

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

San Diego (0-500 alt., 170,000 pop.) is a loosely knit community of residential districts, business centers, and suburban towns covering 96 square miles of seashore, canyons, and mesas. Climate is its main product; tourists are its principal customers. Its excellent harbor, one of the finest natural harbors on the Pacific coast, has been instrumental in attracting three important contributors to its economic welfare. The fishing industry, operated by the Portuguese and Italians, is the oldest; but in recent years the United States Navy and the aircraft industries have been increasingly active. Tourists visit San Diego the year round, but during the fall and winter months, August through March, is the heaviest traffic. Near the northern boundary of the San Diego metropolitan area is La Jolla, an exclusive residential beach town. Along the seashore are several ocean resorts and amusement centers, focused about Mission Bay. At the northern end of San Diego Bay is Old Town, where California civilization began.

At first glance San Diego's appearance seems to belie the figure of its population. There is little of the hurly-burly, the noise, and the mad scramble of traffic—automobile, streetcar, and pedestrian alike—that characterizes the usual city of this size. There is traffic, and it moves, but it moves unhurriedly. The sidewalks are traversed, but there are seldom great clots of people jamming the street intersections. And probably because of the large proportion of elderly, retired persons, who are not able to elude automobiles as well as they once were, the balance of protection on the city's streets is in the pedestrian's favor. Signs instructing the motorist to stop when pedestrians are in the crosswalk mean what they say. Motorists and streetcar operators alike do not attempt to beat traffic signals. These traffic habits, combined with the unusually short blocks—particularly in the downtown area—all add to the characteristically leisurely atmosphere.

Like almost every city, San Diego has its main downtown artery, and, as in many another city, it is called Broadway. Broadway runs due east and west, and divides the city just as definitely as does Market Street in San Francisco. At its lower end it is a wide calm street, flanked by palms spaced at regular intervals, and from the foot of the street at the bay, looking east, the city appears at its best. The clump of newer office buildings, farther uptown, contrasts sharply with the rest of the area, and presents an impressive skyline. The latest addition to this group of buildings, El Cortez hotel, built on the eminence of an abrupt rise north of Broadway, commands a superb view of the tremendous sweep of bay and the peninsula of Point Loma opposite, and sets the tone of the new and modern city that is the present San Diego. And yet, beginning just a few blocks north, a great mass of green marks the beginning of Balboa Park (1,400 acres), huge and sprawling, much of it as uncultivated as it was on the day the tract was set aside for its present purpose. Around its boundaries the northern half of the city has grown. One of the first exclusive residential districts, Golden Hill, hugs the park's southeastern

corner—an area of wide pleasant streets, with many trees and shrubs standing watch in front of the big wooden houses set back in their well-kept lawns. Along the western edge of the park, extending north and south, are many of the new and smart apartment buildings. Northward and eastward from the park the city stretches back, each year spreading farther and farther from the bay.

Immediately south of Broadway is one of the play areas of the Navy enlisted man. Hash houses and honky tonks, drinking parlors with jazz bands and tiny dance floors, trinket shops, shooting galleries, and the ever present pawnshop, combine to make "south of Broadway" a distinct area. But there is considerably more to this section than just these characteristic features of any city's tenderloin district. A little farther south are the remnants of a once good-sized Chinatown—a few forlorn restaurants and a scattering of board shacks. Many of the old original business buildings still stand in all their architectural oddity. Then begins the wholesale and manufacturing section—the warehouses, the gas tanks, the fringe of industrial plants along the southern waterfront. Veering eastward, following the curve of the shoreline, the district widens and becomes residential. In this area are San Diego's Mexican and Negro communities. There is nothing particularly picturesque about this southern end of town—the buildings and the houses are old and in need of repair, there is considerable poverty and very little wealth; if any part of the city could be called slum, this is it.

Since 1900 there has existed a struggle between two elements of the San Diego citizenry. The older group, mainly pioneers and their descendants, have been concerned with keeping San Diego a residential city where tourists might be persuaded to come upon retirement from active business. The newer element, businessmen and industrial leaders, have made every effort to promote San Diego as an industrial center. The effort to keep the town basically a resort area has resulted in a top-heavy economic balance, with too sharp a dividing line between those who are economically secure and the large stratum of working people. San Diego's municipal credit, however, bolstered by the 2-million dollar pay roll of the Navy, has always been above average.

San Diego has gone far since its Mexican village beginnings. It still has that touch of easygoing, *mañana* (Sp., *tomorrow*) spirit typical of Latin-American existence, which makes the city unhurried, conservative, and sure of itself. People dress very much as they please, and, to the visitor from other parts of the country where tradition or climate dictates the mode of daily dress, it may appear that the people are haphazard and tasteless in their choice of attire. But San Diego dresses and lives for comfort. It is rare that some of this spirit does not infect the tourist. Those who come for brief visits are frequently uneasy in the face of such unconventional sartorial philosophy; but the departed tourist remembers San Diego—remembers its climate, its real, comfortable feeling of well-being, and above all its beauty of harbor, hills, ocean front, and back country. And tourists do come back to stay.



SILVER STRAND, CORONADO, AND SAN DIEGO
FROM THE AIR (*Official U. S. Navy photograph*)

THE CITY BY SECTIONS

1. DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO

San Diego's principal business district is concentrated in the area from Twelfth Avenue west to the bay and from A Street south to the bay, with the city spreading fan-wise from this tract. Though an attempt was made in 1850 to found a city on this site, its real development did not begin until 1867, when A. E. Horton purchased a thousand acres and laid out the present street plan. (See *Historical: The Americans.*) At first the center was at Fifth Avenue and Market Street, but following the real estate booms of the 1870's and 1880's, the trend was northward until Broadway has become the main artery.

From all directions traffic converges upon the district, with Broadway carrying the bulk of the streetcar lines. The blocks are short and the streets much narrower than the boulevards of the newer sections. Clustered around the downtown center (1937) of Broadway at Fifth Avenue are the city's imposing group of structures: the newer hotels and office buildings which give San Diego its skyline. But in San Diego the old and new still jostle each other, and particularly in this circumscribed section there is a curious composite of architectural styles. A building of the 1870's stands beside a building with the most ultra-modern of fronts; across the street is a three- or four-storied structure of the 1890's, flaunting a belaced shirt front. South of Broadway, especially in the area of Fifth Avenue and Market Street, many buildings of the 1870's are still in use. Between Market and Broadway are pretentious gingerbread ornamented "skyscrapers" of the 1890's, highly praised in their time for beauty and modernity. Two types predominate along Broadway, the hotel and office building style of the 1910's, and the larger Renaissance type building so popular in the boom days of the 1920's. But newer buildings are gradually appearing: the new Civic Center building lies on the bay edge north of the business area and a new post office of splendid architectural design is nearing completion.

The main streetcar terminal is on lower Broadway, at the Union depot, which also handles the traffic of both railroad systems. Broadway is much wider between the waterfront and Third Avenue than in the remaining downtown area. Horton Plaza, between Third and Fourth Avenues, is a lounging place for the elderly retired and the shopper. At Fifth Avenue is the core of a busy retail district, and a majority of the banks, theaters, and larger hotels are located within the radius of a few blocks. North of Broadway flanking the business houses are numerous residences, the vintage of 1890 predominating. South of Broadway, on Twelfth Avenue, is the principal retail produce market district, flanked by a nondescript residential area. South on Third, Fourth, and Fifth Avenues are cheap eating places, pawnshops, third-run movie houses, and the type of small hotel which offers clean beds from 25 cents up. Around Fourth Avenue and Island Street is the small remnant of San Diego's once large Chinatown, and between it and the bay are large warehouses and industrial plants. To the west and south of this area are the wharves and docks of the waterfront.

2. BALBOA PARK

In an area of mesas and deep canyons, bounded by Date Street and Russ Boulevard on the south, Sixth Avenue on the west, Upas Street on the north, and Twenty-eighth Street on the east, is the 1,400-acre tract of Balboa Park. Since 1915 it has been San Diego's most important cultural and recreational center. Park Boulevard (12th Avenue) running north and south, divides the park into two distinct areas. The western side, of approximately 600 acres, is highly cultivated and contains the greatest number of points of interest. Recreational clubs border the southern and western edges, while the central portion has the museums, art galleries, and exhibition buildings of two world expositions. The lesser developed eastern section of the park contains the municipal swimming pool and tennis courts, the municipal golf course, the naval hospital, the city stadium, and the San Diego High School. Great stretches of barren canyon walls, with green and purple sweeps of chaparral, make up most of this area, indicative of the original appearance of this whole region.

On Sundays, city-tired people wander along the winding pathways and roads and gather at the outdoor organ to hear the featured concert. Floral gardens and landscapings, both simple and intricate, add variety to the ever-changing terrain. The collections in the museums and galleries appeal to visitors, who take an interest in the well-arranged displays, aside from their scientific value.

Though the park was set aside as early as 1868, it was not until about 1892 that extensive plans for development were undertaken. In that year a plan for annual tree planting was evolved, and in 1902 more than \$10,000 was collected from public and private sources for grading and planting the southwestern corner. Roads, walks, drives, and general cultivation areas were planned, and Golden Gate Park in San Francisco donated many specimens of plants, to which friends in Australia added specimens of eucalyptus, acacia, araucaria, and other subtropical plants. Since the exposition of 1935-36 the park has been in the best condition of its history.

3. MIDDLETOWN

Between downtown San Diego and Old Town, lying to the west of Balboa Park, is a long, narrow strip of low hills and tidal flats which retains the pioneer name of Middletown. In the 1850's, when the first attempt was made to found a city on the present downtown site, a group of Old Town citizens purchased this strip and set up a rival subdivision. Not until Horton's venture, however, did the area attract visitors; but as it lay along the main thoroughfare between the old and the new town, it became a convenient suburban residential district. Wealthy families built homes on the hillsides overlooking the bay. As the new town grew, and the harbor became commercially useful, these families moved farther back into Mission Hills, and along the western edge of Balboa Park. At present the Middletown area is given over to rooming and boarding houses. The main business center is known as Five Points. To the south, near the fish canneries, are the homes of Italian fishermen; and to the north are the residences of many of the employees of the aircraft works, which are on the waterfront. (See *Tour 4.*)

4. OLD TOWN

Like a sleepy, dilapidated ghost town forgotten in the swirl of modern industrialism, Old Town lies northwest of Middletown, radiating in its own quiet, nostalgic way a dignity and repose reminiscent of the old Spanish and Mexican regimes. It is only a skeleton of its former self. Many of the comfortable, rambling adobe houses of the early nineteenth century, scenes of gay fiestas, have long since crumbled into the clay from which they were made. The exceptions are few, a small number that the modern age has belatedly rescued from destruction. Occasionally adobe mounds mark the sites of once pretentious homes; but the majority have been cut into lots and covered with small residences and sprawling, ugly auto courts.

Standing in the old plaza, one finds it difficult to picture the town's appearance before progress moved the business interests south. Trees and greenery have taken away the dry, sun-parched appearance of the plaza. The few existing adobe houses have been altered, and frequently not too respectfully. On the outskirts of the town are several fine adobes, which, if not restored within a few years, will become only memories. The inroads of commercialism have proved a serious danger to the many sites which are still privately owned. The past few years have shown an awakened interest in San Diego's past, and already a few of the relics are being saved for future generations; but there is much left to do. (See *Tour 1.*)

5. POINT LOMA

Point Loma, a peninsula 7 miles long, encloses San Diego Bay on the west, and its cliffs, 400 feet high, rising from narrow, sandy beaches, form a natural windbreak which gives the harbor protection from storms at all times. Except for the residential district at the northern end, the several little centers along the shore line, and the Theosophical Homestead on the ridge, the peninsula remains in its wild state. The cliffs are chaparral covered, and deep ravines are eroded into the eastern and western sides. The tip of the point is a United States military reservation, in which is located Fort Rosecrans. At Point Loma post office, formerly known as Roseville, and at the modern subdivision known as La Playa, is the Portuguese colony. (See *Social and Cultural.*)

Point Loma is one of California's historic sites. Here Cabrillo first set foot on California soil; here Vizcaíno held religious services; here the Americans settled and carried on their hide, tallow, and whale-oil industry; and it was here that the American flag was first flown, though unofficially, and many years before the conquest. (See *Historical: The Americans* and *Tour 2.*)

6. MISSION HILLS

On the hills above Old Town, commanding a view of the ocean, the bay, and Mission Valley, is the exclusive and modern residential district of Mission Hills. Thirty years ago this area was given over to small grain farms and olive orchards. Because of the topography of the area, with the prevalence of short canyons and promontory sites, the developers were forced to lay out circular and winding streets. From 1910 to 1925

Mission Hills developed most rapidly. Landscaping of exceptional character was planned and executed by Miss Kate Sessions, to whom also is due much of the beauty of Balboa Park. No definite architectural style prevails in this district, though the earlier residences followed what is generally called the California style. Those built during the past decade are distinctly of the modernistic and Monterey styles. Washington Street is the main thoroughfare of Mission Hills, connecting this rather isolated area with downtown San Diego and offering a short cut to the beach towns from East San Diego. A recent traffic survey reveals that Washington Street is one of the busiest in the city.

7. NORTH PARK

Between Mission Hills and East San Diego, in an area surrounding the junction of Thirtieth Street and University Avenue, is a homogeneous unit of San Diego known as North Park, with an estimated population of about thirty thousand. Here, since 1900, a business and residential center has developed which now has two banks, seven churches, several large stores and many small ones, two theaters, and hundreds of homes. Though there has been a tendency to include North Park with East San Diego as a city division, the local business men have steadily refused to let North Park's individuality be sacrificed. Each year they sponsor a celebration which reasserts their right to be considered a distinct city area.

8. EAST SAN DIEGO

Between North Park and Fifty-eighth Street is East San Diego, which was a municipality of the sixth class until 1923, when it voted to be annexed to San Diego. Had the great real estate boom of the 1880's been successful (see *Historical: The Americans*), East San Diego would have been a thriving city in its own right. Promoters swarmed over the brush-covered hills and mesas, grading streets 100 feet wide, laying out parks and home sites, and even planning for a railroad line. The collapse of the boom in 1888 ended this dream of metropolitan splendor. Not until 1901 was another attempt made to develop the area. Reestablished in that year by the City Heights Land and Water Company, East San Diego grew slowly until 1910-11, when a small boom brought investors and home builders. Two successive booms, one in 1915 and another in 1920, brought thousands of residents. At present, with an estimated population of thirty-five thousand, it is a region of comfortable, medium-priced homes. A strong community spirit is manifested by the business men and residents.

Joining East San Diego on the north and extending to bluffs overlooking Mission Valley are the exclusive residential districts of Talmadge Park and Kensington Park. Northeast, in brushy, rugged hills, just outside the city limits, is a favored area for the construction of luxurious homes.

9. ENCANTO

On ground that was once a part of a Spanish rancho used principally for the grazing of cattle, lies the suburb of Encanto (Sp., *charming*), 6

miles east of downtown San Diego on the extension of Imperial Avenue. The tract was laid out in 1893, and during subsequent promotion periods an attempt was made to attract a motion picture colony to this vicinity, in anticipation of which the subdivisions of West Hollywood and Hollywood were platted. This venture soon collapsed. The present population is a little more than one thousand, and the business section consists of a few stores scattered along Imperial Avenue. The surrounding hills are divided into home sites with many gardens, small orchards, and poultry ranches. A distinctive feature of Encanto is the commercial cactus gardens.

10. LOGAN HEIGHTS

Between Encanto and the Golden Hill area is Logan Heights. The subdividers planned the arterial streets to run in a northwesterly to southeasterly direction so that the sun might shine into every room of every house at some hour of the day; but the plan was not followed during later years, and as a result the district is a maze of cross section streets with numerous triangular lots throughout the area. In the 1890's Logan Heights was one of the choice residential districts. Many men and women prominent in present-day (1937) social and civic life were born, reared, and educated in this neighborhood. As San Diego grew, industrial plants located along the bay front, and even moved into the residential sections. As the district was not restricted, many racial minority groups moved in, particularly the Mexicans and the Negroes. The Mexican colony lies between Sixteenth and Twenty-fifth Streets, along Logan and National Avenues. The most important center of Mexican activity is the Neighborhood House, a community social hall, similar to Hull House, in Chicago. The Negro population has two large areas, one centering on Thirtieth Street between Imperial and National Avenues, the other extending from Sixteenth to Twenty-fifth Streets, between Imperial Avenue and the bay. (See *Social and Cultural*.)

11. GOLDEN HILL

Between Market Street and Balboa Park and Sixteenth and Twenty-eighth Streets is the Golden Hill residential district, which for a quarter of a century was the most aristocratic and highly improved area of San Diego. Its attractive features were its closeness to town and the unexcelled view of the bay to be had from the heights. After 1915, when more distant areas became accessible by means of automobile, this section declined somewhat. The original promoters had several novel restrictions for the subdivision. All houses were on large lots and were built 40 feet from the street, so that all might have an unobstructed view. The sale of intoxicating liquors was prohibited, and no barns were allowed. To compensate for this latter restriction, the promoters, to quote a circular of the period, promised "The company will build at a convenient distance, a two-story, fireproof barn, large enough for the accommodation of all. This building will be constructed with due regard to ventilation and all other means necessary to make it a veritable Horse Palace."