9th floor Grand Ballroom was converted into 9th and 10th floor guestrooms (today, this area holds the hotel's twin Presidential level suites). One of the most influential decisions, however, was to build a restaurant off the lobby on Fourth Avenue - the Grant Grill. (US Grant Hotel, "H



1913 - Four years after his wife's death, Grant, Jr. remarried on July 12, 1913. His second wife was a young widow, active in the social life of San Diego. Grant and America spent six years traveling and in the early 1920s made their home in the nation's capital. On their return to San Diego in 1925, Grant, Jr. sold the house on Prospect Hill to Dick Robinson and Associates and saw it torn down to be replaced by the El Cortez Hotel in 1927. The Grants then took up residence in the Grant Hotel and there in their luxurious rooms entertained many nationally prominent figures. They continued to travel, however, mainly in California. In 1928, Grant took a four-month auto trip with America's nephew Sidney Halbert. While on their way home, some 270 miles north of San Diego, Grant, Jr. became so ill that he made an early stop on the Ridge Route at Sandberg Lodge. During the night of September 26, U.S. Grant, Jr., one of the pioneers and early builders of San Diego died at the age of seventy-seven. (Banning, 1981)

1931 - Carl Laemmle, the founder of the Universal Film Company in Hollywood, bought the Grant house and surrounding property in 1931 for use as a suburban retreat. ("In Old National City" By Irene Phillips, Chula Vista Star-News, Jul 17, 1958)

1937/01/02 - This sales offer appeared in the Los Angeles Times in 1937, two years before the death of Carl Laemmle: "San Diego offer 128 Acres, part of the U. S. Grant Estate, owned now by Carl Laemmle and associates. Close to Sweetwater with

a wonderful view. Modern home of 5 rooms, caretaker's house, fine shade and shrubs, family fruit, plenty water, chicken equipment and the Ideal spot and acreage for Gentleman's Country Estate, Can be made very productive also. Will consider exchange in or near Los Angeles, prefer close-in Country. Submit, J. W. Pearce And Associates 411 West 5th St." (The Los Angeles Times, Jan 2, 1937)

1945 - Louis Farrington bought the Grant house in 1945. George Louis Farrington, a philanthropist and lifetime resident of the area, died last Sunday in a local hospital after a short illness. He was 89. Mr. Farrington is one of those rarities that we find in the South Bay. He spent nearly his entire life as a Californian. He was born in a small town in Colorado Dec. 1, 1911, but his parents almost immediately moved to San Diego before he was 1 year old. Though he never said so, he was probably one of the original surfers. Mr. Farrington grew up in Ocean Beach where he enjoyed surfing, swimming and other water-related activities. He also learned to dance at an early age and enjoyed it practically all his life. Mr. Farrington quit school at the age of 16 to help support his family. He had various menial jobs that included a stint with the WPA, but then went to work in aviation, first at Ryan Aeronautical Company and then at Convair. Mr. Farrington always had the acting bug. While working with a theater group in 1937 he met Mary Elizabeth Olson, a Bonitan, who was to become his wife, a union that lasted for 54 years. In 1945 they bought 130 acres and the structure that is known as the U.S. Grant house. It was originally owned by U.S. Grant Jr., who also owned the U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego. For many years the house was the hub of their activities. They had three daughters, Jaimie, Georgia and Lenore, who became animal lovers, particularly horses. Mr. Farrington himself was quite a horseman and training them. Mr. Farrington's wife, Mary, died in 1993. (Chula Vista Star-News, Mar 11, 2000)



Carl Laemmle

1945 - Louis Farrington and his family lived on Sweetwater Road in the house referred to as the U.S. Grant House. It is the large structure with the pitched roof clearly visible from the road. It was the summer home of the Grant heirs back around the turn of the century. Farrington lived there until just a few months before his death. In a conversation I learned that Farrington was born in 1911 in Saguache, Colo., and when he was a year old, the family relocated to San Diego and settled at Ocean Beach. He grew up there and attended the local schools until, at the age of 16, he quit school to go to work. He started out by working in various odd jobs. He was a filling station attendant, a small truck driver, and worked for an ornamental metal and stone shop. He said that the Agua Caliente Racetrack was being built at that time and his shop supplied much of the ornamental work in the architecture of the building. Like many men of Farrington's age, he also had a stint with the military during the early '30s. Finally, however, he went to work for Convair, which in later years became General Dynamics. He was in the tooling department, and worked his way up to shop foreman and remained in that position until he retired in 1968. In those formative years Farrington became interested in the theater in numerous amateur productions and it was through one of these that he met Mary Elizabeth Olson, a young lady who lived with her parents in Bonita. They married in 1939 and had three daughters, Jaimie, Georgia and Lenore. Over the years the Farringtons were very involved in community affairs. Their principal love was music and the theater. They belonged to many musical groups in the area, including the San Diego Opera and the San Diego Symphony. The family also invested in real estate ventures that proved profitable and allowed Farrington to retire early. Mary died in 1993. Sometime later Farrington moved out of the large house on Sweetwater Road to the retirement of Fredericka. We may wonder what he might do in retirement. He told me he has recently enrolled in a ballroom dancing class and attends dances two or three times a week. While listening to him recite his story, I sort of thought of Horatio Alger character. George Louis Farrington fit the mold. (Around the South Bay by Richard Pena, Chula Vista Star-News, Feb 8, 1997)



This 1964 aerial photograph shows the large oval equestrian ring on the Grant house property used by the Westwind Riders.

1961 - The Westwind Riders began as a riding club of youngsters who met at the Farrington Farm the first Saturday of each month. In 1962, eleven members of the club received awards, and the club itself received a flag that has flown over the nation's capitol, at the group's first annual awards and installation dinner. This flag was presented by Richard Wilson in behalf of his brother Rep. Bob Wilson, who obtained the flag. Leo Reed, president of the County Horse Assn., Barbara Torkildson as president; Katie Perry, first vice president; Dana Pakke, second vice president; Paula Farrington, recording secretary; Pam Sharp, corr

secretary; Susan Crouch, treasurer; and Georgia Farrington, publicity chairman. The riding club had a closed show for members only once each month and a show each year, generally in June. (Chula Vista Star-News, Jan 4, 1962)

1970/11/08 - "Danger at the Farm," produced by DeBello Productions, Inc., will long be remembered as one of the great classic dramas of our time. It was a fun movie to make, but Steve Gurnsey, Dorothy Mayer and Cindy Charles are wondering if they'll be suspended after Mr. Noe sees it. By the way, the film ran enough profit to post John DeBello's bail. There will be one more showing tonight at Farrington Farm, but watch out, there are rumors of a police raid! (by Steve Brault in Chula Vista Star-News, Nov 8, 1970)

1970/11/15 - Movie making isn't easy, Bonita Vista High School writer, director, producer and cameraman John DeBello will readily testify. Responsible for the work on the recently completed "Danger at the Farm," he said work on it stretched over six months and out of necessity he became adept at handling nervous actors, camera store clerks, funny looks from upstanding citizens, dozens and dozens of film splices, as well as Chula Vista police. He wrote the entire script for the movie, which lasts an hour, and was also responsible for much of the casting and production of the film. "The hardest problem was getting everyone together at the right time, especially the Indians. No one seems to notice, but there is a different tribe of Indians in almost every scene." It took all summer to get the people together enough times to shoot the movie, and in the final version dialogue scenes, shot months apart, are spliced together and appear to be happening at the same time. Casting efforts also included putting together a group of hippies for a riot scene at Doctor's Park, at 4th and F in Chula Vista. Neighbors, seeing the filming of which included the attacking of a car driving into the parking lot, directed police toward the amateur movie makers. "I was the one who had to handle them," Steve Peace, ASB president at Bonita Vista and an actor in the movie. "The policeman was ready to believe we weren't attacking good members of the community," Steve recalled. "Only after he saw the camera did he change his mind, and even then he kept a close eye on all of us." Memories of the incident still linger at the police department, Steve said. "A couple of months later the same cop stopped me at night for suspicion of burglary because I made a U-turn with my headlights," he said. "And he recognized me as the one that started the riot in Doctor's Park." Contacts with the local citizenry also came about during filming of sequences in which Marie Orrentia, one of the heroines, was bound hand and foot and left on a railroad track awaiting the train. "We shot that at the tracks down by Rohr Street from the street. You just wouldn't believe the looks we got from people passing by." Dennis Poulos and Gary Jacquot, two national guardsmen in the movie, came in for their share of gazes as they were filmed trying to hitchhike, in full combat uniform including helmets, can-teens and rifles, along Otay Lakes Road. John had his share of funny looks from camera store clerks as he bought 400 film splices. He also had some problems getting his actors to do what they were supposed to do in the movie, although he says there weren't too many difficulties. In classic movie form, they often had to have several retakes of each scene. In classic movie form, however, "Danger at the Farm" shows at the end of the movie many of the mistakes conventionally left on the cutting room floor. "Most of the people were pretty good," John said, "but Marie was always laughing and John Miller, the Indian chief, was too much of a ham. Marie did an outstanding job in the movie, though, and so did John. He has a terrific amount of acting talent." DeBello wrote the entire movie himself, a process which took a month, he said. But moviegoers say that the type-casting in the movie is almost perfect, and John admits that he "had certain people in mind" when he created certain roles. He wrote the entire movie himself. "We would have liked to film from more than one angle during each scene," he said, "but we only had one camera. Sometimes we reshot a scene three or four times and used the best film." Editing the three-reel film took about 25 hours, he said. Compounding normal editing problems was the fact that the scenes of the movie were spread out over the 13 film spools he used. John still has a bushel basket full of unused film. The total cost of the movie was over \$100, of which some \$130 went to film and the rest to costumes, props and other materials. John said he didn't have definite plans for another movie now, but won't rule out the possibility. "It takes a lot of time to put the plot together," he said, "and it could never be shot when school is in session." (Chula Vista Star-News, Nov 15, 1970)

1970/11/15 - Barons producer John DeBello wrote, directed and produced "Danger at the Farm," an hour long, full color, action-packed movie with a cast of Bonita Vista students and a Chula Vista policeman, is virtually guaranteed to warm the hearts and split the sides of nearly anyone who sees it. The creation of the movie by senior John DeBello, it took nearly all summer to make and was shot on location throughout Chula Vista. But New York's legendary Boss Tweed would feel at home during parts of it. So would harried National guardsmen, demonstrating hippies, evil do-badders, Mafia chieftains and cynical Indian savages. Anyone who comes to the movie prepared to do a lot of laughing. It was shot at several spots throughout Chula Vista, but most of the action centers around the Farrington Farm, in real life the Farrington Farm in Bonita. Unlike most home movies, the plot is complex and the acting, especially that of co-star Lenore Farrington as the chief, John Miller, is outstanding. The film is silent, but short written scripts clarify the dialogue between characters. The cast, including extras, includes more than 100 persons, with 19 major characters, DeBello said, and the movie even includes a shot of the Chula Vista police, who came to bust them for staging a riot-scene in the parking lot. The movie centers around the efforts of several groups competing to gain control of the Farnsworth Farm, inhabited only by two helpless female hippies. Leading one charge on the farm is Indian chief Bull Sit, an Indian head who has his problems. Neither can he shoot an arrow nor are any of his track-shoe-less hippies equipped with matches to burn a captive at the stake. They can't even start a fire by rubbing two sticks together, despite instructions from the YMCA Indian chief. Also after the farm is evil Bruce Whitmore of the State Highway Commission, who wants to turn it into a freeway. The girls won't sell, so he tries to arrange an accidental fire, with napalm. But no napalm is to be had because POW! Chemicals, the producers, have been under attack by militant hippies for the past two years. Whitman and his inept assistant escape from the plant, carrying an autographed picture of Ronald Reagan given to them by the POW! Chemical leader, just before the hippies invade and destroy the last strongholds of the flag-toting scientists in the napalm plant. A rich movie actress wants the farm so she can reap publicity from fighting the highway department, and dispatches her business manager to buy it for her. But despite strong temptations brought on by endless piles of crisp green money, the girls refuse. Also after the farm is the Mafia, personified by two triggermen, Cosa and Nostra. Allied with the homesteading girls, however, is the California National Guard and DOG, a group of noticeably braless, cigar chomping women dedicated to the "Deliverance of Girls." But only two members of the National Guard are available, the rest having been shipped to the front at UCLA. But although the DOGS show their nonchalance toward a pep talk by headmistress Norma by blowing smoke rings, enough of her snarling, cigar-chewing Boss Tweed style sinks in to enable the DOGS to beat up the Indian tribe in the end. Nostra falls victim to the FBI at the conclusion of the movie, and the two national guardsmen, their vehicles taken, end a long journey by foot and hitchhiking to the farm in time to surprise the DOGS just before they destroy the Indian tribe. The original farm girls, driven to desperation, then find Whitmore and offer to sell the farm. "Danger at the Farm" is being shown at the farm, the Farrington Farm, near the intersection of the Sweetwater Rd. and Quarry Rd. tonight at 7:30. Ad 50 cents for students, and the parking concessionaire will nick you for another nickel. Profits from the movie will go to a yet-to-be-determined "worthy cause." (Chula Vista Star-News, Nov 15, 1970)

1971/02/14 - Zanuck probably envies Bonita Vista filmmaker. Bonita Vista film producer John DeBello doesn't make three-hour movies on multi-million dollar budgets, but he does do something a lot of Hollywood moviemakers would like to do. He has turned a profit on his last movie, called "Danger at the Farm," which earned about \$120 in profits in five public showings. Total revenues are about \$300. DeBello reports, and the total cost of the movie was about \$180. He shot the movie four times at the Bonita home of Lenore Farrington, the site which doubled as the setting for much of the movie. Also, the 45-minute color film was shown in four installments during lunch at Bonita Vista. Students at Hilltop High have expressed an interest in seeing the movie, he added. Students had to pay 50c to see it at the Farrington home and 15c for each lunchtime showing. Adults had to pay a dollar. At the Farrington's, popcorn was also sold. The movie, made last summer, directed, filmed and produced by DeBello, and featured a cast drawn from the students of Bonita Vista. It took most of the summer to write, film and edit, DeBello said, and has a cast of about 40 people. (Chula Vista Star-News, Feb 14, 1971)

1978 - On the trail of Killer Tomatoes released in 1978. The lobby of Four Square Productions over in Kearney Mesa has one of those well-appointed, yet si decors found in many new buildings. Occupied only since May, it still has a newness about it, a breaking in, so to speak, with people accustomed to their surroundings. It looks, in fact, like any other new lobby until one sees the three large, theater posters encased in glass adorning one of the walls. "Attack of t Tomatoes," says the first, followed by "Return of the Killer Tomatoes," and "The Killer Tomatoes Strike Back." Now the lobby has taken on a singular persc one to which we can relate. I was in the building the other day to talk to the president of the company, John DeBello, a pleasant young man who has lived in his life. He is a product of Bonita Vista High School, a senior class president in fact, who was in the graduating class of 1971, one of the first at the school. I were the days when a 33-30 loss to Sweetwater was considered a moral victory for the fledging school and the football season was declared a success. In the years DeBello has made his mark in business. He not only started the business he is in, but in a sense, invented it. In all fairness DeBello was not alone in thi: enterprise. One of his classmates, in those years was our present Sen. Steve Peace, a young man interested in school government then and state government. According to DeBello, when they were in 11th grade they put their first Tomatoes' feature film together, an "adventure saga" shot at Farrington Farms, the si U. S. Grant house on Sweetwater Road. The story line of that first film is, no doubt, lost in antiquity but it probably was the forerunner for those "Killer Ton films that came along in the late 1970s and 80s. The 'Killer Tomatoes' have, over the years, become icons of the industry. They have acquired a status of 'cul that means, simply, that they have a following that will stay with them forever. They are comparable to such television fare as 'Gilligan's Island' or 'Green Ac because of that following have become classics. Although productions such as the Tomatoes' and others are tangibles. Four Square Productions is a serious, communications firm. Over the years they have searched for and acquired some of the best technology in the business From a handheld camcorder to the lat many solutions to industry. At the present Four Square is in two divisions. The communication group produces major live event presentations and other type training projects to firms nationwide. The entertainment group provides outstanding motion picture and television programming to audiences worldwide Del lives in Bonita not far from the house of his mother, Irene, where be was raised with two brothers, one a U.S. Airforce musician and the other a businessman has the satisfaction of having seen a business, molded from scratch developed into a one-of-a-kind entity. Not bad for the once class president from Bonita V School. (Around the South Bay by Richard Pena, Chula Vista Star-News, Aug 15, 1998)

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