

# Carlsbad -70 year Anniversary

June 24 2022

Carlsbad, California, Historical Society

## Special Edition of the Carlsbad Historical Society Newsletter

### President's Letter

June 24 will commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of Carlsbad's election to incorporate. In 2001, I was asked to author a history book in celebration of Carlsbad's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Below you will find an excerpt from *Windows on the Past: An Illustrated History of Carlsbad, California*. If you'd like to read more about Carlsbad's history you can still purchase this book at the historical society museum, or check it out of the library.

Happy Birthday Carlsbad!



*Carlsbad Power Plant being built*

### Remembrance by Ginny Krepps Unanue

I remember when Carlsbad was part of the County of San Diego, and there was an election to decide whether it should incorporate as an individual city. This was in 1952. I remember that my father, Harry Krepps, a mailman in town, and at that time, perhaps the only mailman in Carlsbad, worked very hard at getting people to vote. He rigged up loudspeakers on top of his car, with a microphone inside, and drove all over the city on election day, urging people to go and vote. He drove around town all that day, urging people to go vote, but not telling them how to vote.

He was successful, and most people in town did vote, one way or another. Carlsbad was voted to be incorporated as a city, by a narrow margin, and would no longer be supported and paid for by the County of San Diego. At that point, in 1952, Carlsbad was on the way to being its own city, and therefore at that point responsible for its own Fire and Police protection, its own Mayor and City Council to make decisions that would take place in Carlsbad.

***From Windows on the Past, an Illustrated History of Carlsbad California by Susan Schnebelen Gutierrez:***

### The Post-war years and new political developments

The many wartime changes that occurred in Carlsbad created a series of events that eventually had a major impact on Carlsbad's view of itself. By war's end, Carlsbad was thriving economically. The influx of military families had revived the real estate market and the business community. GI's settling in town created an environment that was different from the prewar years. The water system was overtaxed by the increase in population. Even construction of the Calaveras Dam was not a significant solution to the water problem. The postwar population increase placed a strain on the local school system causing overcrowding. The lack of basic services inadvertently set up a situation that eventually led to incorporation.

By the early 1950s a series of events led to a growing dissatisfaction with San Diego County's administration of Carlsbad. Residents believed that a better understanding of their problems and a faster solution to those problems would occur if civic matters were handled locally. Each problem or issue that Carlsbad faced was not enough of an individual reason to generate total support or a need for creating a new city. However, viewed together, these issues functioned as building blocks to create a new Carlsbad identity. Some folks argued in favor of one particular "Straw that broke the camel's back" that forced an incorporation vote. But the facts supported

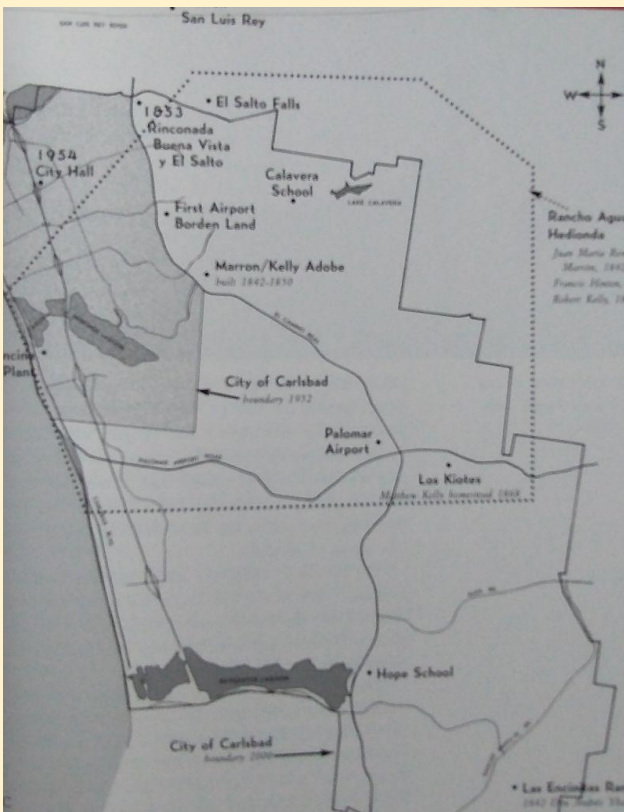
a series of independent events that joined at about the same time to create a unique window of opportunity that led to the formation of an independent city.

Carlsbad's first de facto government was the Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1923 by Roy Chase. Catering for many years to the fledgling business community, the Chamber worked in the best interest of all Carlsbad residents by focusing their combined efforts on finding solutions to local problems. Chamber members petitioned the San Diego County Supervisors for road improvements, building codes, street lighting and updated sewer systems. It was the Chamber that paid for tourism advertisements and installation of street signs. The Chamber also began street beautification programs to clean up vacant land and plant trees and flowers throughout the downtown area. As the city grew, so did the Chamber of Commerce workload. By the late 1940s the Chamber of Commerce had an organization of hard working community-minded members with the expertise and reputation to handle a variety of civic business.

Dewey McClellan, son-in-law of Chamber founder Roy Chase, and Chamber President himself in 1932 and 1946, was a well-respected man in Carlsbad. Viewed as honest, hard working and intelligent, many ordinary citizens sought his opinion and advice on community related issues. According to Al Jandros, he and Reg Marron Senior introduced Mr. Kay Kalika of Gorden Whittenall and Associates to Dewey McClellan. Kalika recommended to McClellan that Carlsbad might consider incorporation as a solution to the many problems facing the town. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the workload to just maintain the status quo in town was a tremendous burden on the Chamber of Commerce.

Jandros and Marron had hired Whittenall and Associates to evaluate property they owned that ran south of Buena Vista Creek. This property, which later became Plaza Camino Real Mall, had a high salt content from sea intrusion and was considered worthless for farming. The release in 1950 of the Stanford Survey detailed projected population increases in San Diego County and the needed road additions and improvements to accommodate the increase. Jandros and Marron hoped that their worthless farmland could be good for commercial development. Kalika suggested that this land was a terrific site for commercial development since two roads that were slated for major improvements, Highway 78 and El Camino Real, surrounded it. However, Kalika pointed out to McClellan, Jandros and Marron that developers for such a project preferred working with local governments, since they received quicker response on building issues than if they dealt with county bureaucracy.

While this issue was taking shape on the northern end of town, another equally important and more immediate development was occurring along the ocean and Agua Hedionda Lagoon. In 1948, the San Diego Gas and Electric Company bought 110 acres along the Agua Hedionda Lagoon to construct a power plant. Development of the power plant would generate more than just electricity, it would produce a tremendous amount of tax money, funds that could be used to establish and maintain a city government. By the early 1950s the power plant represented a potential source of income to run a city. We also have an idea planted that incorporation and the formation of local government would solve many issues and problems. On January 1, 1952 an event that acted as a catalyst brought everything to a head.



*Original size of Carlsbad*

A devastating house fire occurred on New Year's Day 1952 which underlined Carlsbad's totally inadequate municipal services. By the time the fire was over, the series of events associated with it could only be termed a dark comedy of errors.

Early on the morning of January 1, 1952, when smoke was first seen rising from the Garlock house, neighbors thought they were burning trash. Later in the day, at 2:40 p.m. people realized that the home was on fire and a call was placed to the State Forestry Station. The truck was out on another call but by 3 p.m. the truck arrived along with the Carlsbad Volunteer Fire Department crew. The problem was, they had no equipment to fight the fire. Finally at 3:15 P.M. Oceanside's Fire Department arrived, and at 3:30 PM another State Forestry truck from Del Mar was on the scene, but there were no water hydrants close by. As a truck pumped out its tanks it had to go to Pine School on Harding Street to refill and then drive back to the Garlock Home on Oak Street. By 6 PM the fire fighters believed that the fire was under control and left. At 7 PM the fire rekindled, but the Carlsbad-based State Forestry Truck was in La Mesa. Del Mar again sent their truck, which arrived at 8 PM and stayed until 11 PM, when the fire was finally extinguished. Unfortunately, by this time, the Garlock Home was totally destroyed.

started appearing in the local newspaper, outlining problems that faced the town. The list of concerns grew from the lack of basic fire and police service to a declining water supply, lack of fire hydrants and an antiquated sewage system built in 1929. As the number of complaints rose, three separate factions evolved: incorporationist, annexationists and rural citizens who supported maintaining the status quo. Each faction had a proposed solution for all the complaints. Incorporationist believed the only solution to the problems faced by Carlsbad residents was to take control of civic issues through formation of a city government. Annexationists believed that the easiest solution to their problems would be joining Oceanside, an existing city and having immediate access to all of their services. The Rural Citizens viewed all the hoopla as extremist. What had worked for years, by relying on the San Diego County Supervisors to administer local business, was good enough, and would not raise taxes.



*State Street*



*Aerial picture of early Carlsbad*

### **The Battle for Incorporation**

Carlsbad residents were incensed over their lack of locally controlled services. The fire just highlighted how precarious their position truly was concerning basic services. Letters of complaint

Arguments for and against each viewpoint inundated the newspapers as editorials, news stories and letters to the editor. So obvious was the Carlsbad Journal's support of incorporation that the Rural Citizen factions started their own newspaper called



the Carlsbad Free Press. It must be noted that while the three factions were divided on how best to solve Carlsbad's problems and issues, they were all united in the belief that something had to be done, some improvements had to be made for the good of the community.

In addition to the fire response time, another issue still unresolved that had been under discussion since 1949 was how to obtain water for Carlsbad. The Carlsbad Mutual Water Company was a stockholder-owned water company. It owned and operated water wells along the San Luis Rey River. The company piped water into Carlsbad. These wells kept increasing in salinity as well as drying up. CMWC was unable to finance construction of pipelines that would connect to the San Diego Water Authority aqueducts. The Public Utility District, formed in 1949 to find a solution to the water issue, was also unable to solve the water problem. One of the reasons they were unsuccessful was they lacked any real power or authority. If a group refused to join the district, then there was no way to force them to comply. The San Diego Water Authority brought in water from the Colorado River. Carlsbad needed the water and had no way to raise the funds needed to connect to the San Diego Water Authority aqueducts. Without an adequate supply of water there would be no further residential or agricultural development in Carlsbad. An incorporated city would have the authority to finance construction of the pipelines needed to connect to the aqueducts.

After the New Year's Day fire in 1952, retired Major General W. W. Worton, a coastal strip resident, wrote a letter to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, the Carlsbad Public Utilities Commission and the Carlsbad Journal, which was printed on January 10, 1952. In this letter, Worton accused the County Board of Supervisors of not satisfying Carlsbad's needs by not considering how rapidly the town was growing and by not providing adequate fire and police service.



*Carlsbad Flower Fields*

Colonel Gronseth of the Carlsbad Public Utilities Board answered General Worton's concerns. He clarified what specific areas the Carlsbad Public Utilities Board was authorized to address. It was Gronseth's opinion that better fire protection was possible, but establishment of a local police force or resolving health or sanitation issues were beyond the Public Utilities Commission's domain. Gronseth later suggested, when addressing the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce, that incorporation could possibly offer a solution to the concerns and issues expressed by General Worton and by other Carlsbad residents.

Carlsbad Journal editor Robert Garland wrote articles that supported Colonel Gronseth's opinion regarding incorporation as the solution to Carlsbad's problems. He stated that the town was "growing without guidance and we must take steps to incorporate." The feasibility of incorporation now became an issue. Would there be sufficient revenue to support a city if a successful incorporation election occurred? Committees were formed to study the issue, gathering information from neighboring cities and examining what it cost to run a city. Additionally, the committees needed to investigate the legal steps necessary for a successful election attempt. Studies were completed and the information was released in the January 31, 1952 edition of the Carlsbad Journal. San Diego County procedures for incorporation entailed three steps: a petition requesting an incorporation election signed by 25% of the affected property owners who owned at least 25% of the land; money deposited to defray the cost to publish the petition and notice of the election; and the boundaries set for the proposed incorporated city. After the petition was submitted to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, a hearing would be set within two weeks, and an election within two months.

Concurrent with an incorporation election, the first slate of city officials would be elected.

One of the basic steps to be determined was the actual size of the proposed City of Carlsbad. On February 19, 1952, the County Boundary Commission accepted the plan submitted by the incorporationist, detailing the area that hopefully would be the future City of Carlsbad. The area was about seven square miles and included some of the original Rancho Agua Hedionda land grant as well as the downtown area developed by the Carlsbad Land and Water Company. The hoped for City would have a northern border that zigzagged through the Buena Vista Lagoon, from the Pacific Ocean east to El Camino Real. The eastern boundary of the city would follow El Camino Real south to a point between the current Kelly Drive and Cannon Road. It would head west to the Agua Hedionda Lagoon and zigzag and drop south again to run parallel to the coast, about one mile inland from the ocean. It would finally join Palomar Airport Road, where it would turn west and continue until it reached the Pacific Ocean. The boundaries of the proposed City of Carlsbad were generally the same as those of the Carlsbad Utility District, except that the North Carlsbad (Fire Mountain) area would be left out. The reason Fire Mountain was excluded was simply that the area was not contiguous to the rest of the proposed City of Carlsbad. The San Diego Gas and Electric Company's Encina Power Plant, while not included in the Public Utility district, was added to the proposed City Incorporation Boundaries Plan. (Carlsbad Journal, February 21, 1952).

coastal property being included in the proposed City of Carlsbad boundaries. The Boundary Commission listened to all arguments presented by Oceanside City Attorney Harry Juliani, Paul Waggener, retired Major General Worton and Colonel William Atkinson. They requested the Boundary Commission to leave the coastal strip out of the proposed City of Carlsbad. The Boundary Commission approved the boundaries as submitted by the incorporationist and informed the annexationists that they did so because of the annexationists failure to submit any boundary proposals of their own.

The reason that the annexationists had failed to submit boundary proposals of their own was simply because they had not yet approached the Oceanside City Council with the request to be annexed. The annexationist finally approached the Oceanside City Council on February 22, 1952, proposing that they annex only the land west of the railroad tracks in Carlsbad and from the Army and Navy Academy south to Pine Street.

Residents in that area of town who favored annexation believed it would provide an immediate solution for all their problems. Oceanside, which incorporated in 1898, was a well-established municipality, with its own fire and police services, an ample supply of water, and adequate sanitation. Considering their own interests over the good of the entire town, many of the residents along the coastal strip started leaning towards annexation with Oceanside.

Oceanside agreed to accept the land in this proposed area into their city if an official petition was signed by at least 25% of the property owners and a majority subsequently voted in favor of annexation. On February 23, 1952, an Annexation Committee was formed and an official annexation petition was started. Three days later, on February 26, 1952, Attorney J. R. Goodbody submitted eighteen petitions with several hundred signatures requesting an incorporation election. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors accepted them unanimously at their meeting, pending signature verification. Before this meeting was terminated, Oceanside City Attorney Juliani claimed that Oceanside had "preempted" the coastal area that was included in the proposed City of Carlsbad by agreeing to accept petitions from residents in that area for annexation. Juliani also stated that Oceanside had the right to decide if they



*Leo Carrillo Ranch*

During the Boundary Commission hearing, those in favor of annexation with Oceanside objected to their

were annexing the land or not before it could be included in the proposed City of Carlsbad. San Diego County Counsel Bertram McLees disagreed, stating that Oceanside had no legal jurisdiction over the Carlsbad coastal land. There had been no legal petitions filed for annexation and Oceanside had just agreed four days before to accept any circulated and signed petitions from this group of residents.

On March 4, 1952, one and a half hours after Marie Nasland, clerk to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, certified that the incorporation petitions were in order, more than \$2000 was deposited to cover legal and advertising expenses for the incorporation election.

On March 10, 1952, the official annexation petition was submitted to and accepted by the Oceanside City Council. This petition had signatures from 57 of the 90 coastal strip registered voters. At their March 10 meeting, the Oceanside City Council invited Carlsbad residents living west of the proposed future I-5 freeway and all the way south to Batiquitos Lagoon to join the annexation to Oceanside. Their offer was extended to those areas of Carlsbad that offered some financial value to Oceanside, not to the more rural areas that needed the protection of city services just as much if not more than the downtown areas.

Residents of the non-coastal areas of Carlsbad that could have accepted the Oceanside offer were not interested in annexation with Oceanside. These residents ran a real risk by holding out for incorporation, since the entire issue would be moot if the coastal area was annexed to Oceanside. The coastal area contained some of the most lucrative tax producers in Carlsbad: the Army Navy Academy, the Carlsbad Hotel, the Royal Palms Hotel, and the San Diego Gas and Electric Power Plant. If the coastal area joined Oceanside, there would be no way the rest of Carlsbad could financially afford to incorporate. Lack of funds from the coastal strip would mean not enough money to lay new sewers, or water lines to join with the Metropolitan Water District and it would eliminate the tax money needed to improve increasingly overcrowded schools. It became obvious that annexation of Carlsbad's coastal strip would eliminate the need for incorporation, since there would not be sufficient tax funds to pay for city services.

Despite the concerns of all the other Carlsbad residents, the annexationist forged on with their plans, setting May 2, 1952, as the date for election.

While the annexationists were busy with their plans, the incorporationist continued working towards their goal of one unified city. Incorporation Committee Chair, Colonel Gronseth, held informational meetings at the Carlsbad School auditorium throughout March of 1952. Incorporation Committee Attorney J. R. Goodbody, School Superintendent Walter Glines, Sanitary District representative Edger Charles Anthony, and Eddie Kentner all advocated for incorporation and gave factual information to interested attendees.



*Carlsbad Technology*

During April the County Board of Supervisors held several public hearings on the proposed incorporation boundaries, and members of all three factions attended. Each group presented their case, reiterating their previous arguments and adding a few new ones, such as how loss of the beach would affect Carlsbad residents if the coastal strip was annexed to Oceanside. Attendees questioned who protected coastal strip residents who did not want to annex Oceanside. Claude Fennel, a pro incorporationist, stated, "it was not fair, to let half a dozen people (those in favor of annexation) decide Carlsbad's future" (Carlsbad Journal, April, 10, 1952). It was a valid point, considering that removal of the coastal strip would limit any hope of economic viability for Carlsbad.

Three days before the May 2 annexation vote, the County Board of Supervisors finally approved the proposed City of Carlsbad boundaries as submitted by the incorporationist faction on February 19. These boundaries included the Carlsbad coastal strip and



the SDG&E Encina Power Plant then under construction.

On May 2, 1952, the annexation vote proceeded at 7 a.m. in the lobby of the Carlsbad Hotel. With election results in doubt, (44 votes in favor to 41 opposed, 5 absentee ballots and 5 disputed ballots waiting to be counted,) the county set the incorporation election date for June 24, 1952.

The annexation election results were revealed on May 14 when absentee ballots were opened and counted at the scheduled Oceanside City Council Meeting. Banner headlines "Strip Annexation Loses" blazed across the May 15 edition of the Carlsbad Journal. A tie vote of 45 to 45 defeated the annexation attempt, since a simple majority was needed. Those who worked diligently for annexation then turned their attention to supporting incorporation as the only viable solution to Carlsbad's many issues of adequate sanitation, water, and fire and police service.



*Carlsbad McClellan-Palomar Airport*

During the next six weeks, the incorporationists continued with their informational meetings at the Carlsbad School. They organized committees, nominated future council members and appointed precinct workers. At this point, with the annexation issue resolved, the incorporationists faced vocal accusations from the Rural Citizens, who wished to maintain the status quo and stay unincorporated and dependent on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

The Rural Citizens Group was made up of farmers, gardeners and orchardists, for the most part successful agriculturalists. This group objected to incorporation because they believed it would adversely affect their farming business by increasing taxes, eventually forcing them to sell their land. They

viewed those in favor of incorporation as progressives who wished to eliminate farmers in order to build subdivisions and increase development. The plan that the Rural Citizens presented to the rest of Carlsbad's voting population was rather confusing. They proposed presenting a slate of five candidates for City Council if the incorporation vote passed. If this slate of candidates was elected, they would then dissolve the incorporation and annex to Oceanside. This argument seemed illogical and failed to win a majority of the voters. Their own argument that belonging to a city was bad for farming seemed to be self-defeating.

Carlsbad Journal editorials answered a variety of points raised each week by the Rural Citizens group. However, a few remarks made by members of this group bordered on slanderous accusations, implying that personal gain by the business community was the underlying reason for incorporation. At this point, the Carlsbad Journal moved their editorial comments from the inside pages of the newspaper to the front page. They began to name those Rural Citizens who were making these accusations. The Rural Citizens were accused of making false accusations and of running an eleventh hour smear campaign to save a few pennies in tax money.

On June 24, 1952, the election for incorporation took place. Incorporation won 781 to 714. The first City Council chosen in this election included: Manual Castorena, Raymond Ede, George Grober, C.D. McClellan, Lena Sutton, and Roy Pace as Treasurer.

A public service booklet published at the time by the Union Title Insurance and Trust Company stated, "On June 24, 1952, in a special election, residents of Carlsbad voted to incorporate. The splendid cooperation between various service organizations in Carlsbad plus the undeniable natural advantages of the community itself, combine to help paint a rosy picture of Carlsbad's future." This was a prophecy that seems to have come true.

## **EARLY GOVERNMENT -The First Employees and new infrastructure**

"It takes work to establish a City." Editor Buzz Garland expressed this sentiment in the Carlsbad

Journal. Once Carlsbad's certificate of incorporation was filed on July 16, the City Council held their first meeting. At this meeting, council members divided up the workload facing the city. Each member agreed to chair one of the citizen volunteer committees that were formed to gather information pertaining to water, police, fire, building, public works, finance, budget, zoning and planning.

The newly elected city council began forming a city government by assuming all government responsibilities and duties previously handled by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. The council also initiated a local control of the government in Carlsbad. They issued a statement promising to proceed slowly and thoughtfully while setting the basic city infrastructure in place. Operating funds were limited and the council depended on volunteer labor and expertise. Carlsbad's initial city budget was derived solely from permits and business license fees. Collecting funds from gas taxes, liquor licenses and motor vehicle fees was several months away and property tax fees would not be available for at least eighteen months.

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