



# Historic Context Statement

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## San Ysidro

San Diego, CA

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California Office of Historic Preservation

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## I. Introduction

### Purpose

In June 2009 the City of San Diego received a grant through the Certified Local Government (CLG) program to prepare a reconnaissance level survey for the community of San Ysidro. The City prepared the historic context statement and contracted with Page & Turnbull for the field work and preparation of the survey report. The survey was undertaken in support of the San Ysidro Community Plan Update scheduled to be completed by the City Planning & Community Investment Department in 2012. The survey will be used as background information for the Historic Preservation Element of the community plan, and will be used by the City, the public, consultants, and other interested parties to identify significant historic resources within San Ysidro.

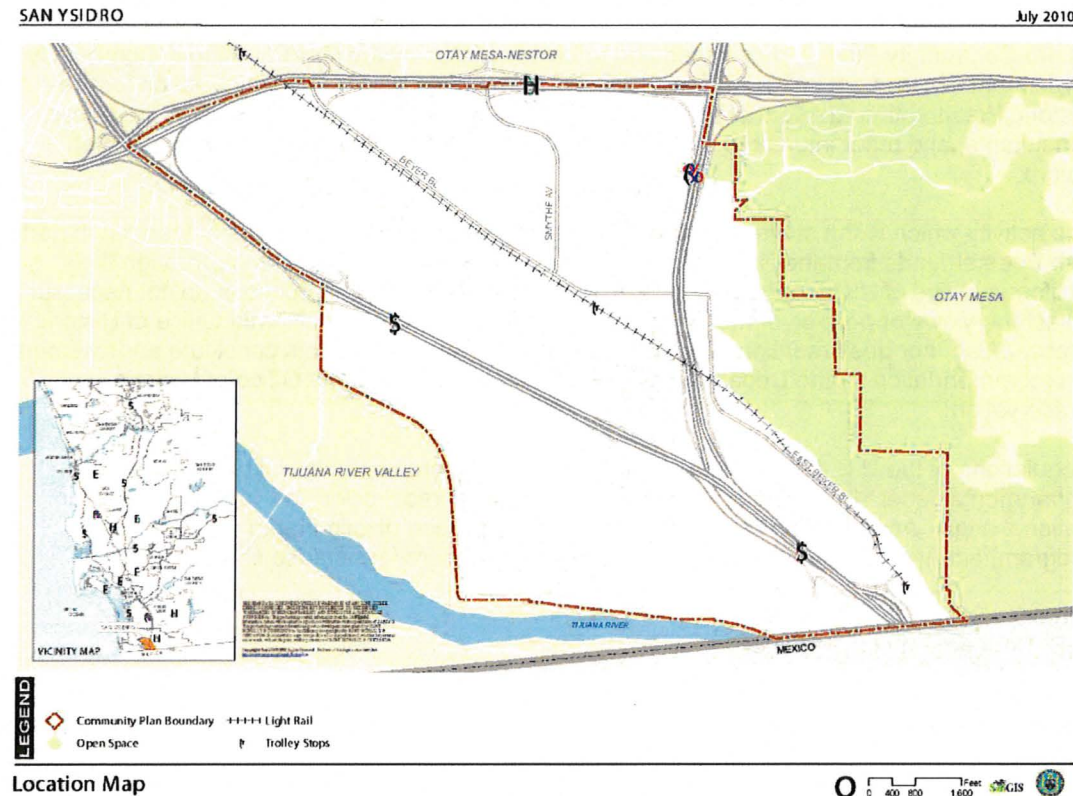
The activity which is the subject of this context statement and survey has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the California Office of Historic Preservation. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the California Office of Historic Preservation, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the California Office of Historic Preservation.

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## Definition of Geographical Area

This context statement addresses the community of San Ysidro, located in the City of San Diego. San Ysidro is located adjacent to the U.S./Mexico border and includes approximately 1,863 acres. San Ysidro is bounded by I-905 to the north, the Tijuana River Valley to the west, the Otay Mesa community to the east, and the international border with Mexico to the south (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. San Ysidro outlined in Red  
with City Boundaries**  
(Source: City of San Diego, July 2010)

## Research Design and Methodology

Investigations for the historic context statement included archival research and field work to define property types. The historic context statement is organized chronologically, with sections that correspond to major periods in San Ysidro's history. The organization of these sections was based on significant events in San Ysidro's history such as the formation of Little Landers and annexation to the City of San Diego. The document follows:

- *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Preservation Planning;*
- *National Register Bulletin No. 15 - How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation;*
- *National Register Bulletin No. 16B - How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form; and*



- *National Register Bulletin 24 Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning.*<sup>1</sup>

Archival research included an examination of various documents at local repositories regarding the history of San Ysidro. Primary sources reviewed include street maps, subdivision maps, newspaper articles, and historic photographs. Secondary sources included books, journals, periodicals, historic resource reports, previous survey reports, and internet sources. In addition, oral interviews were conducted with select members of the San Ysidro and San Diego community, based upon recommendations offered by the City of San Diego Planning Department.

## How to Use This Document

The San Ysidro Historic Context Statement identifies development patterns and significant properties in the area. The document is organized as follows:

- **Section 1. Introduction** provides an introduction to the document and definition of geographic boundaries
- **Section II. Existing Surveys, Studies & Reports** summarizes previous historic resource survey work in the San Ysidro survey area.
- **Section III. Guidelines for Evaluation** provides a definition of each of the major property types found in the survey area (residential, commercial, civic/institutional and industrial), and guidelines to evaluate the significance and integrity of these properties.
- **Section IV. Historic Context** includes a narrative of the area's developmental history. This history is broken into five periods which are defined by events, themes, and development trends. Property types associated with each of the five periods are identified and analyzed. Analysis includes an architectural description, a list of character-defining features, an evaluation of historic significance, and a summary of integrity considerations.
- **Section V. Conclusions & Recommendations** provides a summary of the findings of the historic context and recommendations for future work.

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<sup>1</sup> The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Preservation Planning can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/pad/PlngStds/index.htm#std1>. The National Register Bulletins can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins.htm>.



## II. Existing Surveys, Studies & Reports

A number of prior surveys were conducted within the boundaries of the San Ysidro survey area. The following section identifies which surveys and inventories are on file with the City of San Diego Planning Department.

### 1989 Survey

The City of San Diego surveyed an area of the community of San Ysidro in 1989. The survey area was selected by the R/UDAT (Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team) based on recommendations made in a study completed in 1987. The survey focused on the area referred to as "El Pueblito Viejo" and was bounded by Beyer Boulevard on the north, both sides of San Ysidro Boulevard on the south, both sides of Smythe Avenue on the west, and to East Beyer Boulevard on the east. In addition, El Toreador Motel and the International Building were included in the 1989 survey. Of the 128 buildings surveyed in 1989, four were found to be potentially eligible for the National Register, two were found to be potentially eligible for the California Register, and twenty-four were found to be eligible for the San Diego Register.

### San Diego Historic Register

The San Diego Historic Register is the City of San Diego's official register of locally-designated historic resources, which are designated by the San Diego Historical Resources Board. The 1989 Survey covered San Ysidro's central historic core via an intensive-level survey. Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) forms were completed for all buildings in the 1989 Survey area, and these forms included basic descriptive information. City staff selected twenty-seven of the buildings for intensive research and more information regarding the significance of these structures can be found on the HRI forms.

Three buildings in San Ysidro are listed on the San Diego Historic Register. This includes the following:

- HRB #236, El Toreador Motel, 631 San Ysidro Boulevard
- HRB #451, San Ysidro Public Library, 101-105 San Ysidro Boulevard
- HRB #820, Harry and Amanda Rundell House, 123 East Seaward Avenue

In addition, the U.S. Custom House located on the U.S./Mexico border is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

### III. Guidelines for Evaluation

The following section reviews themes significant to the developmental history of San Ysidro, and defines major property types which are representative of these themes. For each property type, the forms, styles, construction types, and significance are described. The section concludes with general guidelines for evaluating each property type for the national, state, and local historical registers.

#### Summary of Significant Themes

This document divides the history of San Ysidro from pre-history to the present into five time periods or eras based on important events and development trends:

- Pre-History and Spanish Period (pre-1800 – 1822)
- Rancho Period and Early Border History (1822 – 1908)
- An Agricultural Community (1906 – 1964)
- Development of a Border Town (1916 – 1956)
- Annexation to the City of San Diego (1957 – Present)

Within each era, the following themes are discussed relative to the growth and evolution of the built environment in San Ysidro:

- Residential Development
- Commercial Development
- Institutional and Government Development

#### Definition of Property Types

In San Ysidro, the vast majority of the development is residential and includes primarily single-family dwellings. Examples of multiple-family dwellings consist of one-story duplexes, one-story bungalow courts, and two-story apartment buildings. Commercial uses are primarily relegated to San Ysidro Boulevard. Institutional properties include churches, a public library, and civic auditorium.

The town's park, located between East Park and West Park avenues, is San Ysidro's only major landscape feature that is not associated with a specific individual property. The neighborhood is characterized by combination of street grid and curving streets with no notable monuments or street furniture, bridges, or linear features.

#### Residential Properties

##### Single-Family Dwellings

Buildings designed as single-family dwellings are the primary building type found throughout San Ysidro. Most of these dwellings, built between 1909 and 1950, represent small working-class and middle-class homes. Houses constructed between 1950 and 1969 are also present, with a majority located in the northern portion of the planning area. Single-family houses in San Ysidro represent a range of sizes, architectural styles, and construction dates. Many in San Ysidro tend to be rendered in styles ranging from Vernacular and Craftsman to Mid-Century Ranch. In most cases, they are one story in height, of wood-frame construction, and exhibit little to moderate detailing and ornamentation. Single-family residences are most easily distinguished by their single primary entrance. This feature sets single-family dwellings apart from apartment buildings or duplex dwellings, which feature a separate entry for each residential unit within the building.



### **Multiple-Family Dwellings**

Less common than single-family residences, a few properties in the survey area were purpose-built as multiple-family residences taking the form of duplexes, bungalow courts, and apartment buildings. The relative scarcity of multiple-family dwellings is likely due to the rural nature and relatively slow growth of San Ysidro up to the mid-twentieth century. A duplex consists of two residential units arranged side-by-side within a single building. A duplex is usually one story in height, with one residential unit occupying all of the stories on each side of the building. Bungalow courts are groupings of fully- or semi-detached units arranged in parallel rows or a U-shaped configuration facing a central drive or courtyard. Apartment buildings are typically two stories in height, and feature one or more entrances to interior hallways, which lead to doors for each unit. Like single-family houses, multiple-family dwellings can exhibit any number of architectural styles, forms, construction types and materials. Many in San Ysidro tend to be rendered in styles ranging from Vernacular to Mission Revival and Contemporary styles.

### **Significance of Residential Buildings**

Residential buildings in San Ysidro can be considered very significant, as they directly reflect the patterns of development and the socio-economic conditions of the town's most influential historic periods. Residential properties can be significant as individual resources or as a district.

## **Commercial Properties**

Historic commercial development in San Ysidro occurred primarily along San Ysidro Boulevard. The historic commercial buildings in the area exhibit a divergent variety of physical traits, but can be categorized as one- to two-story buildings. Many were constructed in the 1920s, and feature Spanish Eclectic style or other commercial style characteristics popular during that era.

### **Significance of Commercial Buildings**

Commercial buildings are significant for their role in providing goods and services to a growing community. Historic commercial properties in San Ysidro reflect various periods in the area's history. They are capable of conveying the needs and activities of San Ysidro's residents, as well as patterns of development in the town.

## **Institutional and Government Properties**

San Ysidro has few historic civic or institutional properties. In total, the institutional and government properties include: two churches, a public library, and a civic auditorium. The two churches are Comunidad Cristiana Torre Fuerte (formerly Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church) at 114 W. Hall Avenue (constructed in 1927), and the Daniel F. Romero Center for Border Ministries (formerly the San Ysidro Community Church) at 173 W. Hall Avenue (constructed in 1924). These churches are designed in the Mission Revival style. Both are relatively small buildings situated on residential-size parcels and have simple designs.

### **Significance of Institutional and Government Properties**

Civic and institutional buildings are likely to have significance under the themes of development and growth identified in this context statement because they represent the demographics of the neighborhood/community. Churches are often long-standing institutions and are important factors in the city's cultural and social activities. San Ysidro was historically dominated by residential uses, and institutions like the two churches, library, and civic auditorium represent the town's religious, social and cultural identity; providing common touchstones for many residents of San Ysidro.

## Evaluation Criteria

The following discussion of significance and integrity of the identified property types provides the basis for evaluations of resources located in San Ysidro. It is important to note that each property is unique; therefore significance and integrity evaluation must be conducted on a case-by-case basis. These guidelines should be implemented as an overlay to the particular facts and circumstances of each individual resource or district.

### National Register of Historic Places & California Register of Historical Resources

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the nation's most comprehensive inventory of historic resources. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service and includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level. Typically, resources over fifty years of age are eligible for listing in the National Register if they meet any one of the four criteria of significance (A through D) and if they sufficiently retain historic integrity. However, resources under fifty years of age can be determined eligible if it can be demonstrated that they are of "exceptional importance," or if they are contributors to a potential historic district. National Register criteria are defined in depth in *National Register Bulletin Number 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. The California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) follows nearly identical guidelines to those used by the NRHP, but identifies the Criteria for Evaluation numerically.

The four basic criteria under which a structure, site, building, district, or object can be considered eligible for listing in the National or California registers are:

<i>NRHP Criteria</i>	<i>CRHR Criteria</i>
A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or	1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States
B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past	2. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; or
C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.	3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method or construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values.
D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. <sup>2</sup>	4. Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

A resource can be considered significant to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture on a national, state, or local level.

<sup>2</sup> Any archaeological artifact found on a property in San Ysidro has the potential to yield knowledge of history and could therefore prove significant under this criterion. However, analysis under this criterion is beyond the scope of this report.

Properties significant under these criteria would also likely be eligible for local listing in the City of San Diego Register.

### **City of San Diego Register**

Although based on NRHP and CRHR criteria, the City of San Diego designation criteria differ in order and quantity from the federal and state registers. The Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual (a supplement to the Municipal Code) states that any improvement, building, structure, sign, interior element, fixture, feature, site, place, district or object may be designated as historical by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board (HRB) if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- A. Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.
- B. Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.
- C. Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.
- D. Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.
- E. Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the NRHP of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the California State Office of Historic Preservation for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources.
- F. Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.

In addition to meeting one or more of the above criteria, a City of San Diego Register-eligible property must also retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. Although the City's municipal code does use a 45 year threshold to review properties which may be adversely impacted by development, a property need not be 45 years of age to be eligible for listing in the City's register. In addition, the recently adopted *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria* provide guidance on the application of local designation criteria.

Though the order and quantity of the San Diego criteria differ from the NRHP and California CRHR, the following parallel relationships can be established:



NRHP and CRHR Criteria	San Diego (HRB) Criteria
Criterion A/Criterion 1	HRB Criterion A and B (Events)
Criterion B/Criterion 2	HRB Criterion B (Persons)
Criterion C/Criterion 3	HRB Criteria C and D
Criterion D/Criterion 4 <sup>3</sup>	HRB Criterion A (Archaeology)

HRB Criterion A parallels the NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1 as it refers to historic events, but stands apart as a special element of the City's, a community's, or a neighborhood's historical, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping, or architectural development. As stated in the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria* adopted by the City's HRB, "Special elements of development refer to a resource that is distinct among others of its kind or that surpass the usual in significance." When Criterion A is applied to archaeological resources, it closely aligns with NRHP Criterion D or CRHR Criteria 4. Therefore, this document will consider HRB Criterion A separately from the other NRHP/CRHR criterion within the registration requirements for each property type.

HRB Criterion E is only applied to properties determined eligible for the NRHP or CRHR; therefore, registration requirements related to this criterion are not necessary. In addition, HRB Criterion F is applied to contributors in historic districts, but the district is determined eligible under one of the other criteria (HRB A-D); therefore registration requirements are not necessary.

## Integrity

In addition to qualifying for listing under at least one of the NRHP/California Register criteria, a property must be shown to have sufficient historic integrity. The concept of integrity is essential to identifying the important physical characteristics of historic resources and in evaluating adverse changes to them. Integrity is defined as "the authenticity of an historic resource's physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance."<sup>4</sup> The same seven variables or aspects that define integrity—location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association—are used to evaluate a resource's eligibility for listing in the NRHP and/or the California Register. According to the *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, these seven characteristics are defined as follows:

- Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. The original location of a property, complemented by its setting, is required to express the property's integrity of location.
- Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plans, space, structure and style of the property. Features which must be in place to express a property's integrity of design are its form, massing, construction method, architectural style, and architectural details (including fenestration pattern).
- Setting addresses the physical environment of the historic property inclusive of the landscape and spatial relationships of the building(s). Features which must be in place to express a property's integrity of setting are its location, relationship to the street, and intact surroundings (i.e. neighborhood or rural).

<sup>3</sup> NRHP Criterion D and CRHR Criterion 4 typically apply to archaeological resources. The prehistoric context of San Ysidro will be addressed in a separate document and analysis under this criterion will be addressed at that time.

<sup>4</sup> California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistant Series No. 7, How to Nominate a Resource to the California Register of Historic Resources* (Sacramento, CA: California Office of State Publishing, 4 September 2001) 11.

- Materials refer to the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern of configuration to form the historic property. Features which must be in place to express a property's integrity of materials are its construction method and architectural details.
- Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history. Features which must be in place to express a property's integrity of workmanship are its construction method and architectural details.
- Feeling is the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. Features which must be in place to express a property's integrity of feeling are its overall design quality, which may include form, massing, architectural style, architectural details, and surroundings.
- Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. Features which must be in place to express a property's integrity of association are its use and its overall design quality.

For evaluating whether a building conveys its historic significance, a resource either possesses integrity or it does not. However, gradations of integrity are sometimes helpful for city planning purposes; consequently, the following information may be of use.

For planning purposes, a property that has *exceptional integrity* will generally retain all of its character-defining features, and will rate highly in all aspects of integrity. A property with exceptional integrity will have undergone few or no alterations since its original construction, and will not have been moved from its original location. In the case of a property associated with a significant person, retention of the physical features that convey the property's association with that person is critical. A property with exceptional significance must also retain all features from the period when it was associated with a significant person (including later alterations). Properties with exceptional significance should be given high priority in preservation planning efforts.

Generally, a property that has *sufficient integrity* for listing in the national, state, or local historical register will retain a majority of its character-defining features, and will retain enough aspects of integrity to convey its significance. The aspects of integrity necessary depend on the reason the property is significant. Increased age and rarity of the property type may lower the threshold required for sufficient integrity. High priority is typically placed on integrity of design, materials, and workmanship for properties significant under Criterion C/3, while for properties significant under Criterion A/1 or B/2, these aspects are only necessary to the extent that they help the property convey integrity of feeling and/or association. Similarly, integrity of location and setting are crucial for properties significant under Criterion A/1, but are typically less important for properties significant under Criterion B/2 or C/3. For properties significant under all criteria, it is possible for some materials to be replaced without drastically affecting integrity of design, as long as these alterations are subordinate to the overall character of the building. For example, minor alterations such as window replacement may be acceptable in residential districts, but not in an individual property designed by a master architect.

## IV. Historic Context

This section provides a discussion of each historic period, theme, and property type relative to broad patterns of city development in San Ysidro.

Prior to European settlement, the San Ysidro region was inhabited by the Kumeyaay (also known as Diegueño) Native Americans. The valleys and mesas of the Tijuana River Valley including the area of San Ysidro were relatively undisturbed throughout the Spanish period (1769-1822). Most of San Diego was placed under the jurisdiction of the Mission San Diego de Alcalá and due to its distance from the pueblo and mission, San Ysidro remained undeveloped. The Mexican period (1822-1846) would bring the first significant developments to the area of San Ysidro through the Mexican land grant system.

No architectural resources are known to exist from San Ysidro's early Native American and Spanish periods. However, archaeological artifacts discovered from this period are likely to yield information about the life and culture of the Kumeyaay, and are thus assumed to be significant under Criterion D (Information Potential).<sup>5</sup>

### Rancho Period and Early Border History (1822 – 1908)

#### Residential, Commercial, and Transportation Development

##### **Ranchos**

After Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1822, San Diego became part of the Mexican Republic. The Mexican government began issuing land grants in the early 1820s and created a system of large agricultural estates or ranchos. In 1829 Santiago Arguello Moraga, commandant of the Presidio of San Diego received Rancho Tia Juana, a 10,000 acre rancho located in the vicinity of present day Tijuana and San Ysidro.<sup>6</sup> Arguello's son, Emigdio acquired the adjacent Rancho Melijo in 1833. Rancho Melijo has been described as "bounded by Rancho National of San Diego, the Rancho of Tijuana, the hill range of San Antonio and the road leading to Lower California."<sup>7</sup> The Arguellos constructed an adobe house known as La Punta in 1834 or 1835 on Rancho Melijo; this was one of the only structures in the area until the late 1800s.<sup>8</sup> Other than the ranchos, there was no development in the area until after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago in 1848 which established the US/Mexican border south of San Ysidro.

By the mid 1860s, temporary markers were erected at 258 locations across the 1,200 mile border between Brownsville, Texas and San Diego.<sup>9</sup> The border would remain unfenced until 1910 when a barb wire fence with steel posts was installed from the coast to Otay Mountain. In 1871, the first officers were assigned to patrol the U.S. side of the border in San Ysidro. Two years later in 1873, the first border customs building (no longer extant) in San Ysidro was built on the Mexican side of the border.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The analysis of resources under Criterion D is beyond the scope of this report.

<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Hughes, CWH & Associates, "An Historical Overview: Border Field and Its Environs, 1769-1890" (Report prepared for California Parks and Recreation Department, San Diego Coast District), January 2009, 13. The location of Rancho Tijuana has been difficult to confirm as the original documents have not been found. There are documents that describe a ranch in the vicinity of San Ysidro and have led scholars to believe a ranch house was located directly on the U.S./Mexico border.

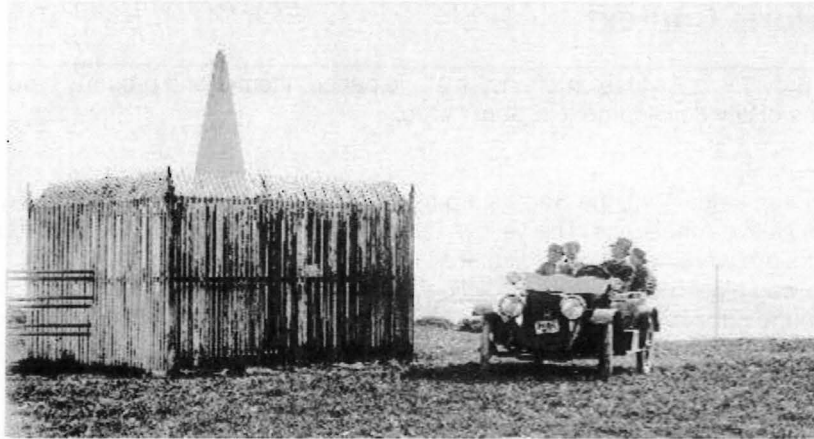
<sup>7</sup> Hughes, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Judy Berryman and Linda Roth, Roth and Associates, "San Ysidro Historic Resources Survey" (Report prepared for the City of San Diego Planning Department), August 1989, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Berryman and Roth, 7.





Automobile parked near a US-Mexico boundary marker, 16 April 1913.  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

### ***California Southern Railroad and Tia Juana City***

In 1885, the arrival of the California Southern Railroad connected San Diego with the transcontinental Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe line in Barstow. The railroad spurred the "Great Boom" in San Diego between 1885 and 1887, wherein the city experienced a population increase unparalleled in its history. Homesteads began to spring up along the rail line including in the area of San Ysidro. In addition, the number of subdivisions filed across the City during this period increased exponentially.<sup>11</sup> The area that is now San Ysidro was part of this boom in subdivisions, as the real estate firm of Hart and Stern developed Tia Juana City on the U.S. side of the border in 1887. The town consisted of a single street of wood frame buildings and a few scattered houses. Shortly after it was settled, Tia Juana City had a drug store, saloon, hotel, and boot shop.<sup>12</sup> As one city developed on the U.S. side of the border, another city also called Tijuana developed on the Mexican side of the border. None of the buildings from Tia Juana City remain; the site is now occupied by the Las Americas Premium Outlets, south of San Ysidro on the west side of Interstate 5 and immediately adjacent to the Mexican border.



Tia Juana City, 1887.

(Source: Ray Brandes, *San Diego: An Illustrated History* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981) 86).

### ***Commercial Development and Tourism***

Along with an upswing in the real estate market, tourists visiting San Diego traveled through San Ysidro on their way to Tijuana. The mineral baths at the Tijuana Hot Springs Hotel at Agua Caliente was only a few miles south of the border and was a main attraction.<sup>13</sup> Other activities

<sup>11</sup> Wendy Tinsley, "How Cities Grow: A History of San Diego's Neighborhood Development Patterns: 1769-1955" (master's thesis, San Diego State University, 2003), 10.

<sup>12</sup> "Tia Juana," *Otay Press*, March 29, 1888. San Diego Historical Society subject files.

<sup>13</sup> Sinéad Ní Ghabháin and Sarah Stringer-Bowsher, ASM Affiliates, Inc., "San Ysidro Port of Entry Cultural and Historical Resource Inventory and Evaluation" (Report prepared for U.S. General Services Administration), July 2009, 14.

that brought tourists across the border included horse races, bullfights, cockfights, and native dances.<sup>14</sup> The tourist trade stimulated development in San Ysidro and by 1889, there were twenty-one buildings, a running spring, and a cemetery between Tia Juana on the U.S. side of the border and Tijuana on the Mexico side of the border. Two years later there were thirty to forty homes in Tia Juana.

A flood in 1891 washed out twenty-five of those homes forcing the settlers who remained to move to higher ground.<sup>15</sup> Another flood in 1895 devastated the community and caused more damage than the flood of 1891.<sup>16</sup> Following the flood of 1895, settlers rebuilt their homes and re-established their ranches on higher ground. Tia Juana City on the U.S. side of the border was not immediately rebuilt, though the location was later redeveloped as San Ysidro (named by George Smythe, leader of the Little Landers Colony, in 1909). Meanwhile, the town on the Mexico side of the border would become the City of Tijuana. One of the earliest settlers, George Belcher and his family, settled in what was to become San Ysidro and constructed their home around this time.<sup>17</sup> Belcher's land and home would eventually become the headquarters for Little Landers Colony in the next phase of town's development, the house functioning as the San Ysidro Hotel for newcomers working to build their houses.

### **Summary**

The Ranch Period and Early Border History (1822 – 1908) is important as the earliest period of Anglo settlement in the San Ysidro area, including the brief existence of the first American town (Tia Juana City) on the north side of the Tijuana River, as well as establishment of the first ranches. Of these ranches, the Belcher homestead is the oldest surviving building in San Ysidro, and continued to be used during the next period of development.

### **Associated Property Types**

The only known property to have survived from the rancho period of San Ysidro's history is the Belcher farmhouse located at 133 San Ysidro Boulevard. As no other buildings from the period remain, it is presumed that other residential wood-frame structures would have been built in addition to adobe structures. There may have also been small wood-frame commercial buildings and sheds or other supporting agricultural structures like water storage; however none of these appear to have survived. Other property types that no longer appear to exist include border markers. Limited information from this period exists, but it appears that the landscape was minimally altered during this ranching period. The town's streets were not platted until a later date. No information exists to indicate whether the location of Tia Juana City's small commercial strip coincides with San Ysidro's present day commercial corridor, San Ysidro Boulevard.<sup>18</sup>

### **Residential**

#### **Architectural Description: Residential**

The only known property to have survived from the rancho period of San Ysidro's history is the Belcher family home located on San Ysidro Boulevard. Historic photos (see page 19) indicate the two-story building originally was a vernacular farmhouse that featured wood lap siding and vertical divided light windows. In addition, a central, partial porch along the south façade was covered by a flat roof supported with simple wood posts. Pairs of windows flanked both sides of the porch on the first and second stories. A single window at the second story was centered above the porch. Historic photos also indicate a large lawn and wood fence were located on the south side of the building where San Ysidro Boulevard currently is located.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence D. Taylor, "The Wild Frontier Moves South: U.S. Entrepreneurs and the Growth of Tijuana's Vice Industry, 1908-1935," *The Journal of San Diego History* 48, no. 3 (2002): 206.

<sup>15</sup> Berryman and Roth, 7.

<sup>16</sup> "Lost in 1885 flood border Marker recovered", *Star News*, May 6, 1979. San Diego Historical Society subject files.

<sup>17</sup> Berryman and Roth, 7. The exact construction date of the Belcher home is not known. Some documentation indicates it could have been built as early as 1895; other documentation indicates a 1901 date of construction.

<sup>18</sup> No detailed maps were uncovered of Tia Juana City.



The building retained its wood lap siding and windows in 1989 at the time of the last San Ysidro survey. However, since the last survey, the building has been altered. Windows have been replaced with aluminum vertical sliders and the building has been covered with a rough stucco finish. It is not known if the wood lap siding is present under the stucco. The building does retain its massing and form, including the side gable roof and south porch. Landscaping has been completely altered from a large open plot of land to a small lot hemmed in by San Ysidro Boulevard and a tall metal fence to the south, and commercial buildings to the east and west.

The presence of the Belcher home did shape later landscape features and land-use patterns. Because the ranch property was purchased by the Little Landers colony in the early twentieth century and the house was used as the colony's headquarters and hotel, San Ysidro's residential street plan was developed on former ranch land close by. Also, the town's primary commercial corridor, San Ysidro Boulevard, was constructed to run directly in front of the house, which was later used as a hotel and has since been used as a boarding house for many years.



133 San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1895-1901. Originally the Belcher family home later converted to the San Ysidro Hotel.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, January 2010)

**Character-Defining Features: Residential**

Given only one property has been identified to be associated with this theme, the following character-defining features have been identified:

- Vernacular style
- Wood-frame construction
- Location on former rancho and homestead lands
- Two-story height
- Side-gable roof
- Front porch
- Brick chimneys

**Significance: Residential**

Single-family residential properties from the Rancho and Early Border period (1822 – 1908) are significant because of their early association with the history of San Ysidro, as well as their rarity.

NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Event)

Given the rarity of resources, should a residence (or commercial building, shed, or other agricultural building) dating to the rancho period or homesteading era be located, it is significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B for its association with the development of San Ysidro as a community for homesteaders and ranchers in the early 20th century. However, this is rather unlikely, since a thorough survey of the planning area has been conducted and the only known resource is the Belcher house. The Belcher farmhouse may be considered significant at the local or regional level for its association with the early homesteading and ranching history in San Ysidro. In addition, should any objects such as border markers be found to be associated with the establishment of the border these may be eligible under this criterion at the local and state levels. It is unlikely that these objects would be found significant at the national level.

NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Person)

A residence or structure may be eligible under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual from the early rancho or homesteading period of San Ysidro. Due to the rarity of this property type, a property associated with a prominent individual will likely be the only remaining example of the person's achievements, and therefore would be significant at the local or regional level.

NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)

Due to the rarity of resources from the rancho period, a residence or structure from this period may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of a type, period, or method of construction. It is unlikely that any adobe or wood-frame building from this period will be discovered, as the only known building to have survived is the Belcher farmhouse. The adobe built by the Arguellos was demolished in 1953 during construction of Interstate 5. It is unlikely that a master architect, builder, designer, or engineer worked on a residence in San Ysidro during the rancho period, but should a resource be found it would likely be eligible as a rare example of a designed property.

HRB Criterion A

A residence dating to the rancho period such as the Belcher farmhouse may be eligible under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical development of San Ysidro. As the oldest building in San Ysidro, the building reflects the early homesteading era of San Ysidro's history and is a significant landmark in the community.

Integrity Considerations: Residential

A residential property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers. A residential building from the rancho and homesteading period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features, including vernacular style, wood-frame construction, location on former rancho and homestead land, two-story height, side-gable roof, front porch, and brick chimneys.

Given the rarity of the property type, a property need not retain all of its character-defining features. A property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (event) should retain integrity of location, design and association, at a minimum. A lower level of integrity for setting would be acceptable as the agricultural setting of San Ysidro has changed since this very early period.

A residence significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (person) should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric and related function that conveys the connection to the individual is critical. Later alterations may not affect the integrity of properties significant under this criterion if the significant person was still connected to the property when the alterations were completed.

A residence significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. Due to the rarity of the property type, alterations may be acceptable (replacement of windows or small additions) as long as the property retains its essential features and overall form.

A property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.



## An Agricultural Community (1909 – 1964)

Following the floods of the late 19th century, settlers re-established their homesteads and the small town that had started to develop along the U.S./Mexico border. The small town became an agricultural community in the model of the Country Life Movement, and was known as the Little Landers' Colony No. 1 (Little Landers) at San Ysidro. The town was named San Ysidro after the original rancho grant along the Tia Juana River Valley, which had been named for the patron saint of farmers. The Little Landers colony struggled in its early years due to the availability of water, but by 1912 the community was well established. Dairies carried on the agricultural business in San Ysidro after the collapse of Little Landers, and maintained a rural belt around the town for a number of years. Agricultural uses continued in San Ysidro after World War II as border traffic in San Ysidro related to tourism and commercial interests increased. The Bracero Program (1942-1964), which was an agreement between the U.S. and Mexican governments that allowed Mexicans to temporarily work in the U.S. on farms and ranches, contributed significantly to cross border traffic during this time.

### Residential, Agricultural, and Community Development

#### *Establishment of Little Landers*

In 1908, William E. Smythe, agricultural reformer, gave a speech at the Garrick Theatre at 6th and B Streets in San Diego, where he announced the opening of the Little Landers Colony within the boundaries of present day San Ysidro.<sup>19</sup> Smythe, a renowned leader of the national reclamation movement and George P. Hall, former Chairman of the California State Board of Horticulture, selected the site of Belcher Ranch in the Tia Juana River Valley as the location for this agrarian community. Little Landers was modeled after Smythe's principles of cooperative farming and agricultural utopian ideals, popular throughout the country in the early 20th century in response to the industrial revolution and cramped conditions of urban living. Smythe's concept included owning a residential town lot and at least an acre of agricultural land. The motto of the settlement – "A Little Land and a Living" espoused the idea that a family could earn a livelihood from cultivating an acre of land.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the proximity of Little Landers to the City of San Diego was emphasized as a market to sell the colony's produce.

Formal incorporation of the Little Landers Corporation occurred on August 1, 1908 and their holdings increased to 550 acres later that year.<sup>21</sup> Smythe purchased 550 acres of the ranch, including 150 acres along the valley floor, 400 acres along the hillside, and the farmhouse itself, for \$15,000 from Belcher. The valley floor contained about 150 acres while 400 acres lay along the adjacent mesas. Lower level lands were valued for their fertile soil and access to water. Streets and parks were marked out by plow furrows and town lots and acres by stakes. Building lots, 50 feet by 120 feet, in the town sold for \$250 and one acre tracts down closer to the river and on the mesas sold from \$350 to \$550 depending on location and soil quality.<sup>22</sup> Just northeast of the old Belcher farmhouse on San Ysidro Boulevard, streets were laid out in a grid pattern with a long rectangular swath of land set aside for a park and civic center amenities. The park was framed by East Park and West Park Avenues, which ran north-south, and bisected by Hall Avenue. Pepper and Cypress Streets were platted parallel to East Park and West Park and functioned as narrow back alleys for the houses facing inward toward the park. Several residential streets paralleled East Park and West Park Avenues, including East and West Olive and Cottonwood, while other streets paralleled Hall Avenue, including Seaward, Sellsway, and Tennie streets. The pattern of small rectangular lots along Hall Avenue was followed on Sellsway

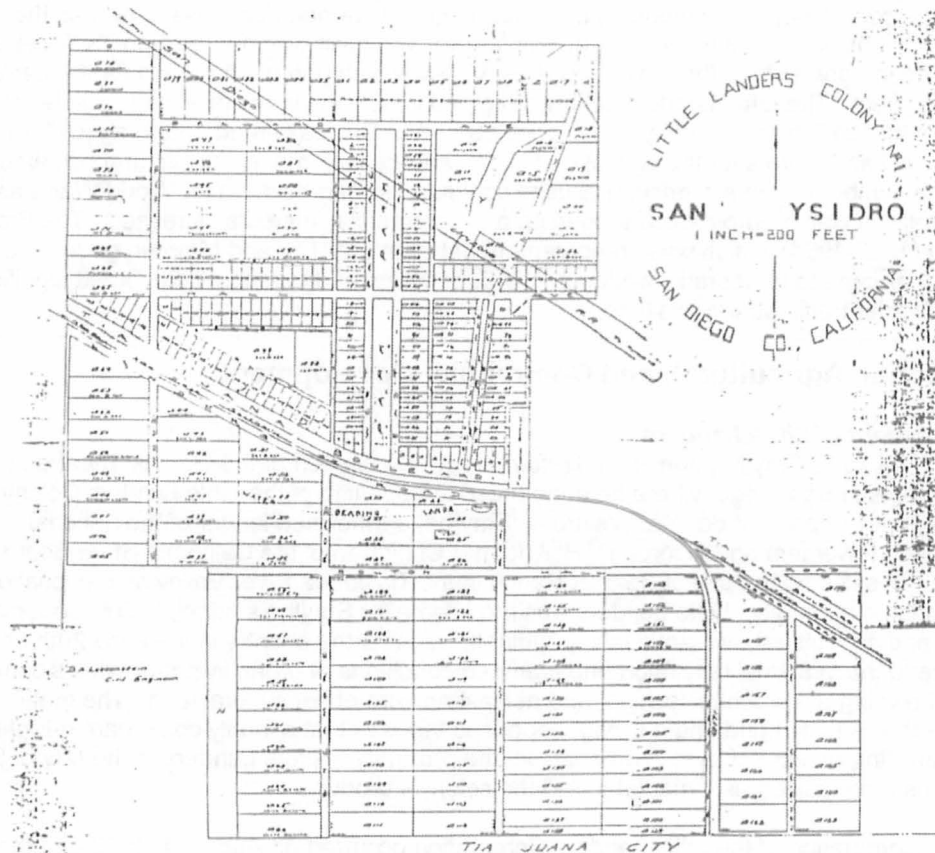
<sup>19</sup> Lawrence B. Lee, "The Little Landers Colony of San Ysidro," *The Journal of San Diego History* 21, no. 1 (1975), <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/75winter/littlelanders.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Lee, <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/75winter/littlelanders.htm>. Berryman and Roth, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Lee, <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/75winter/littlelanders.htm>.

and Smythe Streets, while larger lots developed at the mid-block sections to the north and south of Seaward and between Tennie and Blanche. This street pattern remains extant.



**Little Landers Map of Residential and Agricultural Parcels by Loebenstein 1909.**  
(Source: Judy Berryman and Linda Roth, "San Ysidro Historic Resources Survey,"  
August 1989)

Smythe announced the corporation's plans to grade the area, install sewage and water lines, in addition to constructing park facilities. Within a few weeks of opening day in June 1909, twenty families were living in Little Landers.<sup>23</sup> Many came from the East Coast, where San Ysidro's warm climate and agrarian lifestyle was touted in promotional materials. Though ideally, Smythe's residents would have some knowledge and experience with farming or gardening, the agrarian lifestyle ultimately appealed to a number of aging and retired urban dwellers who hoped to find a quieter and simpler way of life on the Mexican border.

### **Residential Development**

The first official subdivision map (#1174) was recorded by the Little Landers Corporation on 9 April 1909. Early homes constructed in San Ysidro were typically simple wood frame buildings that were neither designed by architects nor built by licensed contractors. From this period through the 1920s and 1930s, designs were often derived from mail-order catalogs, and homes

<sup>23</sup> Berryman and Roth, 10.



varied depending on material availability, the carpenter's skill, and the available funds and personal domestic needs of the individual home owner.<sup>24</sup>

The home of Harold Champ, Smythe's son in law, was one of the more elaborate Craftsman style homes, and has been described as "a frame cottage with a massive cobblestone fireplace and chimney, overhanging eaves, long hall and front porch."<sup>25</sup> The house remains in its original location at 260 Mesa Avenue, on a slight hill overlooking the park and original grid of streets. J.W. Lewis, a contractor, became the general manager for Little Landers. The Smythe family moved to the community and had a house warming on July 4, 1909. Their home was "...a single large room with adjoining tents serving as sleeping rooms and kitchen with covered passageways connecting them."<sup>26</sup> An old ranch adobe (no longer extant) became the headquarters for the company and the Belcher ranch house became the San Ysidro Inn. No documentation has been found that describes alterations that may have been made to the house to convert it into a hotel, though exterior materials appear intact in historic photographs. Conversion of the house to a hotel in 1909 did not immediately precipitate the construction of San Ysidro Boulevard, though a railroad track ran just south of the present-day thoroughfare.



**San Ysidro Hotel (Former Belcher Ranch House) at 133 San Ysidro Blvd, 1909.  
(Source: *The Journal of San Diego History* (Winter 1975, 21:1) 35)**

Initially, settlers of Little Landers were required to purchase a lot in town and an acre of agricultural land. A school, church, and library also opened during the first summer to serve the community.<sup>27</sup> The original school was located on East San Ysidro Boulevard, but is no longer extant.

Early settlers of Little Landers were primarily Anglo-Americans. Indeed, the Little Landers by-laws specified that no lots or acres be sold to "Mexican, Mongolian, or Negroes."<sup>28</sup> However, a couple Mexican Americans did move to the area and established homes around 1910.<sup>29</sup> The Anglo-Americans introduced San Ysidro to the ideals of Craftsman style house design, which were at

<sup>24</sup> Judy Berryman and Linda Roth. "San Ysidro Historic Resources Survey." Report prepared for City of San Diego Planning Department, August 1989.

<sup>25</sup> Lee, <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/75winter/littlelanders.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> "The True Arcadia," manuscript from the San Diego Public Library, n.d.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Wood, "Community Pride Breaks Loose for 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," *Star News*, August 3, 1978.

the peak of popularity at the time and coincided with concepts such as indoor-outdoor living, communing with nature, creating with one's own hands, and exposing natural materials. Mexican-American residents appear to have had little influence on architectural styles or land use patterns during this period, at least upon extant resources.

According to the *San Ysidro 1989 Historic Resources Survey Re-Evaluation*, Interstate 5 (I-5) encroached upon the eastern edge of the original 1908 Little Landers Plan. Based upon this earlier survey, approximately twenty percent of the lots were subdivided into smaller lots than existed in 1908, while another twenty percent were assembled into larger lots. Thus, about half of the 1908 Little Landers Plan is still fully intact.

### **Infrastructure: Irrigation**

Though Little Landers enjoyed success through 1909, by 1910 financial problems and lack of adequate irrigation caused the corporation to go bankrupt. Only thirty-eight families remained in Little Landers by the fall of 1910 and few of the settlers who had purchased land had constructed homes.<sup>30</sup> The greatest difficulty to settlement was the availability of water. While a reservoir was dug at the head of Mesa Avenue and piping was laid, irrigation could not be provided to all settlers.<sup>31</sup> Those who were attempting to farm land on the mesas struggled more than those who had settled down by the Tia Juana River. Thus, the irrigation issue likely discouraged people from purchasing and cultivating land further from the river. In December 1910, the formation of a new corporation, Little Landers, Incorporated, led to the organization of the San Ysidro Irrigation District. With the new corporation, new sales practices were instituted and the requirement to purchase a lot in town plus farm acreage was abandoned.<sup>32</sup> As a result, more people were encouraged to simply purchase a residential lot, which promoted continued development of the platted town sites.

Between 1911 and 1912, the community focused on efforts to create an irrigation district. C.S. Alverson, a former city engineer, designed a new water system that would deliver water to each lot. A pumping plant was built in 1913 at the end of Cottonwood Road. The new system promoted development not only of the agricultural areas down by the river and the residential lots in town, but also the cultivation of the mesas that were previously unserviceable. With a reliable water system, the population of Little Landers increased to three hundred. According to Smythe's promotional article, "Quest of the Fortunate Life," which he wrote for *West Coast Magazine* in June 1913, forty-seven homes were built in 1912.<sup>33</sup> No secondary sources were uncovered that list the locations of all these houses, but city data reveals that extant houses constructed in 1912 are located at 208 East Park Avenue and 123 Seaward Avenue. Based upon estimated construction dates, other extant houses may have been constructed in or around 1912 on Smythe Avenue, East Park and West Park Avenues, Hall Avenue, Pepper Drive, Cottonwood Road, and West Olive Drive. According to this information, the original platted streets with 50 foot by 120 foot lots constituted the primary location for further residential development. The majority of these houses were one story in height (though the house at 123 Seaward Avenue has two stories), of wood-frame construction, and designed in a modest Craftsman or Vernacular bungalow style.

During the next few years, residents of Little Landers continued to work the land and cultivate their acreage down by the Tia Juana River and up in the upper region above the town. They harvested crops such as alfalfa, grain, fruit trees (peaches, lemons, oranges, apricots, and plums), strawberries, guavas, and grapes, and also raised poultry, turkeys, rabbits, ducks, and goats.<sup>34</sup> Residents were not quite self-sustaining, however. Though they ate their own produce, they also sold their surplus crops to city dwellers in San Diego for additional income. Thus, the majority of residents operated as small-time truck farmers on their acre of land. By October 21,

<sup>30</sup> Lee, <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/75winter/littlelanders.htm>.

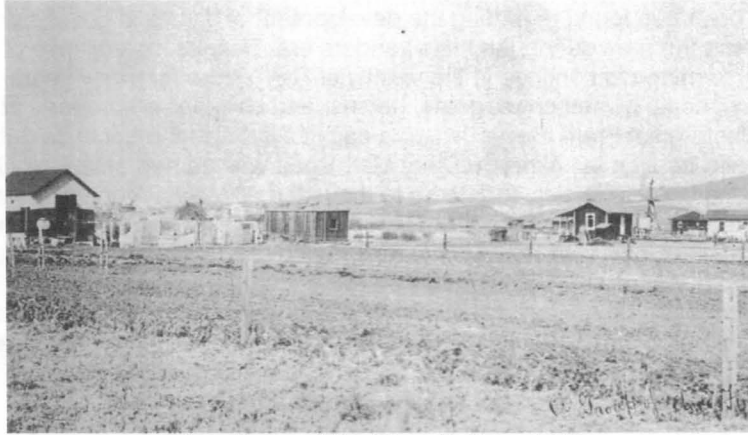
<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

1913, the Little Landers Market was incorporated and sold goods at a store on 6th and B Streets in downtown San Diego and at a cooperative in San Ysidro.<sup>35</sup> Settlers located along the fertile river lands produced an abundance of vegetables, but those on the upper land did not have the same type of fertile soil; therefore, the success of the cooperative was limited and was dissolved by 1915.<sup>36</sup>



**Acre farms at the River Bottom, 1915.**  
(Source: *The Journal of San Diego History* (Winter 1975, 21:1) 33)



**Man on a horse-drawn wagon with produce from the Little Landers Colony, ca. 1915.**  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

The Hatfield Flood of January 18, 1916 brought an end to the community of Little Landers. Twenty-five homes were destroyed along with the pumping plant, cement water mains, and other parts of the water distribution system.<sup>37</sup> It is unlikely that remains of the early water delivery system survive, and the large farming lots south of San Ysidro Boulevard are no longer extant. However, should any pipe fragments be discovered, they would be located in the area between the Tijuana River and San Ysidro Boulevard, or in the original residential neighborhood surrounding the city park.

Refugee camps were set up and relief funds established for the flood victims. Though a new pumping plant was installed to provide water for the mesa dwellers, Little Landers would never recover. The soil on the bottom of the valley floor was waterlogged and could not be cultivated. Residents did try to re-settle the land, but Little Landers Incorporated went bankrupt in 1917. In

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



addition, the growing tourism and gambling industry on the Mexican side of the border ultimately led to a decline of the agricultural character of San Ysidro and a transition to a small border town.

**Agriculture: Dairies**

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, about 250 dairies were located in and around the City of San Diego. People raised dairy cows and traded the milk for produce and other items. Little documentation has been found regarding the development of dairies in San Ysidro, but there were likely a few in the area during the Little Landers era. Despite the collapse of the Little Landers colony, farming did continue in the vicinity of San Ysidro for many years. For example, in the 1920s, many people owned cows, goats, horses, and chickens on property at the outskirts of town. Town philanthropist Frank Beyer owned a dairy called Rancho Lechuza outside the town, though the specific location is unknown. Dairy Mart Road was named after Dairy Mart Dairy, once one of San Diego's biggest dairies and home to thousands of cows. Along with Hages and Golden Arrow dairies in San Diego County, Dairy Mart Dairy delivered milk to homes.<sup>38</sup> A large parcel of land at 1663 Dairy Mart Road contains a house (ca. 1910) and an agricultural building clad in corrugated metal (date unknown). It is possible that this property was part of a former dairy. Dairies carried on the agricultural business in San Ysidro after Little Landers, and maintained a rural belt around the town for a number of years, until much of the land was developed into subdivisions beginning in the 1960s. Today, most of the cows are gone, but the Tijuana River Estuary is home to some farming, stables and open space.



Dairy cows lined up at the feed trough at a San Ysidro dairy farm  
(specific location unknown), 1929.  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

<sup>38</sup> "Valley of Contrasts," Weekend Driver. Website accessed on 23 June 2010 from:  
<http://www.weekenddriver.com/roadtrip/tjvalley/tjvalley.html>



Bales of hay and barn at a San Ysidro dairy farm (specific location unknown), 1929.  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

### ***Agriculture: Bracero Program***

Agricultural uses continued in San Ysidro after World War II as border traffic in San Ysidro increased. One of the largest contributions to the increase in traffic was the Bracero Program (1942-1964). During World War II, there was a sizable drop in the U.S. labor force which caused a shortage across several industries including agriculture. The Bracero Program was an agreement between the U.S. and Mexican governments that allowed Mexicans to temporarily work in the U.S. on farms and ranches. Braceros worked in several states including California, Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico. The first agreement was in July 1942 and stated that Mexican workers were not to displace domestic workers, but only fill shortages. In addition, the workers were to be provided adequate housing and sanitary conditions.<sup>39</sup> The peak year of the program was 1957 when 192,000 workers were brought into the U.S.<sup>40</sup> While an exact count of the Braceros that passed through San Ysidro is not available, border traffic reached 4.5 million in 1945 and 7.5 million in 1948.<sup>41</sup>

Recent survey work has not revealed the presence of a particular property type associated with the Bracero Program. Given the nature of the Braceros' work, it is possible that many of the structures constructed to house them were temporary and have not survived. However, elimination of the Bracero program likely affected the subsequent development of San Ysidro, namely by encouraging Mexican workers to find other arrangements to permanently live in the U.S. The end of the program coincided with an increase in the overall population of Mexican residents in the community.<sup>42</sup>

## **Community and Civic Development**

### ***Civic Park***

While establishing the Little Landers Colony in San Ysidro, George P. Hall, one of the original founders of Little Landers, donated land for the community park and provided for its landscaping. Around 1912, Redwood Hall was built in the park to replace the adobe where business meetings and weekly social events took place.<sup>43</sup> The building was constructed of redwood, as the name suggests. It is unknown who was responsible for constructing the building or what it specifically looked like. As previously discussed, the long rectangular community park is still extant between East Park and West Park Avenues, though Redwood Hall no longer exists. The park is oriented north-south, with San Ysidro Boulevard as its southern border and Hall Avenue bisecting the park

<sup>39</sup> Ernesto Galara, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (Charlotte: McNally & Loftin, Publishers, 1964), 47.

<sup>40</sup> Berryman and Roth, 23.

<sup>41</sup> Ní Ghabhláin and Stringer-Bowsher, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Telephone interview with Michael Freedman, resident and member of San Ysidro Community Planning Group (9 August 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

in an east-west direction. Hall also donated a more than life-sized statue of General Ulysses S. Grant, which stood on a concrete pedestal at the center of the park. The statue and original landscaping are no longer extant. The 3.6 acre linear park is now called San Ysidro Recreation Center.



Community Park and statue donated by George P. Hall, looking west toward houses on West Park Avenue, ca. 1913.  
(Source: *The Journal of San Diego History* (Winter 1975, 21:1) 30)



Aerial view of Community Park, looking from the north, 1928.  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

### **School**

The original Little Landers school was located on East San Ysidro Boulevard and is no longer extant. A site was deeded by the Little Landers Cooperative for a new building in the Civic Center tract between East and West Park Avenues. The new building, a two-room schoolhouse, opened there in about 1915.<sup>44</sup> Children of high school age had to travel to National City High School, about ten miles away, by train. The schoolhouse is no longer extant, having been located where the community park's playground is today.

<sup>44</sup> "Work Started on New School Addition in S.Y." *San Ysidro Border Press*, XX: 5 (12 January 1950).





Little Landers Colony Schoolhouse, ca. 1915.  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

## Transportation

### *Railroad Development*

With the establishment of the Little Landers Colony in San Ysidro, the Spreckels Company announced plans to expand the San Diego and Arizona Railway (SD&A) across the border at San Ysidro. The short line railroad, which was established in 1906, ran southeast from San Diego, and cut through the north end of the city's rectangular park. It crossed the U.S.-Mexico border, traversed eastward through Tijuana, then headed northeast through Tecate and back over the border to the town of Campo. The line ended in Seeley, located east of San Ysidro in California. The first passenger train on the SD&A entered Mexico in July 1910. The line was not completed, however, until 1919.<sup>45</sup>

In addition, the Spreckels Company promised to run the National City and Otay (NC&O) interurban line to San Ysidro for commuting passengers. It ran along the same tracks as the SD&A. The NC&O was formed in 1886 by the San Diego Land & Town Company, a subsidiary of the Santa Fe Railroad. It was the first commuter railroad in San Diego. In 1909, John D. Spreckels acquired the line and merged it with the Coronado Railroad to form the San Diego Southern Railroad, which was sold to Spreckel's San Diego and Arizona Railroad in 1917. The NC&O was electrified in 1907, and is the predecessor of today's San Diego Trolley.<sup>46</sup>

### *Road Development*

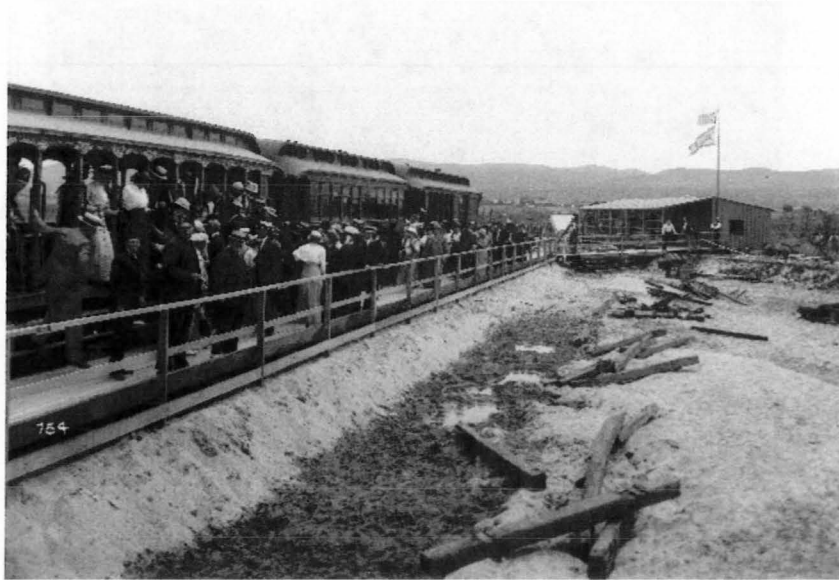
In the early 20th century, San Diego county workers began to construct Tia Juana Boulevard as part of the Little Landers Colony.<sup>47</sup> This road ran parallel to the San Diego & Southern Railroad to the border. North and South Vista Avenues ran parallel to the San Diego & Arizona line. Tia Juana Boulevard (predecessor to present day San Ysidro Boulevard) merged with North and South Vista Avenues just before the border. North and South Vista Avenues became known as Sunset Avenue/Highway 101 by 1928.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> "San Diego and Arizona Railway," Wikipedia. Website accessed on 23 June 2010 from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Diego\\_and\\_Arizona\\_Railway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Diego_and_Arizona_Railway).

<sup>46</sup> Kathleen Flanigan and Bruce Coons, "National City & Otay Railroad Depot," *Save Our Heritage Organisation Magazine* (Spring 2007, 38:2).

<sup>47</sup> Ní Ghabhláin and Stringer-Bowsher, 17

<sup>48</sup> Ní Ghabhláin and Stringer-Bowsher, 19.



Passengers exiting a train near the U.S. inspection station at the  
US-Mexico border, ca. 1915.  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

### **Summary**

The Little Landers Colony No. 1 period (1909 – 1916) is important because of the earliest development of the present-day town of San Ysidro, including construction of the original neighborhood of Craftsman homes, some of which are still extant. The city park and a few early commercial buildings were also established during this period. The earliest infrastructure and transportation systems were also established at this time, laying the basis for further property development in the town.

### **Associated Property Types**

Property types dating to the Little Landers period are primarily residential – single family homes. Due to the flood of 1916, only some buildings survived from the period. The homes that did survive the flood are generally located north of San Ysidro Boulevard between the area bounded by Smythe Avenue on the west and Willow Street or Interstate 805 on the east. Residential properties ranged in size from small, one-story wood-frame vernacular bungalows to two-story Craftsman-inspired homes such as the Henry and Amanda Rundell House (HRB #820).

In addition to residential properties, the street layout and circulation patterns of the original neighborhood survives north of San Ysidro Boulevard, as well as the 50 foot by 120 foot residential lots. The long rectangular community park, flanked by East Park and West Park Avenues, also remains extant.

Based upon a reconnaissance survey of the neighborhood, no churches, library, schools, train stations, agricultural barns, haylofts, Bracero housing, commercial buildings, Redwood Hall, or the park's General Ulysses S. Grant statue appear to have survived from this period. In addition, no utilities, remnants of Little Landers' irrigation system, or agricultural lots are known to have survived the Hatfield Flood and intervening years.

## **Landscape Resources**

### **Architectural Description: Civic Park**

San Ysidro Community Park is a long rectangular parcel of land surrounded by residential neighborhoods, and is the only known resource associated with this property type from this time period. It contains two areas of fields/grassy open space, tennis and basketball courts, and a playground. The San Ysidro Library and parking lot denotes the southern end of the park, while the Civic and Recreation Center denotes the northern end of the park. West Hall Avenue bisects the park. The park no longer contains the Ulysses S. Grant statue or the original school from the Little Landers era.



**San Ysidro Community Park between East Park and West Park Avenues  
(Source: Microsoft (left) and Page & Turnbull (right), 2010)**

### **Character-Defining Features: Civic Park**

The community park constructed during the Little Landers period features the following character-defining features:

- Long, rectangular parcel
- Bounded by East Park and West Park Avenues and bisected by Hall Avenue
- Open grassy areas with shaded sections, framed by civic buildings
- Recreational spaces, such as basketball and tennis courts
- Children's playground

Many of the character-defining features of civic park appear to have been altered from their original design, which included open grassy and landscaped areas but no athletic courts.

### **Significance: Civic Park**

The Civic Park appears significant as the earliest public open space and designed landscape feature in San Ysidro. It is the focal point of the original Little Landers neighborhood, of which many single-family residences still exist. The park may be a contributing resource to a potential historic district associated with the original Little Landers residential development and the agricultural community of San Ysidro.



NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)

San Ysidro Community Park does not appear to be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B. The community park was the focal point of the residential community, which was established on Hall Street, East Park Avenue, and West Park Avenue, but it is important within the community's plan as a whole. Although the park does not appear to possess individual significance, it may be eligible as a contributing resource to a potential historic district consisting of Little Landers residences.

NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)

San Ysidro Community Park does not appear to be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B, but could potentially be eligible under California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the development of Little Landers, such as William Smythe or George Hall. For example, Hall donated a statue for the park after he and Smythe set aside the property as a focal point for the community, so the park may be significant as an example of his influence on the development of Little Landers as an agricultural community.

NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)

San Ysidro Community Park does not appear to be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C for its design because the features within the rectangular open space have changed over time and the design of the park itself is not notable for its design and/or construction. The important aspects of the park include its placement within the plan of the neighborhood as a whole, which relates more to development of the town (See above, NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B [Events]).

HRB Criterion A

San Ysidro Community Park does not appear to be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical and social development of San Ysidro. However, the park may contribute as part of a potential historic district that represents the historical and social development of Little Landers as an agricultural and residential community.

**Integrity Considerations: Civic Park**

San Ysidro Community Park must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers. To convey its significance, San Ysidro Community Park will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- If San Ysidro Community Park is significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B, it should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. A slightly lower level of integrity of setting is acceptable as over time the setting of San Ysidro has lost its agricultural character.
- If San Ysidro Community Park is significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B, it should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric and function that conveys the connection to the individual is critical.
- San Ysidro Community Park is not significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D, and therefore, integrity considerations are not necessary.
- If San Ysidro Community Park is significant under HRB Criterion A, it should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association. Due to the rarity of the property type, a few alterations may be acceptable as long as the property retains its essential features and overall form.

**Residential Properties**

As Little Landers Incorporated began to develop after 1910, families who moved to San Ysidro in hopes of earning their living from the land and those who desired a home in San Ysidro constructed single family homes on 50 foot by 120 foot lots on streets such as East Park and West Park Avenues, Hall Avenue, and Mesa Avenue. Based upon a reconnaissance-level survey of the neighborhood, a handful of these properties appear to remain.

**Architectural Description: Single Family Residences**

The single-family residences tend to be modest in size, built of wood-frame construction, and feature wood cladding on the exterior. Some homes were built of single wall construction. The majority of the homes had front facing or side gables, though a few have hip roofs. The homes are set back on the lot from the street and many featured a front porch. Many of the homes are constructed with little or no ornamentation and are vernacular in style. Their existing landscaping is not uniform or common to the period of development.



HRB #820, Harry and Amanda Rundell House,  
123 Seaward Avenue, 1912.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010).



1663 Dairy Mart Rd, 1910.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010).



233 West Park Avenue, 1910. Originally George P. Hall's House  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010).

**Character-Defining Features: Single-Family Residences**

Single family homes in San Ysidro constructed during the Little Landers period feature the following character-defining features:

- Modest in size
- Vernacular or Craftsman style
- Wood-frame construction
- One story (two on rare occasion) in height
- Front porch
- Wood cladding
- Wood sash windows (typically double hung or casement)
- Gable or hip roof
- Brick or stone chimney

**Significance: Single-Family Residences**

Single-family residences are significant in association with the Little Landers Colony No. 1 period (1909-1916) because they were constructed in San Ysidro's first residential neighborhood. The Craftsman and vernacular style houses were constructed by the colonists on the first platted street grid, which is still extant.

**NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

A single-family residence from the Little Landers period may be significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B for its association with the development of San Ysidro as an agricultural community reflecting the Country Life Movement popular throughout the country at the time. Intact groups of homes appear to be located in the vicinity of Hall Street, East Park Avenue, and West Park Avenue. They may be eligible as a historic district for their association with Little Landers and the agricultural community of San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

A single-family residence from the Little Landers period may be eligible under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the development of Little Landers, such as William Smythe or George Hall. For example, the house at 260 Mesa Avenue (the home of either Smythe or Harold Champ, his son-in-law) or 233 West Park Avenue (the home of George Hall) may be eligible as an example of their influence on the development of Little Landers as an agricultural community.



**NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

Due to the rarity of resources from the Little Landers period, a single-family residence from this period may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of a vernacular bungalow/farmhouse type or as an example of a method of construction such as single wall construction. The significance of the home would likely be at the local or regional level and may not rise to the level or significance required for the NRHP or CRHR. Homes built in San Ysidro during this period are not likely to be eligible for their association with a master architect, builder, or craftsman as most homes were vernacular in nature and did not involve the work of a master.

**HRB Criterion A**

A single-family residence dating to the Little Landers period may be eligible under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical and social development of San Ysidro. The homes dating to this period represent the historical and social development of Little Landers as an agricultural community. Residential properties dating to this period (1909-1964) may represent the historical and economic evolution of San Ysidro from an agricultural community to a border town with local, regional, and national economic impacts. In addition, should a resource associated with the Bracero Program be identified, it may be eligible under HRB Criterion A.

**Integrity Considerations: Single-Family Residences**

A single-family residence from the Little Landers period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national register. A residential building from the Little Landers period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. A slightly lower level of integrity of setting is acceptable as over time the setting of San Ysidro has lost its agricultural character.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric and function that conveys the connection to the individual is critical.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. Due to the rarity of the property type, some alterations may be acceptable (replacement of windows, small addition) as long as the property retains its essential features and overall form/massing. Alterations that would not be acceptable include removal of wood siding, addition of stucco, or a second story addition.
- A residence significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association. Due to the rarity of the property type, a few alterations may be acceptable as long as the property retains its essential features and overall form.



## Development of a Border Town (1916 – 1956)

The history of San Ysidro is intimately connected to the history of the U.S./Mexican border. As the agricultural community of Little Landers waned, the community evolved with a new focus on border activity, entertainment, tourism, and civic development. The following section highlights the impact of events, people, and border activity on the development of San Ysidro.

### Entertainment and Tourism

#### *The Draw of Tourism*

The development of San Ysidro during the 1920s and 1930s was influenced by the growing number of gambling and entertainment establishments directly across the border in Mexico. These influences lead to increased tourism across the border and a large population of Anglo residence in San Ysidro, who traveled across the border for work. The Progressive Movement (1880s-1920s) in the United States was gaining strength and led to several laws and moral reforms that would impact travel between San Ysidro and Tijuana. Progressives believed gambling, alcohol, prizefights, and prostitution to be corrupt and their removal from public life essential. Several promoters of gaming, liquor sales, and prostitution moved their operations to Tijuana and Mexicali (to the east on the border in Mexico) due to the laws in the U.S. In 1913, Marvin Allen, Frank Beyer, and Carl Withington, owners of saloons and brothels in Bakersfield, California, formed the ABW Corporation with the purpose of opening similar establishments in San Ysidro and Tijuana.<sup>49</sup> Allen, Beyer, and Withington each had their own responsibilities for the business with Allen in charge of the liquor, Beyer handled the gambling, and Withington was the business genius.<sup>50</sup>

By 1915, San Ysidro was home to five hundred residents. Horserace gambling had become outlawed in the U.S and these restrictions led to the growth of tourism in Tijuana, Mexico. As a result, the railroad increased the number of trips from San Diego to the border to three or four a day.<sup>51</sup> With the 18th Amendment declaring alcohol illegal in 1917 and Prohibition enforced from 1920 to 1933, Tijuana continued to draw American tourists through San Ysidro and across the border for gambling, drinking, bullfighting, and prostitution. In addition, the Lower California Jockey Club, a race track, owned by James W. "Sunny Jim" Coffroth and Baron H. Long opened on January 1, 1916 and drew a crowd of 10,000.<sup>52</sup>

At the end of 1917, U.S. Immigration department required passports to cross the border and a short time later closed the border as a precaution during World War I. Though travel across the border was restricted, Allen, Beyer, and Withington expanded their business interests in Tijuana to include the town's casinos and cantinas. They expanded the Tivoli Bar, and built the Foreign Club in Tijuana. In addition, they joined forces with Coffroth to add the Sunset Inn to the Monte Carlo casino, thereby increasing the potential earnings of the race track.<sup>53</sup>

In 1920, the border re-opened and travel between San Ysidro and Tijuana continued for tourists, residents, and business people. Horsemen, casino workers, track workers, bartenders, and businessmen worked in Tijuana but lived on the U.S. side of the border in San Ysidro.<sup>54</sup> When Cy Buehrer, an early resident of San Ysidro, arrived in 1920 he noted that "...there was just open pasture land where the little farms had once flourished, and the village consisted of the San

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, 212.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Gwynne, "Marvin Allen, Dominant Border Figure for 10 years, Dies After Operation; Was Last of Big Three," *San Diego Union*, Feb. 7, 1933, 1-2.

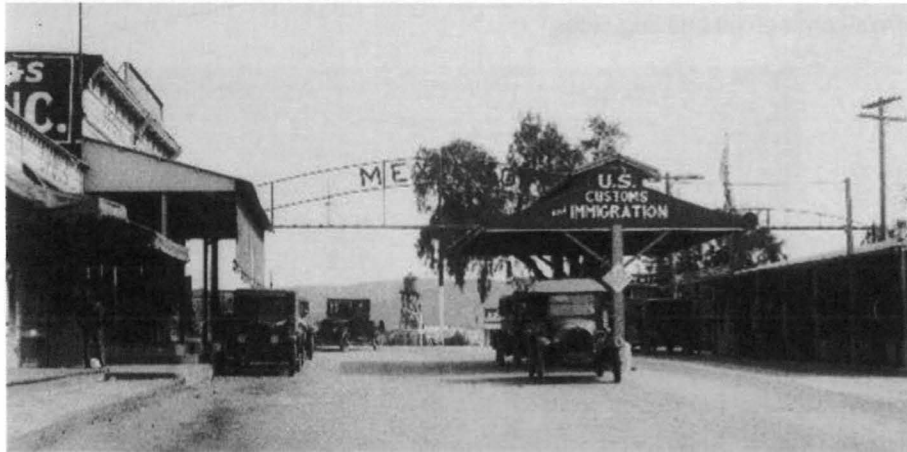
<sup>51</sup> Berryman and Roth, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, 214.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, 215.

<sup>54</sup> Neal Matthews, "Welcome to San Ysidro," *The Reader* 10, no. 35 (Sept. 3, 1991): 9.

Ysidro Hotel (still operating), a post office, a couple of grocery stores, a restaurant, and two dozen or so houses."<sup>55</sup>



Automobiles entering the United States at the San Ysidro border crossing, 1922.  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

### **Commercial Development**

As tourist and entertainment activity around the U.S./Mexican border continued in the 1920s, there was also an increase in the number of businesses located in San Ysidro. San Ysidro Boulevard developed as the main artery to and from Tijuana, and also as the commercial center for the San Ysidro community. Several commercial buildings were constructed along the thoroughfare during this decade, including 109, 119, 125, 138, 141, 143, 145-149, 148, 150-152, 154A-154B, and 160 W. San Ysidro Boulevard, as well as 109, 299, and 315 E. San Ysidro Boulevard. The buildings were of wood frame construction, one or two stories in height, and were designed in a vernacular or Craftsman style with wood siding, or Mission Revival or Spanish Colonial Revival style with stucco exterior cladding and clay tile pent roof parapets. Based upon extant resources, it appears that commercial buildings were first constructed on San Ysidro Boulevard closest to the community park and the old San Ysidro Hotel at 133 W. San Ysidro Boulevard which was the dividing line between East and West San Ysidro Boulevard.

For example, during the 1920s, the Bilasco Theater (no longer extant) was built across from the San Ysidro Hotel. While the theater did not show talking movies, there was a music accompaniment played by Nora Youmans. During World War II, the theater was converted to a USO to serve Army and Navy men stationed at Brown Field in nearby Otay Mesa.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Louis Gill designed the San Ysidro Commercial Company building constructed at 145-149 W. San Ysidro Boulevard in 1927.<sup>57</sup> The nephew of famous San Diego architect Irving Gill, Louis assisted his uncle with the designs of the La Jolla Women's Club, the home of Ellen Scripps, and a new hospital for the San Diego Medical Society. On his own, Gill was known for his church and hospital designs. He was the original architect for the San Diego Zoo in 1916, and in 1926, he designed the zoo's research hospital in a Spanish Revival style. He also designed the County Administration Building in 1938 in a modern design with Spanish detail.<sup>58</sup> The San Ysidro Commercial Company building is typical of Gill's Spanish style designs. It may be considered the work of a master, since Gill was an important and influential architect in the San Diego area. A general merchandise store occupied the building and supplied a variety of commodities for the community. Gill's work may have influenced the architects and builders of other Spanish Colonial

<sup>55</sup> Matthews, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Matthews, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Berryman and Roth, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Rev. C. Douglas Kroll, "Louis John Gill: Famous but Forgotten Architect," *The Journal of San Diego History* (Summer 1984, 30:3).

Revival style commercial buildings on San Ysidro Boulevard. Built at the height of this first wave of commercial construction, it is a marker of this phase of community development. However, aside from Gill, no other important San Diego architects have been uncovered who contributed to San Ysidro's commercial building stock.



San Ysidro Commercial Co. building, 145-149 W. San Ysidro Boulevard, 1929.  
(Source: The San Diego Historical Society)

As the availability of water was secure, San Ysidro continued to expand as a community through the 1930s. The San Ysidro Border Press began publication in 1930 and provided a summary of news in the community. Travel between the U.S. and Mexico remained high at this time, as border traffic increased to 5.5 million between July 1930 and June 1931.<sup>59</sup> As a result, a variety of restaurants and business opened along San Ysidro Boulevard.<sup>60</sup> The Lotus Café and the Coffee Cup (specific addresses unknown) both opened at the end of 1930.<sup>61</sup> The Coffee Cup was located on Tia Juana Boulevard (later known as San Ysidro Boulevard), across from the library. It was built by C. Scotten Pefley, who was known in racing circles. A wood-framed, general merchandise store named "International Commercial Co." had existed on the U.S. side of the border, immediately adjacent and east of the first U.S. Customs House.<sup>62</sup> About 1930, the building was demolished to make way for a new U.S. Customs House. An Art Deco building was constructed for the International Commercial Co. directly north of the new Customs House.<sup>63</sup> The new International building at 751 East San Ysidro Boulevard appears to have been completed around 1930, as city directories from the time period reference a general merchandise store managed by J.N. Llanos Jr.<sup>64</sup> The design, with a stepped parapet and vertical geometric ornament, does not appear to have influenced other commercial architecture in the area, as it remains the only pure Art Deco building in San Ysidro.

Although the border was open twenty-four hours a day for the first time in 1933, there was a drop in the number of people crossing the border due to the Great Depression the repeal of the 18th amendment that ended Prohibition; the nationalization of foreign-owned properties in Mexico; and the enforcement of Mexican anti-gambling laws. The decrease in border traffic throughout the Depression and World War II brought a slow down to the local businesses in San Ysidro.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Ní Ghabhláin and Stringer-Bowsher, 15.

<sup>60</sup> *San Ysidro Border Press* 1, no. 9, Dec. 19, 1930.

<sup>61</sup> *San Ysidro Border Press* 1, no. 10, Dec. 26, 1930 and *San Ysidro Border Press* 1, no. 4, Nov. 14, 1930.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> The U.S. Customs House was listed in the National Register in 1983 for its architecture and role in politics/government.

<sup>64</sup> Ní Ghabhláin and Stringer-Bowsher, 19.

<sup>65</sup> Rosalinda Gonzalez, "San Ysidro: Voices and Visionaries" in *Searching for San Diego, II: A Journey Through Four San Diego Neighborhoods*, ed. Alden Mudge and Ralph Lewin, 16-20 (California Council for the Humanities, 1994).



After World War II, however, San Ysidro continued to evolve as a destination for tourists on their way to Tijuana. New restaurants and cafes opened on San Ysidro Boulevard and several hotels and motels were under construction by the late 1940s.<sup>66</sup> Motels varied in size from six to forty-five units and were located along San Ysidro Boulevard as well as Highway 101 (now Beyer Boulevard and East Beyer Boulevard).<sup>67</sup> The twelve-unit Pan American Motel was located along Highway 101 and was considered a "...first class hostelry."<sup>68</sup> Construction of El Toreador Motel (HRB #236) at 601 E. San Ysidro Boulevard began in 1948. Tony Silva was the contractor and the San Ysidro Border Press reported that the motel was "the most elaborate and expensive building project ever undertaken in the history of San Ysidro."<sup>69</sup> El Toreador opened in October 1948 and attracted "...the Agua Caliente gambling crowd and other Mexico-bound tourists who wanted U.S. conveniences."<sup>70</sup> The building featured a large neon sign, 22-feet long and 11-feet high, depicting a toreador in mortal combat with a bull. Other motels that opened in San Ysidro in 1948 include the El Rey and La Pas on old Highway 101 (one of which may be 3896 Beyer Boulevard, at the corner of Smythe Avenue, which has since been converted to apartments), and the Vista de Cal Mex on East San Ysidro Boulevard.<sup>71</sup> Generally, the hotels and motels were designed to accommodate automobile traffic, often resembled bungalow courts, and featured detached units arranged around a courtyard or open space. Some motels were constructed as two-story buildings with exterior hallways that provided access to individual rooms.



HRB #236, El Toreador Motel at 601 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1950.  
(Source: The San Diego Historical Society)

In addition to motels, other businesses opened in San Ysidro in the late 1940s to serve the community, including C.G Fitzsimmons' Border Cleaners, Jesse Valdez's San Ysidro Jewelry, the Border Liquor Store, an automotive garage, pharmacy, and grocery store (specific locations unknown).<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> "Opening of New Café Highlights New Business Activities in San Ysidro," *San Ysidro Border Press* 18, no. 5, Jan. 15, 1948.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> "Work Started at El Toreador Motel," *San Ysidro Border Press* 18, no. 12, March 4, 1948.

<sup>70</sup> Lisa Petrillo, "Compromise reached on old motel," *San Diego Union*, May 27, 1990.

<sup>71</sup> "El Toreador Motel Open for Business," *San Ysidro Border Press* 18, no. 44, October 14, 1948.

<sup>72</sup> "Horowitz Sells San Ysidro Store to Bennett-Kagan," *San Ysidro Border Press* 19, no. 2, December 23, 1948.

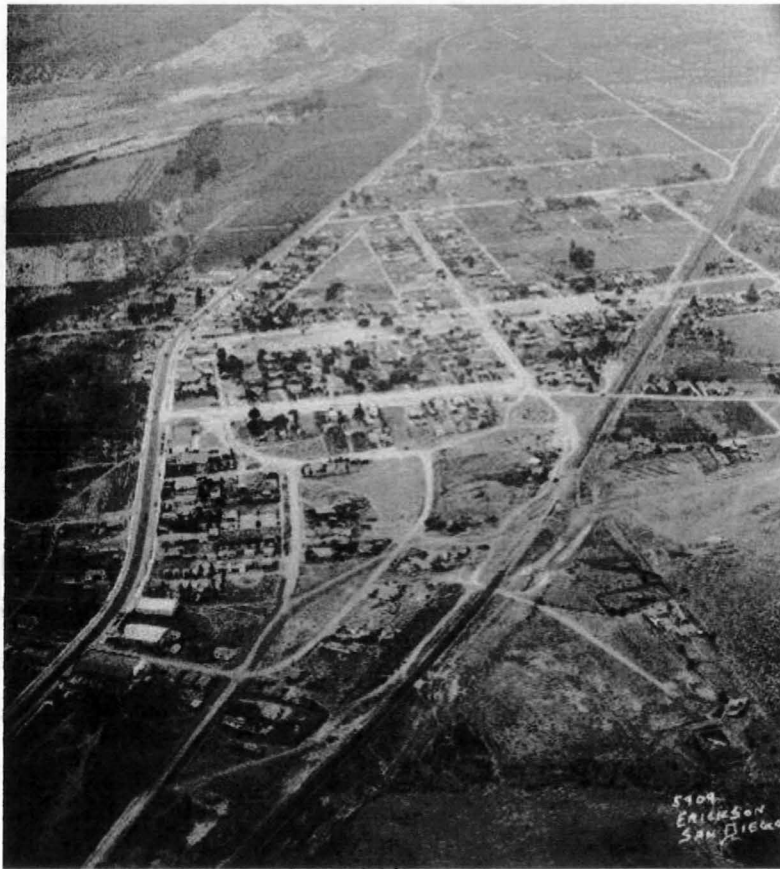


## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Road Development**

Improvements to the community's transportation network were undertaken throughout the 1920s. Tia Juana Boulevard became known as San Ysidro Boulevard, and continued to run parallel to the San Diego and Southern Railroad to the border. North and South Vista Avenues, which ran parallel to the San Diego & Arizona line, became known as Sunset Avenue/Highway 101 by 1928.<sup>73</sup> While San Ysidro Boulevard was paved by this time, many of the residential streets continued to be dirt or gravel, as seen in aerial photographs taken in 1928.

In 1951, Highway 101 was replaced by "Highway 5" (now Interstate 5), which brought more tourists to the border region. Highway 101 was converted to Beyer Boulevard and East Beyer Boulevard.<sup>74</sup> Businesses were bulldozed to make way for the new highway, including a plumber's shop and two bars. Many of the bulldozed businesses did not return, and others were eventually replaced by corporate chain stores.<sup>75</sup>



**Aerial view of San Ysidro, looking west, 1928.**

**San Ysidro Boulevard runs northwest (to the left), paralleled by the railroad track to the north. The city park runs north-south (just above center), bisected by Hall Avenue, which runs east-west.**  
(Source: San Diego Historical Society)

<sup>73</sup> Ní Ghabhláin and Stringer-Bowsher, 19.

<sup>74</sup> Telephone interview with Michael Freedman, resident and member of San Ysidro Community Planning Group (9 August 2010).

<sup>75</sup> Rosalinda Mendez Gonzalez, "San Ysidro: Voices and Visionaries," *Searching for San Diego, II: A Journey Through Four San Diego Neighborhoods*, San Diego: The California Council for the Humanities, 1994.

### **Water System**

During the 1920s and 1930s, improvements to the water system were also important to the development and expansion of San Ysidro. Though efforts had been made to construct a water system during the Little Landers period, this system proved to be inefficient. Following the 1916 flood, a new plant was built on Cottonwood Avenue and was known as the Tia Juana River pumping station. Prominent long-time resident Cy Buehrer was appointed to the San Ysidro Water District in 1935, and at that time water usage was charged at \$1.50 a month for a house on a standard 50-foot by 120-foot residential lot and \$1 a month for an acre.<sup>76</sup> There were no meters on individual homes and there was no limit on the amount of water usage.

### **Residential Development**

Coinciding with the growth in tourism, San Ysidro shifted from primarily agricultural to residential uses, and the population increased. By 1922, twenty new modest homes had been built in San Ysidro for working class residents. Some of James W. Coffroth's three hundred employees of Tijuana's Lower California Jockey Club racetrack lived in San Ysidro and traveled across the border to work;<sup>77</sup> others worked in Mexican saloons and gambling halls. The community of San Ysidro was primarily Anglo at this time, as few Mexicans were living on the U.S. side of the border.

Residential development during the 1920s centered on the original platted streets that had been established by the Little Landers colony, and was generally located directly north and south of San Ysidro Boulevard. Homes were primarily small, vernacular bungalows with references to Craftsman and Spanish Eclectic architecture. For instance, in 1923, prominent citizen Frank Beyer built his one-story bungalow at 159 Hall Avenue in a Pueblo Revival style, with a deeply recessed porch, double-hung wood sash windows, clay tile awnings above the windows, and circular clay ornaments that simulated vigas at the roofline.

A shift in demographics occurred around 1933 with the repeal of the 18th amendment that ended Prohibition, the nationalization of foreign-owned properties in Mexico, and the enforcement of Mexican anti-gambling laws. Due to the ensuing decrease in business, Anglo racetrack-related trainers and horse owners left San Ysidro, and some of their homes were purchased by Mexican families who worked in the United States. At this time, the Mexican presence did not much affect the character or development of the built environment. The town remained a small and close-knit community living in Craftsman-style houses and frequented modest commercial buildings.

During World War II, San Diego and its suburbs grew exponentially as people moved into the area to work in wartime industries, such as aircraft manufacturing. A housing shortage emerged in San Diego and the cities north of San Ysidro, which was primarily addressed by the government through Federal Housing Authority (FHA) housing projects. No FHA housing projects were constructed in San Ysidro during the war, likely because San Ysidro is located a distance from San Diego's wartime industries. However, following World War II, the housing shortage that existed in other parts of San Diego extended to San Ysidro. Along with single family homes, new construction included small apartment buildings and a handful of post-war bungalow courts. Typically, apartments and bungalow courts were arranged around a common outdoor or open space. These buildings offered an alternative form of housing for those who either could not afford a single-family home or those who desired an experience similar to a single-family home with a common space for social or recreational activities.

Along with new multi-family buildings, single-family homes were constructed as infill on lots in town that had not yet been developed. Cy Buehrer and his wife constructed an experimental

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<sup>76</sup> Matthews, 9.

<sup>77</sup> Berryman and Roth, 18.

home at 208 East Park Avenue in 1948.<sup>78</sup> The 18-foot by 32-foot, one bedroom home was built in the Buehrers spare time, and was constructed of concrete block rather than the typical wood frame. Only the plumbing and electrical wiring were done by contractors. While the Buehrers did not live in the home, they planned to incorporate some of the same details in another house for themselves, including knotty pine in the kitchen cupboards as well as exposed beamed ceilings in the living room. Mr. and Mrs. D.S. Cotton moved into the house and were its first occupants.<sup>79</sup> The building did not impact contemporaneous design, as no other small residential buildings were constructed of concrete block at that time. Nevertheless, the Buehrers' house represents the development trend in the 1940s to infill the remaining residential lots on established streets.

## Community and U.S. Government Development

As traffic across the border increased in the 1920s, the community of San Ysidro required additional community services and civic improvements. Frank Beyer (1875 - 1931) was instrumental in establishing much of San Ysidro's civic infrastructure. He was the greatest benefactor in San Ysidro history. He was born in Pennsylvania, but came to the west coast as a mining engineer following the mining booms in Alaska, Colorado, and Arizona. In 1910, he was listed as a roulette dealer; however, by 1914, he had become an entrepreneur in the border town of Mexicali, Mexico. Partnering with Marvin Allen and Carl Withington as the ABW Syndicate (mentioned above), the Americans operated a Mexicali nightclub called the Owl Café and Theatre. The Owl prospered with gambling, liquor sales and prostitution in the face of Prohibition and codes against gambling in the United States. ABW also operated the gambling clubs of Monte Carlo, the Tivoli Bar, the Foreign Club and horse racing at the Jockey Club in Tijuana. In the meantime, Beyer and his wife settled across the border in San Ysidro in 1918, and the couple ran a jewelry and pawn shop in town. They bought ranch property, bred horses and raised Guernsey cows on a dairy farm near town which they called Rancho Lechuza.<sup>80</sup> By the mid-1920s, Beyer began to show a public interest in philanthropy.<sup>81</sup>

In May 1924, the County of San Diego was surprised to hear that Beyer and his wife wanted to donate \$7,000 to San Ysidro for a community library. He promised to build and furnish the library and establish a ten-year trust fund to buy books and magazines. The county accepted the gift. Beyer followed through by donating the land for the San Ysidro Library and constructing the building for the County.<sup>82</sup> Beyer's only requirements were that the Police Gazette be on the reading room table and that smoking be allowed. The building cost \$12,000 and was finished in October 1924.

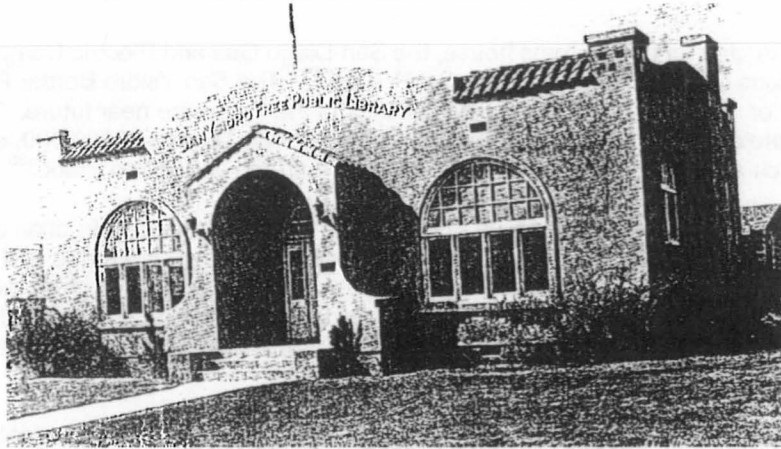
<sup>78</sup> "Buehrers Build Experimental House in S.Y.," *San Ysidro Border Press* 18, no. 39, September 9, 1948.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> The exact location is unknown, as no documents were uncovered which described the particular location of the ranch.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Crawford, "Gambler turned philanthropist left mark on San Ysidro," *The San Diego Union-Tribune* (5 June 2008).

<sup>82</sup> Historic Resource Board File #451, City Planning & Community Investment, San Diego, California.



**San Ysidro Free Public Library, ca. 1924.**  
(Source: California State Library)

Along with the library, other community amenities began to appear in the 1920s. The San Ysidro Community Church, designed by Louis Gill, opened in 1924 at the corner of Cottonwood and Hall Avenue. In 1927, Beyer donated land for the construction of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church at 114 Hall Avenue. Beyer funded construction of the building for \$1,000, and the church was built by contractor W.B. Settle. Both one-story churches were designed in the Mission Revival style and feature stucco cladding, arched entryways, and small bell towers with clay tile roofs.

Other buildings constructed in the 1920s included the San Ysidro Bank (1925), and the Civic and Recreation Center (1925). Beyer donated the land for the Civic Center, which was intended to be used by community groups such as the San Ysidro Women's Club. It was located between East and West Park Avenues on Hall Avenue, in line with the city park.

By the late 1920s, it was evident that the small one-story Customs House could not accommodate the volume of traffic and would need to be replaced with a larger facility. In June 1931, the U.S. Treasury Department took title to the last of five parcels on the border and construction drawings were completed in 1932 by architect James A. Wetmore. A new U.S. Customs House was built in a Spanish Colonial Revival style directly north of the border.<sup>83</sup> The new Customs House was completed in May 1933.



**U.S. Customs House, 1933.**  
(Source: The San Diego Historical Society)

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



With the construction of the customs house, the San Diego Gas and Electric Company announced plans to extend gas service to San Ysidro.<sup>84</sup> The San Ysidro Border Press reported, "Half a million or more will be spent in new buildings at the line in the near future. The Government project will cost \$115,000, the Sutherland Stage Terminal \$100,000, and other structures, such as stores, will bring the total to more than the half million mark."<sup>85</sup>

Other improvements in the community in the late 1940s included the construction of an elementary school on the south side of Sunset Lane between Smythe Avenue and Alverson Road.<sup>86</sup> The school consisted of three classrooms. An \$81,000 addition of three more classrooms, an administrative office, and separate kindergarten building expanded the school in 1950.<sup>87</sup> An elementary school remains in this location, but the existing building was constructed in recent years.

Throughout the period between 1916 and 1956, San Ysidro evolved into a residential community and a border town with an international economy. The border crossing in San Ysidro influenced the community's economic and commercial development as businesses opened to support the number of tourists and immigrants moving to and from the area. The influence of the border crossing would continue to play a key role in San Ysidro's development after it was annexed to the City of San Diego.

### **Summary**

The Development of a Border Town period (1916 – 1956) is important for addressing the needs of a growing population of both residents and tourists from California and Mexico. Americans were attracted into the area because of recreational gambling and horse racing just over the border in Tijuana, Mexico, while both Americans and Mexicans were attracted to agricultural employment opportunities in and around San Ysidro. Consequently, the era saw the further construction of single-family residences in the original platted neighborhood, as well as multi-family housing like the first small apartment buildings and bungalow courts. Commercial development also expanded greatly along San Ysidro Boulevard, and many of these commercial properties remain extant. Institutional facilities, such as the Customs House, public library, and churches were established to service the tourists and/or residents. The town was now a full-fledged city that supported the various economic, social, religious, and recreational needs of the residents and visitors.

### **Associated Property Types**

During the 1920s and 1930s, the population of San Ysidro increased and the area developed as a residential community for workers commuting to casinos, racetracks, and saloons in Tijuana. In addition, as San Ysidro gained more residents, commercial and institutional properties developed in the community along San Ysidro Boulevard. Residential properties can be separated into single family residences, small apartment buildings, and bungalow courts. Commercial buildings included retail stores, restaurants/cafes, auto garages, and motels. Community and government buildings from the Border Town period include a library, two churches, a bank, civic center building, and U.S. Customs House.

Properties that no longer exist include the elementary school that was built in the 1940s and the railroad has also been replaced with the San Diego Trolley system, which uses the same route through town, but with updated tracks.

<sup>84</sup> "Port of Entry Project to Start, Gate No. 1 Selected and Buildings to be Erected; Gas Service Promised," *San Ysidro Border Press* 1, no. 18, Feb. 20, 1931.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> "Contract Let for New S.Y. School Building," *San Ysidro Border Press* 18, no.20, April 29, 1948.

<sup>87</sup> "Work Started on New School Addition in S.Y." *San Ysidro Border Press*, XX: 5 (12 January 1950).

### **Residential Properties**

Between 1916 and 1956, San Ysidro developed as a border town and was home to many of the people who worked in Tijuana's casinos, racetracks, and saloons. To accommodate an increase in population, homes were constructed adjacent to San Ysidro Boulevard throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Residential property types dating to the border town period include modest single family houses, primarily one story in height and designed in a vernacular style with Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic influences; small apartment buildings, and bungalow courts in Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic styles.

### **Architectural Description: Single Family Residences**

Single family homes were generally constructed on undeveloped lots (typically measuring 50 feet by 120 feet) on streets, which had been laid out during the Little Landers period. Homes from the Border Town period are interspersed among the residences that survived the 1916 flood, and are located along Hall Avenue, Seaward Avenue, Cottonwood Road, and East Park and West Park Avenue. The modest scale of the homes is comparable to that of the previous period. The houses were built in vernacular architectural styles, though some homes exhibit Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic styles. They tend to be one story in height, built of wood-frame construction, and feature either Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic details. They are set back on their lots and some properties feature driveways that lead to the rear. They are clad in wood or stucco siding, and typically are capped by a gable or hip roof covered with asphalt shingles. Though original windows are wood, many have been replaced with aluminum or vinyl sash.



**159 Hall Avenue, 1923.**  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, Jan 2010)



**117 Alverson Road, 1925.**  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

### **Character-Defining Features: Single Family Residences**

Single family residences constructed during the border town period should possess the following character-defining features:

- Vernacular, Craftsman, or Spanish Eclectic style
- Wood-frame construction
- One story in height
- Front porch
- Wood or Stucco cladding
- Gable, hip, or flat roof
- Wood sash windows (typically double hung or casement)
- Set back from street with front yard

**Significance: Single-Family Residences**

Single-family residences from the Border Town period (1916 – 1956) are significant for continuing the Craftsman and vernacular styles and modest size of San Ysidro's earliest houses, and infilling the remaining lots in the original platted neighborhood. The houses, especially those from 1916 through the 1930s, blend seamlessly with the houses from the Little Landers period. In addition, they housed people who worked the gambling and racetrack operations across the border in Tijuana, signifying the further development of San Ysidro as a border town.

**NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

A single family residence from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B for its association with the transition of San Ysidro from an agricultural community to a small border town. These residences can be identified by their modest size, vernacular style, and period Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic ornament. They are interspersed on previously platted residential lots in the original Little Landers neighborhood; however, their post-Little Landers construction dates represent the infill that occurred as the town expanded to include new residents who worked the Mexican racetracks and casinos. Should any intact groups of homes be located, they may be eligible as a historic district for their association with San Ysidro as an early border town.

**NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

A single family residence from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the development of San Ysidro as a border town. For example, the home of Frank Beyer (159 Hall Avenue) may be eligible for its association with Beyer during the time when he was working in Tijuana, living in San Ysidro, and actively participating in the civic development of San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D**

A single family residence from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of a vernacular, Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic bungalow. Given the modest nature of most residential properties in San Ysidro, properties may not rise to a level of significance for the NRHP or CRHR on an individual basis; however, a single-family residence may be significant as a contributor to a historic district in the original neighborhood that includes East Park Avenue, West Park Avenue, and Hall Avenue. The earliest houses from the border town period were constructed amongst the surviving Little Landers houses. It is unlikely that a residential property from this period will be associated with a master architect, builder, or craftsman, but should a property be discovered to be associated with a master it may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion D.

**HRB Criterion A**

A single-family residence from the border town period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, architectural, and economic development of San Ysidro. Residential properties dating to this period may represent the historical and economic evolution of San Ysidro from an agricultural community to a border town with local, regional, and national economic impacts. In addition, should a resource associated with the Bracero Program be identified, it may be eligible under HRB Criterion A.

**Integrity Considerations: Single-Family Residences**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, a single-family residence from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. A residential property from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion A or B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.



- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. Some alterations may be acceptable (replacement of windows, small addition) as long as the property retains its essential features and overall form/massing.
- A residence significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

#### **Architectural Description: Apartment Buildings**

As the population of San Ysidro increased after World War II, a few forms of multi-family housing were constructed. Small apartment buildings, typically two stories in height with no more than four units, offered a less expensive and alternative form of housing from a single family home. Apartment buildings from this era typically are rectangular in plan, with wood-frame construction, stucco siding, a gable roof, and steel casement windows or sliding aluminum-sash windows.



**239-241 Cottonwood Road, Walsh Apartments, 1945.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)**





325 Mesa Avenue, 1948.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

**Character-Defining Features: Apartment Buildings**

Apartment buildings from the border town period should possess the following character-defining features:

- Modern style
- Wood-frame construction
- Two-story
- Stucco cladding
- Gable roof
- Steel casement or sliding aluminum-sash windows

**Significance: Apartment Buildings**

Based upon the recent reconnaissance survey of San Ysidro, it is highly unlikely that an apartment building may be found to be individually significant under any of the significance criteria within the context of Development of a Border Town period (1916 – 1956), due to lack of craftsmanship, as well as integrity considerations. However, should any outstanding examples be uncovered, they should adhere to the following criteria:

**NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion A and B (Events)**

An apartment building from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B for its association with the transition of San Ysidro from an agricultural community to a small border town. These buildings can be identified by their relatively modest two-story size and simple modern style. They are interspersed on previously platted residential lots in the original Little Landers neighborhood; however, their post-Little Landers construction dates represent the residential infill that occurred as the town expanded to include new residents who worked at the Mexican racetracks and casinos.

**NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

An apartment building from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the development of San Ysidro as a border town. However, it is not likely that important persons will be found who are associated with these apartment buildings.

**NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D(Design/Construction)**

An apartment building from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of the multi-family housing property type. In addition, given the rarity of apartment buildings from this period, a property may be eligible as an example of the apartment building type. Given the modest nature of most residential properties in San Ysidro, properties may not rise to a level of significance for the NRHP or CRHR on an individual basis, but as contributors to a historic district in the original neighborhood that includes East Park Avenue, West Park Avenue, and Hall Avenue. It is unlikely that a residential property from this period will be associated with a master architect, builder, or craftsman, but should a property be discovered to be associated with a master it may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion D. Furthermore, examples of apartment buildings from this period should possess high artistic values and embody the characteristics of a multi-family housing property type, as specified above.

**HRB Criterion A**

An apartment building from the border town period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, architectural, and economic development of San Ysidro. Residential properties dating to this period may represent the historical and economic evolution of San Ysidro from an agricultural community to a border town with local, regional, and national economic impacts.

**Integrity Considerations: Apartment Buildings**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, an apartment building from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. An apartment building from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. Some alterations may be acceptable (replacement of windows, small addition) as long as the property retains its essential features and overall form.
- A property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

**Architectural Description: Bungalow Courts**

Bungalow courts consist of groupings of detached or attached units arranged in parallel rows or a U-shape around a courtyard. Bungalow courts are typically one-story, wood-frame buildings finished in either wood or stucco in vernacular, Craftsman, or Spanish Eclectic styles. These properties can be found along major roads such as San Ysidro Boulevard and Beyer Boulevard, but a few can also be found on smaller streets such as Cottonwood Road and Smythe Avenue.



407 W. San Ysidro Blvd, 1928  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)



2266-2296 Smythe Avenue, 1935.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

**Character-Defining Features: Bungalow Courts**

Bungalow courts from the border town period feature the following character-defining features:

- Vernacular, Craftsman, or Spanish Eclectic style
- Wood-frame construction
- One-story in height
- Front stoops or individual apartment entryway
- Stucco cladding
- Gable, hip, or flat roof
- Wood sash windows (typically double hung or casement)

**Significance: Bungalow Courts**

A bungalow court may be significant from the Border Town period (1916 – 1956) because it represents the introduction of a new residential building type to meet the demands of a growing population, related to the influx of newcomers who worked across the border in Tijuana.



NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)

A bungalow court from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B for its association with the transition of San Ysidro from an agricultural community to a small border town. These residences can be identified by their modest size, vernacular style, and period Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic ornament. They are interspersed on previously platted residential lots in the original Little Landers neighborhood; however, their post-Little Landers construction dates represent the infill that occurred as the town expanded to include new residents who worked at the Mexican racetracks and casinos.

NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)

A bungalow court from this period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the development of San Ysidro as a border town. However, no research conducted to date has uncovered any important persons associated with the bungalow courts in San Ysidro, so it is unlikely that a resource may be found significant under this criterion.

NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)

A bungalow court from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of vernacular, Craftsman or Spanish Eclectic buildings. In addition, given the rarity of multi-family housing from the border town period, a property may be eligible as an example of the bungalow court building type. Given the modest nature of most residential properties in San Ysidro, properties may not rise to a level of significance for the NRHP or CRHR on an individual basis, but as contributors to a historic district in the original neighborhood that includes East Park Avenue, West Park Avenue, and Hall Avenue. The earliest residential buildings from the border town period were constructed amongst the surviving Little Landers houses. It is unlikely that a residential property from this period will be associated with a master architect, builder, or craftsman, but should a property be discovered to be associated with a master it may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion D.

HRB Criterion A

A bungalow court from the border town period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, architectural, and economic development of San Ysidro. Residential properties dating to this period may represent the historical and economic evolution of San Ysidro from an agricultural community to a border town with local, regional, and national economic impacts.

**Integrity Considerations: Bungalow Courts**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, a bungalow court from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. A bungalow court from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.
- A bungalow court significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A bungalow court significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. Some alterations may be acceptable (replacement of windows, small addition) as long as the property retains its essential features and overall form.
- A property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.



### ***Commercial Properties***

San Ysidro Boulevard developed as the commercial center of San Ysidro in the 1920s and 1930s. Initially, commercial development was limited to the area directly adjacent to the border crossing, but by the late 1920s and early 1930s as the community grew, additional businesses opened to accommodate the residents and tourists traveling through town. Commercial properties from the early Border Town period can largely be separated into the following building types: commercial retail (including restaurants/cafes) and auto garages. After World War II, San Ysidro saw an increase in the number of hotels and motels as travelling to Tijuana remained a popular attraction for tourists.

### **Architectural Description: Commercial Retail**

Retail and restaurant/cafe buildings in San Ysidro from the border town period are typically one or two stories in height, constructed of wood, clad in stucco, and feature large glazed storefronts. These commercial properties are Spanish Eclectic or vernacular in style and most are located along the San Ysidro Boulevard corridor. The buildings may be free-standing or attached to one another. They are sited on the front property line with no setback.



**145-149 W. San Ysidro Boulevard, 1927.**  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010).



The International Building at 751 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1930.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)



143 W. San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1920  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)





148 W. San Ysidro Boulevard, est. 1922-1928.  
Originally known as La Nola Hotel.  
Photo by Page & Turnbull, April 2010

**Character-Defining Features: Commercial Retail**

Commercial retail properties constructed during the border town period should possess the following character-defining features:

- Located along San Ysidro Boulevard or old Highway 101 (Beyer Boulevard)
- Spanish Eclectic or Art Deco style
- Sited on property line, no setback
- Wood-frame construction
- One story or two stories in height
- Wood or stucco cladding
- Flat roof with parapet
- Glass storefronts

**Significance: Commercial Retail**

Commercial buildings from the Development of a Border Town period (1916 – 1956) may be significant for their association with tourism related to San Ysidro's close proximity to the tourist destination of Tijuana. In addition, some of these buildings, especially those designed in the Spanish Eclectic style in the 1920s, may be significant for their architecture.

**NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

A commercial retail building from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B for its association with international trade and tourism in San Ysidro. For example, the International Building is likely eligible under this criterion as well as Criterion C (see below). Should any intact groups of commercial properties be located, they may be eligible as a historic district for their association with international trade and tourism in San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

A commercial retail building from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the international trade, tourism, or civic development of San Ysidro. For example, a commercial building associated with Frank Beyer may be eligible for Beyer's role in the economic and civic development of San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

A commercial retail building from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of Spanish Eclectic or Art Deco architecture. In addition, properties may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion D for its association with a master architect, builder, or craftsman. For example, Louis Gill is known to have designed at least two buildings in San Ysidro. One of these, the San Ysidro Commercial Company building at 145-149 W. San Ysidro Boulevard, is a commercial property that may be eligible as the work of a master.

**HRB Criterion A**

A commercial retail building from the border town period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical or economic development of San Ysidro. Commercial properties dating to this period may represent San Ysidro's role in international trade and tourism with Mexico. In addition, a commercial property may represent the historical development of San Ysidro and its evolution to a small border town.

**Integrity Considerations: Commercial Retail**

A commercial property from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national register. A commercial property from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A commercial retail property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
- A commercial retail property significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A commercial retail property significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as the physical aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. While some alterations may be acceptable such as the replacement of windows or a small addition, the property must retain its essential features and overall form.
- A commercial retail property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

**Architectural Description: Auto Garages**

In San Ysidro, older auto garages are typically one story in height, constructed of concrete, clad in stucco or concrete block, and feature glazed storefronts, large garage doors, and shaped parapets. They have long rectangular plans. Auto garages are primarily located along the San Ysidro Boulevard corridor. The buildings are often attached to adjacent buildings and may be set back behind a parking lot. The buildings are typically designed in 20th century commercial styles with Spanish Eclectic influences.





299 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1940s.  
Photo by Page & Turnbull, April 2010



109 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1920s  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

**Character-Defining Features: Auto Garages**

Auto garage properties in San Ysidro constructed during the border town period feature the following character-defining features:

- Located along San Ysidro Boulevard
- 20th Century Commercial style with Spanish Eclectic ornament
- Long rectangular floor plans
- May have a setback behind a parking lot
- Concrete construction
- One story
- Stucco or concrete block cladding
- Flat or gable roof with parapet
- Glass storefronts

**Significance: Commercial Auto Garages**

Based upon the recent reconnaissance survey of San Ysidro, it is highly unlikely that an auto garage may be found to be individually eligible under any of the significance criterion due to integrity considerations; however, should any outstanding examples be uncovered, they should adhere to the following criteria:

**NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

An auto garage from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B for its association with international trade and automobile

tourism in San Ysidro. Should any intact groups of commercial properties be located, they may be eligible as a historic district for their association international trade and tourism in San Ysidro. Such a group is likely located along San Ysidro Boulevard, within a few blocks east and west of the San Ysidro Library.

**NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

An auto garage from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the automobile-related tourism or community development of San Ysidro. However, no research conducted to date has uncovered any important persons associated with the auto garages in San Ysidro, so it is likely that this criterion will not be applicable.

**NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

An auto garage from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of Spanish Eclectic or Art Deco architecture. In addition, properties may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion D for their association with a master architect, builder, or craftsman. For example, Louis Gill is known to have designed at least two buildings in San Ysidro (though neither are auto garages).

**HRB Criterion A**

An auto garage dating to the border town period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical or economic development of San Ysidro. Auto garages dating to this period may represent San Ysidro's role in international trade and tourism with Mexico. In addition, a commercial property may represent the historical development of San Ysidro and its evolution from an agrarian community to a small border town.

**Integrity Considerations: Auto Garages**

An auto garage from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers. A commercial property from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- An auto garage significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
- An auto garage significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- An auto garage significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as the physical aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. While some alterations may be acceptable such as the replacement of windows or a small addition, the property must retain its essential features and overall form.
- An auto garage significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

**Architectural Description: Hotels and Motels**

In San Ysidro, hotels and motels from the late border town period are typically one or two stories in height, constructed of wood, and clad in stucco. Hotels and motels from this period often resemble bungalow courts and featured detached units arranged around a courtyard, or a two-story building with exterior hallways that provide access to individual rooms. Hotels and motels exhibit Spanish Eclectic, Modern, or vernacular architectural styles. Several are set back behind a parking lot, emphasizing the vehicular impact upon the tourism industry, in particular the motel businesses in San Ysidro.





601 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, 1949. Originally the El Toreador Motel.  
Photo by Page & Turnbull, April 2010



672 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1940s. West wing of the Holiday Lodge Motel  
(south wing is two stories in height)  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

**Character-Defining Features: Hotels and Motels**

Hotel and motel properties constructed during the border town period feature the following character-defining features:

- Located along San Ysidro Boulevard or old Highway 101 (Beyer Boulevard)
- Spanish Eclectic, Modern or vernacular style
- May be set back behind a parking lot
- Wood-frame construction
- One story or two stories in height
- Wood or stucco cladding
- Gable or hip roof
- Wood or aluminum-sash windows

**Significance: Commercial - Hotels and Motels**

Hotels and motels are significant in the context of the Development of a Border Town period (1916 – 1956) for their association with tourism through San Ysidro on the way to Tijuana. They represent the growth of automobile-based culture. Some hotels and motels may also be significant for their distinctive Spanish Eclectic or Modern styles.

**NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

A hotel or motel from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion A or B for its association with international trade and auto-related tourism in San Ysidro. For example, the El Toreador Motel is listed as HRB #236 under this criterion as well as Criterion C (see below).

**NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

A hotel or motel from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the tourist trade of San Ysidro. For example, a hotel or motel associated with Frank Beyer may be eligible for Beyer's role in the economic and civic development of San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

A hotel or motel from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of Spanish Eclectic, Modern, or vernacular architecture. In addition, properties may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion D for their association with a master architect, builder, or craftsman. However, research conducted to date has not uncovered any master architects associated with hotels and motels in San Ysidro.

**HRB Criterion A**

A hotel or motel from the border town period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical or economic development of San Ysidro. Hotels and motels dating to this period may represent San Ysidro's role in international tourism with Mexico.

**Integrity Considerations: Hotels and Motels**

A hotel or motel from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers. A commercial property from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A hotel or motel significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.
- A hotel or motel significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A hotel or motel significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as the physical aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. While some alterations may be acceptable such as the replacement of windows or a small addition, the property must retain its essential features and overall form.
- A hotel or motel significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

**Institutional and Government Properties**

Early institutional development during the border town period was dominated by civic and religious institutions. Frank Beyer donated the land for all of the civic institutions including the library and civic center building. Beyer also donated the land for Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and some money for the construction of the San Ysidro Community Church on Hall Avenue. As the population of San Ysidro grew and the border crossing increased traffic through the community, other institutional properties such as schools were also constructed.

Most of the institutional buildings in San Ysidro are one or two stories in height, constructed of wood, clad in stucco, and reflect either Mission Revival or Spanish Eclectic architecture. Institutional properties can be found along San Ysidro Boulevard, the streets north of San Ysidro



Boulevard, or within the civic park. The following institutional properties date to the border town period: San Ysidro Civic and Recreation Center (212 West Park Avenue), San Ysidro Community Church (173 Hall Avenue), San Ysidro Public Library (101-105 San Ysidro Boulevard), and the original Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church (114 Hall Avenue). In addition to these properties, the San Ysidro Border Station was constructed during this period, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

An elementary school was constructed in the 1940s, but no longer exists, as it was rebuilt in the same location some years later. No police or fire stations, hospitals, other government buildings, or any other institutional buildings appear to have been constructed during this era.

#### **Architectural Description: Churches**

The San Ysidro Community Church (now the Daniel F. Romero Center for Border Ministries) was designed by Louis Gill, and opened in 1924 at 173 W. Hall Avenue. In 1927, Frank Beyer donated land for the construction of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church (now the Comunidad Cristiana Torre Fuerte) at 114 W. Hall Avenue. The church was built by contractor W.B. Settle. Both one-story churches were designed in the Mission Revival/Spanish Eclectic style and feature stucco cladding, arched entryways, and small bell towers with clay tile roofs. They are located on residential-size parcels and are set back from the street. 114 Hall Street includes an adjacent parking lot.



173 W. Hall Avenue, 1924, former San Ysidro Community Church designed by Louis Gill.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, January 2010)



114 W. Hall Avenue, 1927, Originally known as Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

#### **Character-Defining Features: Churches**

Churches in San Ysidro constructed during the border town period feature the following character-defining features:

- Located on W. Hall Avenue
- Mission Revival or Spanish Eclectic style
- Wood-frame construction
- One story
- Stucco cladding
- Flat or gable roof with shaped parapet
- Bell tower with arched openings
- Arched primary entry
- Clay tile accents
- Set back from street

#### **Significance: Churches**

Churches are significant in the context of the Development of a Border Town period (1916 – 1956) because they represent the movement to establish a full-fledged city with community services. They may also be significant for their association with benefactor Frank Beyer, as well as for their modest Mission Revival or Spanish Eclectic style of architecture.

#### **NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

A church from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B as a representation of the area's civic development during this period. For example, the 173 W. Hall Avenue and 114 W. Hall Avenue may be eligible as examples of the civic development in San Ysidro that represents the growth and establishment of the community as a border town.

#### **NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

A church from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if they are found to be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the international trade, tourism, or civic development of San Ysidro. For example, the former Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church at 114 W. Hall Avenue is associated with major civic benefactor Frank Beyer, and may be eligible for its association with Beyer's role in the economic and civic development of San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

A church from the border town period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as examples of Mission Revival or Spanish Eclectic architecture. In addition, properties may be eligible under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion D for their association with a master architect, builder, or craftsman. For example, Louis Gill is known to have designed at the San Ysidro Community Church at 173 W. Hall Avenue.

**HRB Criterion A**

A church from the border town period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, architectural, or social development of San Ysidro. Institutional properties dating to this period may represent a special element in San Ysidro's civic development as a border town and the role the town played in international trade and tourism with Mexico.

**Integrity Considerations: Institutional and Government, Churches**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, an institutional property from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. An institutional property from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A church significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association.
- A church significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A church significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as the physical aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. While some alterations may be acceptable such as the replacement of windows or small additions, the property must retain its essential features, proportions, and overall form.
- A church significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

**Architectural Description: Library**

The San Ysidro Library was constructed in 1924 in the Mission Revival style. It is one story in height, with a rectangular plan, wood frame and stucco cladding. The building is set back on the parcel from San Ysidro Boulevard, and the property has landscaping and benches. Architectural features include a symmetrical primary façade organization, a center projecting entry with a clay tile gable roof and arched opening, arched windows, and a stepped and curved mission parapet that conceals a flat roof. An addition extends from the rear (north) façade.





101-105 San Ysidro Boulevard, 1924, HRB #451, San Ysidro Public Library.  
Photo by Page & Turnbull, January 2010

**Significance: Library**

The San Ysidro Library is already listed in the San Diego Register. Based upon a reconnaissance survey of the area, no other libraries exist within San Ysidro.

**Architectural Description: Civic or Recreational Centers**

The Civic and Recreation Center was constructed in 1925 on land donated by Frank Beyer. The building lacks an architectural style and ornamentation. It has a rectangular plan, wood frame, and stucco cladding. The windows are double hung wood sash and covered with screens. Entries feature flush wood doors. The building terminates in a parapet and combination bow truss and flat roof.

Based upon the reconnaissance level survey of San Ysidro, the Civic and Recreation Center appears to be the only property of this type from the border town period.



Civic and Recreation Center, 212 West Park Avenue, 1925  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)



### **Character-Defining Features: Civic or Recreational Centers**

The Civic and Recreation Center includes the following character-defining features:

- Located on Hall Avenue between East Park and West Park Avenues
- Mission Revival or Spanish Eclectic style
- Wood-frame construction
- One-story or two-stories
- Wood or Stucco cladding
- Flat roof with parapet

### **Significance: Civic or Recreational Centers**

Based upon the reconnaissance survey completed in April 2010, it does not appear that the Civic and Recreation Center will be individually significant, primarily due to integrity considerations. However, the building may be considered a contributing resource to a potential historic district that includes the city park and surrounding neighborhood.

### **NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

The Civic and Recreational Center does not appear to be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B, but it may be significant as a contributor to a historic district because it represents the continued growth and establishment of the community during the border town period.

### **NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

The Civic and Recreational Center does not appear to be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B, but may be significant under California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B if it is found to be associated with a significant or prominent local individual who contributed to the international trade, tourism, or civic development of San Ysidro. For example, the Civic and Recreation Center is associated with Frank Beyer, who was the primary benefactor of institutional facilities in San Ysidro during the border town period. The building may be eligible for the role Beyer played in the economic and civic development of San Ysidro.

### **NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

The Civic and Recreational Center does not appear to be significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of a type of architecture or method construction, or for its association with a master architect, builder, or craftsman. It does not appear that this building was designed by a master architect or builder. Furthermore, the design of the building does not embody distinctive characteristics of an architectural style and appears to have been altered.

### **HRB Criterion A**

A civic center dating to the border town period may be significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, architectural, or social development of San Ysidro. Institutional properties dating to this period may represent a special element in San Ysidro's civic development as a border town and the role the town played in international trade and tourism with Mexico.

### **Integrity Considerations: Civic or Recreational Centers**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, an institutional property from the border town period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. An institutional property from the border town period that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A civic center significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association.
- A civic center significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.

- A civic center significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as the physical aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance. While some alterations may be acceptable such as the replacement of windows or small additions, the property must retain its essential features, proportions, and overall form.
- A civic center significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

**Architectural Description: Institutional and Government, US Border Stations**

The U.S. Border Station was constructed in 1932, and is designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. It features a low-pitched, clay tile roof with little eave overhang, wood frame, stucco cladding, prominently placed arches around window openings, and an asymmetrically arranged façade. Architectural terra cotta with a mottled yellow-buff glaze is used for the window sills and ornament. Small amounts of painted wood trim are used for the windows, shutters, eave trim, and projecting window hoods. Flat roof sections are covered with copper sheathing and built-up roofing. Ornamentally glazed quarry tiles are used to highlight openings, and wrought iron is used for balcony and stair railings.



**San Ysidro Border Station, 1932**  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, March 2008)

**Significance: US Border Stations**

The San Ysidro U.S. Border Station is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places, based upon significance related to Criteria A (Events) and C (Architecture) within the areas of "architecture" and "politics/government" for the period of significance from 1931 to 1933. According to the nomination forms,

Architecturally, the building displays the features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, typical of the kind of eclectic borrowing which distinguished the many public buildings designs in the 1920s and 1930s by the Supervising Architect's office of the Treasury Department. It is a locally prominent example of its genre – a small public building of the early thirties. More important than its architectural significance, however, is the building's symbolic role in the international relations between the United States and Mexico. Erected as a Custom House and Inspection Station on the border between two countries, it served for over twenty years as the only U.S. building at the San Ysidro crossing. Today, this crossing is

the most heavily trafficked along the border, and although superceded in function by the immense new inspection structure, the 1933 Station still represents the importance of international commerce and governmental relations.<sup>88</sup>

Therefore, significance and integrity guidelines are not necessary for the purpose of this Historic Context Statement. The building is eligible for the San Diego Historic Register under HRB Criterion E.

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<sup>88</sup> Clayton Fraser, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form: Inspection Station/U.S. Custom House, San Ysidro, California* (7 March 1982) Section 8.



## Annexation to City of San Diego (1957 – Present)

In 1957, San Ysidro was annexed to the City of San Diego and is now one of numerous communities within the city. Although water concerns from San Ysidro residents and commercial owners precipitated the idea of annexation, the City of San Diego as a whole recognized the importance of the border to the region and voted for annexation in 1957. For the City, San Ysidro provided "...a direct land connection to Mexico and a stake in the international trade that flows across the United States-Mexico border."<sup>89</sup> Shortly after its annexation, the community experienced a shift in demographics as the population transitioned from primarily Anglo to Mexican in the 1960s. In addition, San Ysidro continued to play an important role in the local, regional, and national economy as the border crossing became the busiest crossing in the U.S. in 1988.

### Movement to Annexation

#### **Water Concerns**

The early 1950s was a period of transition for San Ysidro. As the population of Tijuana grew, and Mexico passed laws that restricted the ability of Americans to work in Mexico, the demographic population of San Ysidro shifted from primarily Anglo to Mexican American. By 1960, a majority of San Ysidro residents were Mexican nationals or Mexican Americans.<sup>90</sup> In addition, due to the increase in population in Tijuana in the early 1950s, the water table began to drop and water quality quickly declined. Residents of San Ysidro became concerned about the ability of the town to provide water and other basic services. These concerns influenced community leaders to approach the City of San Diego about annexation in the early 1950s.

While there was opposition to annexation on the part of some San Ysidro residents, others were in favor of joining the City as a way of obtaining a reliable water source as well as other municipal services. After annexation, there was a period between 1959 and 1961 when building permits were restricted due to water quality.

Water management remained an issue for San Ysidro throughout the 1960s. In 1967, the International Boundary and Water Commission recommended that the United States and Mexico approve a joint project for the control of floods in the Tia Juana River to protect development on both sides of border. The project provided for 2.7 miles of a concrete lined channel south of the boundary in Tijuana, veering westward for six miles to the Pacific Ocean. The project was crucial to protect development on both sides of the border. Ultimately, the part of the project located in the United States was modified in 1977 to the present stilling basin configuration located south of San Ysidro, between the community and the U.S.-Mexico boundary.<sup>91</sup>

### Transportation

#### **Road Development**

As the population of Tijuana grew, the border crossing in San Ysidro became the busiest crossing in the country. Traffic across the border continued to play a major role in the region's economy, and by 1951, the Montgomery Freeway section of Interstate 5 had been constructed, creating a direct connection between San Ysidro and the larger City of San Diego.<sup>92</sup> The freeway separated Calle Primera and the southern part of the original neighborhood from the rest of the community.

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<sup>89</sup> Gonzalez, 16.

<sup>90</sup> Berryman and Roth, 21.

<sup>91</sup> "Tijuana River Flood Control Project," [http://www.ibwc.gov/Mission\\_Operations/TJ\\_River\\_FCP.html](http://www.ibwc.gov/Mission_Operations/TJ_River_FCP.html) (accessed on Jan. 20, 2010).

<sup>92</sup> Ní Ghabhláin and Stringer-Bowsher, 16.



Along with the freeway, San Ysidro Boulevard was altered to six lanes to accommodate the high volume of traffic in 1953.<sup>93</sup> It does not appear that this change affected the buildings on San Ysidro Boulevard, and the thoroughfare has since been changed to four lanes. The widening of San Ysidro Boulevard further enforced the primacy of the commercial corridor's development and circulation pattern. Though movement across the border was important for both Tijuana and San Ysidro, there was also a shift in the border environment as a 22,000 foot section of a fourteen-foot high fence was constructed on both sides of the port of entry by Altas Iron and Wire Works in 1955.<sup>94</sup> By 1967, San Ysidro Boulevard was no longer used as the international highway, as these traffic patterns shifted to Interstate 5.

Freeway construction continued in the early 1970s, and at this time disrupted the street system in San Ysidro. Residential and commercial buildings were removed to make way for the freeways.<sup>95</sup> In 1971, Interstate 5 was straightened and widened for the millions of vehicles traveling to and from Mexico. In addition, construction of Interstate 805 also began in 1971 and led to the demolition of two hundred homes in old San Ysidro.<sup>96</sup> It essentially bisected the town into two sections, displacing several residences and disrupting local businesses. Freeway development was the main reason why the San Ysidro border crossing became the busiest in the United States. Along with freeway construction, new Brutalist style buildings at the San Ysidro border crossing were constructed over Interstate 5 to enhance border crossing security.

### **Interurban Electric Railroad**

In 1979, San Diego's Metropolitan Transit Development Board (now known as MTS) purchased the San Diego and Arizona Eastern Railway (SD&AE) from the Southern Pacific Railroad. In 1981, the trolley line was extended south through San Ysidro along the old railroad corridor, and terminated at the port of entry buildings. The SD&AE railroad track was rehabilitated, with forty percent of all ties replaced, construction of electric catenaries, and installation of an absolute block signal system. The San Ysidro Transit Center at the border station is presently the southern terminus of the Blue Line.

### **Residential Subdivision Development**

As the water quality in San Ysidro improved in the late 1960s and investors saw promise in the proximity to the new Highway 5, building activities increased. The first subdivision since the early 20th century, Mount Carmel Heights, was filed by the San Ysidro Development Co., which was owned by Adrien Vigneau and Kenet Pearce. Mount Carmel Heights was located on Otay Mesa Road immediately above the original Little Landers village, and included plans for 150 new homes.<sup>97</sup> The first 42 homes known as "Sunkissed Homes" included three, four, and five bedroom homes ranging in price from \$18,000 to \$21,000.<sup>98</sup> The developer specifically built "...frame and stucco dwellings with distinctive Spanish designs to appeal to Mexican-American families from Tijuana."<sup>99</sup> After completing the first 42 homes, the developer continued to construct another 37 homes as well as a condominium project in the same area.<sup>100</sup> Housing development in the northern area of San Ysidro also increased to offset the displacement of residents due to construction of Interstate 805, including the development of Barrio San Martín and an addition to Mount Carmel Heights.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Berryman and Roth, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Lorenzo Judd, "Once Upon a Time," *Border City Press*, July 7, 1955.

<sup>95</sup> Berryman and Roth, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Jamie Bryson, "Cultures Blend at San Ysidro" *San Diego Union*, Nov. 17, 1969, B-4.

<sup>97</sup> "Church, Community Cooperation Help Launch San Ysidro Project," *San Diego Union*, June 16, 1968.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Jamie Bryson, "Cultures Blend at San Ysidro" *San Diego Union*, Nov. 17, 1969, B-4.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Michael Freedman.

In addition to Mount Carmel Heights and other single-family housing subdivisions, developers began to construct multi-family units in San Ysidro from the 1960s through the 1980s. For example, the Gersten Construction Company had 398 apartments, called Via Nueva, under construction in 1969, in the area of Del Sur Boulevard and Beyer Boulevard. Located just east of Mount Carmel Heights in northern San Ysidro, these apartments were intended to be occupied by January 1970 and were federally subsidized to provide homes for families displaced by freeway construction. After the first apartments were completed, Gersten Construction Company planned to build another 238 apartments and 187 single family homes in the same area, which was called Vista Terrace. By 1988, over half the population in San Ysidro was of Mexican descent. Many of these families lived in recently built housing developments that were funded in part by Federal subsidy programs.

As more housing was built in San Ysidro, additional recreational and institutional facilities were constructed. The new residential construction on Iris Avenue and Del Sol Boulevard, north of the 905 freeway, led to the development of Southwest Middle School, a YMCA, and a commercial complex on Beyer Boulevard. Residential development just south of the 905 freeway resulted in the construction of Nicoloff Elementary School on Howard Avenue, and La Mirada Elementary School and the San Ysidro Community Activity Center on Avenida De La Madrid. In 1970, the Secretary of the Interior, Walter J. Hickel announced he was supporting a grant of \$206,978 for construction of a pool in San Ysidro. The pool was located in Vista Terrace Park, located north of Beyer Boulevard and west of Smythe Avenue, and included a bathhouse and landscaping. The total cost of the project was \$414,000.<sup>102</sup> Other community facilities included the San Ysidro Health Clinic that opened in 1968 in a small house at 4004 Beyer Boulevard. This house is no longer extant, as the clinic constructed a new building on the same site in 1972.

By the mid-1980s, community members became concerned about the uncontrolled development of housing complexes and other construction projects in San Ysidro. To update the 1974 Community Plan, the local planning group obtained an AIA Regional Urban Design Assistance Team. This effort led to a Historic Resources Survey, which began in December 1987 and was complete in 1989.<sup>103</sup> A new Community Plan was implemented by 1990. It contained controls for zoning of residential and commercial uses. It also limited the ability to redevelop the deep single-family residence parcels in the original Little Landers neighborhood into several units without yards, which has been occurring with more frequency.<sup>104</sup>

## Commercial Expansion

During the second half of the twentieth century, large retail stores were constructed near the border to accommodate those who wanted to purchase goods not readily available in Mexico. The impact on the physical fabric of San Ysidro was an increase in the number of commercial centers and strip malls along San Ysidro Boulevard, as well as the adjacent streets near the border. Chain restaurants and convenience stores, such as McDonalds and 7-Eleven, were established on San Ysidro Boulevard, as well as gas stations like Chevron, Arco, and Shell, and grocery stores like Lucky Supermarkets. Money changing stores became ubiquitous in San Ysidro following the devaluation of the peso in 1982, which had prompted people living in Mexico but working in the U.S. to want to use U.S. dollars to meet their needs. Investors bought out older mom n' pop stores and replaced them with money changing outlets.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> "Fund Given for Pool at San Ysidro," *San Diego Union*, March 26, 1970.

<sup>103</sup> Telephone interview with Michael Freedman, resident and member of San Ysidro Community Planning Group (9 August 2010).

<sup>104</sup> Telephone interview with David Flores of Casa Familiar (29 July 2010).

<sup>105</sup> Telephone interview with Michael Freedman.

San Ysidro made national news in 1984 when James Oliver Huberty walked into the McDonalds on San Ysidro Boulevard and killed twenty-two people.<sup>106</sup> In addition to the dead, nineteen people were injured in the shooting that became known as the "McDonalds Massacre." After the shooting, McDonalds donated the site to the city and demolished the building. In 1988, the City constructed an Education Center for Southwestern Community College on the site. A memorial for the victims of the massacre was built in front of the school. Designed by Roberto Valdes, the memorial consists of 21 hexagonal granite pillars ranging in height from one to six feet. Every year the memorial is decorated on the anniversary of the shooting, as well as on the Mexican holiday, Día de los Muertos.<sup>107</sup>

Over the past twenty-five years, San Ysidro has continued to play a crucial role in border activity. The San Ysidro Port of Entry Border Station has remained the busiest land port of entry in the U.S. with 130,000 people crossing each day.<sup>108</sup> Tourism continues to attract people from San Diego to the border and with the trolley's expansion to San Ysidro, travel between downtown San Diego and Tijuana is an easy day trip. In addition, commerce in the U.S. has continued to draw Mexicans across the border. In 1996, the City of San Diego adopted the San Ysidro Redevelopment Plan and one of the first projects completed was the Las Americas Premium Outlets, a 67-acre mixed-use project, located just west of Interstate 5. Due to the volume of border crossing traffic, the General Services Administration plans to reconfigure the current port of entry. The project will likely involve the demolition of the buildings over Interstate 5; however, the conceptual design of the project is currently being revised. The project is due to be complete in 2015 and is anticipated to improve the safety as well as congestion at the border.<sup>109</sup>

### **Summary**

The Annexation period (1957 – present) is important because it represents the transition of a small, relatively sleepy border town to a bustling community, which is today characterized by a heavy influence of Mexican culture and primarily Mexican residents. Further expansion of the transportation infrastructure between San Diego and the border has encouraged the growth in the amount of travel between Mexico and California. Development of subdivisions and commercial areas in San Ysidro are indicators of various cultural, economic, and political changes in the last fifty or so years that have promoted both commerce and residency on the U.S. side of the border.

### **Associated Property Types**

Property types dating to the period following San Ysidro's annexation to the City of San Diego period include primarily single family residential tract homes, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings, along with a few institutional facilities, which primarily consist of recreational facilities.

### **Residential Properties**

After San Ysidro was annexed to the City of San Diego, the population of San Ysidro grew and produced a need for additional housing. In previous eras, residential development had been confined to the areas immediately adjacent to San Ysidro Boulevard. However, following annexation, new Tract Ranch subdivisions were established north of the center of town and Beyer Boulevard. Two-story apartment buildings were also constructed during this period.

### **Architectural Description: Single Family Tract Ranches**

Mount Carmel Heights was the first residential subdivision built after annexation and is characterized by a uniform appearance of one-story Tract Ranch homes. The wood frame houses

<sup>106</sup> "San Ysidro McDonald's Massacre," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Ysidro\\_McDonald%27s\\_massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Ysidro_McDonald%27s_massacre) (accessed January 25, 2010).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> San Ysidro Smart Border Coalition Position Paper, <http://www.sanyidrochamber.org/>, (accessed February 9, 2010).

<sup>109</sup> San Ysidro Border Station Project, [http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA\\_OVERVIEW&contentId=16106](http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA_OVERVIEW&contentId=16106) (accessed February 9, 2010).



are generally L-shaped in plan, with cross-gable roofs clad in asphalt shingles, steel or aluminum-sash casement windows, and integral two-car garages. The lot sizes measure roughly 50 feet by 100 feet, and the houses are set back on the lots behind landscaped yards. The streets are laid in an orthogonal grid with curving corners and cul-de-sacs.



176 Padre Tullio Drive, Tract Ranch in Mount Carmel Heights, 1969.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)



172 Mt. Carmel Drive, Tract Ranch in Mount Carmel Heights, 1969.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

**Character-Defining Features: Single Family Tract Ranches**

Single family tract ranches constructed after the annexation of San Ysidro to the City of San Diego should possess the following character-defining features:

- Located in Mount Carmel Heights and other areas in the northern region of the city
- Tract Ranch or Minimal Traditional styles
- Rectangular or L-shape plan
- Wood-frame construction
- One story in height
- Horizontal massing
- Wood or stucco cladding
- Cross-gable roof
- Steel or aluminum-sash casement windows

- Integral garage
- Recessed entryway
- Cohesive site planning and relationship to other similar residences

**Significance: Single Family Tract Ranches**

Based upon the reconnaissance survey completed in April 2010, it appears unlikely that a residence from the Annexation to the City of San Diego period (1957 – Present) would be individually significant, based on their homogeneity and recent age. However, in the event that a tract home subdivision is found eligible as a historic district in the future, representing the influx of Mexican immigrants and the ensuing mass residential development of San Ysidro, the following criteria would apply:

**NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Event)**

It is unlikely that a residence from the annexation period would be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B. Concentrations of Tract Ranch homes may be eligible as a historic district for the San Diego Register; however, it is unlikely that the district would have sufficient significance to qualify for the NRHP or CRHR. Guidelines regarding the evaluation of Tract Ranch homes are provided in the San Diego Modernism Context Statement and state that these homes will gain significance in a district context within a largely or exclusive Tract Ranch subdivision. In addition, the San Diego Modernism Context states that it may be possible for a Tract Ranch to qualify as an individual resource, but this would likely be under HRB Criterion C and be associated with a master architect or builder under HRB Criterion D.

**NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Person)**

It is unlikely a residential building from the annexation period would be eligible under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2. A residential property will likely not rise to the level of significance required for the NRHP or CRHR. However, it may be possible that a property would qualify for the San Diego Register under HRB Criterion B if the property can be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the annexation of San Ysidro or played a prominent role in the San Ysidro border crossing becoming the busiest in the U.S. However, the residential property should represent the person's influence or achievement, and cannot only be their place of residence.

**NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

It is unlikely that a residence from the annexation period would be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction). Single-family tract ranches from the annexation period may be significant as a district under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of Tract Ranch architecture or a period of construction. Concentrations of residential properties may be eligible as a historic district for the San Diego Register; however, it is unlikely that the district would rise to the level of significance to qualify for the NRHP or CRHR. Guidelines regarding the evaluation of Tract Ranch homes are provided in the San Diego Modernism Context Statement and state that these homes will gain significance in a district context within a largely or exclusive Tract Ranch subdivision. In addition, the San Diego Modernism Context states that it may be possible for a Tract Ranch to qualify as an individual resource, but the property would likely be associated with a master architect or builder. It appears unlikely that a Tract Ranch home in San Ysidro would qualify under either of these criteria because their architecture does not embody distinctive characteristics and no information has been found that associates these developments to a master architect or builder.

**HRB Criterion A**

A single-family tract ranch dating to the annexation period may be significant as a district under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, social, or economic development of San Ysidro. As stated in the Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria adopted by the City's HRB, "Special elements of development refer to a resource that is



distinct among others of its kind or that surpass the usual in significance." A residential property that is not distinct from other similar properties would not qualify under HRB Criterion A.

**Integrity Considerations: Residential, Single Family Tract Ranches**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, a grouping of single-family tract ranches from the annexation period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. A residential property that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance.
- A property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

**Architectural Description: Apartment Buildings**

Following annexation, new subdivisions were established north of the center of town and Beyer Boulevard. They consisted primarily of single family tract ranch houses, but apartment complexes were also constructed in the area. These apartments are typically rectangular in plan, with wood frames, wood or stucco siding, gable roofs, steel or aluminum sash casement windows, and individual outdoor entries. They are designed in Minimal Traditional or Modern styles.



Apartment complex on Seaward Avenue, ca. 1966-1970.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

**Character-Defining Features: Apartment Buildings**

Apartment buildings constructed after San Ysidro was annexed to the City of San Diego should possess the following character-defining features:

- Modern or Minimal Traditional styles
- Rectangular plan
- Wood-frame construction
- Two stories in height
- Horizontal massing
- Wood or stucco cladding



- Gable roof
- Steel or aluminum-sash casement windows
- Individual outdoor entries

**Significance: Apartment Buildings**

Based upon the reconnaissance survey completed in April 2010, it does not appear that any apartment buildings from the Annexation to the City of San Diego period (1957 – present) will be individually significant, primarily because of their recent construction dates and lack of important individual connection to a historic event or trend during this period of San Ysidro's development. However, if further information or elapsed time yields a new assessment, the following criteria will be applicable:

**NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Event)**

An apartment from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B, though concentrations of nearby Tract Ranch homes may be eligible as a historic district for the San Diego Register. Modern apartment buildings will likely not qualify as individual resources because they are not significantly related or the best example of an important event or development trend. Also, most were constructed after 1970, and therefore would not be eligible due to their age.

**NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Person)**

An apartment building from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2. A residential property will likely not rise to the level of significance required for the NRHP or CRHR. However, it may be possible that a property would qualify for the San Diego Register under HRB Criterion B if the property can be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the annexation of San Ysidro or played a prominent role in the San Ysidro border crossing becoming the busiest in the U.S. However, the apartment building should represent the person's influence or achievement, and cannot only be their place of residence.

**NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

An apartment building from the annexation period will likely not be individually eligible under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of Modern or Minimal Traditional architecture or a period of construction. It appears unlikely that a modern apartment building in San Ysidro would qualify as a good example of a type, period or method of construction; a representative work of a master architect; or an example of high style architecture. Generally, their designs do not embody distinctive characteristics of an architectural style and no information has been found that associates these developments to a master architect or builder.

**HRB Criterion A**

An apartment building from the annexation period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, social, or economic development of San Ysidro. As stated in the Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria adopted by the City's HRB, "Special elements of development refer to a resource that is distinct among others of its kind or that surpass the usual in significance." A residential property that is not distinct from other similar properties would not qualify under HRB Criterion A.

**Integrity Considerations: Apartment Buildings**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, an apartment building from the annexation period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. An apartment building that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- A residence significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance.
- A property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

### **Commercial Properties**

As the number of people crossing the border continued to increase after the City of San Diego annexed San Ysidro, there was an expansion in the number and type of commercial properties built in San Ysidro. Mexicans typically crossed the border to purchase a variety of items, including food and clothing. Items could be purchased at better prices in the U.S. and the quality of goods was often an attraction. As a result, additional commercial properties were built in San Ysidro. Typically, either strip malls adjacent to San Ysidro Boulevard or larger "big box" stores opened during this period. Along with retail businesses, hotels and motels also opened to accommodate those crossing the border for leisure and business.

### **Architectural Description: Commercial Strip Malls**

In general, commercial strip malls are located on parcels on San Ysidro Boulevard, and are designed in a modern or contemporary style with wood frame or concrete construction and wood, stucco or concrete cladding. They are often set back behind paved parking lots or have rear parking lots. They feature modern materials, such as aluminum sash storefronts and fully glazed doors.



795 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, ca. 1980s.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)

### **Character-Defining Features: Commercial Strip Malls**

Commercial properties constructed after San Ysidro was annexed to the City include the following character-defining features:

- Located along San Ysidro Boulevard or adjacent to border
- One story in height
- Wood frame or concrete construction
- Stucco, concrete or wood exterior finishes
- Aluminum sash storefront glazing
- Surrounded by paved parking

**Significance: Commercial Strip Malls**

Based upon the reconnaissance survey completed in April 2010, no commercial strip malls appear to be individually significant within the context of the Annexation to the City of San Diego (1957 – present). This is primarily due to their recent construction dates and lack of individuality or quality of design. However, if further information or elapsed time yields a new assessment, the following criteria will be applicable:

**NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

A commercial strip mall from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B. Concentrations of commercial properties on San Ysidro Boulevard (though, primarily from earlier periods) may be eligible as a historic district for the San Diego Register; however, it is unlikely that the district would rise to the level of significance to qualify for the NRHP or CRHR.

**NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

A commercial strip mall from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2. A commercial property will likely not rise to the level of significance required for individual listing in the NRHP or CRHR. However, it may be possible that a property would qualify for the San Diego Register under HRB Criterion B if the property can be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the annexation of San Ysidro or played a prominent role in business relations between Tijuana and San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

A commercial strip mall from the annexation period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of a type (strip mall) or mid-century architectural style (Streamline Moderne, Futurist-Googie, or Contemporary). Several commercial properties are not a pure example of a particular style, but rather reflect a combination of styles; therefore, if a style can be identified, these buildings should be evaluated against the guidelines provided in the San Diego Modernism Context Statement.

**HRB Criterion A**

A commercial strip mall from the annexation period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, social, or economic development of San Ysidro. As stated in the Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria adopted by the City's HRB, "Special elements of development refer to a resource that is distinct among others of its kind or that surpass the usual in significance." If a commercial property can be shown to reflect a special element of the annexation of San Ysidro or a special element of San Ysidro's economic relationship with Tijuana or a special element of the evolution to a predominantly Mexican American community, it would qualify under HRB Criterion A.

**Integrity Considerations: Commercial Strip Malls**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, a commercial property from the annexation period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. A commercial property that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.
- A commercial building significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- Commercial properties significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance.



- A property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

### **Architectural Description: Motels**

Motels from the annexation period are primarily located on large parcels on San Ysidro Boulevard, and are designed in a modern style with wood frame or concrete construction and wood, stucco and/or stone cladding. They are set back behind paved parking lots, and include a manager's office and long two-story wings of rooms. The motels feature modern materials, such as aluminum sash windows and flush wood or fully glazed doors.



**655 W. San Ysidro Boulevard, Motel, ca. 1960s.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)**



**701 E. San Ysidro Boulevard, Motel near Port of Entry, ca. 1960s.  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)**

### **Character-Defining Features: Motels**

Motels constructed after San Ysidro was annexed to the City should possess the following character-defining features:

- Located along San Ysidro Boulevard or adjacent to border
- One to two stories in height
- Wood frame or concrete construction
- Stucco, wood, and/or stone exterior finishes
- Aluminum sash windows

- Exterior hallways with metal railings that lead to each room

**Significance: Motels**

Based upon the reconnaissance survey completed in April 2010, it appears that no motels from the Annexation to the City of San Diego period (1957 – present) will be individually significant, primarily due to their recent date of construction and lack of individual importance in association with the further development of tourism at the border. However, should further information or elapsed time yield a new assessment, the following evaluation criteria will be applicable:

**NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

Motels from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B. Concentrations of commercial properties may be eligible as a historic district for the San Diego Register; however, it is unlikely that the district would rise to the level of significance to qualify for the NRHP or CRHR.

**NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (Persons)**

Motels from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2. A motel will likely not rise to the level of significance required for individual listing in the NRHP or CRHR. However, it may be possible that a property would qualify for the San Diego Register under HRB Criterion B if the property can be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the annexation of San Ysidro or played a prominent role in business relations between Tijuana and San Ysidro.

**NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/ HRB Criterion C and D (Design/Construction)**

Motels from the annexation period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of a type or mid-century architectural style (Streamline Moderne, Mid-century Modern, Futurist-Googie, or Contemporary). These buildings should be evaluated against the guidelines provided in the San Diego Modernism Context Statement.

**HRB Criterion A**

Motels from the annexation period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the historical, social, or economic development of San Ysidro. As stated in the Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria adopted by the City's HRB, "Special elements of development refer to a resource that is distinct among others of its kind or that surpass the usual in significance." If a motel can be shown to reflect a special element of the annexation of San Ysidro or a special element of San Ysidro's economic relationship with Tijuana or a special element of the evolution to a predominantly Mexican American community, it would qualify under HRB Criterion A.

**Integrity Considerations: Motels**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, a motel from the annexation period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. A commercial property that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A motel significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.
- A motel significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- Motels significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance.
- A motel significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

### ***Institutional and Government Properties***

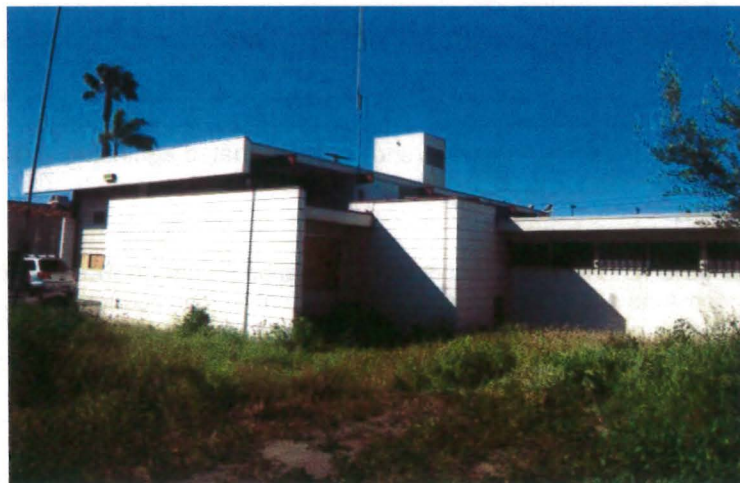
A handful of institutional and government properties were constructed after San Ysidro was annexed to San Diego. Several of these buildings were related to government services or administration. The original police station on San Ysidro Boulevard was built in 1960 and the fire station, also on San Ysidro Boulevard, was constructed in 1963. Other institutional properties included a community center, parks, and schools.

### **Architectural Description: Institutional and Government Properties**

Institutional and government properties are often located on San Ysidro Boulevard or in/adjacent to city park facilities, and are designed in a modern or contemporary style with wood frame or concrete construction and wood, stucco, molded concrete, or stone cladding. Institutional and government properties are sometimes set back behind paved parking lots or have rear parking lots. They feature modern materials, such as aluminum sash windows and flush wood or fully glazed doors.



**San Ysidro Community Center, ca. 1960s  
(Source: Page & Turnbull, April 2010)**



**Former fire station, ca. 1960s  
(Source: Page & Turnbull)**



### **Character-Defining Features: Institutional and Government Properties**

Given the few number of institutional properties constructed after San Ysidro was annexed to the City, it is difficult to generalize character-defining features. However, the following may generally describe institutional properties:

- Modern or contemporary style
- Wood frame or concrete construction
- Variety of exterior finishes (stucco, wood, molded concrete, stone)
- One story in height
- Low, gabled or flat roofs
- Aluminum sash windows
- Flush wood or fully glazed doors

### **Significance: Institutional and Government Properties**

Based upon the reconnaissance survey completed in April 2010, it does not appear that any Institutional and Government properties will be individually significant within the context of the Annexation to the City of San Diego (1957 – present), primarily because of their relatively recent dates of construction and integrity considerations. However, should further information or elapsed time yield a new assessment, the following criteria will be applicable:

#### **NRHP Criterion A/California Register Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B (Events)**

Institutional and government properties from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1. An institutional property will likely not rise to the level of significance required for individual listing in the NRHP or CRHR. However, it may be possible that an institutional or government property would qualify for the San Diego Register under HRB Criterion B if the property can be associated with a specific event related to annexation or international trade between U.S. and Mexico.

#### **NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B (People)**

Institutional and government properties from the annexation period will likely not be individually significant under NRHP Criterion B/California Register Criterion 2. An institutional or government property will likely not rise to the level of significance required for individual listing in the NRHP or CRHR. However, it may be possible that an institutional or government property would qualify for the San Diego Register under HRB Criterion B if the property can be associated with a significant or prominent individual who contributed to the annexation of San Ysidro or played a prominent role in business relations or international trade between Tijuana and San Ysidro.

#### **NRHP Criterion C/California Register Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C and D (Architecture/Design)**

Institutional and government properties from the annexation period may be individually significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C as an example of a Modern architectural style or period of construction. Institutional properties that can be classified as one architectural style or a combination of styles should be evaluated against the guidelines provided in the San Diego Modernism Context Statement.

#### **HRB Criterion A**

An institutional or government property from the annexation period may be individually significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the political, social, economic, or landscape development of San Ysidro. For example, Vista Terrace Park may reflect a special element of the landscape development of San Ysidro. As stated in the Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria adopted by the City's HRB, "Special elements of development refer to a resource that is distinct among others of its kind or that surpass the usual in significance." Therefore, if an institutional property can be shown to reflect a special element of the annexation of San Ysidro or a special element of San Ysidro's economic relationship with Tijuana or a special element of the evolution to a predominantly Mexican American community, it may qualify for listing under HRB Criterion A.

**Integrity Considerations: Institutional and Government Properties**

In order to be eligible for listing in the local, state, or national historical registers, an institutional or government property from the annexation period must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. An institutional property that has sufficient integrity will retain a majority of the character-defining features listed above. In detail:

- A property significant under NRHP Criterion A/CRHR Criterion 1/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.
- An institutional or government building significant under NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2/HRB Criterion B should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association as the physical fabric that conveys the connection to the individual is crucial to the property's significance.
- Institutional or government properties significant under NRHP Criterion C/CRHR Criterion 3/HRB Criterion C or D should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as these aspects of integrity are necessary for the property to convey its significance.
- A property significant under HRB Criterion A should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

## V. Conclusion & Recommendations

San Ysidro has played an important role in the City of San Diego's agricultural and international tourism history. The community contains a number of potential historic resources that date primarily to the Little Landers farming period of the 1910s. San Ysidro has been a residential area enhancing the economy along the border, and primarily housing working class Mexicans since the mid-twentieth century. The community's connection to the rest of the city and region via railroad, interurban electric streetcars, and freeways has provided access to employment and leisure activities for residents of the community, and commerce for San Ysidro's establishments. Over time the character of the area has developed to include residential subdivisions and strip malls, but the heart of old San Ysidro, including its Craftsman bungalows and city park, remains largely unaltered.

The historical narrative and property types guide presented in the historic context statement provide a foundation on which future historic resources documentation can be conducted. Using the information contained herein, it should be possible for city staff, historical consultants, and community members to understand how individual historic properties connect with San Ysidro's social, cultural, commercial or developmental context. Subsequent evaluation with respect to a property's physical characteristics and historic significance and integrity can also be undertaken, thus enabling accurate determination of the resource's potential eligibility for designation at the national, state, or local levels.

The following tables identify properties found to be potentially significant through the current reconnaissance survey. The tables highlight those properties, which may contribute to a potential historic district, or which may be potentially significant as an individual property.

Properties noted as significant to a potential historic district were assigned a California Historical Resource Status Code (CHRSC) of "7R," while properties noted as significant as an individual resource were assigned a CHRSC of either "3CB," "3CS," or "3S." All other properties were noted with a CHRSC of "6Z." Based upon the current methodology used by the State of California Office of Historic Preservation, these status codes are defined as follows:

- 3CB – Appears eligible for CR both individually and as a contributor to a CR eligible district through a survey evaluation.
- 3CS – Appears eligible for CR as an individual property through survey evaluation
- 3S – Appears eligible for NR as an individual property through survey evaluation
- 6Z – Found ineligible for NR, CR or Local designation through survey evaluation
- 7R – Identified in Reconnaissance Level Survey: Not evaluated

**Table 1. Potentially Significant Individual Properties**

Number From	Number To	Street	Built Date	District	Individual	Status Code
3283		Beyer	ca. 1910s		x	3CS
320		Bolton Hall	ca. 1940s		x	3CS
1663		Dairy Mart	1910		x	3S
114		Hall, W	ca. 1920s	x	x	3CB
159		Hall, W	1923	x	x	3CB
260		Mesa	ca. 1900s		x	3CS



Number From	Number To	Street	Built Date	District	Individual	Status Code
240		Pepper	ca. 1910s		x	3CS
701		San Ysidro, E	ca. 1950s		x	3CS
751		San Ysidro, E	ca. 1930		x	3S
133		San Ysidro, W	ca. 1895-1901		x	3CS
407		San Ysidro, W	1928		x	3CS
3616		Sunset	1934		x	3CS

**Table 2. Properties Eligible as a Contributor to a Potential Historic District**

Number From	Number To	Street	Built Date	District	Individual	Status Code
107		Alverson	1935	x		7R
111	113	Alverson	ca. 1920s	x		7R
112		Alverson	1922	x		7R
115		Alverson	1932	x		7R
117		Alverson	1925	x		7R
169		Alverson	1925	x		7R
549		Blackshaw	ca. 1920s	x		7R
559		Blackshaw	1021	x		7R
567		Blackshaw	ca. 1920s	x		7R
207		Cottonwood	1930	x		7R
211		Cottonwood	ca. 1910s	x		7R
229		Cottonwood	1940	x		7R
239		Cottonwood	1945	x		7R
253		Cottonwood	1948	x		7R
2612		East Beyer	1930	x		7R
2631		East Beyer	1948	x		7R
122		East Park	1938	x		7R
134		East Park	1925	x		7R
158		East Park	ca. 1910s	x		7R
208		East Park	1912	x		7R
212		East Park	1914	x		7R
214		East Park	1928	x		7R
218		East Park	1922	x		7R
266		East Park	1922	x		7R
114		Hall, W	ca. 1920s	x	x	3CB
122		Hall, W	1926	x		7R
123		Hall, W	ca. 1910s	x		7R
137		Hall, W	ca. 1910s	x		7R
138		Hall, W	1938	x		7R
146		Hall, W	ca. 1920s	x		7R
158		Hall, W	ca. 1930s	x		7R
159		Hall, W	1923	x	x	3CB
166		Hall, W	1935	x		7R

Number From	Number To	Street	Built Date	District	Individual	Status Code
167		Hall, W	1931	x		7R
195	197	Hall, W	ca. 1910s	x		7R
525		Pearl	1949	x		7R
299		San Ysidro, E	ca. 1920s	x		7R
315		San Ysidro, E	ca. 1920s	x		7R
109		San Ysidro, W	ca. 1920s	x		7R
138		San Ysidro, W	ca. 1920s	x		7R
145	149	San Ysidro, W	1927	x		7R
148		San Ysidro, W	ca. 1920s	x		7R
150	152	San Ysidro, W	ca. 1920	x		7R
154A	154B	San Ysidro, W	ca. 1920	x		7R
156		San Ysidro, W	ca. 1910s	x		7R
161		San Ysidro, W	1920	x		7R
2273		Smythe	1927	x		7R
2277		Smythe	ca. 1910	x		7R
2371		Smythe	1922	x		7R
2375		Smythe	ca. 1920	x		7R
2378		Smythe	1945	x		7R
2383		Smythe	ca. 1920	x		7R
3794		Sunset	1945	x		7R
392		Sycamore	ca. 1910s	x		7R
125	129	West Olive	ca. 1910s	x		7R
113	115	West Park	1914	x		7R
121		West Park	1950 (1920s?)	x		7R
143		West Park	1915	x		7R
147		West Park	ca. 1920s	x		7R
212		West Park	ca. 1940	x		7R
233		West Park	1910	x		7R
314		West Park	ca. 1910s	x		7R

Based upon the reconnaissance survey completed in April 2010, properties noted as significant to a potential historic district were assigned a California Historic Resource Status Code (CHRSC) of "7R," while properties noted as significant as an individual resource were assigned a CHRSC of either "3CB," "3CS," or "3S."

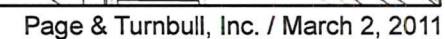
Future work should continue to explore the potential historic resources located within San Ysidro. Specifically future work should focus on the following specific study areas:

- San Ysidro Community Park Cultural Landscape Study: As a former agricultural and rural community, San Ysidro has had deep connection to the natural landscape, which had impacts upon the development of the border town. Some evidences of this landscape

and early rural development are still evident in the San Ysidro Community Park. In recent history, the immigration of Mexican citizens into San Ysidro may have influenced the development of the park as a cultural landscape. Further work should explore the San Ysidro Community Park and surrounding area as a cultural landscape with specific focus on the influence of Mexican culture on the physical environment.

- Little Landers Historic District: A potential historic district may exist within the area of the original Little Lander settlement. This residential district would be centered on the San Ysidro Community Park and encompass the area between Pepper St, Seward St, Alverson St, and San Ysidro Blvd. Based upon initial mapping of potential resources within this area, the potential historic district may not be viable due to integrity issues (See Map 2). However, further intensive-level study is required to examine the alterations to individual properties, and to weigh the number of non-contributing parcels against the contributing parcels. A smaller district may exist encompassing as little as one or two street blocks.





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