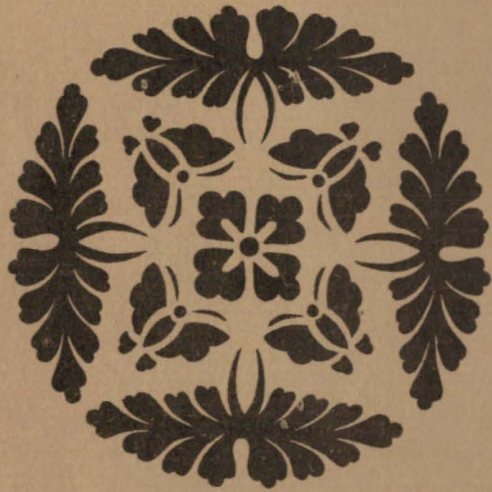


VIEWING VICTORIAN VISTAS

OF NATIONAL CITY





Frank Augustus Kimball
1832 - 1913



Frank Kimball



AND THE HISTORY OF NATIONAL CITY

Like so many early residents, Frank Kimball chose to settle in San Diego County for reasons of health. In January of 1886 Kimball, a successful builder and contractor in San Francisco, was warned by his doctor that he must move to a more temperate climate. Traveling south with his brothers Levi, Warren and George, Kimball scouted 17 tracts of land throughout Southern California before coming to the San Diego area. There, impressed by the equitable climate, desert beauty, and development potential, the Kimballs purchased the 26,631 acre El Rancho de la Nacion for \$30,000 on June 18, 1868.

The town of National City was plotted next to the bay and became the second settlement in the area. The remainder of the ranch as well as five-eighths of the townsite itself would eventually be given to the railroad as land subsidies to establish a line that would link National City with the East.

The Kimballs soon became prominent financiers and were considered the wealthiest men in San Diego County. In addition to his land and railroad interests, Frank Kimball founded a number of businesses and helped establish the agricultural economy of Southern California. His work with the Mission Olive led to the development of the United States Olive Industry. He also cultivated oranges, lemons, limes, citron, grapefruit from Mexico, and the tangerine which he discovered at an exposition in New Orleans. In 1876, the Kimball brothers planted the first eucalyptus grove in San Diego County. The grove would eventually provide fuel for their brick kiln and was fertilized by sheep kept in movable pens.

As part of his agricultural pursuits Frank Kimball also established a lemon packing plant and an olive mill which could process 18 tons of olives in twenty-four hours.

Despite the success of his many business and real estate ventures, the perfidy of those close to him would eventually undermine Frank Kimball's financial position. His willingness to back developing businesses made him an easy target for unscrupulous businessmen and several business associates made purchases in his name while keeping subsequent profits for themselves. By 1893, Kimball's debts were so extensive that a trust deed was filed against him.

The 32,000 fully paid shares of San Diego Land and Town stock that Kimball had counted on to see him through the crisis were steadily decreasing in value. Kimball's difficulties were compounded when B. P. Cheney took over the company and made an assessment of \$1.00 per share. Unable to pay the assessment, Kimball was eliminated from the company to which he had given most of his life's earnings.

When the trust deed was filed, Frank's property was worth several times the \$800,000 debt against it. The property in the deed included the Brick Row as well as 41 houses, town lots, orchards, businesses, and several hundred acres of land. Mismanagement of the deed, however, resulted in much of the income property being sold leaving taxes on the remaining property unpaid. In 1894 a second trust deed was filed, and two years later the property was purchased by Ralph Granger for the amount of the delinquent taxes.

Kimball's financial position continued to deteriorate until he lost his home of thirty years through a mortgage foreclosure. As a result Frank and his wife Sarah were forced to move into an old restaurant building owned by a nephew.

Discouraging days followed with Kimball laboring from dawn to dusk doing any work available. Through diligent effort Frank was eventually able to redeem his old mill in 1905 and again sold olive oil and pickled olives. By this time, however, Kimball was an old man and was never able to recoup his losses entirely. It was not until 1908 that the Kimballs were able to buy another house after ten years of living in a restaurant and an old bank building.

Frank Kimball died in 1913 at the age of 81. He had been a true pioneer who willingly sacrificed everything to progress. His life had its full measure of joy and sorrow, and in later years he was to confide, "I have spent the best years of my life trying to make those around me happier, and the result is unsatisfactory. I am confronted at every step by ungrateful people, but I look back and thank God I have lived. As far as I know, I have done my best."



In September of 1887 when Frank Kimball started building the Brick Row, National City was still in the midst of a boom era; houses were scarce and people were sleeping on the veranda of the International Hotel. At that time Frank Kimball wrote in his diary, "Let contract to build ten houses covering 250' x 45' to J. J. Hunt for a lump sum of \$2,200.00 with an agreement that if he does not make journeyman's wages, besides paying the bills, then I shall give him \$150.00 more." National City was still in fierce competition with San Diego and the row houses were probably built to house the VIPs of the Santa Fe Railway.

The five unit, two-story building was constructed according to drawings sent from Philadelphia. The Philadelphia row house scheme, unique to the East Coast, contrasted sharply with the detached Victorian residences typical in Southern California at that time.

The individual units are L-shaped with the plan reversed for every other unit, creating U-shaped service yards. The units are divided by twelve inch thick interlocking brick walls. The brick foundation walls are set on mortar three feet into the ground. It has been a good test of the Kimball brick to withstand the weight of the walls all these years. There are over 240,000 bricks in the entire structure, many of them from Kimball's brick kiln built in 1886. In that year the bricks from the National City Brick Yard were selling for \$7 to \$10 per thousand.

The brick work on the Row Houses was laid with an artistic eye to break the severe lines of the long walls. The bricks above the second story are set upright at an angle. The same motif is carried out in the border around the entire building. The two end walls are recessed to give a panel effect and relieve their otherwise plain surfaces. Sixteen ornamental brick chimneys originally adorned the front of the building, but all but four have since been removed. The utility chimneys are located in the rear.

A one-story porch runs the length of the front of the building. Wood dividers corresponding to the party wall insure the privacy of each unit.

The curved toppings on the windows are cement and are set on decorated units which in turn rest on the 12" walls. The design under the arch is pressed wood and duplicates, in reverse, the design used on the porch.

The slightly pitched, iron roof was put on by the Silver Gate Pipe Works. It started leaking in 1892, and failing to get repairs, Frank Kimball was forced to apply layers of canvas and shellac which still exists under the many layers of tar and roofing paper added since.

The units open into a large stair hall with an open rail stairway against the left wall. On November 26, 1887, Frank Kimball wrote in his diary, "Let contract to build and complete ten flights of stairs in my new houses to Mr. Thomas of San Diego for \$625.00. Rails, newels and balusters to be of oak and finished in first class style."

Each unit has a fireplace in both the living and dining rooms. The fireplaces were of steel with an etched gold finish; the mantels were black precast stone. The original screens were of pressed iron scroll work.

Wood board flooring was used throughout the houses except in the kitchen and bath. All doors have four vertical panels, two over two. The trim around the doors and windows is molded wood, and all major rooms have a picture rail 18" from the ceiling. The light fixtures were enhanced by molded plaster work and originally had alabaster centers.

The construction of the Brick Row houses became the center of interest for the people of National City. They had just become accustomed to the three-story "Steel Block" (National Hotel) and felt very metropolitan indeed.

The Brick Row is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and as such is able to qualify for federal assistance in historic preservation.

2

BOYD-VURGASON HOUSE
907 D Avenue
1886



This home was built by Lynn Boyd for his widowed mother, Mrs. Ward Boyd, and the rest of her children. Lynn Boyd served as National City Postmaster from 1886-1889. In 1887 Lynn and his brother, E. Ware, built for the new Post Office the Boyd Block, at 7th Avenue and 16th Street. The structure, which had an ornamental iron front and a blue granite tower, also contained the Boyd Brothers' Drug Store, The Sign of the Mortar. The Boyds were active socially and their drug store was a popular meeting place.

4

In 1906, the house was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Vurgason. Vurgason worked as a millwright, pattern-maker, and carpenter in the National City shops of John Spreckels rail and street car companies, where repair work was done and street cars built.

Oscar and Tessie Vurgason's son Joseph organized and published the National City Reporter in 1934. The Reporter was later merged with the National City News, which Joe Vurgason purchased in 1937 and continued to publish until 1950.

3

ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
521 East 8th Street
1887



Completed in 1887, St. Matthew's is the oldest Southern California Episcopal church still on its original site. Reflecting the Victorian Gothic style with its soaring tower and Gothic doors, the church was built with a combination of Georgia hewn pine shipped "around the horn," California redwood, and Douglas fir. The extreme proportions of the tower dominate the simple gable form of the main nave, and the interior is graced by the repetitive roof trusses of simple rafters, tie beams, and diagonal braces. The architect, Henry E. Cooper, modeled the church after photographs of a countryside church in the south of England. The windows were originally of plain glass with plans to replace them with stained glass as funds became available. Most of the stained glass windows now present were given as memorials to former parishioners. The church altar is seven feet in length with seven steps leading up to it which reflected the importance and frequency of the number seven in the Scriptures; this and several other symbolic features that contributed to the spiritual dimension of the church were noted by the National City Record in its account of the dedication ceremony in 1887.

Funds for the construction of St. Matthew's and the rectory that originally sat next to it were obtained through the sale of lots that had been donated to the parish by Frank Kimball. The three thousand dollar structure was built on the lot at the corner of 8th and "F" Streets given by Mr. Elizur Steel.

Scale drawings of St. Matthew's were prepared by the Historic American Building Survey in 1971 and are now part of the permanent records of the National Archives.

5



The church also obtained a matching funds grant in 1974 when the federal government recognized the importance of St. Matthew's contribution to the history of Southern California.

4

SLOCUM HOUSE
524 East 7th Street

The property the house was built on was owned by Elizur Steele and was given to Slocum as a bonus for making land sales for the Kimball brothers. Mrs. Slocum was interested in youth activities and opened the first subscription kindergarten.

The most famous resident of the house was Slocum's son, Harvey. Harvey was known for his construction of the Lake Hodges Dam near Escondido in 1917, the Grand Coulee Dam in Washington and the Bull Sheal Dam in Arkansas. When he died he was constructing the largest dam ever built in India, the Bhakra Mangel Dam.

6

5

COLONIAL APARTMENTS
520 F Avenue
1889

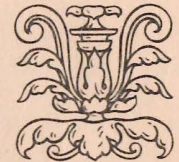
It is believed that this piece of land, originally owned by Elizur Steele, was sold to Frank Kimball who in turn then passed it on to Sarah B. Annis. The house and the land stayed in the Annis Family until 1920.

The designs by the Warren Kimball Planing Mill offered sturdy scroll cutouts which support arched decorative topping over square dormer windows.

The structure is now divided into separate dwellings.

6

WILLIAM BURGESS HOUSE
540 E Avenue
1880's
(Remodeled)



William Burgess was the first editor of the National City Record which began publication on September 28, 1882. In 1886 Burgess entered the real estate business and turned the management of the paper over to his son, Frank, who had been writing a column of commentary, at times humorous or critical, entitled "Uncle Josh Takes A Walk." Frank Burgess remained editor until 1889, when the Burgesses sold the Record and left National City.

The house was later occupied by A. E. Hornbeck who, after arriving in 1886, became active in the Land & Town Company and served on the County Board of Supervisors in the 1920's.

The remodeled structure now contains apartments.

7

PINNEY HOUSE
538 C Avenue
1869

The second oldest house (1869) was built of redwood lumber imported by Frank Kimball on an ocean-going raft from San Francisco.

Pinney was employed as a granite tombstone polisher, but earned the home for half cash and half labor by helping Frank Kimball build his original house at 10 W. Plaza.

The house was originally standing at B and 7th Streets on a 20 acre site Pinney received from Kimball. The house was moved to this site in 1922.

7

The two brick chimneys and the square nails used for construction are still part of the house.

8

Thelan House
304 E. 4th Street
converted to apts.

9

TYSON HOUSE
341 F Avenue
1888



This house was purchased in 1888 by Mitchell's parents. Relatives who had arrived in National City from Kansas occupied the house.

The family wanted to be near the school and St. Matthew's Church.

Evidently, the family ended up purchasing the entire block. Later they built a house at 314 F Street, which was much smaller.

10

MITCHELL-WEBSTER HOUSE
305 F Avenue
1909

The 15-room Tudor style home was built to the very specific instructions of the J. P. Tyson family in 1912. Maria Tyson obtained the original 10-acre parcel for the house in 1887 for \$1,275. The work and materials for the house cost \$2,235. Tyson contracted S. John Hauer-Johns Building Co. July 1, 1909, to construct the house which was to be completed by September 10, 1909. S. G. Kennedy was the architect.

The two-story, wooden frame house contains some unusual features not found in many homes of the period. Double and single seats are built into the living room, and the kitchen has tilted bins for storage and a built-in cooler. There is a cupboard between the dining room and the kitchen. A table on the stair landing contains a woodbox which is accessible from inside and outside the house. Early owners had no intention of toting soiled clothes and linens from the upstairs bedrooms to the downstairs laundry facilities. A chute transports such things from a rear bedroom to a screened porch at the back of the house.

8

The contract specifications noted, "All lumber, where no particular timber is specified shall be of Oregon pine." The house at 305 F Avenue contains a living room and dining room floor of maple flooring while all others are of "clear Oregon pine." It was specified that the front door and the outside door to the stair landing (woodbox access) were to be birch veneered while all others would be pine. "All outside exposed woodwork is to be clear dry redwood" was another order.

As a result, all the porch floors are redwood and the pergolas, similar to arbors, also are redwood.

The buffet built in the house is of plate glass and the diamond-shaped light is leaded glass.

George and Charlotte Webster moved into the house in 1968, next door to Mrs. Harry Smith, granddaughter of James Tyson who built the house.

The house has belonged to three National City families, the Tysons and their daughter and son-in-law the Rev. & Mrs. Arthur Mitchell, the George Dunn family and the George Websters.

According to the Websters, the house has never actually been sold, but has simply passed from family to family.

11

JOHN STEELE HOUSE
636 East 2nd Street
c. 1882



With his brother, Elizur, John Steele was a builder and property owner in the city. In 1884 the two brothers purchased for subdivision, 1,700 acres in the Jamacha Ranch, adjoining the National Ranch.

12

DR. JAMES A. SMITH HOUSE
405 G Avenue
1889

Known as "Doctor's House," this residence was built by one of the city's early physicians. Dr. Smith later sold the house to Mr. Muggett, who operated the city's first hardware store.

13

Elizur Steel House
737 E. 4th Street
converted to offices

9

DANFORD CARPENTER HOUSE
524 I Avenue
c. 1869

Danford Carpenter was one of the earliest settlers in National City. Soon after purchasing land in Paradise Valley he became a partner in the nursery business of Carpenter & Early. On December 29, 1869, Carpenter was appointed the city's first postmaster. As no mention is made of a post office, Carpenter probably collected the area's mail, took it to San Diego, and returned with the mail that was there. He died a few months after his appointment.

The property later came into the possession of a Mr. Padrick, a merchant, who was one of the organizers of the city's Methodist church. The Padricks presumably moved into the house in the 1880's.



15 MUSEUM OF AMERICAN TREASURES
1315 East 4th Street
Hans Lindemann, Founder

The Museum of American Treasures at 1315 East 4th Street began life as the "Museum of Sun Colored Glass" when founder-collector Hans Lindemann opened it 21 years ago to house his glass collection.

Lindemann, 77, is a German who fled to this country in 1936 in distaste for the activities of Adolf Hitler. He has never returned home although his family home is in what is now part of Poland.

His love of his adopted country has led him to collect all the precious pieces of Americana that he can find. His collection soon included far more than glass and forced him to change the name of his museum.

A resident of National City for 32 years, Lindemann has willed his museum to the city so that future generations can view his collection.

Lindemann is a chef at Lubach's Restaurant, San Diego, and was a renowned chef in Europe before fleeing Hitler's regime. He cooked in Europe's finest restaurants and once was selected to prepare a meal for England's King George V.

After moving to National City, Lindemann acquired the buildings and site for his museum for \$3,400 at Christmas time, 1943.

The museum how houses documents signed by several American presidents, ornate antique marriage licenses, antique gramophones and many other bits of Americana. Lindemann has a large collection of intricately engraved shell casings which he said soldiers used to create while time hung heavy on their hands. He likes to think of the casings as weapons of destruction that have been turned into examples of beauty.

The museum's place of pride is occupied by an 82-inch delicately carved elephant tusk which was created for the last emperor of China, according to Lindemann. It disappeared during China's revolution and re-appeared in Long Beach where Lindeman acquired it.

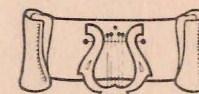
Another revered piece is a six-foot high mother of pearl altar piece from an Arabian Christian church. According to Lindemann, the altar piece was hidden away in a cave when Hitler's forces invaded Africa. It later was discovered by American Army troops and taken to Camp Roberts. The man who owned it eventually sold it to Lindemann.

There is a story behind each of the thousands of articles Lindemann has collected, and Lindemann takes great pleasure in recounting those stories to visitors as they tour his museum.

The museum is open on Sundays from 11-5 p.m. and by appointment.

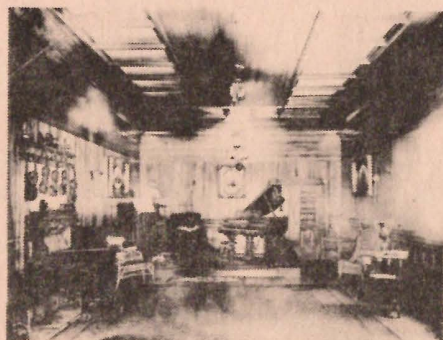
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GRANGER MUSIC HALL
N.E. Corner 4th & Palm
1896, 1898

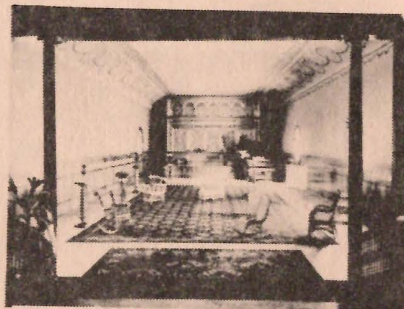


In 1896, Colorado silver magnate Ralph Granger built a music room across the driveway from his Paradise Valley home. The hall was built as a place where violin concerts for those of discerning tastes could be given. The original 19 x 36 foot room was designed by the famous San Diego architect Irving Gill, who made every effort to achieve the best possible sound effect. Thus, the ceiling has no supports to stop vibrations and the floor runs across without girders under joists. The exterior walls reflect Gill's early experimental use of shingles. The original music room also contained a concrete vault inside which a safe was placed to keep Mr. Granger's recently purchased collection of priceless violins in best possible condition.

Reception Room, Granger Music Hall
1897



Granger Music Hall, 1898



In 1898, an 80 x 30 foot auditorium was added to the original music room which then became the foyer. The most outstanding feature of the addition was the 75 foot ceiling mural painted on linen by New York artist, D. Samman. The mural features the muse of music Euterpe and her hand maiden Erato. Circling the muses on a sky-blue background are pink and white cherubs playing various musical instruments. The floor was originally covered by a large Oriental carpet, and guests were comfortable seated in wicker chairs. The new hall also contained a 1,060 pipe organ designed by Murray Harris who had constructed the Great Tabernacle Organ in Salt Lake City. The organ was covered by an intricately carved grille of kiln-dried cedar which is still intact. A Knabe concert grand piano, which at twelve feet in length was one of the two largest in existence, was also present in the new addition.

Among the great artists who played for Mr. Granger's guests were Austrian pianist Mark Hambourg, Russian violinist Alexander Petschnikoff, and Eugene Ysaye who was acclaimed the greatest violinist of his time.

Use of the acoustically perfect hall was shortlived, however, as it was closed down in 1906 when Mr. Granger moved to San Diego after his home was destroyed by fire. After twenty-three years of disuse, the organ was put back in working condition by Granger's grandson, Lester Wegeforth. The hall has since been used occasionally for musicales given by the National City Altrusa Club.

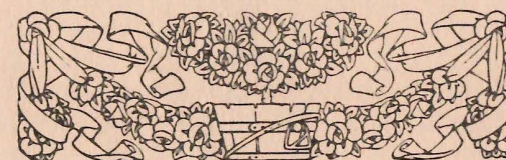


Granger Music Hall, 1949

In 1969, when the Music Hall was threatened with demolition, it was moved by the South Bay Historical Society from 8th Street to its present location. After sitting on blocks for two years, the Music Hall was finally put on a new foundation and is now being restored largely through the efforts of volunteer labor. Despite heavy vandalism, two fires and accompanying smoke and water damage, the Music Hall was named to the National Register of Historic Places in April 1975, and is still deemed structurally sound and worthy of restoration.

17

Bon Air Ranch House
2216 E. 5th Street
demolished



FRANK KIMBALL'S PARADISE VALLEY
LEMON & ORANGE PACKING HOUSE
702 Pleasant Lane
1884

The packing house was the first all-brick building in National City. It was well-insulated, having walls 15 inches thick with an air space the width of one brick in the center. The building was set high so that the fruit from Frank Kimball's citrus orchards could be unloaded from the wagons.

The fruit was placed on the floor a foot deep, covered with canvas or sacks, and left until it "sweated." It was then uncovered and allowed to "rest" until dry. This procedure hastened ripening and produced juicier fruit. The fruit was then wrapped in tissue paper, boxed and shipped.

In 1958 the packing house was remodeled as a private home by Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Karas.



THE TOWER HOUSE OF MOSES KIMBALL
2202 East Tenth Street
1880's

Moses Kimball was no relation to the Kimball brothers. This beautiful home with a view of the entire Sweetwater Valley was built of rough lumber. The lumber was purchased from the Brewster Nursing Home which was dismantled after the death of Mrs. Brewster's son. The brick is from the Frank Kimball Sweetwater Brick Kiln and the woodwork was dressed at the Warren Kimball Planing Mill.

The most fabulous characteristic of the home is the three-story stairway which has no visible supports.

The fireplaces in the hall, dining room, back parlor and central parlor all lead to a large central chimney which tapers to the roof. One of the fireplaces is oak, one is cherry, and the other two are maple. They are all hand carved. The fireplaces have cast iron scroll work.

The Newell post is almost a foot wide with heavy carving. Another added feature is the set of sliding doors on Payon Tracks (1891) which divide the rooms and glide as smoothly as they did many years ago. Most of the woodwork in the house is oak.

SAMUEL J. BAIRD HOUSE
1114 East 8th Street
Early 1880's
(Demolished)



Samuel Baird, originally from Illinois, came to National City and purchased land in 1878. His house is one of the several built by Frank Kimball. In addition to cultivating orchards on his property, Baird served as a director of the National City Bank. He died in 1906.

The Baird house was on the crest of the hill as one enters Paradise Valley. Baird's Hill was once a considerable obstacle and the horse-drawn street car introduced in 1888 was unable to negotiate the grade. Work was later done to reduce the hill. The eastern side of Baird's Hill was planted with apricots, Baird's favorite fruit.

ELIZUR STEELE-CRANDALL-ENNIS HOUSE
904 East 8th Street
1879

Two Monterey cypress trees which once stood in front of this house gave it the name "El Cipres." The house, built of redwood, has twelve rooms and a shingled third-floor tower. The original stone cistern still remains.

Elizur Steele, fruit rancher, builder, and with his brother John, large property holder, constructed at least twelve houses and other buildings in National City. In 1883 he sold this house to Charles F. Blossom, a partner in the merchandising firm of George H. Parsons.

During the 1920's the house was owned by Frederick A. Crandall, realtor and City Trustee (1917-1919). For many years after this it was the home of Mrs. Florence Ennis.

GEORGE KIMBALL HOUSE
1515 L Avenue
1876



George Kimball, the oldest of the Kimball brothers, came to National City in response to a 17-page letter from brother Frank telling of all the healthful advantages of such a move. The elder Kimball "had palpitations of the heart," according to local history, and always was looked after by Frank and the other Kimball brothers.



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George Kimball House, c. 1914

George, and his wife Lucy and his sisters Laura and Jennifer arrived by steamer November 16, 1869.

The first house that was built for them was near Frank Kimball's home at Plaza Blvd. and National Ave. That house was the first post office in the area when George was appointed postmaster. The house later was moved to San Diego for restoration as an historic site.

On February 16, 1870, George Kimball picked out land at what is now 1515 L Avenue for his home. The land was a gift from brother Frank. Construction began in 1876. There is not much mention of the house until an 1887 edition of the National City Record which refers to George Kimball's house as "an elegant residence on Nob Hill."

The house was valued at its construction at \$6,000. Millwork was done at Warren Kimball's planing mill and bricks for the house came from the Kimballs' kiln in the Sweetwater Valley at the mouth of the river.

Modern conveniences were not installed in the house until 1941 when it was sold to Raymond O. White.

White installed a modern apartment in the house for Miss Laura Kimball, the last of the Kimballs. She spent her life collecting references from the National City Record and other newspapers to the history of her family and the town they built.



23

RESIDENCE
1129 East 16th Street
1880's

This residence was perhaps build by Frank Kimball for the Orsmond Barrett family, which was living there by the 1890's.

According to Donald Smith, the house was owned in the 1920's and 1930's by his father, Dale Smith, City Clerk. In later years it was the home of Mrs. Vera Eimer.

24

AUGUSTUS KIMBALL HOUSE
1041 East 17th Street
c. 1904



Augustus "Gus" Kimball, one of George Kimball's sons, married Hattie Johnson in 1902 and built this house near his parents home. Gus worked as a printer and from 1906 to 1911 was the owner of the National City News.

25

GEORGE BEERMAKER HOUSE
1735 J Avenue
1886

This was the first house in National City with gingerbread on its eaves. The gingerbread was made of barge-wood.

George Beermaker, the first owner of the home, opened a real estate office and later he became manager of the National City Record.

Beermaker sold the house in 1887 to O'Connell who was postmaster of National City. The O'Connell Family kept the house until 1940.

26

Floyd House
1941 Highland Ave.
converted to apts.



27

CHARLES KIMBALL HOUSE
539 E. 20th Street

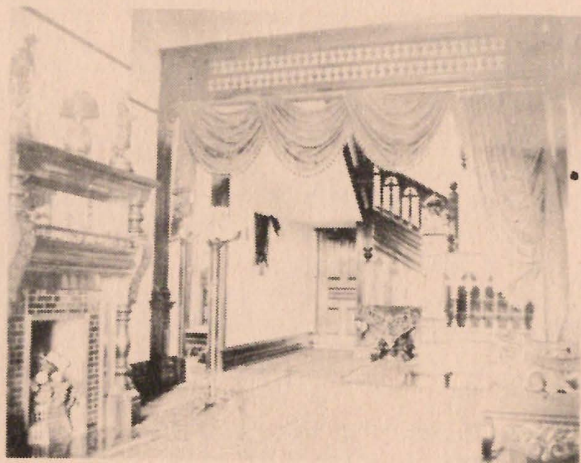
Charles Kimball was the youngest child in the family of Asa Kimball. He was one of the Kimball brothers and was active in the carpentry trade.

D.K. Horton House
1504 E. 22nd Street

DICKINSON-BOAL HOUSE
1433 East 24th Street
1887

This large and handsome Queen Anne Victorian is the work of the architectural firm of Comstock & Trotsche, who designed several buildings in San Diego, the best-known of which is Jesse Shepard's Villa Montezuma. Of particular interest are the veranda over the broad covered porch, the hexagonal tower, and the tall pressed-brick chimney. The 18-room house contains a carved stairway of black walnut, some stained glass, fine hardwoods, and sculptured fireplaces with ceramic tile.

In 1886 Col. William Green Dickinson came to the city and purchased 40 acres on which to build a home. Six years earlier a group of Boston financiers had formed the San Diego Land and Town Company and, promising to build to National City a railroad that would connect with a cross-country line, had received as a subsidy a major portion of the Kimball's National Ranch. Col. Dickinson was sent out to manage the company and in this capacity was involved in the building of Sweetwater Dam and the National City and Otay Railroad. He is considered the founder of Chula Vista, a suburban town of small fruit tracts. The colonel died in 1891 at the age of 65.



Entry hall and stairway, Dickinson-Boal House, 1889



Dickinson-Boal House, c. 1889

In 1888 the Dickinsons' daughter Mary married John E. Boal of Topeka, Kansas, and the couple soon came to live in the Dickinson home. The family held a variety of social activities: there were literary euchre, and stereopticon parties, and couples danced the intricate figures of the "German" (cotillion).

After the colonel's death Boal became manager of the Land and Town Co., a position he held until the company's dissolution in 1926. Boal's death occurred in 1934.

The house was later occupied by the San Miguel School for Boys, during which time the exterior stairway was added, but by the late 1960's was once more a private residence.

WALLACE DICKINSON HOUSE
1430 E. 24th Street
c. 1887

Across the street from Col. Dickinson's house is the one built by his son, Wallace. Wallace Dickinson worked with his father in the San Diego Land & Town Company before going to Montana.

The house is of Carpenter Gothic design, with a hipped roof and lancet windows. There is a variety of shingle patterns, a dormer window on the roof, and turned spindle porch detailing. Similarities to the Dickinson-Boal House include a porch extending along two sides of the house and a window combination of an arched window flanked by two rectangular ones.

31

GORDON-CLARK HOUSE
2505 N Avenue
1888
Demolished



Gordon-Clark House, 1949

This beautiful and elaborate house, torn down in 1959, was long considered one of the city's showplaces. The great variety of designs used was produced by Warren Kimball's planing mill. The lower portion of the exterior walls was tongue-and-groove siding, while the upper portion was covered with varying "dimensional shingles." Portions of the columns supporting the porch roof were fluted in the form of a vase, and over each of these hung a garland of fruit. Two large round towers were dominant features.

The house was built by James S. Gordon, who had come to National City about 1878. Gordon was first engaged in the real estate business, then served as cashier of the Bank of National City, and, with Frank Kimball, had interest in the Carriage Company and the National Bank. He died in 1892. The Gordons, with three daughters, were active in society and often gave parties for as many as 50 guests, charades and costume masques being frequent themes.

In 1909, R. Kenton Clark, a retired sea captain, acquired the house. Captain Clark reportedly commissioned for the dining room walls a series of frescoes, consisting of scenes from his life at sea, and remodeled the kitchen to resemble a ship's galley.

32

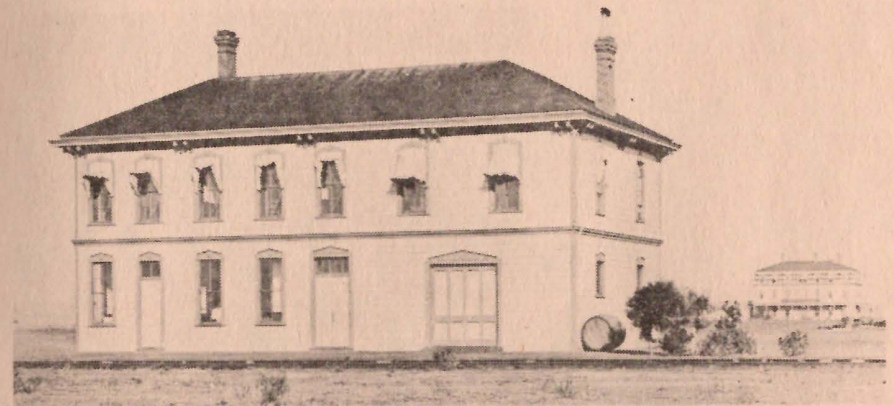
Oliver Noyes House
2525 N Ave.



33

THE DEPOT

c. 1887



Perhaps no building in National City better symbolizes the high aspirations and shattered dreams of the Kimball brothers in their efforts to bring the railroad to National City. Built shortly after 1880 when the San Diego Land and Town Company incorporated the Southern California Railroad, the Depot features simple Victorian ornamentation. Decorative brackets are visible under the eaves, and slightly embellished cornices accent the windows.

The second floor of the station, consisting of seven large rooms with a magnificent view of the entire bay, housed the telegrapher/station master for many years. By living right at the station this man did practically twenty-four hour a day service for the railroad and the public.

For many years the only transportation, other than house and buggy, from National City to San Diego was by way of the "National City and Otay Motor Railroad." Anyone wishing to go to San Diego for a concert or the theatre depended on the so-called "Theatre Train" that would take them there and wait to bring them back.

The Nelly Bell, formerly a private sleeping car and with the original berths still intact, sits on the track in front of the Depot. Intricate relief detailing is still visible around the windows.

34

FRANK KIMBALL HOUSE
10 W. Plaza
1869

The home of National City's founder, Frank Kimball is called "the most important house ever built on the National Ranch." Efforts are being led by National City Mayor Kile Morgan to save this house around which revolved National City's early civic and social life. Kimball bought the National Ranch and construction of his house began in 1868, immediately after the survey of the Kimball "empire" was completed.



Frank Kimball House, c. 1875

Kimball chose property near W. 10th Street (now Plaza Blvd.) and National Avenue for his house while brother Warren chose land near what is now 24th Street and Highland Avenue; and brother Levi chose land in the Sweetwater Valley.

No records indicate the architect for the Kimball House, but the first structure on the property was erected by the Kimball brothers themselves. It was a night's shelter for them as they began their empire building.

Kimball and his wife, Sarah, took up residence in their still uncompleted home August 4, 1868. Into Kimball's house, valued at that time between \$8,000 and \$10,000, went 3,000 bricks shipped from San Francisco to form the kitchen chimney. The two chimneys of the house were completed in 1887 and considered "the finest in town."



Frank Kimball House, c. 1906

Kimball referred to the hall area west of the living room as the "Tower Hall." In it is the winding staircase leading to the second floor.

The house originally faced in another direction but was later shifted to face what is now Plaza Blvd. When the house was turned, a large rear addition containing kitchen and dining facilities for the "help" and one upstairs bedroom was removed.

At Kimball's house, there was always a welcome for sailors returning from the sea and in need of food and a night's lodging. And families settling in the area often stayed with the Kimballs until their own homes were built. Visitors included not only Kimball's relatives but men like Pardee, Parsons and Phinney whose ranches later became subdivisions of the new town Kimball was building. On April 30, 1891, the house took on special lustre as Kimball hosted an important group visiting a growing portion of Southern California. Newspaper accounts and Kimball's diary reveal that the "entire presidential party" of President Benjamin Harrison, Sec. Rusk, Col. Ingersoll, and Ulysses S. Grant, Jr. were entertained in Kimball House. Kimball also noted in his diary a visit by a less noted personage.

According to Kimball, he fed a tramp "who said his name was Frank Kimball, but I doubt it." Also in his diary Kimball wrote that in the 29 years he and Sarah lived in the house, they were alone only twice.

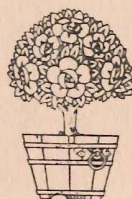
Streets and developments have encroached on Kimball House, but it originally was surrounded by lush landscaping. There reportedly was a large tree which stood in the yard and could "shelter hundreds of people," but the tree was taken down in 1891.

The house also was a nursery for experimental plants at one time during its long life.

Presently, the house shelters low income families and awaits acquisition by the city for restoration.

35

BARBER-FERBITZ HOUSE
926 7th Street
1887
(Remodeled)



Albert Barber became the first man to buy land in Chula Vista when that subdivision was opened up.

After having several owners, the house was acquired in 1922 by Mark & Emma Ferbitz. For many years Ferbitz was National City's only electrician.

According to Mrs. Faith Ferbitz Frikart, the Ferbitz's only daughter, the house was originally a one and one-half-story cottage on a redwood foundation. Later additions were made, including one by Frederick Crandall

36

FRED COPELAND HOUSE
1108 D Avenue
1870, 1880'
(Remodeled)

Fred Copeland and his wife Mary, Frank Kimball's sister, settled in National City in 1869. A civil engineer, he served the area well; as City Engineer and Surveyor and Deputy Surveyor and Deputy Assessor for the county. He had the final responsibility for the layout of the city's streets. Copeland was also the contractor for the city's three early wharves: the 1800-foot long Kimball Wharf of 1871, the railroad wharf of 1887, and the pleasure wharf of 1904. He died in 1906.

Originally built in 1870, the house had an addition made about 1880 and has since been remodeled.

37

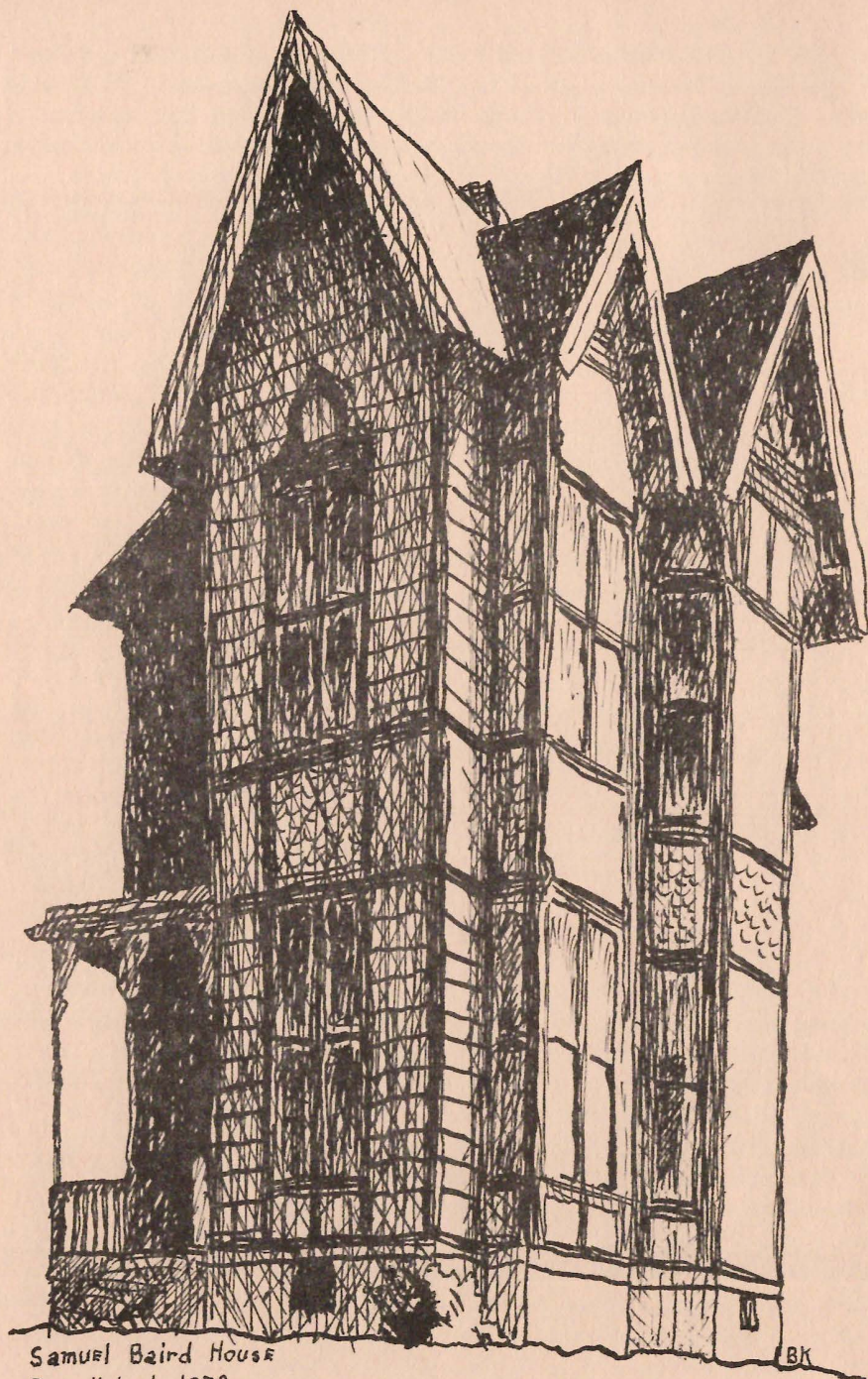
LA VISTA MEMORIAL PARK
3030 Granger
1870
Not Shown on Map



In the older sections of the memorial park are buried those who took part in the early history of National City - Frank Kimball and his wife Sarah, other members of the Kimball family, the Copelands, Elizur Steele, the Dickinsons, Theron Parsons, Dr. Anna Potts of the Paradise Valley Sanitarium, and many others.

Frank Kimball laid out the cemetery in 1870, when there occurred the first death among the settlers, that of Mrs. Wincapaw. He referred to the place as the "Resting Ground" or the "Silent City on the Hill." In 1887, the eucalyptus trees were planted, and aerial observation later indicated that the planting was done in the shape of a huge harp. Following Frank Kimball's financial misfortunes, a La Vista Cemetery Association was formed in 1892 to protect the cemetery.

La Vista continues today as a private memorial park.



Samuel Baird House
Demolished 1973

NATIONAL CITY AND THE RAILROAD

The history of the railroad in National City is a story of unkept promises and dashed hopes. The economic and industrial development of the city would always depend on a railroad link with the rest of California and the nation, and the Kimball brothers would work for many years to establish this connection. It first appeared that the Texas & Pacific would be the railroad to provide this link, but the financial crisis of 1873 put an end to this hope. It was not until 1880 that the San Diego Land and Town Company, made up of a group of Santa Fe stock holders and eastern money interests, would incorporate the Southern California Railroad. In exchange for the major portion of the National Ranch and five-eighths of National City itself, the company agreed to bring the railroad and a number of terminal shops to National City. While the Kimballs were given a sixth interest in the company, the bulk of National City passed out of their hands.

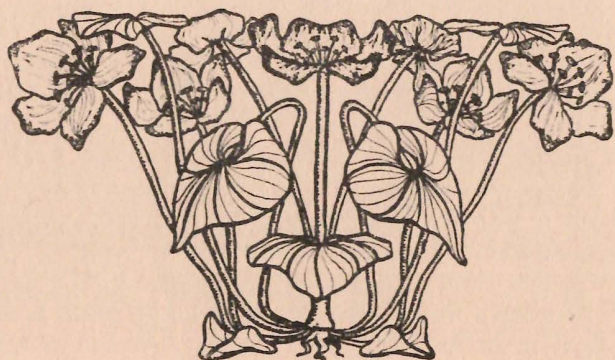
In October of 1880 the first railroad spike was driven in National City, and the Southern Pacific began moving to meet the Atcheson, Topeka & Santa Fe. In November, 1885, the last spike connecting the two railroads was driven near Cajon Pass.

The railroad became the nucleus of National City's industrial center. The population soared to 2,000 by 1885, and as part of the agreement with California Southern, shops were set up at the end of what is now 18th Street. There was a roundhouse, machine shops, storekeepers' rooms, paint shops, car shops, carpenter shops, warehouses, and an office building. Working day and night the shops constructed more than 500 railroad cars in 1881.

Stimulated by the railroad business, the building industry was progressing at full speed. Offices and houses were going up overnight, and the new wharf was moving out into the water at a rate of 20 feet a day. National City presented a lively picture of railroad activity; vessels were unloading at the wharf, stores were operating at a Christmas pace, hotels and boarding houses were full, and the prediction was made that the city "would spread until its suburbs touched those of San Diego."

Despite this fever of activity, the Southern Pacific decided to move its offices to San Bernardino in 1885. Perhaps it was the flood of 1884, when the tracks were washed out and National City was without rail service for nine months, that brought about the decision. It was at this time that the railroad was rerouted from Palisades to San Juan Capistrano, through Santa Ana, and then on to San Bernardino. By 1889 the railroad has ceased to maintain the shops, and with the shops went the employees. The payroll dropped from \$20,000 to \$4,000 per month, and by 1892 the last of the shops had been dismantled and sent to San Bernardino. Several banks closed, and by 1894 the "boom town" was in the midst of a recession.

Despite the ultimate loss of the railroad's main offices and shops, the San Diego Land and Town Company did contribute much to the development of the Southbay area. In 1883 50,000 acres of land were made available for six years credit at seven percent interest; the National City School was re-opened in 1880, and in 1886 the Sweetwater Dam, that would supply water for domestic use and irrigation of citrus trees cultivated in the Paradise and Sweetwater Valleys, was completed. The company was also responsible for installing a sewer line and planting approximately 300 acres of citrus trees. So successful were these ventures that the San Diego papers would later say of National City that "orchards transformed the city into a garden, many cottages dot the Paradise Valley which nurseryman Asher has changed from a catcus cover place to a valley of gardens."



HOUSES NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

1. Herbold Ranch House, 10 Highland Avenue
Built 1886, owner was a rancher.
2. Bon Air Ranch House, 2216 East Fifth Street
This home was built in 1891 by Thomas J. Swayne, one-time political opponent of Frank Kimball. Swayne defeated Kimball in 1884 in his bid to become the state assemblyman of the National District. After Swayne's election there was opposition to his actions because of his support of Leland Stanford who opposed the dredging and creation of San Diego Harbor.
3. Theron Parson House, 606 East 8th Street
4. Evans Home, Corner of 8th and National
Early stage-coach driver owned this house.
5. Warren Kimball Home, 236 10th Avenue
Built 1872 - first home.
6. Ranch home of Edward Owen, 1715 Rachael
7. Townhome of Edward Owen, 833 East 18th Street
8. Dranga Hall, Corner 18th and McKinley
Built 1881, Hall had many firsts:
1st National City Band organized there,
1st strike held there in 1885 (men got no raise, returned to work),
1st Episcopal church services held there,
1st Methodist church organized there,
1st fire department organized there.
9. David Harbison house, 2510 East 18th
10. National City Bank Building, Corner of 21st & McKinley
Built in 1887. Became Annex Motion Picture Co. in 1911 - no voice - then San Diego Casket Company in 1925.
11. Captain's House, 25th & N
12. Staug's Blacksmith Shop, 18th and McKinley

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RESEARCH SOURCES

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San Diego City and County Directory, various years.



Looking north along McKinley Avenue from W. 19th St.,
c. 1900



PICTURE CREDITS

Portrait of Frank Kimball: San Diego Historical Society,
Serra Museum and Library

Baird House : Bruce Kamerling

All other illustrations are from the Historical Collection
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