

On July 20, 1769, Father Juan Crespi arrived in the area known today as the San Luis Rey Valley, which was populated by Native Americans. His glowing report of the area as a possible mission site was responsible for the founding of Mission San Luis Rey de Francia in 1798. Three-and-a-half miles from the present site of Oceanside, the mission prospered beyond the dreams of its Franciscan Brothers and came to be known as "King of the Missions". History and politics were to see the decline of the mission in the 1840's, but the area's advantages were common knowledge by this date.

The early California period was the time of massive Mexican land grants. On May 10, 1841, Pio Pico and his brother, Andreas, received a grant of 133,441 acres from Governor Alvarado. Known as Rancho Margarita and Las Flores, this land grant is the present site of the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. The rancho changed hands several times throughout the years. Andreas tired of the quiet life of a California Don sold his share to Pio for \$1,000. Pio, in turn, sold his share to his brother-in-law John Forster, an Englishman, for only \$14,000.

Forster died in 1882, and Richard O'Neill, a wealthy San Franciscan, purchased the rancho from the Forster estate for \$250,000. O'Neill sold half interest in the rancho to the "Bonanza King of California," James C. Flood. The heirs of O'Neill and Flood held the property until 1942, when it was sold to the United States Navy.

About the time O'Neill and Flood purchased the rancho, the California Southern Railway, a branch of the Santa Fe, was constructing a railway linking San Diego with San Bernardino. Completed in 1883, the railway opened the beach area of San Diego County for development and the real history of Oceanside began.

A small town had grown up around the mission in the San Luis Rey Valley. A storekeeper there, Andrew Jackson Meyers, was far-sighted enough to apply for a homestead grant in the area just south of Rancho Santa Margarita. The Federal government granted "Jack" Meyers 160 acres and a former government surveyor, Cave J. Coutts, staked-out the claim, which was to become the very heart of Oceanside. J. Chauncey Hayes handled the real estate for Meyers and the boom was on.

Going to the "ocean side" was a popular weekend retreat for rancho families living in the warmer inland areas. The two words were eventually merged in to "Oceanside". When Hayes petitioned for a post office, he submitted the name Oceanside and put the small community officially on the map.

Early Oceanside grew at a phenomenal rate; on the date of the city's incorporation July 3, 1888 the population of Oceanside was approximately 1,000. By 1887, the Bank of Oceanside was built on the corner of Mission Avenue and South Coast Highway and also a grand hotel, the South Pacific, located on Pier View Way and Pacific Streets near the present pier.

A wharf company was formed and soundings were made at the location of what is now known as Wisconsin Street. The wharf was made entirely of wooden pilings, the first pile being driven May 12, 1888.

In the winter of 1890-91, the wharf was destroyed by a storm and Melchoir Pieper, the proprietor of the South Pacific Hotel, salvaged most of the lumber. He took the pilings to his hotel where he kept it until the city appropriated funds for a new pier in 1893. This second pier was the first of five built at the Pier View Way location, including the one recently completed in 1987.

In the 1890's Oceanside had three hotels; the South Pacific, the St. Cloud and the Tremont, two drug-stores, two livery stables, two blacksmiths, a hardware store, a bakery, a harness shop, a lumber yard, a barber shop, a newspaper, a school and the Oceanside Bank along with many other businesses. There were six churches: Christian, Congregational, Baptist, Episcopal, Holiness and Methodist.

The railroads played an important role in the continuing development of the city. During the boom years, the trains brought thousands of prospective buyers. This continued until a highway was paved between San Diego and Los Angeles through Oceanside before 1920. In the 1920's the city prospered. Streetlights were installed, a new golf course was laid out and a grand new theater, "The Palomar", was built. The City slogan at that time was, "Oceanside, California's Pride." Many noteworthy visitors enjoyed our shore, including Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. And a number of movies were filmed here during this decade.

This sense of prosperity, of course, was false; founded more on speculation than stability. Oceanside suffered through the Great Depression of 1929 with the rest of the Nation. In spite of economic depression, considerable progress can be measured in the thirties. In 1934 a new city hall was built on

Pier View Way; City government had its first permanent home since incorporation. That same year, a two-year college was founded. The Depression, however, did nothing to stem population growth; Oceanside's population grew from 3,508 in 1930 to 4,652 in 1940, according to U.S. Bureau of the Census figures.

In 1943 the old steel pier was damaged severely in a storm. The value of the pier as a tourist attraction was deemed strong enough to consider raising a bond issue to build a new and even grander pier. In 1946, the people of Oceanside passed a \$175,000 bond issue to build the longest pier -- 1,900 feet on the West Coast. The same year saw the construction of the building which was to house the Oceanside Public Library until 1971.

World War II saw Oceanside grow from a sleepy little town to a modern city. With the construction of the nation's largest Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, on her border, the demand for housing and municipal services exceeded supply. The best illustration of the tremendous growth of the city is found in the census figures. The population of Oceanside jumped from the 1940 figure of 4,652 to 12,888 in 1950. In 1952 a special census showed the city's population exceeding 18,000 as the Marine Base grew with the Korean War and more service-connected families moved into the area.

The 1960's saw the opening of Tri-City Hospital and the building of the Oceanside Small Craft Harbor. The harbor is a tourist destination and is well used with over 800 boat slips covering 100 acres (30 land and 70 water). In addition to being the homeport of many pleasure boats, the marina harbors several sport fishing boats.

A new downtown transit center was built in 1983 and in September of 1987, the city dedicated its sixth pier, just in time for Oceanside's Centennial Celebration in 1988. The following year the new Civic Center was constructed and became the cornerstone for downtown redevelopment.

This brief history suggests that the mainstays of the Oceanside economy have been tourism and the proximity of Camp Pendleton. However, Oceanside currently enjoys a diverse economic portfolio and has a number of business advantages. To encourage new investment in the City, an incentive plan for new commercial, industrial and office construction is available and the property tax is one of the lowest in the county. Oceanside has a large sporting and recreational goods manufacturing sector as well as a large number of biotech and medtech companies. Agriculture is also important to Oceanside's economy. San Diego County is a major agricultural producer and the warm climate of Oceanside makes it ideal for the growing of tomatoes, avocados, citrus fruit, nursery stock, and flowers.

Today, Oceanside is a thriving community that provides all the conveniences of a modern city without the disadvantages. Located just 35 miles north of San Diego and 83 miles south of Los Angeles, Oceanside offers a unique combination of outstanding location, well-priced available land and multiple resources. California's main highway, Interstate 5, runs through Oceanside, as does Highway 78, which provides southeast access to Interstate 15. Highway 76, which runs northeast, also provides access to Interstate 15. With the Los Angeles area to the north and the San Diego/Tijuana area to the south, Oceanside enjoys proximity to all major Southern California destinations, while at the same time maintaining its coastal beauty and autonomy.

Information from the City of Oceanside's web site