

**NORTH PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
JANUARY 2021 MEETING SUMMARY**

DATE: JANUARY 21, 2021

TIME: XX PM

These notes summarize information that was planned to be presented at the January 21, 2021 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 January 22, 2021. The meeting was canceled in advance due to concerns about the novel coronavirus and resulting state and local restrictions on gatherings.

All future meetings scheduled for the third **THURSDAYS of the month starting at 6:30 p.m.** in a second-floor meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church **WILL NOT OCCUR in 2021** until the public health crisis due to COVID-19 has passed. Although we will not be able to resume our public meetings until then, we are still providing information to all who contact us with questions about North Park history and documenting those communications in monthly summaries.

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 newsletters will be circulated for viewing at the next possible meeting. The December 2020 and the January 2021 PastMatters columns in Uptown News were Part 8 and Part 9 of a series about historic street names in San Diego (see the last pages of this summary).

3. MINUTES ACCEPTANCE

The meeting summary from the canceled November 19, 2020 meeting has been posted on the website. NPHS does not meet in December.

BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The financials for the entire year of 2020 were included in the Annual Report sent to Board Members on January 7, 2021.

The financials for this meeting are for December 17, 2020 to January 21, 2021 and were sent to Board Members on January 21, 2021. In this time period, one member renewed and provided an additional donation (thank you, Robert!). The San Diego History Center paid for one tote bag, and we sold five spiral bound North Park history books wholesale to Verbatim Books. Total income was \$171.55. Expenses of \$56.29 were \$1.29 in fees to pay state sales tax online, and \$55.00 for our annual website backup subscription with VaultPress.

The following state and federal organizational reports for the 2020 fiscal year were filed on the dates indicated below:

- 199N State income tax report filed online on January 5, 2021
- 990N federal income tax report filed online on January 10, 2021
- State sales tax of \$2.00 reported and paid online via NPHS debit card on January 5, 2021
- California Registry of Charitable Trusts Registration Renewal form RRF-1 filed online on January 17, 2021
- Statement of Information with the Secretary of State filed online March 3, 2020.

ACTIVITIES PORTION OF MEETING

5. UPDATE ON PLAQUE FOR WATER TOWER

Coordination with City Public Utilities Department staff 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 is pending return to some kind of normalcy.

6. PLANNING FOR PAULY'S ADDITION WALKING TOUR

The team has developed the route, photo notebook and draft guide notes for the southern part of Pauly's Addition. The current tour starts at Upas and Texas, heads west on Upas, north on Mississippi to Landis, east on Landis to Texas, and south on Texas back to the park. This route is approximately one mile and includes six designated houses and a wide range of ages and architectural styles. All walking tours are pending return to some kind of normalcy.

7. SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2020

The following summary of accomplishments was provided to the Board of Directors in the 2020 Annual Report on January 7, 2021:

The North Park Historical Society (NPHS) was formed in 2008 to educate residents and visitors about the history of North Park. The primary purpose of NPHS is "to conduct research and educational outreach in order to facilitate preservation of North Park's cultural and architectural history." The accomplishments of NPHS in 2020 grouped by the seven objectives stated in our Bylaws under the primary purpose are summarized below. Activities and product sales were profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and public health mandated limitations on gatherings.

Objective 1. To market and distribute printed and digital publications consistent with our purpose (e.g., *North Park: A San Diego Urban Village, 1896-1946*, our book on the history of North Park's first 50 years).

- Local stores continue to sell the book we prepared in 2014, *Images of America: San Diego's North Park* published by Arcadia Publishing Company. At the beginning of 2020, it was available for retail sale at various locations including SOHO, San Diego History Center, and CVS. NPHS sold 1 book to a friend of NPHS in 2020. We received a total of \$94.89 in royalty payments from Arcadia for sales by others in 2020.
- We continue to sell our "original" history book: *North Park: A San Diego Urban Village, 1896-1946* by Donald Covington, which is published and distributed by NPHS. We sold 15 spiral-bound books to the Verbatim Books store for their retail in 2020. Paras Newsstand closed permanently at the end of 2019. The San Diego History Center closed during the pandemic, and may not re-open their gift shop. We did not sell any copies to individuals in 2020.
- Our past agreement with Amazon was terminated in 2019.
- A total of 0 perfect bound and 15 spiral bound North Park history books left our inventory in 2020. Since publishing the book in 2007, we have sold a total of approximately 2,766 copies. We have 19 spiral-bound copies and 16 perfect-bound copies remaining.
- We did not sell any copies of the book, *Burlingame, the Tract of Character* by Donald Covington in 2020. We have 94 copies remaining.
- In 2017 we had 100 canvas tote bags with our logo printed at [AKA] Apparel-Supplies-Printing. We did not sell any bags to individuals in 2020. The San Diego History Center paid us for 5 bags sold on consignment in 2020 and returned one unsold bag when they closed the gift shop. We have 23 bags remaining.

Objective 2. To coordinate with other organizations on public historical education and preservation efforts, including designation of historical districts and/or structures.

- Due to the City limiting our access to the “canvas” of the fencing on top of the concrete reservoir facing Howard Avenue, the NPHS Board voted to terminate the project of developing an art installation to celebrate the Water Tower in April 2019. We refunded the remaining unspent County Grant funds for the project to the County.
- NPHS remains committed to installing the bronze plaque that NPHS paid to create in 2015 recognizing the Water Tower as a Local Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, but communication with the City was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- NPHS Board Member Paul Spears provided input on whether a full historical report should be required for 131 building permit applications to the City of San Diego for changes to buildings more than 45 years old.
- Paul and a small group of other Board members continued a free advice service helping to inform people on the potential for their house to be designated as a significant historic resource. NPHS received and responded to a total of eight requests in 2020. The owner of a newly designated historical home on Felton Street wrote to thank NPHS for guidance at the beginning of their designation process two years ago.
- NPHS wrote a letter to the city HRB staff supporting designation of a rare Queen Anne/Stick vernacular residence on Howard Avenue, which was built during the 1880s and moved to University Heights during the 1920s.
- NPHS bought a paver to benefit the Mini-Park under construction behind the North Park Theater.



Objective 3. To develop and conduct walking tours relating educational information about the history of various areas in North Park.

- One tour was conducted:
 - Tour of the Hamilton Street neighborhood emphasizing bungalow courts for Tiny Home enthusiasts on January 18, 2020 for eight people. The attendance was small but the participants were very attentive and appreciative. Michael and George shared guide duties. Jody, Sharon, Michael B., Claudia, Steve and Katherine assisted.



- Although the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from conducting any other walking tours, NPHS continued to develop a tour of Pauly's Addition. A group including George, Paul, Jody, Sharon, Steve and Katherine developed a route for the southern part of the neighborhood focusing on Mississippi and Texas streets from Upas to Landis streets. George developed text for the tour guide, Paul compiled interior photos for the assistant photo book, and Katherine organized the list of houses with construction date and style based on information compiled by others, including Paul and Hilda. We look forward to conducting this tour when normalcy returns, perhaps by Fall 2021. Homes that are candidates for highlighting include the following:



2140 Upas Street, Designated



3405 Texas Street, Designated



*3435 Texas Street, Designated
Built by Master Builder John Pearson*



*3530 Mississippi Street
built by Master Builder John Pearson*

Objective 4. To research and write objective articles about the history of North Park's people, landmarks, architecture, homes, commercial buildings, tracts, and other topics for publications.

- Press coverage was good this year in the *Uptown News*. Highlights include the following:
 - Twelve articles written by NPHS Secretary Katherine Hon in her monthly column "PastMatters" were published in *Uptown News* on the following topics: Pershing Drive, the Verbatim Books building on 30th at North Park Way, the unsung and unseen sewer system, the North Park sign, and an eight-part series on the people behind street names throughout San Diego, focusing on North Park.
- More than 500 people like and follow our North Park History Facebook page. We posted 20 items throughout the year, including information about the Mini-Park paver program coordinated by North Park Main Street, and the Uptown News articles.



Objective 5. To make and sponsor presentations of information useful to helping the public understand the origin and significance of historical resources in the community, including buildings, landmarks, and other structures.

- NPHS displayed at the San Diego History Center on March 10, 2020.

This was the last event we participated in due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual Congress of History conference, Festival of the Arts, and Toyland Parade were all canceled by their various organizers in response to public health prohibitions against gatherings. NPHS did not hold in-person meetings after the February 2020 meeting, but instead emailed a "meeting summary" each month containing information we would have shared.



Objective 6. To organize, convert to digital format (when possible) and provide the following materials for research and other purposes: documents, slides, data, notes, photos, and various ephemera and records related to history donated to the North Park Historical Society, and to establish a North Park collection for eventual donation to the San Diego Historical Society for preservation.

- Mike Hess of Hess Brewing Company requested a historic photo of North Park they could use on the can of their "Pershing Pils" beer, which they named to honor Pershing Drive, the old wagon road from downtown to North Park. We provided the classic 1953 picture of the corner of 30th and University Avenue, courtesy of the Hartley Family, who were credited on the can.





- NPHS received an envelope full of photos and newspaper clippings about the Toyland Parade from Gregg Schloss of A&B Sporting Goods. These were scanned and two excellent photos were emailed to Ken Kramer, genial host of the KPBS TV program “About San Diego.” The photos were shown on Ken Kramer’s November 2020 show, and he credited the North Park Historical Society and Gregg Schloss.



The 1960 Toyland Parade Court and other VIPs. From left, Lou Briscoe, Judy Cleer, Victor Jory, Janice Hillis, Karen Saunders, Patrick McVey, Jan Worrell and Judy Vultaggio. Jory and McVey starred in the TV show “Manhunt” from 1959 to 1961 as Detective Lieutenant Howard Finucane and police reporter Ben Andrews, respectively. The show was set in San Diego.



Queen Janice Hillis and Jay North AKA “Dennis the Menace”

- NPHS was saddened to learn from Gregg Schloss of A&B Sporting Goods that he would close the store at the end of December 2020 due to the negative impact the pandemic has had on youth sports and consequently his business. North Park Main Street asked NPHS for historical “whereas” clauses for a County of San Diego Proclamation to honor the Schloss family for their long-time operation of the store. The following text was provided:
 - Whereas, A&B Sporting Goods has been a family-owned business on University Avenue since 1941.
 - Whereas, Three generations of the Schloss family have continuously operated the store, providing baseball gloves, cleats, uniforms and other essential equipment to children who are now bringing in their own children and grandchildren.
 - Whereas, Store founder David Schloss played Santa Claus in two decades of the Toyland Parade after the popular community event re-started following World War II.
 - Whereas, David's son Joe, who became known as “Mr. North Park” for his work with the North Park Lions Club and on the Toyland Parade, joined his father at the store in 1946 as a salesman and later the owner, where he warmly greeted every customer until his death in 2015.
 - Whereas, Joe Schloss helped create North Park Little League in 1957, was a beloved coach for 60 years, and was honored with a ball field at Morley Field being dedicated to him on May 13, 2000, and the access road to the ball fields being named “Joe Schloss Way” in 2016.
 - Whereas, Joe's son Gregg has been at the store full time since 1982, continuing the store's fine tradition of providing outstanding merchandise and service until cancelation of youth sports due to the COVID-19 pandemic during much of 2020 forced him to close the store. [Only this clause was edited by the County]



*The Proclamation presented to Gregg Schloss by
County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher*

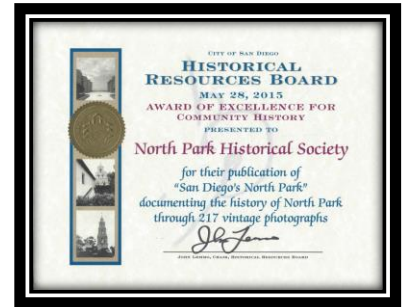
Objective 7. To conduct outreach to schools regarding North Park history consistent with our purpose.

- NPHS did not conduct any formal projects with schools in 2020.

Accomplishments in Previous Years

Accomplishments of NPHS since forming in 2008 include the following:

- Successfully nominated John Pearson, a craftsman builder in North Park in the 1920s, as a Master Builder in 2016.
- Printed approximately 100 more copies of *Burlingame: The Tract of Character* by Donald Covington in 2015.
- Received a 2015 Excellence in Historic Preservation Award in May from the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board (HRB) for our new book *Images of America: San Diego's North Park*.
- The City of San Diego HRB designated the Water Tower and surrounding historic district of water infrastructure as a local significant historic resource on April 23, 2015.
- The Water Tower was proclaimed a Local Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) San Diego Section on January 27, 2015. NPHS had a bronze plaque made and a ceremony was held on site on November 5, 2015 to celebrate. Many community group representatives and elected officials attended, including County Supervisor Ron Roberts.
- Established a Facebook page for NPHS in 2015.
- Prepared *Images of America: San Diego's North Park* which was published by Arcadia Publishing Company in November 2014.
- Received a 2014 SOHO People in Preservation (PIP) Award for successful designation of the water tower and surrounding water supply facilities on the National Register of Historic Places, sharing the award with University Heights Historical Society, McKinley Elementary School, and historian Alexander Bevil, who prepared the historical designation application.
- At SOHO's request, NPHS was their partner for the SOHO Annual Historic Home Tour Weekend in June 2014, conducting multiple walking tours.
- Developed the Hamilton Streetcar Suburb tour.
- Achieved listing of the Water Tower and surrounding area of past and present water facilities on the National Register of Historic Places on June 25, 2013.
- Launched revised website in 2012.
- Supported community efforts to oppose the Plaza de Panama Project in 2012.
- Achieved local designation of the North Park Dryden Historic District on June 23, 2011.
- Reprinted *Burlingame; the Tract of Character* by Donald Covington, 2010.
- Won community awards from San Diego Historical Resources Board (2011 and 2012), SOHO (2011), and the American Planning Association (2011).
- Conducted numerous walking tours of Burlingame, Dryden District, commercial area, "Pershing Heights," and Morley Field.
- Displayed at community events, including at the North Park Festival of the Arts and Old House Fair.
- Held annual car shows from 2010 to 2019 (ten shows).
- Continued successful marketing of our first book, *North Park: A San Diego Urban Village, 1896-1946* by Donald Covington, published in 2007.



8. COMMUNITY COORDINATION

In January 2021, we responded to requests for information as summarized below.

1. Sarah wrote asking for an evaluation, noting, "The house was likely built in 1927. We have obtained photos from the early 1940's from a relative of the family who lived in the house at that time as well as some original papers, including deed trusts. I am attaching a couple of those photos and an image of the deed trust from 1940." Paul and his team evaluated the house and concluded it should qualify for designation as an Individually Significant historical resource.



2. Kim wrote: "I am the incredibly happy new owner of a home in North Park. When I first saw it, I was struck how everything is original - windows, bathrooms, kitchen, electrical system (yikes), etc. This is what makes it so special to me - I want to honor the home and fix it up, maintaining these original features... I would really appreciate your opinion if it may qualify for historical designation, and then Mills Act qualified." Paul and his team evaluated the house and concluded it should qualify for designation as an Individually Significant historical resource.
3. Darren wrote: "I am on the HOA Board for the La Boheme building on Ohio & 30th Streets and was hoping the NP Historical Society could be of assistance in a building remodel we are planning. We are looking for classic black and white photos of North Park to use in our elevator lobbies and were hoping you could provide access to some we haven't yet seen." Katherine directed him to the 2014 Arcadia book by NPHS to identify photos NPHS has the rights to share. Darren said he would purchase the book at the Verbatim Books store and get back in touch.

The December 2020 PastMatters column in Uptown News discussed the pioneers behind the original names of present-day Granada Avenue and 30th Street between University Avenue and Upas Street. The January 2021 PastMatters column discussed possibilities for the original name of Ray Street, which was Robinson. See the last pages of these notes for those articles.

9. UPCOMING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Future events will have to wait until a return to some kind of normalcy.

10. FUTURE MEETINGS

All future meetings scheduled for the third **THURSDAYS of the month starting at 6:30 p.m.** in a second-floor meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church **WILL NOT OCCUR in 2021** until the public health crisis due to COVID-19 has passed. Although we will not be able to resume our public meetings until then, we are still providing information to all who contact us with questions about North Park history.

Prepared by

Katherine Hon

Katherine Hon
Secretary, North Park Historical Society

Attorneys and captains in West End

San Diego street names: Part eight of the series

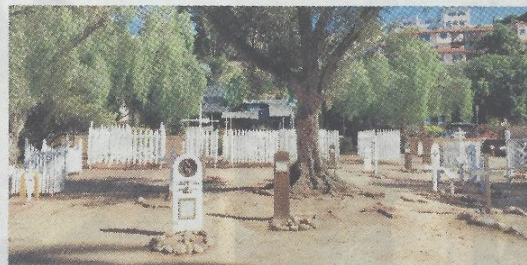
PastMatters KATHERINE HON

William Jefferson Gatewood formed his West End tract in 1873 and named his north-south streets after people he knew. In the ordinances of 1899 and 1900, original names changed as follows: Pemberton became Idaho (later 28th), Winder became Utah, Johnson became Sherman (later Granada), Gatewood became Kansas (later 29th), Brunson became Nebraska (later 30th), and Robinson became Ray. The names Pemberton, Winder and Gatewood were discussed in last month's

column. This time the focus is on Johnson, Sherman and Brunson. Possibilities for a San Diego pioneer behind Gatewood's choice for the street name of Johnson include Cullen A. Johnson and George A. Johnson.

Cullen Augustus Johnson (1826-1872) was working as an attorney in San Francisco by 1861 and moved to San Diego in 1867. He served as the district attorney from 1868-1869. A City Deed dated February 25, 1869 records his purchase of the 80-acre west half of Pueblo Lot 1116 from the City Trustees for \$20 with "Wm Jeff Gatewood" signing as the notary public. This land became part of University Heights in 1888.

Cullen Johnson died of tuberculosis on May 16, 1872. Father Antonio Ubach conducted the funeral service in the Old Town Catholic Church, and Johnson was buried at El Campo Santo Cemetery. The Daily Union's May 17, 1872 issue noted, "A large number of the members of the Bar and friends of the deceased followed his remains to the grave." However, his gravesite is not identified. It may be one of the many unnamed graves marked with a simple cross, enclosed with a picket fence, or even lying under San Diego Avenue. The cemetery was split by a streetcar line in 1889, and the rail line was paved for what is now San Diego Avenue in



Historical records verify that Cullen Johnson was buried at Old Town's El Campo Santo Cemetery in 1872, although his gravesite is not marked. The original name of Granada Avenue was Johnson Street, perhaps for this attorney who also dealt in land. (Photos by Katherine Hon)

1942. Most of the bodies were left in place both times.

George Alonzo Johnson (1824-1903) was born in New York and came to California by steamer in 1849, landing in San Francisco. The 1860 Federal Census listed Johnson as a "Steamboat Captain" in San Diego. He was a notable pioneering captain on the Colorado River before settling in San Diego. In 1853, he founded a successful steamboat company that shipped cargo up the Colorado River from its mouth to Fort Yuma. He is an important figure in Arizona history.

George Johnson lived in Old Town during his early and later years. He was a member of the State Assembly in 1863 and 1866-1867 and participated with Gatewood as a director of the San Diego Bay Shore Railroad Company to build a rail line from Old Town to Horton's Addition. His name is among those listed on the back cover of the 1874 San Diego

City Directory as a director of the Commercial Bank of San Diego.

In addition to these civic accomplishments, he raised premier stock on the Rancho Santa Maria de los Peñasquitos. The rancho was a wedding gift to Johnson's bride, Maria Estéfana Alvarado (1840-1926), from her parents in 1859. Through her mother, Estéfana was the niece of Pio Pico, the last governor of California under Mexico, and General Andrés Bello. The land encompassed what is now the communities of Mira Mesa, Carmel Valley and Rancho Peñasquitos. Johnson sold the rancho in 1880. Later, the family moved to a wood-frame pre-fabricated building that had been brought by ship to San Diego's Old Town in 1869. They lived in this simple home until Johnson's death on November 27, 1903. The San Diego Union's December 1, 1903

SEE STREET NAMES, Page 27



George and Estéfana Johnson lived in this simple house on the Old Town plaza after leaving their adobe on the Rancho Santa Maria de los Peñasquitos in 1880. The Johnson House was reconstructed in 1989 by California State Parks and is currently operated as a fine goods store with colorful clothing, jewelry and hats.



Matthew Sherman's early San Diego home near the corner of 19th and J streets was built in 1868 and moved to its current location in 1904 from a lot now in the northbound lane of I-5. Present-day Granada Avenue in North Park was named Sherman Street from 1900 to 1911.

Continued on next page

Street names

CONTINUED FROM Page 5

issue reported his "interment was at the Catholic Cemetery on the mesa overlooking the Bay." This is present-day Pioneer Park in Mission Hills, a story in itself.

In 1900, City Engineer Louis Davids replaced the West End name of Johnson with Sherman, because nearby University Heights also had a Johnson Avenue. In University Heights, the street was named for Andrew Johnson, U.S. President from 1865 to 1869. Gatewood had named his street before the 1888 map of University Heights was filed, but Davids apparently gave higher priority to maintaining consistency with the University Heights theme of presidents for east-west streets.

Davids likely recognized prominent San Diego pioneer Matthew Sherman (1827-1898) with the replacement name in West End. Sherman was stationed in San Diego in 1862 during the Civil War and came to live in San Diego permanently in December 1865 after being discharged from the army with the rank of captain. He started his military career at age 13 and served on the USS Independence during the Mexican War in the 1840s.

Sherman was a long-time public figure in San Diego. He served as Customs Collector from 1865-1869, as city clerk from 1869-1870, on the City Board of Trustees from 1884-1886, on the County Board of Supervisors from 1886-1887, and as mayor from 1891-1893. He founded Sherman Heights from land he bought from the City Trustees in 1867. The family lived in several homes in his tract. Sherman helped set aside the land that became Balboa Park and helped create Mount Hope

Cemetery — his eventual resting place — which his wife named.

The Evening Tribune's July 5, 1898 issue announced Sherman's death that morning, noting, "During his thirty-three years' residence here Captain Sherman enjoyed the confidence and respect of everyone with whom he became acquainted..." Those acquaintances probably included Louis Davids, who also lived in Sherman Heights during the 1890s. Sherman Street was changed to Granada Avenue by Ordinance No. 4346 on January 16, 1911.

Anson Brunson (1834-1895) was born in Ohio and became an attorney. He practiced in Macon City, Missouri, before coming to California in 1862. He settled in Napa and then moved to Los Angeles a few years later. He came to San Diego often. The San Diego Union's October 20, 1869 issue reported, "Our friend A. Brunson of Los Angeles, was badly stung by a stingaree while out bathing on Saturday last. He is doing well under the care of Dr. Hoffman. The surf is very fine, but dangerous. We advise our friends to patronize the Baths of Cottrell, at Horton's wharf."

Brunson represented plaintiffs and defendants in a variety of San Diego cases. He and Gatewood represented the defendants in a case reported in the Daily Union's October 8, 1871 issue, and both men gave speeches at an April 13, 1871 San Diego event to entertain members of the Los Angeles Bar. A City Deed dated April 20, 1871 indicates Brunson bought land in San Diego, including in Pueblo Lots 22, 32, 33, 206 and 214. However, it appears he had sold all this land by 1873.

Brunson was nominated to be a Superior Court judge in 1884. Later, he continued his law

practice, including for railroad companies. The San Diego Union's December 12, 1890 issue noted, "Judge Brunson of Los Angeles, attorney for the Santa Fe system, came down last evening on business." The San Diego Union's June 15, 1893 issue reported, "W.J. Hunsaker, ex-mayor of San Diego, was yesterday appointed general attorney of the Southern California Railroad company, with headquarters at Los Angeles. Mr. Hunsaker succeeds Anson Brunson, his law partner." Brunson died on October 8, 1895 and is buried at Pioneer Memorial Cemetery in San Bernardino.

Present-day Ray Street separates Gatewood's West End tract from the eastern part of Joseph Nash's Park Villas tract, which extends from Ray to Boundary streets. Future columns will discuss the pioneers behind original street names in this part of North Park.

—Katherine Hon is the secretary of the North Park Historical Society. Reach her at info@northparkhistory.org or 619-294-8990.

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Meet the Robinsons

San Diego street names: Part nine of the series

PastMatters

KATHERINE HON

The original name of present-day Ray Street was Robinson Street. This narrow road marks the boundary between William Jefferson Gatewood's West End tract and Joseph Nash's Park Villas tract. Both men knew multiple Robinsons in early San Diego.

One possibility for the original street name is William N. Robinson (1841-1878), who arrived in San Diego from Texas in 1850 as a young boy with his father and mother. The family settled in Old Town. In 1867, 10 years after his father died, William and his mother sold their large land holdings in the western part of San Diego and moved to a ranch in Jamul. The 1870 federal census listed him as a farmer.

He served in the state assembly in 1869 and 1870, during which time he was favorably mentioned in several issues of the San Diego Union. The December 30, 1869 issue noted, "Hon. W.N. Robinson, our member of the State

Legislature, will please accept the thanks of this office for favors at Sacramento." The February 3, 1870 issue reported under a letter from Sacramento, "I don't know what our San Diego people are after, but I have noticed several of our leading citizens here lately. W. Jeff. Gatewood has been at the Capital all along, and within the past

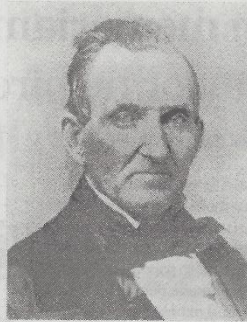
few days I have seen Judge Bush, Sheriff McCoy, and other familiar faces. Representative Robinson is always at his post, and votes regularly on every bill that comes up." Robinson and Gatewood connected in the effort to bring the transcontinental railroad to San Diego. The San Diego Union's October 10, 1868 issue listed William N. Robinson as one of the directors of the San Diego and Gila Southern Pacific and Atlantic Railroad Company, of which Gatewood was president.

The San Diego Union's June 3, 1871 issue related a connection between Robinson and merchant Joseph Nash in a short news item stating, "TALL OATS—We saw at Mr. J. Nash's store yesterday, stalks of oats eight feet in height, that came from Mr. W.N. Robinson's Ranch in the Jamul Valley. Mr. Robinson will cut about one hundred and fifty tons of oat hay on his ranch this season."

When Robinson ran again for the Assembly in 1873, Gatewood endorsed him at a rally of Democrats, as reported in the Daily Union's September 3, 1873 issue. Robinson lost the race, how-

ever, and the stress led to a mental breakdown reported in the Daily Union's September 18, 1873 issue as a "sad calamity that has befallen one of the leading citizens of Southern California." Judge Thomas Bush committed him to the Stockton State Hospital. After a few months, Robinson recovered and was discharged in January 1874. He returned home to Jamul and lived with his mother until his death on October 30, 1878 at the relatively young age of 37. His obituary in the San Diego Union's October 31, 1878 issue noted he was "to be buried at Old Town where the remains of his father and wife repose." This is El Campo Santo cemetery, although these Robinsons are not in marked gravesites, and their names are not on the list of known burials.

William N. Robinson's street name could also recognize his father, James W. Robinson (1790-1857), a prominent California pioneer who played a significant role in Texas history before William was born. In 1835, when Texas was pursuing its independence from Mexico, James W. Robinson was elected lieutenant governor of the provisional government. He



James W. Robinson was a prominent attorney and provisional lieutenant governor in Texas before he came to San Diego in 1850. Ray Street was originally named Robinson Street, possibly for James or his son, William N. (Courtesy of Wikipedia)

briefly served as governor in early 1836, when the original governor, Henry Smith, was deposed. But Smith refused to relinquish the office, so Robinson joined the Texas army and fought at the battle of San Jacinto. He served as a judge from December 1836 to 1840, practiced law, fought in battles at San Antonio, was imprisoned in Mexico in 1842, and may have participated in negotiating the 1843 armistice between Texas and Mexico.

In 1850, James W. Robinson arrived in San Diego with his wife, Sarah, and their young son. They had traveled in a wagon train that included Louis Rose, another prominent San Diego pioneer. Attorney James Robinson took cases throughout the state, many involving land claims, his



The graves of James W. Robinson and his son William at El Campo Santo cemetery in Old Town are not marked. Ironically, "Yankee Jim" Robinson — a thief successfully prosecuted by District Attorney James Robinson in 1852 — has one of the few marked graves, possibly because Yankee Jim is reputed to haunt the nearby Whaley House. (Photo by Katherine Hon)

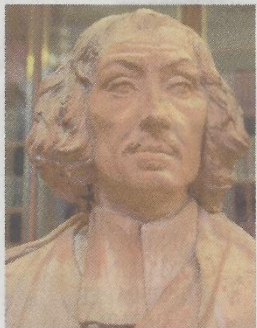
specialty. He served as district attorney from 1852 to 1855, and in this capacity, he prosecuted an individual who has surpassed most Old Town pioneers in name recognition to this day — "Yankee Jim" Robinson (no relation).

Under the headline, "An Interesting Page of San Diego History — How the Pioneers Disposed of Offensive People," the Daily Union's October 4, 1872 issue related the story of a crime and trial that occurred twenty years earlier in the summer of 1852. The article described how James Robinson, alias "Yankee Jim," a Canadian Frenchman of "dangerous character," and two companions stole a boat in the harbor, afterwards deserting it and turning it adrift. The three men were arrested on the

charge of grand larceny. The article noted that "James W. Robinson, father of Hon. Wm. N. Robinson, was at that time the District Attorney and conducted the prosecution." Yankee Jim was found guilty. He was hanged a month later "on the spot where Whaley's brick house now stands." His spirit is reputed to haunt the Whaley House in one of San Diego's most popular ghost stories.

Unaware that Yankee Jim's story would reverberate through time while his own story would become obscure, District Attorney James W. Robinson continued his contributions to early San Diego civic development. He helped establish the Democratic party in

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This bust of English naturalist John Ray by French sculptor Louis-François Roubilliac is at the British Museum. Ray may be the scientist honored when City Engineer Louis Davids changed Robinson Street to Ray Street in 1900. (Photo by Stephen C. Dickson, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)



James W. Robinson's family home on the Old Town Plaza was built in 1853, demolished about 1900 and reconstructed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1989. (Photo by Katherine Hon)

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San Diego, serving as a local delegate to the state convention in 1855. He served as president of the three-member City Board of Trustees from 1852 to 1853 alongside Louis Rose as treasurer. In 1851, Robinson helped establish San Diego Masonic Lodge No. 35. He followed Philip Crosthwaite — Gatewood's brother-in-law — as Master of the Lodge in 1856. Robinson strongly supported development of a railroad connection for San Diego, serving as president and a director of the first San Diego and Gila railroad company organized in 1854. He died on October 27, 1857 at the age of 67.

Creating historical confusion, the only Robinson grave marker at El Campo Santo cemetery is for Yankee Jim, which lists the executed man's name as "James W. Robinson." The known burials also list Yankee Jim's name this way, with his age as 31 and date of burial as September 19, 1852, the day after his hanging. Charles L. Spratley notes in his book, "Piercing the Veil: Examining San Diego's Haunted History," that "If you ever see a picture purporting to be the Yankee Jim who was hanged, chances are it's a photo of James W. Robinson, a highly distinguished and prominent judge, attorney, and businessman."

James W. Robinson built a grand two-story house on the Old Town Plaza in 1853. The first floor was adobe painted to look like wood siding, and the second floor was wood frame painted to look like adobe. Through the next 50 years, the building served various purposes, including private residence, offices for the San Diego Herald — Old Town's newspaper during the 1850s — general store, schoolroom, law office, medical office, jail cell, and the County Clerk's office. Louis Rose bought the house from James W. Robinson's widow in 1868. By about 1900, the house had been demolished, but it was reconstructed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1989 and now serves as the Old Town visitor information center.

Robinson Street in West End was changed to Ray Street in May 1900 at the recommendation of City Engineer Louis Davids. With his admiration for early scientists, perhaps Davids wanted to honor John Ray (1627-1705), an English botanist, ornithologist, zoologist, theologian and naturalist at the University of Cambridge who established species as the ultimate unit of taxonomy.

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