

# *Heritage Square*

National City,  
California



The Frank A. Kimball House  
The Rice-Proctor House  
The Elizur Steele, Crandall-Ennis House  
Brick Row

**CITY COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (CDC)  
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## City of National City Office of the Mayor

1243 National City Blvd., National City, CA 92050-4397 (619) 336-4230  
George H. Waters—Mayor

On October 25, 1980 the City of National City and the Community Development Commission of the City of National City formally dedicated the Frank A. Kimball House which is a part of Heritage Square. Heritage Square is located between 9th Street and Plaza Boulevard along "A" Avenue in National City. On the easterly side of "A" Avenue is the Kimball House, the Elizur-Steele-Crandall-Ennis House, and the Proctor House. On the westerly side of "A" Avenue is Brick Row, a ten unit row house which was built by the Kimball Brothers and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The street in front of these houses was reconstructed to visually coordinate with these historic buildings.

Kimball Square is part of the Center City Redevelopment Project which has been financed with Community Development Block Grant Funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Without this financial aid and the support of the City Council and Community Development Commission Members Heritage Square would not have been possible.

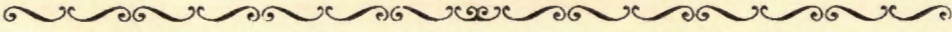
David L. Sheldon, Assistant Director, Rehabilitation, of the Community Development Commission worked for years in the planning and implementation of Heritage Square. We are grateful to him for his dedication to this Project.

Among donors to Heritage Square Mr. and Mrs. Ernest M. Stanley deserve special thanks.

On behalf of the people of National City I express gratitude to all of the people who have given their time, furnishings, and funds in support of the Frank A. Kimball House and Heritage Square.

This booklet was prepared to acquaint the reader with an important period in National City's history which is reflected in the Frank A. Kimball House and in Heritage Square. I hope you will find it interesting and valuable.

George H. Waters  
Mayor, City of National City, and  
Chairman, Community Development Commission  
of the City of National City

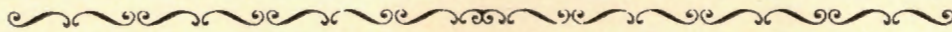


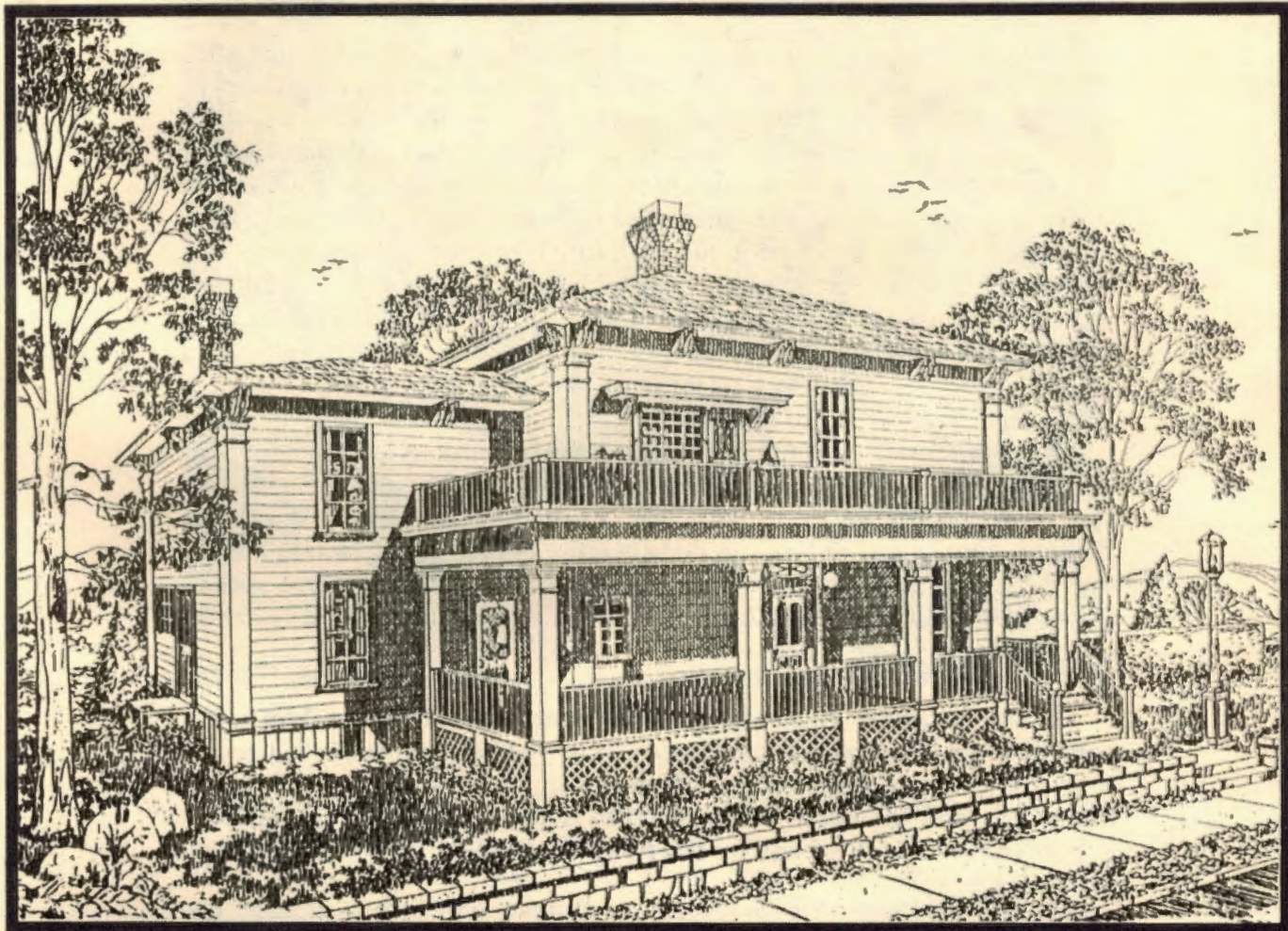
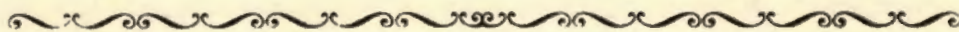
## Acknowledgements

Architectural work for renovating the Frank A. Kimball House, the Rice-Proctor House, the Elizur Steele, Crandall-Ennis House and the northerly unit of Brick Row is by George T. Szabo, San Diego. Landscape architecture for these houses and the "A" Avenue street scene is by Van Dyke/Halsey Design Group, San Diego. Much of the physical renovation of these buildings was performed by Beshears Construction, San Diego. Willie Davis Painting, San Diego, did all materials preparation and painting. Loretta Hyatt, San Diego, was responsible for interior decoration of the Frank A. Kimball House.

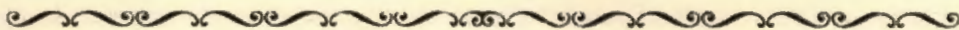
The Text of this booklet was prepared by Terri Jacques through research and information contributed by various individuals and archives. Recent photographs are by Kenneth Jacques, photographer.

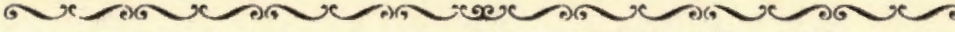
Unless otherwise noted, all historical photographs are from the San Diego Historical Society-Title Insurance and Trust Collection, San Diego.





**Restoration of the Frank A. Kimball House  
1980**





# The Frank A. Kimball House

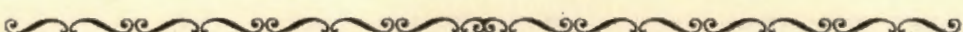
The dedication of the Frank A. Kimball House on October 25, 1980, signified the opening of Heritage Square as a unique historical district in National City which depicts a period of growth and prosperity in the history of San Diego. The ten-unit Kimball Brick Row and three wooden houses which were moved to Heritage Square in recent years from nearby locations in National City represent the Victorian period of architecture. In the years that the houses of Heritage Square were originally built, National City and San Diego were competing in size and population as railroad and shipping interests patronized both cities.

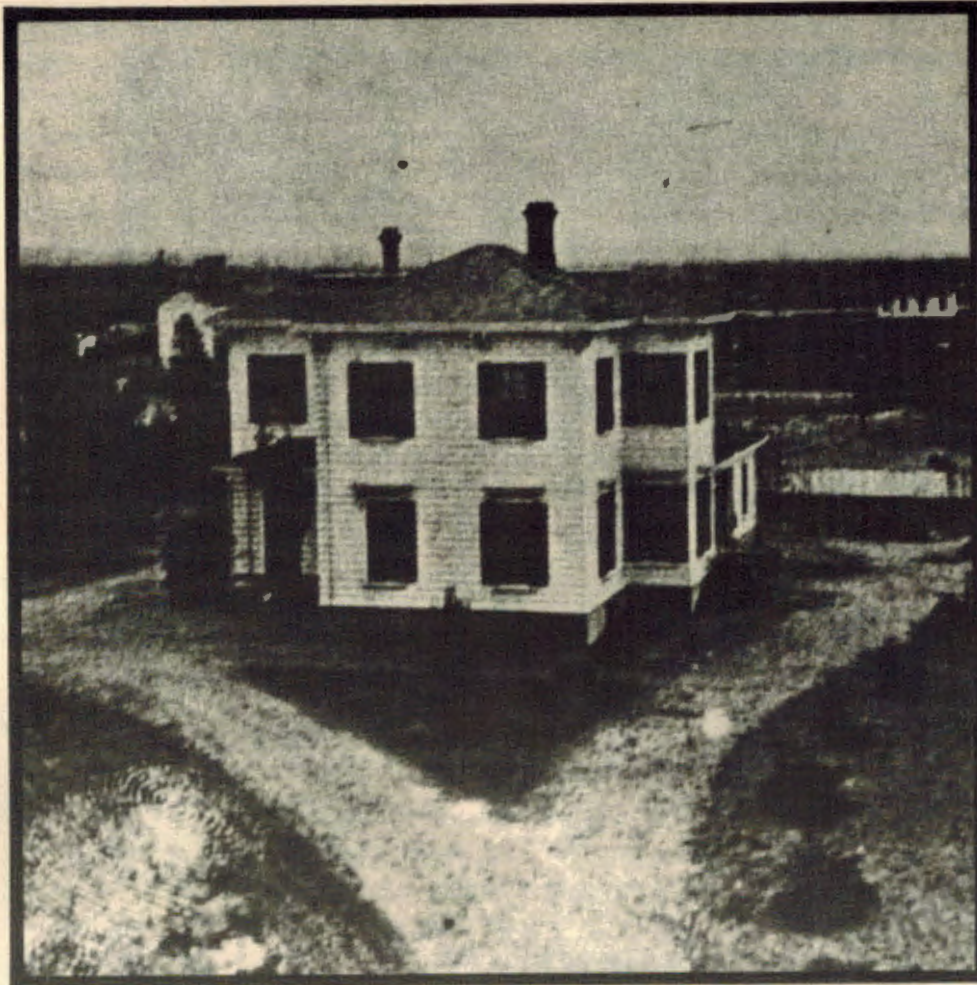
The earliest of the structures in Heritage Square is the Frank A. Kimball House, constructed in 1868-1869. Frank Kimball and his brothers Levi, Warren and George were instrumental in the founding and development of National City. In June of 1868 the Kimball Brothers purchased El Rancho de la Nacion consisting of 26,631 acres of land, from Francois L.A. Pioche for \$30,000. In subsequent years the townsite of National City was laid out. Much of the land for the new community was donated by the Kimball Brothers.

Frank Augustus Kimball, who had been a successful builder and contractor in San Francisco, selected a site for his new ranch house at the present-day location of the 200 block of Plaza Boulevard. His was one of the first houses to be built in the newly-formed National City. A San Diego *Union* newspaper article of October 1868 records the progress:

"We are informed that Mr. Kimball is putting the roof on his main building. He is building a fine large 2-story residence. It will cost some eight to ten thousand dollars. He will have hot and cold water in every room in the house. His dwelling overlooks the Bay and commands a fine view of the surrounding country."

Bricks from the Kimball brick kilns were used in making the chimneys for the two-and-a-half story, fifteen room house. A planing mill had not yet been set up in National City, which accounts for the simplicity in design of the house. Prominent characteristics of the completed Kimball House included its "Tower Hall," a 24-foot high interior stairway hall (still intact today), and interior plumbing, the first of its kind in the community. The home was completed by June of 1869. Frank Kimball added the finishing touches by landscaping his property with evergreens, pine, cedar, cypress, almond, pear, peach and apple trees.

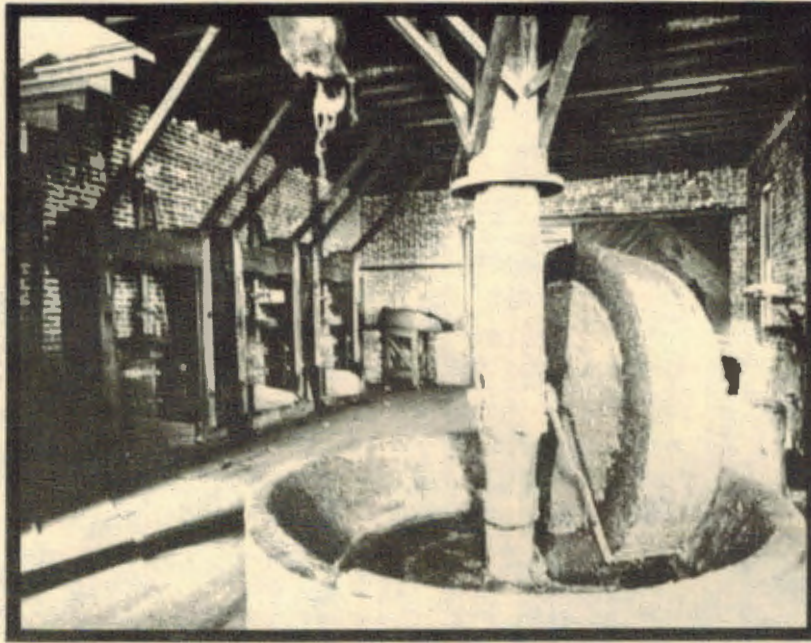




*The Frank A. Kimball House circa 1879-1880*

Over the years, the Kimball Brothers made significant contributions to the growth of National City as a thriving community. They also made fortunes from their land sales, railroad stock, agriculture and varied pursuits in business. The brothers and their families lived in National City. Much of the land of the original rancho was donated for railroad use and local interests such as churches and La Vista Memorial Cemetery.

Frank Kimball was not only responsible for the subdivision of his large rancho for settlement, but he was also directly instrumental in bringing the railroad to National City and southern California. In addition, Kimball founded a number of businesses and participated in establishing the agricultural economy of the South Bay region. He was partially responsible for the establishment of southern California's olive industry, citrus industry, and for many of the eucalyptus groves we see today in San Diego County. Frank Kimball served as State Commissioner of Agriculture for several years in the 1880s and 1890s, and experimented with new varieties of fruits and vegetables on his ranch.



*The Kimball olive oil mill in 1904  
(established 1887 at the foot of 23rd Street)*

The Kimball Brothers also shared interests in water issues concerning the South Bay area. To meet the needs of a growing community, the brothers formed a water company and selected the site for Sweetwater Dam, which was later constructed by San Diego Land and Town Company in 1886-1887.



*Colonel William Green Dickinson and Frank A. Kimball (r)  
at the Sweetwater Dam, circa 1889*



Because of increasing financial problems for Frank Kimball during the 1890's, he and his wife Sarah moved out of the Kimball House in the fall of 1897. The house had been lost by Kimball through a mortgage foreclosure. It was difficult for the Kimballs to leave their home of thirty years. The Kimballs had always opened their doors to guests, and prominent citizens often visited. President Grant reportedly stayed at the house at one time during one of Kimball's many railroad negotiations.

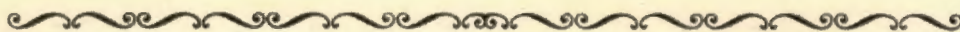
In the early 1900's the Robert Lee Lewis family moved into the Kimball House. In 1909, a son, John T. Lewis, was born in the house. Other children included Howell G. Lewis and Margaret Lewis (Arnold). The Lewis children, now grown, have visited the Kimball House after its restoration and remember that the house was once

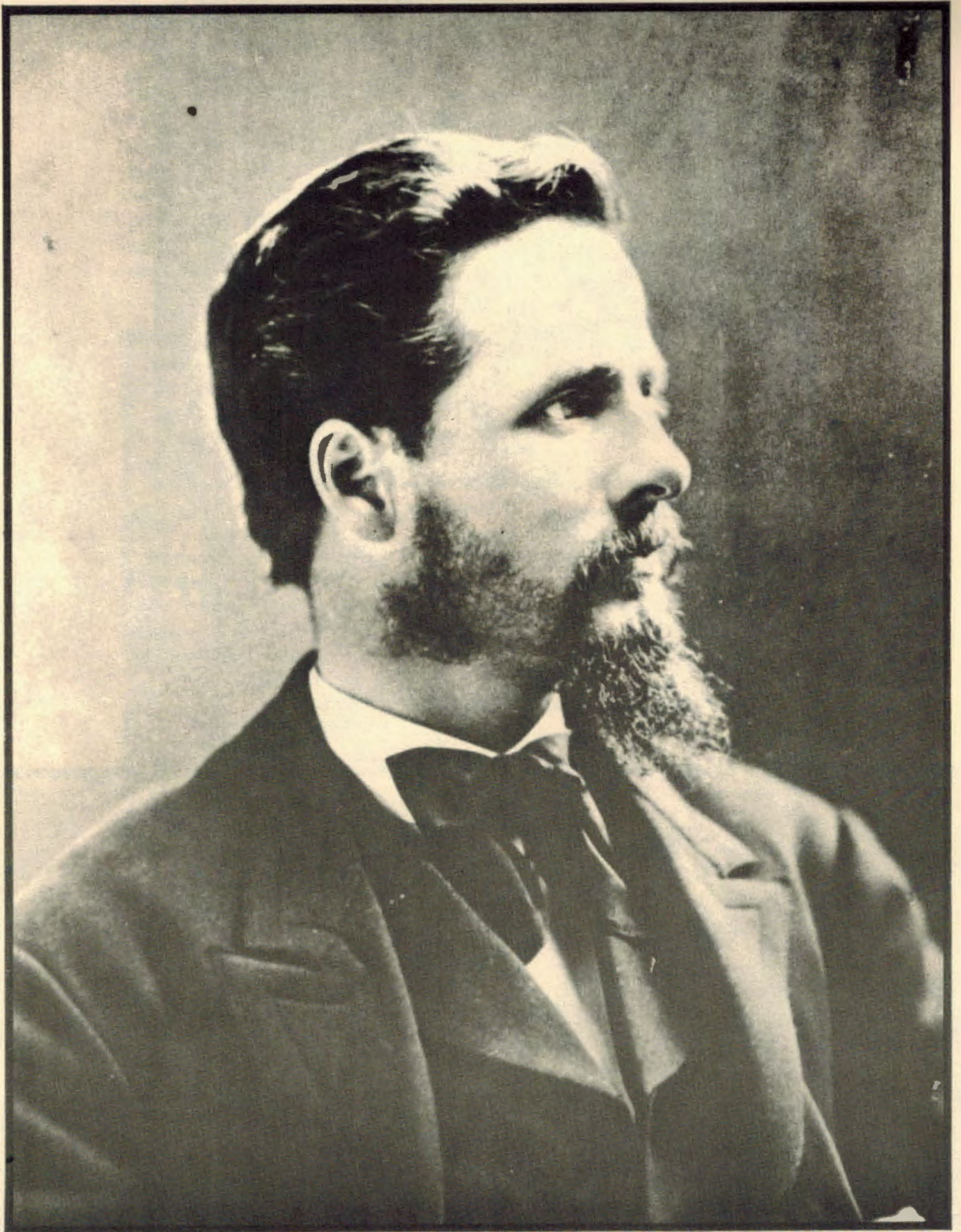
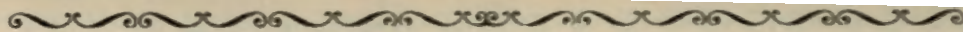


*The Frank A. Kimball House, 1906; Professor & Mrs. C.P. Evans and daughter Ava Evans (Smith) in front of carriage*

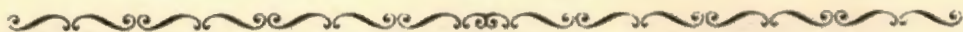
much larger. Since the 1920's, the rooms which were in place of the present-day front porch and second-story balcony were removed.

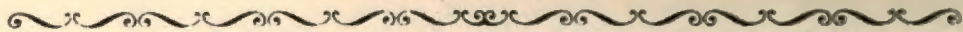
A man named Carl L. Welsbacher purchased the Kimball House in 1913 and owned the structure until the 1960s. In the 1940s, Welsbacher moved to North Park and rented the house to the Paul E. Griffith family. Paul Griffith and his wife Jerry lived in the house with their sons for several years. An upstairs room in the house (present-day Frank Kimball bedroom) was reportedly used as a wood workshop in these years. Later, the Griffith's parents moved into the upstairs part of the house. The Shaw family lived in the Kimball House in 1950-51 at which time some of the lower floor rooms (family room and library) were used to keep grocery store supplies.



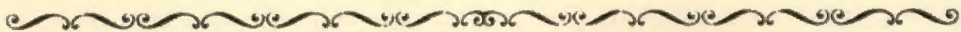


Frank Augustus Kimball, 1887





Sarah Currier Kimball ("Sister"), about 1890



# The Rice-Proctor House

The Rice-Proctor House was purchased by the Community Development Commission of National City in September of 1978 in order to relocate it in Heritage Square and renovate it. The narrow wooden house, originally located at 1311 Roosevelt Avenue in National City, was purchased because it was typical of early National City housing and was in keeping with the architectural style of Brick Row, the Frank Kimball House and the Elizur-Steele, Crandall-Ennis House already located in Heritage Square. The two-story house was acquired for \$5,000 and restored on the exterior for \$28,000. The house was then auctioned to the public in early 1979 and currently houses a single family.

Originally, Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Block #4 in National City were purchased by Julius A. Rice from the San Diego Land and Town Company on November 11, 1887. Julius A. Rice was an early resident of National City, serving as schoolmaster in National City school in the 1870s. He was quick to join Frank Kimball in furthering education on the National Ranch. He not only taught school, but also served as principal, was a member of the School Board and provided valuable advice on school curriculum.



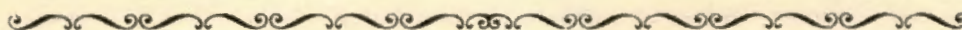
*The Rice-Proctor House, built approximately 1887 and moved to Heritage Square in December of 1978. Photograph date unknown.*



*The Rice-Proctor House in 1980*

Rice was also involved in the real estate business in National City. Julius Rice married John B. Steele's daughter in the 1880s and after the wedding, the Steele family gave the newlyweds a new house located on Second Street in National City. It was probably at this time that Rice moved out of the Rice-Proctor House. He later became involved with the San Diego County School Board and became principal of San Diego public schools. He also served the community as a Notary Public. Rice also raised fruit at his ranch orchards in National City, including prize peaches and quantities of olives. In 1900, Rice served as Deputy County Superintendent of Schools and in 1904 he retired and lived in National City the rest of his life.

On February 2, 1897, John W. Proctor purchased the Lots of Block #4 from Julius A. Rice for \$1,000. In 1913, George W. and Mary B. Tweed acquired the property. The Tweeds sold the property to Frank and Etta Russell in 1920. Some remodeling was done on the Rice-Proctor House in these years. New windows were put in the kitchen, plaster was repaired, and a rear upstairs screen porch (now a closed-in room with glass windows) was added to the structure. Also at this time, a large full-length mirror framed with dark wood sat in the entry hall. Frank Russell had reportedly obtained the mirror from the dismantling of one of the buildings of the Panama-California Exposition of 1915-1916. The Russell estate was left to four daughters, Mamie Gilmore, Nina L. Wilson, Neva N. Mikkelson and Bessie M. Lewis. On September 28, 1959, the sisters sold the property to Kenneth J. Oldaker who in turn sold it to Ronald W. and Jean Cooper on May 24, 1977.



# The Elizur Steele, Crandall-Ennis House

The Elizur Steele, Crandall-Ennis House, the northernmost wooden Victorian house in Heritage Square with its towers and trims, was built in 1879 by Elizur Steele, well-known builder and citizen of National City.

Elizur Steele, architect and builder of the Elizur Steele, Crandall-Ennis House, came to San Diego from Vermont (born 1825). He invested in National City in 1874, purchasing land and joining Elijah Valentine as a real estate agent for the Kimball Brothers. Elizur and his brother John B. Steele built approximately twelve houses in the National City area in the 1870s and 1880s: "All Steele houses were along straight, severe lines at first," then Steele "made radical changes in construction plans." Kimball brick was used in the construction of some of the houses. The Steele brothers were also responsible for construction of the Steele Block at the corner of 8th Street and National Avenue, with its popular "Royal Hotel." Elizur Steele was also known as a rancher with fourteen acres of land in Paradise Hills, east of National City. In 1884, he purchased 1,700 acres of Rancho Jamacha to the east to divide up for settlement. Elizur Steele died at the age of 74 on December 22, 1899.

Two Monterey cypress trees which once stood in front of the Steele house, originally located at 904 East 8th Street, gave it the name "El Cipres." The house, originally built of redwood, had twelve rooms and a shingled third-floor tower. An original stone cistern still remained at the house before it was moved to Heritage Square in December of 1977.

In 1883, Elizur Steele had sold the house to Charles F. Blossom, a partner in the merchandising firm of George H. Parsons. The house was subsequently owned by Frederick Adam Crandall in the 1920s. Born in 1860, Crandall came to San Diego from Illinois in 1911 with his wife Sarah. A realtor, Crandall also served as a City Trustee and for several years was treasurer of the Fairmont Baptist Church. Sarah Crandall, a worker in the Baptist Church, died at age 69 in 1937 and Frederick A. Crandall died at age 81 in 1941.

For many years after the Crandalls owned the "old Steele House," it was the home of Mrs. Florence Ennis. Florence Ennis was born in 1879, a native of Salt Lake City, Utah. She was a resident of San Diego and National City since 1909. She died at age 87 in 1966.

In 1977, the Elizur Steele, Crandall-Ennis House was donated to the City of National City by George Matheson and it was moved to its new location in Heritage Square. The house has been restored to accommodate store and office spaces.



*The Elizur Steele, Crandall-Ennis House of Heritage Square, 1980*

# Brick Row

"Brick Row," patterned after the nineteenth century architectural style of the Philadelphia row house, was an idea conceived by Frank Kimball. Although it has been believed that Brick Row was designed by a Philadelphia architect, recently discovered records indicate that R.C. Ball of San Diego was the architect of the project. The design of Folsom Prison of northern California is also attributed to Ball.

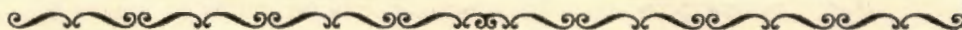
Built in 1887-1888 for \$30,000, Brick Row was reportedly constructed to house California Southern railroad executives in the early years of National City's development. Common to the East Coast, the Brick Row is one of the few known examples of its type architecture on the West Coast.



*The Brick Row, around 1911; chimneys on the front of the structure were for decorative purposes.*

The unusual ten-unit Brick Row, assembled with bricks from the Kimball brick kilns, extends the length of one block of "A" Avenue. The building appears to consist of five units, but each comprises two apartments. Individual units are L-shaped with the plan reversed for every other unit, creating U-shaped service yards. Originally there were sixteen ornamental chimneys on the front of the Brick Row structure with the utility chimneys located in the rear.

All of the wood used in the construction of Brick Row was redwood, and over 240,000 bricks were used to build the structure. The interior of each original unit had a stairway and balusters of







*White oak staircase on the interior of a restored Brick Row unit*

white oak with a curving handrail. Wooden floors, wood trim around doors and windows, molded plasterwork around light fixtures, picture rails, and cast iron fireplaces are a few of the many prominent features characterizing each original Brick Row unit.

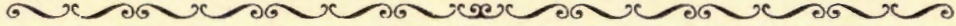


*The kitchen area of a restored Brick Row unit*



*Brick Row, 1980*

Today located in its original position in Heritage Square, the Brick Row is being renovated by its individual owners. Each unit is composed of a formal dining room, a kitchen, a parlor, a butler's pantry and four bedrooms upstairs. Marc Tarasuck has completely renovated his unit to a Victorian style. Several other units are now being renovated, including the far northern unit being completed by the Community Development Commission of National City. Brick Row is presently listed with the National Register of Historic Places.



*Through the efforts of National City's Mayor and City Council, the Community Development Commission and many individuals, Heritage Square, with its Victorian period houses, Brick Row and the related streetscape, has been made a reality—a park to commemorate National City's Heritage.*

