

History of Encinitas

The history of Encinitas includes the communities of Leucadia, Olivenhain and Cardiff as they are intertwined. They all shared a common need of water, the influence of the railroad and their main export, flowers.

Nathan Eaton, a native of Chicago settled near Leucadia in 1875. By the 1880's about forty people lived in the area which included the Hammonds, the J.B. Elliott family, Reuben Chaffin, the Kincaids, Thomas Rattan and Dr. Sturges.ⁱ Leucadia was also referred to as "Merle" around the turn of the century. Merle was the name of the son of E.B. Scott, an early resident.ⁱⁱ

Jabez Pitcher settled in Encinitas in 1881 and is considered the founder of the town. He located on a claim of 160 acres near the railroad tracks where the present civic center is located. The first school was built in Encinitas in 1882 and Edward G. Hammond is credited with the building the first hotel in 1883. James B. Elliott planted cypress and eucalyptus trees throughout the area.

Cardiff began in 1875 with the arrival of the McKinnon family who settled on the San Elijo Lagoon. J. Frank Cullen purchased a large portion of San Elijo in 1909 and established a town in 1914. He called his new town "Cardiff-by-the-Sea" after Cardiff, Wales.

The town of Olivenhain, meaning "olive grove" was established in 1884 by German immigrants.

Excursion trains carried prospective buyers over the new rail route to Encinitas. The lots sold rapidly but the area was without a viable water supply the community remained a small enclave with a population of about 160.

The San Dieguito Irrigation District was formed in 1922-23, bringing water into this area and further ensured the success of Encinitas and surrounding communities.

William G. Kerckhoff, owner of the South Coast Land Company, is credited with the "vision, faith, and courage, and provided the money to make this development possible."ⁱⁱⁱ The plan included the building of a six-mile pipeline from the Rancho Santa Fe to the coast with a lateral to Del Mar and another north to Leucadia, the water to be derived from the wells on the Santa Fe Rancho.

With an adequate water supply secured by 1924, Encinitas grew steadily. Its flower industry was born and flourished. Thousands of acres of land were planted "to avocados and other trees, some 300 or 400 acres of vegetables, and several hundred acres to bulbs, poinsettias and other flowers."^{iv}

In 1925 Encinitas began hosting the National Mid-Winter Flower Show, an annual event for ten years. Gladiolas and carnations were a popular floral crop grown in Encinitas, but the most well known is the poinsettia.

Paul Ecke came to Hollywood, California from Switzerland with his father. After his father's death, Paul relocated to Encinitas in 1919. The poinsettia is a plant native to Mexico and was fairly uncommon even after it was "discovered" in 1833 by Joel Roberts Poinsett. It was the Ecke family, who through years of hybridizing, created the poinsettia plant which is now renowned and symbolizes the Christmas season.^v

In 1936 the San Dieguito Union High School District was formed which included Encinitas, Cardiff, Solana Beach, Del Mar, Rancho Santa Fe, Olivehain, Green Valley and

Leucadia.^{vi} Prior to this, students had to travel by train or auto to Oceanside to attend high school.

The Route Through Encinitas

The “dawn of a new era” came to Encinitas when the State announced plans to construct a road along the coast. The new road would bring new life into the town. First Street, or Main Street, as it was also called, was the central road through Encinitas that would become part of the state highway system.

In 1912, State Highway Engineer A.B. Fletcher was directed to begin the work of surveying for the various highway divisions. San Diego County was in Division 7 and a route was ordered to be surveyed through the county via Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas to San Diego.^{vii} The job of surveying was “being rushed” and it was expected that construction could begin as early as eight months. Sharp turns would be eliminated, grades and curves lowered on a new road that would be surfaced with an oil macadam.^{viii}

Work did begin on portions of the route; the section from Del Mar to Encinitas was nearly complete by February of 1913. However, due to a lack of funds, a year after the survey was made, the route from Encinitas to Oceanside had not begun. Frustrated, but willing to “spend money to make money” a group of San Diego bankers decided to finance the construction of the highway through bonds. The amount needed northward would be upwards of \$200,000.^{ix}

“Encinitas Day” was held on February 5, 1913. The event served to host a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of Northern San Diego. It featured a concert by the Houk Band of Oceanside, a solo by George Beech of Cardiff and a singing of the National Anthem by Mrs. Alex Beller of Carlsbad.

Among the guest speakers were J.A. Fay, Tom Hurley and W.V. Nichols. William G. Patton, with the Pacific Coast Defense League spoke of “Military Highways for the Defense of the Pacific Coast.” After the songs and oratories, a picnic was enjoyed with complementary grape juice provided by the Simon Levi Company of San Diego. Cigars were provided by the Encinitas Mercantile Company.^x

In May of 1913 an additional sum in the amount of \$107,000 was allotted for construction of the state highway on the coast route through San Diego county. The contract for the section from Encinitas to Oceanside was awarded.

The San Diego bankers bonded an amount of \$157,000 for this portion of the highway and with the funds in place and a contractor selected, the work was expected to start again and “pushed to completion.”^{xi}

J. M. Montgomery, the contractor for the state highway work between Oceanside and Encinitas, arrived with sixty mules and a crew and established camp at Encinitas in July. The job of grading was commenced and it was estimated that work on the ten-mile stretch between Encinitas and Oceanside would be completed in about eight months.^{xii}

Work steadily continued on the route through Encinitas and by November of 1913 the concrete work for the highway was finished from Encinitas to Merle and nearly complete from La Costa to the Kelly slough. It was reported that the construction work was “proceeding at much more rapid rate than that on the first stretch from Del Mar to Encinitas.”^{xiii}

With the state road completed, Encinitas prospered. The cypress and eucalyptus trees planted years ago now lined the highway and streets offered shade for traveling motorists. Businesses catering to the traveling public sprouted along the highway as auto travel increased in popularity. New commerce included campgrounds, the Leucadia Service Garage and the Cypress Grove Auto Camp and Filling Station.^{xiv}

Due to the increase in traffic, the need and demand for better roads was a constant. In 1923 the State announced work on widening the state highway between Los Angeles and San Diego. Sixteen miles of the highway from north of Del Mar through Encinitas to South Oceanside would be widening and surfaced with Portland cement concrete. After the widening, the state highway would have a width of 18 feet.^{xv}

A number of changes would take place with this new project that included moving the highway west of the railroad at Cardiff into Encinitas that would eliminate two railroad crossings. With the improvement of the highway assured, the city experienced a growth spurt.

“Numerous realty sales have been reported recently and inquiries for real estate are coming in constantly. There are rumors of the new business buildings to be erected in the near future and everyone is feeling hopeful of great results in the next year.”^{xvi}

It was reported in *California Highways* in November of 1924 that:

“The two Santa Fe railroad crossings eliminated by a relocation of the highway and railroad tracks in San Diego County. The old highway was abandoned between Encinitas and Cardiff, and the railroad moved over to provide a roadway for the new pavement along the ocean front. The new pavement is twenty feet wide.—A gas tax job.”

In 1925 aerial pictures were taken and published to show the dramatic changes of the coast route, which included two grade crossings and a reduction of the number of curves from eleven to four. The maximum grade was lowered from 7.10 per cent to 4.75 per cent and the overall distance of the route was shortened 350 feet.^{xvii}

The growth of Encinitas and its neighboring communities escalated with the traffic, which brought in business and development.

Two of the most notable landmarks in Encinitas are the boathouses on Third streets, the S.S. Encinitas and S.S. Moonlight. Built in 1928 by Miles Kellogg from scrap lumber and a wonderful imagination, they became a curiosity for residents and travelers

alike. They continue in their popularity and are some of the most photographed buildings in Encinitas to date.^{xviii}

As in many towns, the centerpiece of culture and entertainment was the theatre. The La Paloma opened in February 11, 1928 with much fanfare and celebrity appearance by Mary Pickford.

Two auto camps were built, first the McClung Auto Court in 1928, near the civic center, and the following year the Blue Goose Auto Court was constructed.

By 1930 the population of Encinitas was nearly 1500. The town had a weekly newspaper, the *Encinitas Coast Dispatch*.

In 1934, the highway from Encinitas to Oceanside was one of the first to be marked with center lines, two parallel white stripes with a four-inch black center, dividing the four-lane road. "This marking is to be standard on all four-lane traffic highways throughout the state."^{xix}

Another famous landmark along the 101 Highway is Swami's, an affectionate name given by surfers. The Self-Realization Fellowship was founded in 1937 and is another interesting curiosity along the coast route.

In August of 1936 the State approved plans to widen the coast highway to three lanes from San Diego to Oceanside. \$279,221 was awarded for improving and widening the road from Encinitas to Del Mar.^{xx}

In the 1937 Encinitas planned a "highway festival" or street fair and flower show to celebrate the widening of Highway 101 through town. Flowers will be displayed in the stores and wherever possible, canopies will be stretched across the sidewalks and flower booths arranged along the boulevard. To encourage competition among the florists and home gardeners prizes will be offered. The festivities would "include various entertainments in the week ending with a big street dance on the last evening of the celebration."^{xxi}

Cardiff

Just north of Del Mar is the town of Cardiff-By the Sea. Named after Cardiff, England, the small beach town has English street names such as Manchester and Birmingham. Originally part of the San Dieguito Rancho, Cardiff was laid out as a subdivision by J. Frank Cullen and the town's first school house was named after him.

By 1915 Mariano San Clemente opened a grocery store and was appointed postmaster of the sleepy little beach town. His father-in-law, George Beech operated the "House by the Side of the Road" which was a favorite for motorists and famous for its steak and lobster dinners. Mrs. Beech's specialty was her pies. Just north of George's, stood a 300 foot wooden pier, which washed out in 1919.

In 1920 the population was just 150 but 1930 it was listed at 450. It boasted of a church, three hotels and one auto camp. Recreation included tennis, surf bathing and fishing.

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- ⁱ From the "*History of San Diego County*", published by The San Diego Press Club, San Diego, 1936, Carl H. Heilbron, Editor in Chief, pages 334-337
- ⁱⁱ *North 101 Corridor Specific Plan* (Encinitas)
- ⁱⁱⁱ From the "*History of San Diego County*", published by The San Diego Press Club, San Diego, 1936, Carl H. Heilbron, Editor in Chief, pages 334-337
- ^{iv} From the "*History of San Diego County*", published by The San Diego Press Club, San Diego, 1936, Carl H. Heilbron, Editor in Chief, pages 334-337
- ^v *Encinitas, the Poinsettia Capital of the World*, Beth Stallings, May 20, 1962
- ^{vi} From the "*History of San Diego County*", published by The San Diego Press Club, San Diego, 1936, Carl H. Heilbron, Editor in Chief, pages 334-337
- ^{vii} *Oceanside Blade*, Saturday, February 3, 1912, "State Commission Orders Survey Made"
- ^{viii} *Oceanside Blade*, Saturday, February 24, 1912 "State Road Surveys"
- ^{ix} *Oceanside Blade*, Saturday, February 22, 1913 "San Diego Bankers To Finance Highway"
- ^x *Oceanside Blade*, February 2, 1918
- ^{xi} *Oceanside Blade*, Saturday, May 31, 1913 "Contract Let For State Road From Encinitas To Oceanside"
- ^{xii} *Oceanside Blade*, Saturday, July 26, 1913 "Work Begins On State Highway From Encinitas To Oceanside"
- ^{xiii} *Oceanside Blade*, Saturday, November 8, 1913, "Progress of State Highway"
- ^{xiv} *North 101 Corridor Specific Plan* (Encinitas)
- ^{xv} *Oceanside Blade*, November 22, 1923 "Soon To Start On Highway"
- ^{xvi} *Oceanside Blade*, March 20, 1924, "Encinitas"
- ^{xvii} *California Highways*, January 1925
- ^{xviii} www.encinitas101.com
- ^{xix} *San Diego Union*, November 18, 1934 "Highway Open To Autos"
- ^{xx} *San Diego Sun*, August 20, 1936, "S.D.-Oceanside 3-Lane Paving Contract Let"
- ^{xxi} *San Diego Union*, March 29, 1937 "Encinitas Plans Highway Festival"