

Save Our Heritage Organisation PRESENTS

Victorian National City



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In 1868 four brothers from New Hampshire, Frank, George, Warren, and Levi Kimball purchased Rancho de la Nación, 26,632 acres for the grand sum of thirty thousand dollars. Located immediately below San Diego, the rancho included six miles of land fronting on the Bay. The Kimballs changed the name to The National Ranch and laid out National City. The National Ranch included what today are the communities of National City, Chula Vista, Paradise Valley, Otay, and Bonita. National City fast became the main competitor to Alonzo Horton's New Town.

The Kimball families are among the most important pioneers in San Diego history. It would be difficult to enumerate just how important their contributions were to the development of San Diego County.

Heavily invested in agriculture and horticultural interest, they were deeply involved with the development of the commercial olive oil industry in America, the establishment of the Pure Food and Drug Act, the founding of the San Diego County Fair, and the building of the Sweetwater Dam, the largest of its type in the world in 1888. However they were known nationwide for the greatest of all their achievements when they brought the transcontinental railroad to San Diego and its terminus to National City, breaking the monopoly of the great railroad barons, Governor Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins, known as the "Big Four." This created California's greatest building boom of the 19th century and established the cities of Orange, Riverside, and Pasadena to name just a few. This boom forever changed the face of Southern California and dramatically reduced coast-to-coast transportation costs for the nation at large.



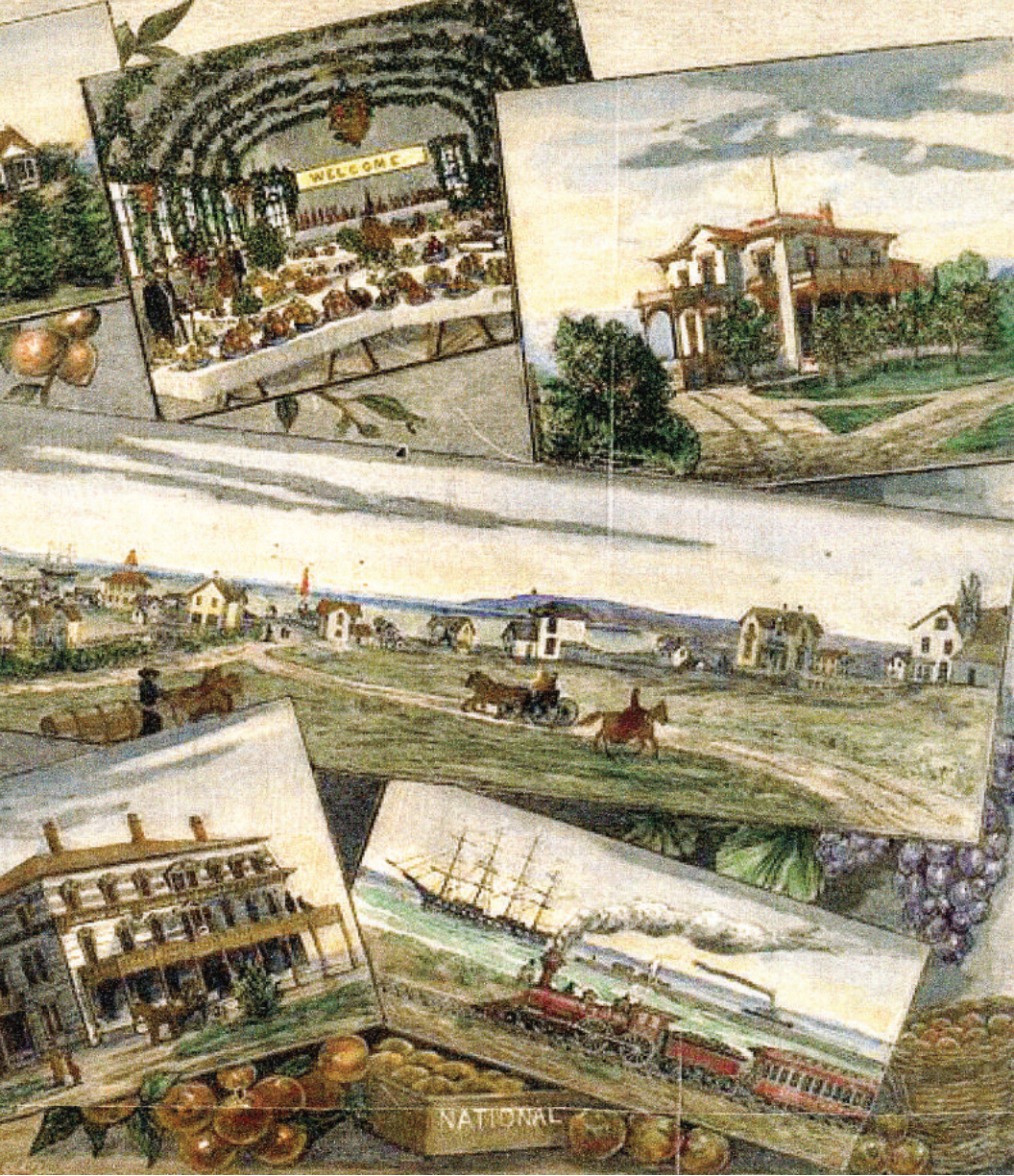


Image from an 1885 German newspaper at the completion of the transcontinental railroad, this event was noted around the world.

Tangible reminders of the Kimballs' vast legacy can be found today in the city's great Victorian architecture. All of these buildings were saved from demolition. We hope that you enjoy your tour today. The story of National City is one of the most interesting city histories in California; bibliographies are included here to encourage your further exploration of this remarkable community.

Frank and Sara Kimball House

932 A Avenue

Built 1868

Style - Italianate

Craftsman-era porch addition

National Register of Historic Places

Moved to this location to save it from demolition

Owned & operated by the City of National City

The home of National City's founder, Frank Kimball and wife Sara, is the oldest existing building in the South bay. While the home suffered some remodeling during the Craftsman period it remains mostly intact and in its original colors. The hope is that one day it will be completely restored to its original exterior, befitting one of the most important historic homes in Southern California.

The majority of the furnishings, paintings, and other artifacts in the museum belonged to the Kimball family, although not all are from the Frank Kimball home, and are primarily from brothers Warren and George's National City homes. Note the beautiful bedroom suite; this golden oak set is from the 1870's, a particularly early use of oak predating its huge popularity at the turn of the century.

Portraits of Sara and Frank Kimball hang in the home; their story is one of great love and equality, as it was with brother Warren and his wife Flora. These men chose women who were particularly suited to creating a city out of a wilderness.

One of the most important pieces in the collection is from the Warren Kimball estate; it is the marquetry partner's desk, which Warren





c. 1872, Coons collection

made for his wife Flora. She was a professional writer of note and it was from this desk that she wrote; Flora was one of San Diego's earliest and foremost horticulturalists and a national figure of the feminist movement. The desk was a symbol of Warren and Flora's life together, made from California Redwood and native woods from their respective hometowns in New England.





Brick Row

900 Block of A Avenue

**Built 1887 by the Atchison,
Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad**

Architect R.C. Ball

Style - Brick Row house

National Register of Historic Places

Privately owned • Not open for viewing

This ten-unit, two-story row house so common to the East Coast contrasted sharply in its day with the detached wood framed residences typical in Southern California at that time. It was constructed as housing for Santa Fe Railway executives and no doubt the Santa Fe envisioned many more to be built with the anticipated success of the railroad.

The individual units are L-shaped with the plan reversed for every other unit, creating U-shaped service yards. The bricks used are from Frank Kimball's own brickyard. Sixteen ornamental brick chimneys originally adorned the front of the building, however, all but four have been removed. A one-story porch runs the length of the front of the building. Wood dividers corresponding to the party wall insure privacy. Today they are of multi-use functions, businesses and residential.

The California Southern/Santa Fe Transcontinental Depot

900 W. 23rd Street

Built 1882

Style- Italianate

National Register of Historic Places

Owned by the City of National City and operated by the San Diego Electric Railway Association

Purchased and restored through an ISTEA grant.

This is one of the most important railroad buildings in the Country. The depot served as the first pacific coast terminus station of the Santa Fe Railway system's transcontinental railroad. Of the original five transcontinental railroad terminus stations, this unique Italianate designed station is the lone survivor. Restored and painted in its original colors it now serves as the primary catalyst for heritage tourism on the bayfront of National City.

From the time of his purchase of the Rancho, Frank Kimball became the tireless promoter of San Diego Bay as the perfect place for a west coast terminus of a transcontinental rail line. The Kimballs' National City grew slowly at first with a small boom in the 1870's spurred by the announcement



that the Texas and Pacific Railroad was to locate its terminus there. Some grading was started before this early effort was crushed by the “Big Four” and a national depression. Like many far-sighted businessmen during this era, Kimball recognized that his hopes for the creation of a permanent settlement in National City depended upon his ability to procure a railroad link for his fledgling city.

In October of 1882, the California Southern station and general office building was completed, the headquarters moved into this building in December of that same year. The first floor contained the baggage room, freight room, waiting room, ticket office, and the vault. The second floor consisted of seven large rooms with a magnificent view of the entire bay; these served as offices and private quarters, which housed the telegrapher/station master for many years.

Near the Depot there was a roundhouse, machine shops, storekeepers’ rooms, paint shops, car shops, carpenter shops, warehouses, and yard office. Working day and night the shops constructed more than 500 railroad cars.

The first through transcontinental train left the National City Depot on November 14, 1885. The first train from the east arrived on November 16, 1885.

A general invitation was sent to all and a great celebration was held in National City.

“... guests arrived at the Terminal Depot and went up to the International Hotel... One side of the room was neatly decorated with wreaths and flowers and several tables were literally covered with plates and pyramids of apples and fine specimens of other fruits grown in the vicinity. A pyramid of roses was beautifully arranged and a mountain of Japanese lilies arrested general notice. On one side of the room in large gilt letters, stood the notice “National City Greets the World November 15, 1885.”

The excitement generated by the completion of the only cross-country route from San Diego Bay to the east cannot be overstated. As early 20th century San Diego historian and biographer William Smythe wrote, “The event was the most potent influence in the creation of ‘the great [economic] boom’ and the largest single factor in making the city what it is today.”

Today the Depot relies on visitors and donations to reach their goals to return passenger train service to the old Coronado railroad built in 1888 that runs along the south end of the bay. Volunteers are welcome and much needed.



ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH.



KIMBALL BLOCK.



G.W. CHASE BLOCK.



SAN DIEGO LAND & TOWN.



NATIONAL CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL.

1. SANITARIUM.
2. W. & DICKINSONS RES.
3. MOTOR ROAD.
4. SWEETWATER RIVER & VAL.
5. W. C. KIMBALL RES.
6. R. S. WATER TANK.
7. SCHOOL HOUSE.
8. EPISCOPAL CHURCH.
9. CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.
10. FRANK A. KIMBALL'S RES.
11. METHODIST CHURCH.
12. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL.

13. BUN.
14. AT.
15. H.
16. C.
17. C.
18. P.
19. B.
20. M.
21. O.



BIRDS-E NATION SAN DIEGO COU



OFFICE NATIONAL CITY.

W.E. KIMBALL, PROPRIETOR.

OLIVEWORKS OF F.A. KIMBALL. 8TH AVENUE.

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL. W.H. PORTER, PROP.



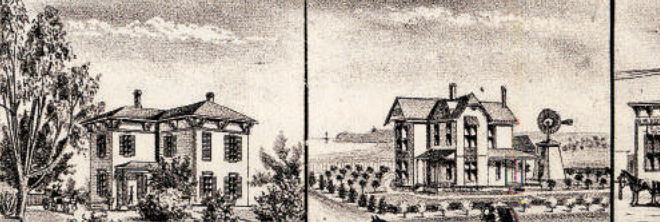
PORT CITY
SHOPS,
WHARF,
DOCK
WORKS
TO
CORNER OF
VALLEY

- 22 TIJAHUA RIVER.
- 23 CORONADO ISLANDS
- 24 CORONADO BEACH.
- 25 ENTRANCE TO HARBOR
- 26 POINT LOTJA.
- 27 LIGHT HOUSE
- 28 SAN DIEGO CITY
- 29 OLD SAN DIEGO
- 30 CHOLLAS VALLEY
- 31 SAN DIEGO LAND AND TOWN CO. LANDS.
- 32 PARADISE VALLEY



RECORD, STEAM PRINTING HOUSE

VIEW OF
AL CITY.
TY. CALIFORNIA.



Stein Farm

1808 F Avenue

Built c. 1880's

Style - Victorian era vernacular farmhouse

The home of Charles Stein, his wife, Bertha, and their 5 children. Stein purchased the farm in 1900, and immediately set to work to improve his new property. The Stein Family Farm, known today as the National City Living History Farm Preserve, (NCLHFP) is a wonderful reminder of the city's agricultural heritage.

The Farm includes the original house, barn, and attached out buildings and is the last cohesive remnant of a farmstead in the city of National City. Much of the original landscaping is extant. The interpretive period is 1880s – 1950s with a focus on rural 1900.



Several original furnishings can be seen: wedding portraits of the Steins, the dining room table, the original hanging oil lamp fixture, and an unusual and beautiful china cupboard and desk combination, or escritorio. The bed and matching dresser are said to be a wedding gift, and the quilt displayed on the bed was made by the Stein daughters, who were well known for their skillful quilting. The kitchen's wood burning stove, kitchen table, worktable, sink, and pie safe are all original to the home.

The barn was built by Mr. Fuson of National City; it was thriftily made with varying sizes of lumber, some of which were clearly recycled from earlier buildings. An interesting detail is that the roof is a replacement of the original that was destroyed when a "cyclone" ripped through the area on April 26, 1926. There is a door to a hayloft, but no floor for it; possibly the hayloft was not replaced after the destruction. The Stein Farm's barn was never painted the typical barn red shade; its original color was white, and some of the original paint still remains.



The farm is owned by the City of National City and operated by the non-profit group, NCLHFP, who formed to save this property from demolition when a condominium project already designed and approved for the site threatened its survival. The community and the city worked together to purchase the site from the developer and because of this great preservation effort we now have a vivid and tangible reminder of the entrepreneurial efforts of immigrants who raised a family, invested in land, and were successful farmers that worked diligently throughout their lives.

Donations and volunteers are needed to continue the fine work you see today.

Stein Farm c. 1900. The two small trees flanking the front gate are seen today formed into an arch, a typical 19th century landscape treatment.



Granger Music Hall

1615 East 4th Street

Architect Irving Gill

Built 1896 with an 1898 addition

Style - Shingle

National Register of Historic Places

Owned by the City of National City and operated by the National City Historical Society

Built to house Colorado silver magnate Ralph Granger's important violin collection and to hold private concerts, the building was originally on his Paradise Valley estate. Granger commissioned a young new architect fresh from Chicago making a name for himself in the community, Irving J. Gill.

Gill made every effort to achieve the best possible acoustics when he designed the original 19 x 36 foot room. In 1898 he was asked to design an 80 x 30 auditorium to be added to the original music room, which then became the foyer.

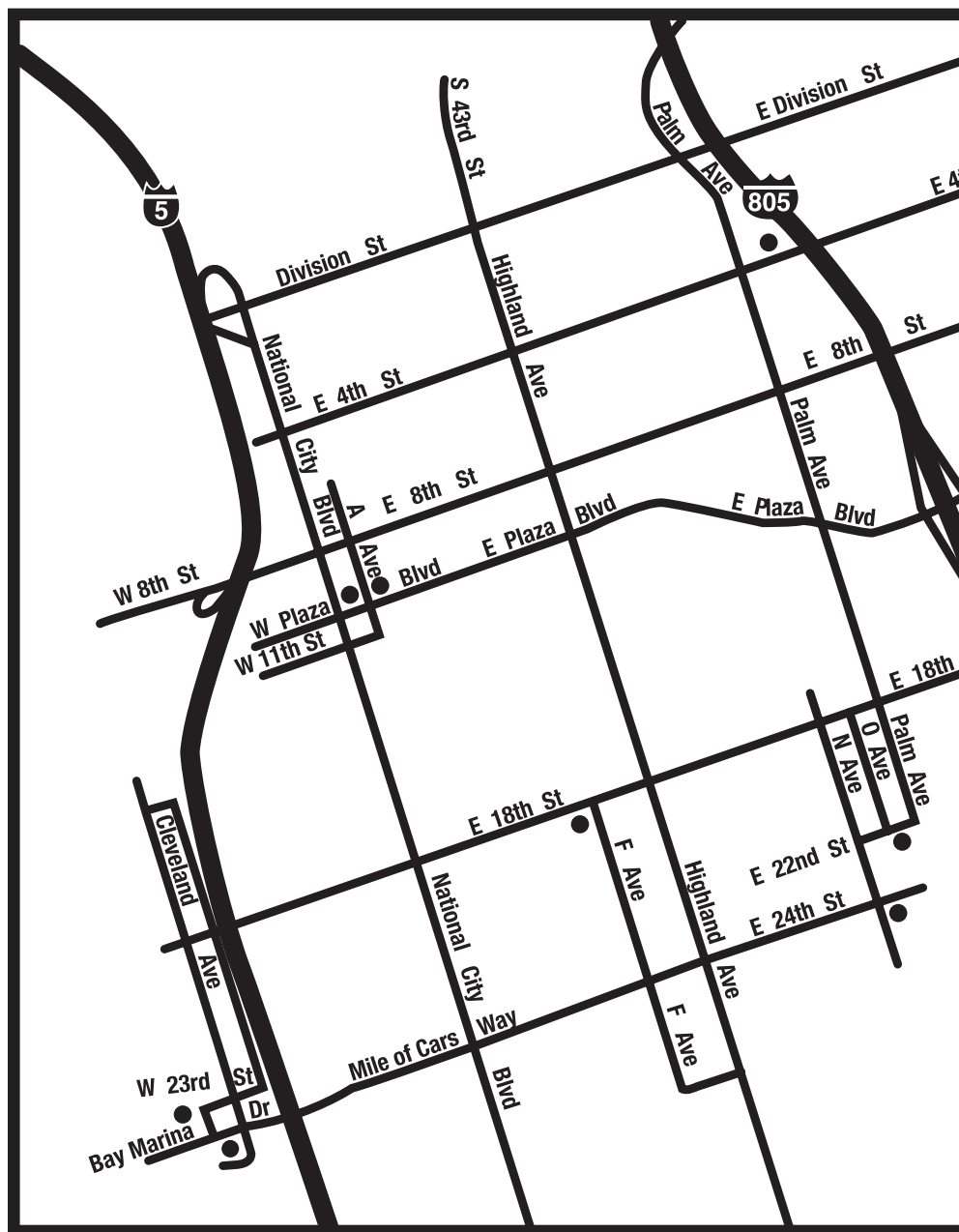
One of the most outstanding features is the 75-foot ceiling mural painted on linen by New York artist D. Samman. The mural features the muse of music Euterpe and her handmaiden Erato. Circling the muse on a sky-blue background are cherubs playing various instruments. A large Oriental carpet originally covered the floor, and guests were comfortable seated in wicker chairs. The new hall also contained a large pipe organ designed by Murray Harris who had constructed the Great Tabernacle Organ in Salt Lake City. An intricately carved fretwork grille of kiln-dried cedar covered the organ, and can still be seen today.

Among the great artists who played here were Austrian pianist Mark Hambourg, Russian violinist Alexander Petschnikoff, and Eugene Ysaye, who was acclaimed as the greatest violinist of his time. Use of the acoustically perfect hall was short lived, however, as it was closed down in 1906 when Mr. Granger moved to San Diego after his home was destroyed by fire.

In 1969, threatened with demolition, it was moved to its present location and is owned by the City of National City and operated by the National City Historical Society, who, among its activities, aptly holds an annual concert series here. It is now painted in its original colors.



One Mile



Map of **V**ictorian **N**ational **C**ity Tour

Frank & Sara Kimball House
932 A Avenue

Brick Row (not open for viewing)
900 Block of A Avenue

California Southern/Santa Fe
Transcontinental Depot & Car #1
900 West 23rd Street

NC&O Car #1
840 Bay Marina Drive

Stein Farm
1808 F Avenue

Granger Music Hall
1615 East 4th Street

Dickinson-Boal House (not open for viewing)
1433 East 24th Street

D.K. Horton House (not open for viewing)
1504 East 22nd Street

Homes & sites may be viewed in any order

General Tour Rules

- Carpooling is encouraged
- Have courtesy when parking in these residential neighborhoods
- Do not block driveways
- No photography inside the homes
- No food or beverages allowed
- No pets
- No high heels or bare feet
- No strollers
- Turn off pagers & cell phones
- Do not touch anything in the homes, including doors, drawers or furnishings
- Do not enter rooms that are cordoned off
- No use of bathrooms
- Stay with the group you enter with

Other Historic Sites to see in National City

Dickinson-Boal House

1433 E 24th Street

Built - 1887

Architect - Comstock and Trostche

Style - Queen Anne

The home was built for Colonel William Dickinson who managed the real estate arm of the California Southern Railroad. It is the most spectacular Queen Anne building in San Diego County, second only to the Hotel Coronado, which was designed by the same architectural firm. The house directly across the street was built for his son Wallace D. Dickinson.

D.K. Horton House

1504 East 22nd Street

Built - 1895

Architect - Irving Gill

Style - Colonial Revival

One of Gill's earliest surviving examples. While the home is built in the Colonial Revival style so popular at the time, Gill's later style can already be seen in this elegant home emerging as he stripped away ornament and simplified it from the more ornate Colonial Revivals of the time. This is a remarkably intact estate, with its original carriage house and servants cottage. D.K. Horton was a major stockholder and investor in the Santa Fe Railroad.

National City & Otay Passenger Car #1

Built - 1887, by Hammond, the San Francisco builder, who also built the trolleys in San Francisco

Style - Open passenger car

Across from the National City Depot

The National City & Otay was the first commuter railroad in San Diego and this was its first car. The railroad provided transportation for equipment and men to build the Sweetwater Dam, and accommodated transportation needs for business and pleasure passengers. Another important role was its conveyance of building stone from the Sweetwater quarry for use in construction of the Zuniga Jetty, the breakwater for the Hotel del Coronado. This rare artifact was found by Rurik Kallis and Richard Pennick and retrieved from Descanso, California, where it was being used as a house. In later years it was purchased from Mr. Kallis by Bruce Coons who brought it back to National City and made it available to the City of National City for its permanent display. Renovation of the car and the display building was made possible with Port of San Diego Public Arts funding.

Special Thanks to the volunteer docents who regularly support and man the museums of National City and who have made this tour possible.

The City of National City

Mayor Ron Morrison
Vice Mayor Frank Parra
Councilman Luis Natividad • Councilman Fideles Ungab
Councilwoman Rosalie Zarate
Susanna Hernández-Peredo, Community Services Department

Frank & Sara Kimball House

Manuel Cavada

National City Historical Society

Tom & Marilyn Carnes
Janice Martinelli

National City Living History Farm Preserve

The Stein Farm is graced by these caretakers and stewards who have dedicated years to make the farm one of the most exceptional sites in all of the South Bay.

Chris, Nancy & Norm Johnson
Vincent Reynolds • Susan Walters

San Diego Electric Railway Association

www.sdera.org

Historic photographs

Courtesy of the Bruce Coons Collection to whom special acknowledgement is given for procuring the ISTEA grant for the purchase and restoration of the National City Depot.

Cover photo: The vault at the National City Depot, courtesy of the Historic American Buildings Survey collection. *Centerfold:* 1887 Birds Eye view, courtesy History Room, National City Public Library

Production & Text

Alana Coons • Sandé Lollis

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Through education, advocacy, and stewardship SOHO's mission is to preserve, promote and support preservation of the architectural, cultural and historical links and landmarks that contribute to the community identity, depth and character of our region.

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