

NORTH PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MARCH 2020 MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: MARCH 19, 2020

TIME: XX PM

These notes summarize information that was planned to be presented at the March 19, 2020 Business Meeting of the North Park Historical Society (NPHS) Board of Directors, and the activities discussion for the organization. These notes include updates as of March 25, 2020. The meeting was canceled in advance due to concerns about the novel coronavirus, and would have been prohibited by the third week in March, when gatherings of 10 or more were forbidden and the church was closed.

The next meeting scheduled for **THURSDAY April 16, 2020 starting at 6:30 p.m.** in a second floor meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church **MAY NOT OCCUR IF RESTRICTIONS ON GATHERINGS ARE STILL IN PLACE AND THE CHURCH REMAINS CLOSED.**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

We hope all our members and friends are staying safe and healthy.

2. AGENDA REVIEW AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The latest Pacific Beach Historical Society newsletter(s) will be circulated for viewing at the next possible meeting. The March 2020 PastMatters column in Uptown News was about the history of the unsung and unseen sewer (see last pages of this summary).

3. MINUTES ACCEPTANCE

The minutes from the February 20, 2020 meeting have been posted on the website.

BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The financials for the period February 20 to March 18, 2020 were sent to Board Members before March 19. During this period, one member renewed (thank you Robert R.!). We sold five spiral-bound North Park history books to Verbatim Books. The San Diego History Center paid NPHS for four tote bags they sold on consignment. Total income in this period was \$106.55. Expenses in this time period consisted of our annual donation of \$100 to Grace Lutheran Church for allowing us to use their meeting room for our monthly meetings.

ACTIVITIES PORTION OF MEETING

5. UPDATE ON PLAQUE FOR WATER TOWER

Regarding the feasibility of placing the plaque in a boulder or some kind of low wall next to the two-story building at the Water Tower site, since the installation would not be considered public art, our new contact is with the City Public Utilities Department and not with the Arts Commission.

6. UPDATE ON COUNTY COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Steve noted that he has asked the County if we can apply the remaining \$1,250 from the 2019-2020 grant for water tower art to placement of the plaque, and he is awaiting their reply. Also, Steve said that the County no longer has a fixed deadline for future grant requests. However, there are likely to be many competing requests due to the economic disaster that is accompanying the coronavirus crisis, so NPHS probably will not make a request.

7. PLANNING FOR PAULY'S ADDITION WALKING TOUR

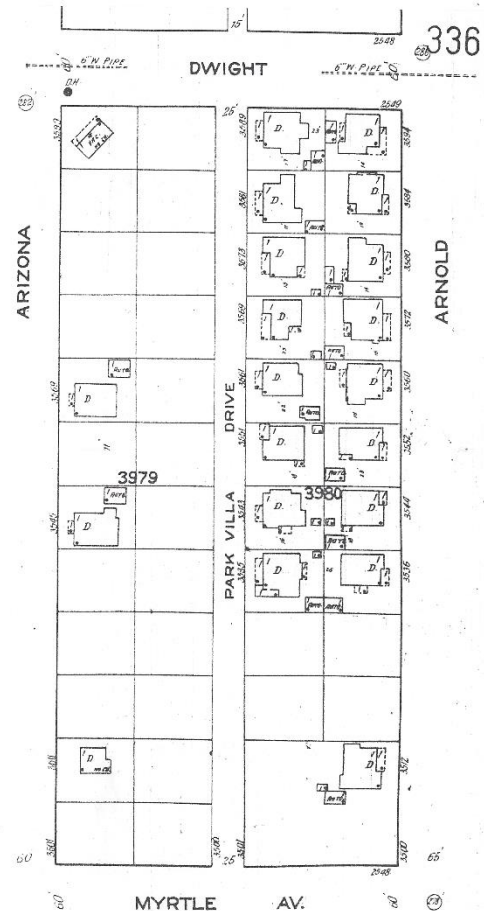
Sharon, Hilda, Paul, Michael, George, Steve, and Katherine are working to develop a walking tour of part of Pauly's Addition. Several sub-committee members met on February 23 and developed a route pattern. A draft table with information about each house and walking hazards has been compiled. A photo notebook has also been initiated. Our next steps are to choose the homes to highlight with more research, conduct a preliminary practice tour, adjust the route and guide notes, add pictures to the photo book, and then conduct another practice tour.

8. ARIZONA STREET TRACT (PARK VILLA DRIVE) POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

As directed in the North Park Community Plan Update, City staff conducted a detailed field assessment of the one-block-long potential historic district between Myrtle Avenue and Dwight Street on the south and north, and Arizona Street and Arnold Avenue on the west and east. The potential district includes the interior street of Park Villa Drive. This block within the original larger Park Villas subdivision was re-subdivided in 1912 by Southern California Home Builders. The developer split the original 125-foot-deep lots in half and merged two 25-foot frontages to form nearly square lots that were about 62 feet deep with 50-foot frontages. In 1913, the first five homes were built (3594 to 3560 Arnold Avenue), followed by about a dozen homes the next year. The 1921 Sanborn map at right shows about 20 homes built. The other lots remained vacant until later in the 1920s.

Unfortunately, City staff found a lot of integrity issues with a high percentage of the homes in this potential district, such that only 20 of the 48 homes could be identified as contributing. City staff prepared a detailed summary for each house and conducted a field meeting attended by NPHS Board Members Katherine and George, as well as North Park Planning Committee and SOHO representatives. It is likely this proposed district will not be processed or designated.

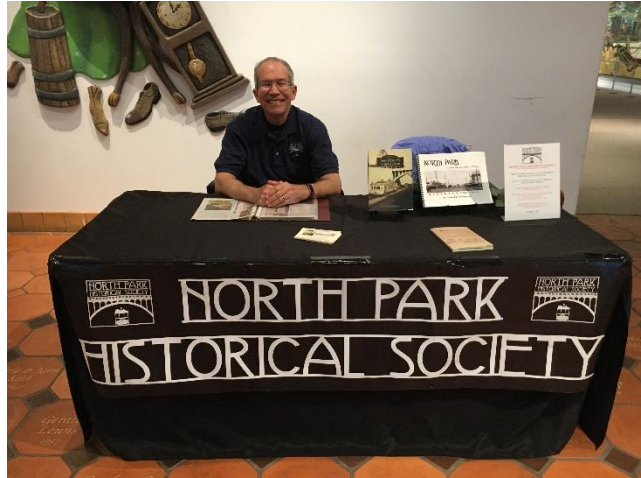
Other North Park districts in the city's work plan this year include Park Boulevard and Kalmia Place. District processing planned for 2021, 2022, and 2023 includes Altadena, St. Louis Heights/28th Street, and the North Park commercial district, respectively.



9. UPCOMING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Information regarding future events in 2020 is summarized below.

- Table in Lobby at San Diego History Center: March 10, 2020. Steve staffed the display table, in what was one of the last public events at the San Diego History Center for the duration of the public health crisis. Due to a combination of rainy weather and looming health concerns, attendance was light. But NPHS showed up! The History Center offered us another opportunity to display in August, when Katherine is scheduled to give a Tuesday Talk on "North Park and How it Grew." If life is back to normal by that time, we will do it.
- Congress of History: March 13-14, 2020. This conference was canceled due to the public health crisis and prohibitions against gatherings.
- Festival of the Arts: Saturday, May 9, 2020. The NPHS Board has already decided to skip exhibiting at the Festival of the Arts in 2020.
- Presentations for the Community: We have typically arranged for an outside speaker to make a free presentation in May, and have a few people in mind who could be quite interesting. However, given the current public health crisis, we will wait until it is safe to gather in groups before arranging a community meeting.



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Prepared by

Katherine Hon

Katherine Hon
Secretary, North Park Historical Society

Unsung and Unseen: San Diego's sewer system

PastMatters

KATHERINE HON

Imagine stray dogs and wild pigs consuming sewage and garbage dumped into streets and empty lots. A town in Crete in 2500 B.C.? Yes. But also San Diego in 1880. The modern sewer design of underground pipes with access manholes for cleaning and repairs was not envisioned until 1882. And it took until 1917 for almost all houses built in San Diego to have wastewater removal either by the city system or septic tanks.

It is not a topic we want to think much about. In contrast, the newly built, eight-foot diameter sewer tunnels in Paris during the 1700s were considered an engineering feat and a public attraction. People toured the sewers in barges to admire the efficient system.

Live tours of the sewer system in neighborhoods like North Park are not feasible, since the typical pipeline diameter is only eight inches. However, the construction of the system had a significant effect on development throughout San Diego.

In 1868, fewer than two dozen people lived in New Town, the core of what has become San Diego's Downtown. But within a few years, waste generated by the growing population created problems. The Sept. 5, 1872 issue of the *Daily Union* recommended some more effective means of carrying off sewage be developed, because the flows emptying into the bay on the beach at Alonzo Horton's wharf above low water mark were creating very offensive odors.

As dire as this situation may seem, it was 10 years before the city's Committee on Sewerage released a report on how to address the problem. The May 30, 1882 issue of the *San Diego Union* printed the committee's recommendations, which involved constructing several sets of sewers in New Town and Horton's Addition

as soon as possible, especially south of B Street and west of 12th, which was the "present centre of population." Modern features of the system included access manholes and provisions for periodic flushing. The committee also recommended that the underground pipeline system carry only sewage collected from direct connections to households and businesses and not carry any surface runoff, in order to keep the pipeline sizes as small as possible.

At this time, East Coast cities typically provided large pipelines for carrying off combined flows of rainfall runoff and sewage. Separate pipelines for rainfall runoff and sewage were called the "Waring System," after Colonel George E. Waring, Jr., who championed this concept and was instrumental in having such a system installed in Memphis, Tennessee in 1880. That city was in dire financial shape at the time and could not afford a "combined flow" system.

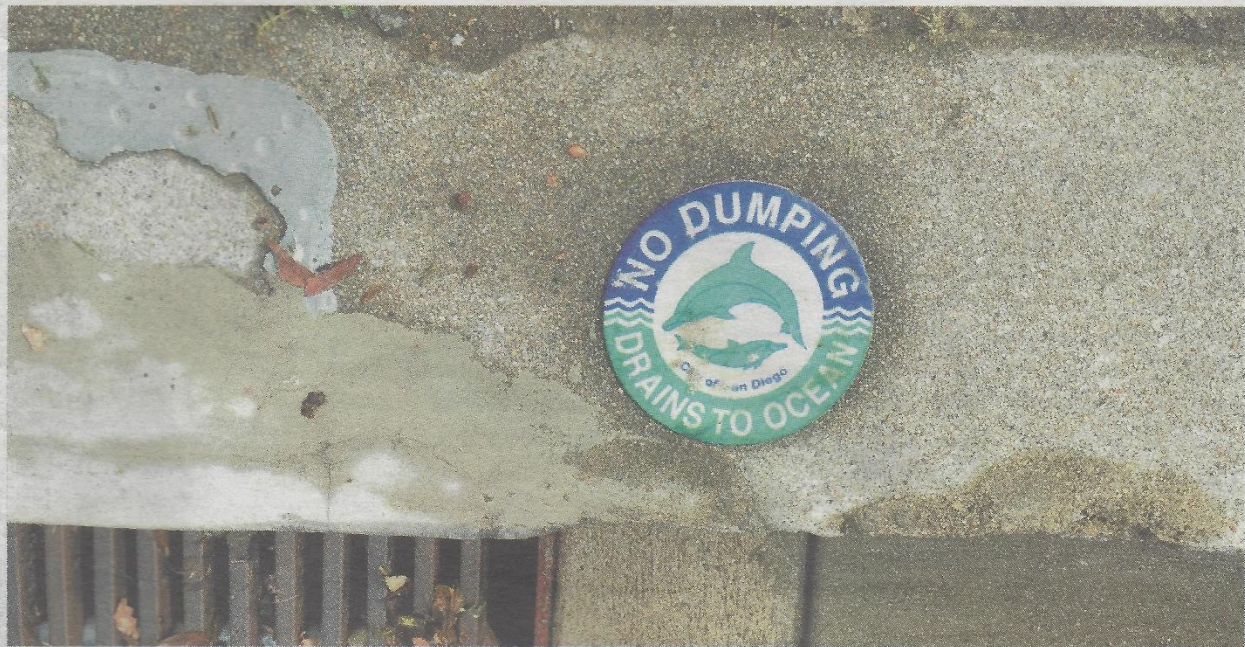
Waring (1833-1898) was born in New York. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War and became an expert in sanitary engineering, including facilities for drainage, sewers, and garbage removal. The San Diego Board of City Trustees sought his guidance in February 1887, when a bond issue was approved for the construction of buried sewers by the city. Waring offered to supervise the project and came to San Diego in April 1887. Work began in July that year. Neighborhoods in New Town, Sherman Heights and Golden Hill were the first to benefit from the pipeline system. The first trunk sewer to collect urban flows was the Market Street Trunk Sewer. It discharged into a tank located in San Diego Bay about 1,100 feet offshore. The tank failed to operate properly, however, and was removed a year later.

As a new century dawned, the sewer pipeline system expanded, while disposal into San Diego Bay through multiple

outlets continued. The April 5, 1912 issue of the *Evening Tribune* announced final sewer connections for a system serving University Heights from Georgia to Kansas streets west to east, and University Avenue to El Cajon Boulevard south to north. This sewer system was dubbed the "North Park" line, and also connected homes south of University Avenue and west of Oregon Street. Two other trunk lines were completed at this time. The "east side" trunk line ran in Switzer Canyon under the 30th Street bridge and drained to the sewer system at junction of Switzer and Powder House (now Florida) canyons. It served homes along Utah, Sherman (now Granada), Kansas and 30th streets. The "west side" sewer started at University Avenue and Fifth Street, and drained into the bay at Olive Street.

By the end of the 1930s, San Diego Bay was a polluted mess that was corroding the paint of Navy ships. In 1940, the Navy helped the city obtain the necessary funds for a treatment plant and deep outfall to be constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). President Roosevelt signed the proposal. The plant was located on Navy property at Harbor Drive and 32nd Street and was completed in June 1943. It was enlarged in 1950, but even so, increasing flows degraded water quality in the bay to the point that the County Department of Health quarantined the entire bay in 1955. It took eight more years for the Point Loma Treatment Plant and ocean outfall to be completed. In 1963 — nearly 100 years after New Town residents started discharging raw sewage into San Diego Bay — the Metro system began operations, and the bay finally was able to recover its natural water quality.

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Decals like this remind us that runoff in the streets empties untreated into canyons, rivers, San Diego Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Keeping sewers separate from rainfall runoff in San Diego began in the 1880s, when the Board of City Trustees chose the "Waring System" instead of a combined flow system for runoff and sewage. *(Photo by Katherine Hon)*