



# HISTORY MATTERS

## CHA UPCOMING EVENTS

**Curatorial Workshop: Architecture**  
 Wednesday, September 4th | 2:00 p.m.  
 \$10 for CHA Members  
 \$15 for Non-Members  
 R.S.V.P. Required

**Lunch & Learn:**  
**Coronado School of Fine Arts**  
 Join us for a lunchtime talk. Bring a brown bag lunch or order from the Tent City Cafe and hear Christine Stokes, CHA's Director speak and share photos from the Coronado School of Fine Arts.  
 Friday, September 13th  
 Lunch begins at 11 am  
 R.S.V.P. Required  
 Seating is first come, first serve

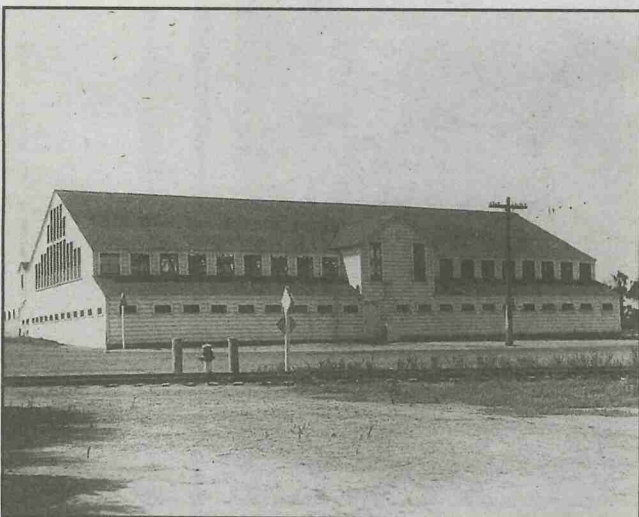
**Wine & Lecture:**  
**The Midway Then & Now**  
 Join us in partnership with the USS Midway as speakers Steve Walker and Brian Butler, delve into the past and present history of the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier that has become San Diego's most highly rated tourist attraction.  
 Friday, September 13th  
 5:30 p.m. Reception 6:00 p.m. Lecture  
 \$15 for CHA Members  
 \$18 for Non-Members

**Hands-on History: Naval Airships Kids Program**  
 Wednesday, June 19th  
 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
 \$7 for CHA Members  
 \$10 for Non-Members

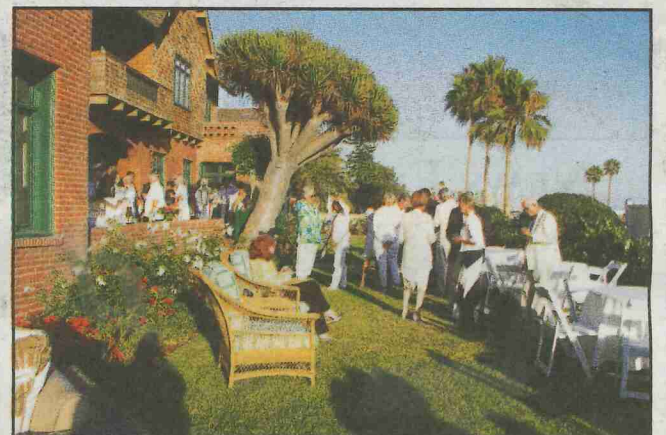
R.S.V.P. or Purchase Tickets at [www.coronadohistory.org](http://www.coronadohistory.org), (619) 435-7242, or by visiting the Museum Store at 1100 Orange Avenue.

## HISTORY MYSTERY

A monthly photo from CHA's Collection of Coronado's past for residents to guess. What does this photo depict? See the next page for the answer.



Coronado Historical Association Collection



## CORONADO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION HOLDS ANNUAL SPRECKELS PARTY

The Coronado Historical Association held its annual Spreckels Party, Saturday evening, August 10th. The event is held each year to thank the organization's most generous supporters -- its Spreckels Society members.

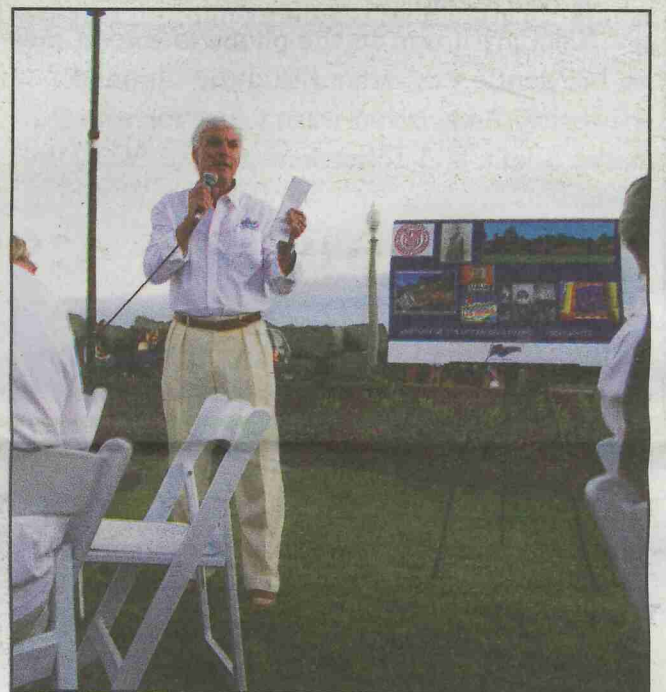
CHA's members are true keepers of Coronado history. Their generosity and loyal support are a service to the community, enabling CHA to continue its mission of preserving that history. The Spreckels event is a way to show the organization's gratitude.

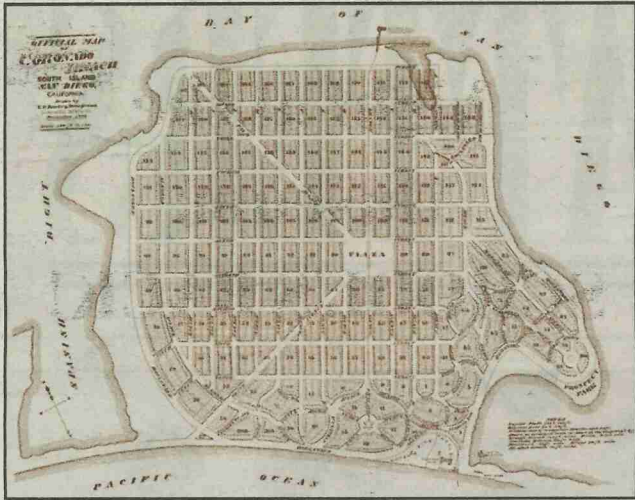
Gracious hosts Tracey Sedlock and Barnaby Walsh, as well as Carrie and John O'Brien, opened the historic home at the corner of Ocean and Marina. The home is a Craftsmans style home with Tudor influences, designed by William Sterling Hebbard and built in 1915. The beautifully decorated lawn and brilliant sunset off of Point Loma were unforgettable. Spreckels Society Party Chair Caroline Murray, assisted by Emily Talbert, created the festive and casual mood.

New CHA Board President Dave Landon presented the Spreckels Society Award to the O'Briens for their many years of community leadership in celebrating and preserving Coronado history through their real estate business. Earlier this summer, John presented the interesting history of Ocean Boulevard at a CHA Wine & Lecture. During the Spreckels Party, he also presented the history of the home, including notable former owners Howard W. Baker (1915-1922), Walter Fitch (1929-1973), and Robert Clark (1973-2002).

Overall the atmosphere was spirited as CHA celebrated Coronado History and it's top supporters. CHA Spreckels Member Jenna McIntosh summed up the night: "We enjoyed it all - the venue, the food, the company!"

*Photos courtesy of Kara Adams*





## NEWS FROM THE PAST

### More On Spanish Street Names In Coronado

*Coronado Eagle and Journal,  
Volume 68, Number 17, 23 April 1981*

This month's news from the past, is another look at Coronado's street names. We hope you truly enjoy this step into the past!

*by Fran Marshall*

Kat Carlin was on the phone to correct me in her gentle way, after I said the Coronado Historical Association wasn't sure for who Isabella, Adella and Tolita were named. Well, the historians are firm on two of them and romantic about a third.

Isabella is for the wife of Elisha Babcock, Adella for the wife of H.L. Story, developers of the Hotel del Coronado. A gentleman who lives on Isabella remarked, when his granddaughter was named Isabella that she was named for the street on which he lives, a cute quip but not true, which he knew, because the child was named for her great-grandmother.

Tolita may have been named for Tolita Wilcox, the daughter of a rich Spanish family in San Diego, according to Eleanor Ring Storrs, whose mother Belle Stewart Reynolds was a contemporary and friend of Tolita's.

Tolita's father, Wilcox by name, was an adventurous gentleman, there's a vague tale about a ship he skippered being grounded off Baja in a storm. While he lived in Coronado he would have known the Hotel del developers, Babcock and Story, and it seems logical that they used his daughter's name for a street name.

Tolita married a naval officer named Randolph Miner, spelling uncertain in the latter. At one time Tolita lived in Paris in great luxury, and when Eleanor Storrs, then Eleanor Reynolds and her mother went to that city they were lavishly entertained by her.

## History Mystery Answer

Captured by a photographer standing on the ocean-side boardwalk on September 26, 1927, this photograph depicts an exterior of the Hotel del Coronado bath house and swimming pool. However, swimming wasn't the only recreational activity that had a designated room at the resort. Historically, the Hotel Del had rooms for activities such as reading and writing, smoking and men's and women's billard.

## CALLING THE PAST: HISTORIC TELEPHONE BOOTHS

*by Zoraida Payne*

I am Zoraida Payne — I'm a student at SDSU pursuing a master's in American History to study in depth the roots and expressions of this culture, since I am originally from Argentina. I thoroughly enjoy the challenge of researching at CHA in the museum and library archives to collect information about Coronado's past! Last month I shared the interesting history of the Toledo Scale.

This month I invite you to think in the way that we orally communicate; this intrinsic human necessity was once done in person, but what about when you weren't physically close to that person? In 1876, a new tool came into the scene: the telephone. This new technology could be used either at a business location or at home; but, what about if you weren't able to afford that invention at home? Well, in our city, you could have gone to the Coronado Pharmacy —located on 918 Orange Avenue— and used the telephone booth for placing your call, and today, you are invited to look at that very same phone booth in the museum exhibit, CHA Collects!.

Thinking about this new technological tool of communication, I'd like to share a brief journey of the telephone development. Alexander Graham Bell's invention was first used on March 10, 1876, when he successfully spoke through a telephone to his assistant in the adjoining room. He said: "Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you". Only two years later, in 1878, one of the earliest commercial telephone exchanges was established between Bridgeport and Black Rock in Connecticut, covering around 6 miles. That year, Thomas Doolittle had also re-used a telegraph wire between the two towns and "put a telephone on each end and put them in wooden booths" according to historian Hochheiser. So, people could pay a set rate of 15 cents to use the phone, making that perhaps the first telephone connection that was both in a booth, and where they could pay to make an individual call.

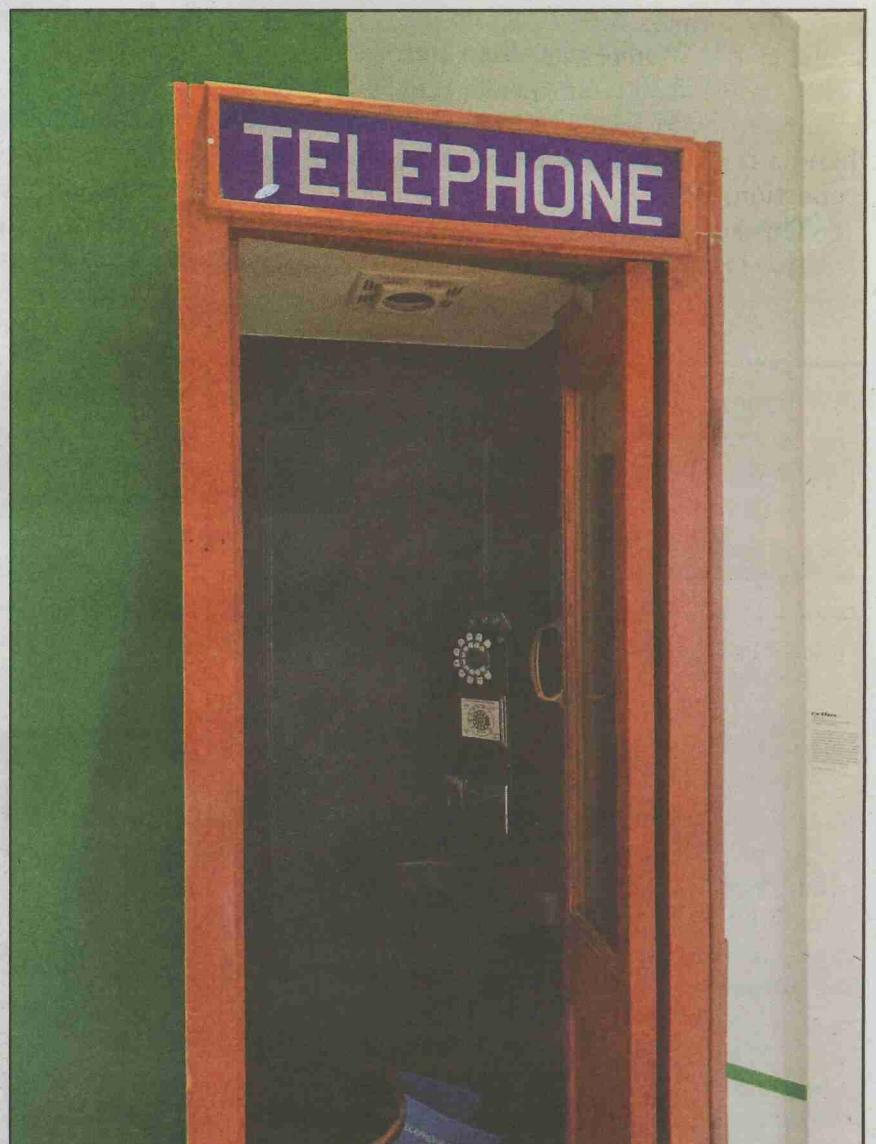
The first proper "telephone cabinet" was patented in 1883, and it was a fairly elaborate affair: intended to measure a roomy four by five feet, with a desk inside and wheels to move the whole thing. Though there is no clear information about where the very first telephone was installed, Hochheiser says "they typically would have been in places like high-class hotels." Hence, it is not surprising that the Hotel Del had telephone services since its beginnings in 1888. It's telling to the Hotel's opulence as it had only been seven years since the city of San Diego has their first phone in 1881.

In 1889, William Gray created the new coin-operated public telephone, this "post-pay" machine was installed in a bank in Hartford, Connecticut. He came up with a series of experimental models, submitted a patent application in 1888, and on August 13, 1889, it was issued. Soon he formed the Gray Telephone Pay Station Company and along with another inventor named George Long, made a series of improvements, says Hochheiser. In 1898, the Western Electric No. 5 Coin Collector was the first automatic "prepay" machine; therefore, depositing of coins before placing a call gradually became the norm, in lieu of after the call when the operator indicated the amount to be inserted.

Pharmacist Lathan Lyman Hale opened the Coronado Drugstore in 1934, and six years later he embarked on an extensive expansion and renovation. "We want the people of the city to come in and enjoy our new store," said L. H. Latham, proprietor. The area of the store has been increased to twice its former size, embracing now the space formerly occupied by the Burge Barber Shop. New features of the store also included linoleum in a pleasing green pattern, the trim of the antique cream walls being of the same green tone, and a 40-foot soda fountain.

Aligned with all the innovations, a public phone booth was installed for the convenience of customers. "We believe that we have the most up-to-date store in the city now." Those were the proud words of the pharmacist. Six years after this makeover, Mr. Lathan opened the Avenue Pharmacy, and in 1954, he merged both shops under Coronado Pharmacy in the newly remodeled headquarters at 918 Orange Avenue.

The phone booth in CHA's collection witnessed many conversations and community events through the years. One particularly interesting event was the firefighters' response to a call in the early hours on December 25th, 1981, when the phone book was set on fire. Certainly, the innate necessity of oral communication traveled a long journey, from the few home phones to the public booth in stores and on the streets, to the expensive cumbersome mobile artifact, to the ubiquitous and multifunctional cellular phone. If you want to reminisce of previous times, just come by the museum to visit this nostalgic piece of our own local history, the telephone booth.



## FIELD GUIDE TO CORONADO HISTORY: WHEN FIRST STREET WASN'T FIRST STREET

by Bruce Linder

During the early 1920s, a bit of madness swept through little Coronado. Our famously regular grid of residential streets – alphabetical north and south, numerical east and west – came under intense fire. Politicians and newspapers fanned the flames of revolt. Many considered the existing uninspired design to be at best “pedestrian,” at worse, “a reminder of large Eastern center cities.” One written opinion in the Coronado Journal had it that, “it shows of thought and paucity of ideas to have a street in Coronado, under California skies with California architecture, called the ‘Corner of 3rd & I.’”

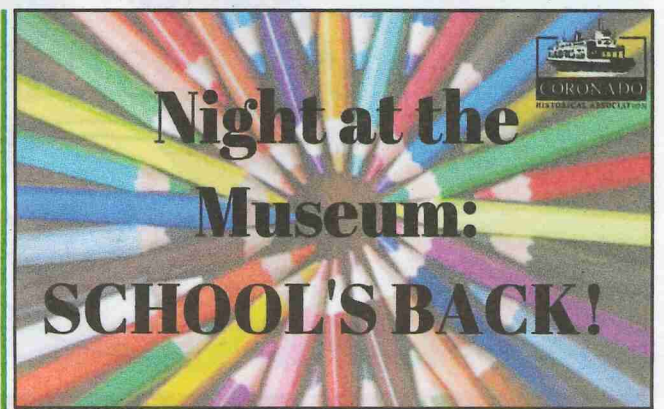
The City Planning Commission delved into this burning issue and released findings that founding father Elias Babcock originally intended, way back in 1887, to name everything with Spanish names. He had only reluctantly agreed to an alphabetical/numerical array because he was desperate to sell house lots to recoup investments. Lots would be easier to locate for potential buyers if streets held letters and numbers logic.

In the end, he only named our curvy streets in the Spanish mold (think of Isabella and Alameda) while saving Orange, Palm and Olive for the trees he planned to plant along them. Everything else, to heck with it, would help cross-fix house sales. In studying the issue in the early 1920s, several new schemes were suggested to the City Planning Commission and Board of Trustees to finally do away with letters and numbers.

One of the most promising was to rename lettered streets with Spanish names beginning with that letter (A Avenue might become Alicia for instance – a practice we are familiar with in San Diego) and numbered street would take on a Spanish equivalent (Octava for 8th Street for example). Luckily, calmer heads prevailed when it was voiced that 6th Street could become Sexta or G Avenue could be changed to Gustavito – probably not names you would want on your return address. On January 7, 1924, the Board of Trustees did take some limited action by unanimously passing a resolution to rename First Street as “Cabrillo Esplanade.” A double win for the Spanish-sobriquet faction, honoring a Spanish explorer and adding a Spanish-sounding term akin to “promenade.”

Alas, the name only lasted three years, reversed by public petition. “Most people cannot spell Cabrillo much less pronounce it,” read the petition. “The name is confusing and incomprehensible to eastern correspondents, no one can locate First Street, and it is impossible to telephone!” Local history is full of stories like this of the collision of politics and common sense ... and this nice story makes you a bit more streetwise about Those Times in Coronado.

Oh, and why don't we have Orange trees along Orange Avenue? They all died, either gnawed by jackrabbits after planting or disturbed by the wind and smoke from passing Orange Avenue trolleys. Come visit the Coronado Museum and the Research Library of the Coronado Historical Association for this story and others.



### NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Please join the The Coronado Historical Association for fun- filled museum- themed night on Friday, September 20 at 6:00 pm! At this kids program, children will be learning about the different types of museums and they do. Kids will also be in for an evening of crafts, games, and more! CHA will be serving pizza, you just need to bring a pillow or sleeping bag to get comfy. Cost for CHA Members is \$15 / Siblings \$5; CHA Non-Members \$25 / Siblings \$10. The event takes place at 1100 Orange Avenue, seating is first come first served. RSVP required. For more information visit coronadohistory.org or call (619) 435-7242.



## CORONADO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION IS IMPROVING RESEARCH SERVICES

Over the last two years, the Coronado Historical Association has prioritized the improvement of its research services. Heritage research is imperative for spreading awareness about Coronado's historical assets. CHA's research services provides opportunities for the public to learn about how to protect historical resources and ensures the accurate dissemination of historic research. The Association's services include providing access to the museum's collection for research for family genealogies, scholarly publications, and for Determination of Historic Significance applications through the City of Coronado's Historic Preservation Program.

Last summer, CHA opened the renovated Research Library. The improvements - which included four computer workstations for researchers, interns, and volunteers - expanded CHA's ability to provide community researchers with a usable workspace.

Another accomplishment of this last year was the implementation of the Research Volunteer Program. To assist the nearly 200 researchers that visit CHA every year, a whole new volunteer program was developed. Potential volunteers are trained in various research topics including how to handle fragile artifacts and archives. Once trained, they facilitate research appointments where Coronado residents and outside visitors can access the collection. When they are not helping researchers, they assist staff with documenting and caring for the collection.

This summer, staff and volunteers are improving CHA's research services by diligently cleaning up the data about its historic holdings. The collections include more than 1,400 three dimensional objects (items such as Navy SEAL diving equipment, Panama Exposition trophies, china from the Hotel del, and paintings by Monty Lewis); over 22,000 historic photographs; and about 2,000 archives files which translate to thousands of documents related to Coronado social organizations such as the Rotary Club, local businesses like Mexican Village, Coronado schools, City records and personal family collections.

While most of the items in the collection are well documented, some have remained mysteries - particularly photographs. Some of the historic photographs are missing key information or the places, events, and people in them remain unidentified. This makes it difficult when researchers have particular questions about an important event or are looking for significant pieces of information about influential locals.

Luckily, CHA is tackling these issues head-on. CHA has developed a new program where local community members can come and help us identify photographs. Two of these mystery photo sessions occurred in July and more are being scheduled. Once we get accurate information, the Research Library Volunteers plug the correct data into the computer database that is used to manage the collections. The database, in turn, is what researchers use to browse and learn about our collection.

While much of the work is behind-the-scenes, CHA is continually improving its research services.

