



## *Happy 100th Anniversary to Fletcher Cove!*

*Many visitors to Solana Beach may not know that Fletcher Cove was man-made. In 1924, Colonel Ed Fletcher and his wife Mary watched as a steam shovel took the first scoop to open the bluffs and create easier access to the beach below.*



### President's Message

*Come Celebrate Fletcher Cove's 100th Anniversary with us on Thursday, September 12, at Fletcher Cove Community Center! We'll serve cake and ice cream and hear from descendants of Ed and Mary Fletcher about the Cove's namesake.*

We had a fun, first Movie Night in La Colonia Park on August 24th! Your Society co-sponsored the free event with the City of Solana Beach, Boys & Girls Club of Northwest San Diego, and the La Colonia Foundation. Jakes Del Mar restaurant donated dinners and we served nachos!



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Two years prior, in 1922, Col. Fletcher -- he liked to use the title he earned in the military reserves -- purchased 140 acres of undeveloped land from George Jones. Jones had farmed in this area starting in about 1913 and, at the time, lived in one of just two houses in Solana Beach. His was on Barbara Street; his sister, Lucy Estes, lived in the first home to be built here, on Highway 101.

Born in Massachusetts, Fletcher came to California at age 15 in 1888 to join his sister Bessie, one of five siblings who had been raised largely in foster homes after his mother's death (when Ed was just four years old) and his father lost his business and abandoned the children.

In San Diego county, Fletcher took a job moving produce and got to know the rural farming and undeveloped back country. He became fascinated with the idea of building dams and putting water to use in our arid region.

At 23, Fletcher traveled back to the Boston area to marry his childhood sweetheart, Mary Batchelder. After returning to San Diego, he opened his own wholesale grocery business, which thrived. But Fletcher remained fixated on land and water development. He found work with the South Coast Land Company, which was heavily involved in the development of Del Mar. The company sold more than \$500,000 of real estate in the area and operated a grocery store. Fletcher recruited his brother-in-law, Eugene Batchelder, to run that grocery business.

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## *Fletcher Needed Fresh Water to Develop Solana Beach, cont...*

The pair would eventually become known as the founders of Solana Beach. But it all depended on finding fresh water that could support development.

Before buying land here, Fletcher had sold his grocery businesses and developed a successful career in dam and land development. He started as a manager of the Warner Ranch hotel and hot springs; he built a country home there, which his descendants still enjoy today. Next, he got a job as manager of the Volcan Land and Water Company, which was formed to build the dam for Lake Henshaw. He went on to recruit investors for and manage construction of the Grossmont, Murray, Sutherland, Pamo, San Clemente and El Capitan dams -- and their neighboring communities -- as well as the dam called Hodges.

That project came about because the Santa Fe Railroad needed to turn around its money-losing eucalyptus farming project in what is now Rancho Santa Fe. The trees had proven useless as railroad ties. By 1911, Col. Ed Fletcher had developed a reputation as a visionary with deep knowledge of the area and the techniques and deal-making required to develop its water resources. W.E. Hodges, then-president of the railroad's subsidiary, the Santa Fe Land Improvement Co., turned to Fletcher for help in actually improving the Santa Fe land.

Fletcher and his longtime partner, Batchelder, abandoned the tree farm to raise profitable cattle and grain instead. They added beets and envisioned citrus crops, but water was again key. Fletcher scouted potential dam sites, charmed railroad executives, and brokered a deal for W.G. Henshaw to sell all of his land that would become the dam and Lake Hodges to the Land Improvement subsidiary. Development by the subsidiary circumvented Clayton Act restrictions against having a railroad construct dams and water distribution systems.



The 146-foot high, 750-foot wide Lake Hodges Dam opened in 1918, creating an eight and a half mile long lake. Initially, 2.5 billion gallons a day flowed over its spillway. Fletcher was named President of the new San Dieguito Mutual Water Company and began developing the distribution lines that would irrigate Rancho Santa Fe and service Del Mar, La Jolla, Cardiff, Encinitas, Leucadia and Lockwood Mesa -- the farming mesa above San Dieguito lagoon. In 1919-20, water company Operations Manager Eugene Batchelder bought 10 acres in Lockwood Mesa from Ed and Jennie Stevens, some of the earliest settlers here. The reason?

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## ***Batchelder Founded First Neighborhood and Named our City, cont...***

Large numbers of Mexican laborers were brought in to lay the main water distribution lines from Lake Hodges and install irrigation for citrus groves, as well as to grade roads for the planned residential community. They initially lived in a tent city located just about where the Santa Fe Irrigation District offices in Rancho Santa Fe are today. But from the outset, Rancho Santa Fe was envisioned as a "highly restricted, exclusive community of country estates for gentlemen farmers." White gentlemen. The migrant worker camp in the middle of town was a public relations and sales problem. Batchelder was tasked to fix it.

He built rustic cabins on the land he had purchased along Ida Avenue to relocate the workers into their own colonia. There were three types -- one 12-by-12-foot "single man's cabin," four 14-by-24-foot cabins divided into four rooms, and seven 20-by-30-foot "family cabins." The residents not only worked in Rancho Santa Fe, but also labored to extend water distribution lines to Ida Avenue to service a communal shower and laundry facility. That's how our first neighborhood -- La Colonia -- was founded.

Batchelder also is credited for coming up with the name for his and Fletcher's new town -- Solana (sunny) Beach. With fresh water becoming available, the area was now poised for rapid development. One hitch -- "There's no beach here," early resident H.G. Larrick Sr. griped to Fletcher. "Why of course there is," he replied, according to recounts in old editions of the San Dieguito Citizen. "You just take that trail. . . climb that small hill and on the other side you'll find a beautiful cove!"

But how much better if the beach could be seen from the main road, Highway 101? After his 140 acre purchase, Fletcher laid out plans for the Plaza and got permission to use water from the Lake Hodges spillway to run a high pressure hose through the sandstone bank, 100 feet high and 400 feet wide. ***After the first steamshovel scoop, he wrote in his 1952 memoir, "it was a most interesting sight to see one man for three months, using hydraulic pressure, melt away the soil."*** Fletcher called the process "hydrauliclicking."



The newly carved out cove's grand opening was on July 4, 1924 with a celebration that famously included horse races on the beach. Residents flocked to the bluff top and new stairway; hundreds of visitors came from as far as Escondido. Ever the developer, Fletcher took advantage of the event to advertise lots for sale. In the 1930s, he donated the bluff-top land -- now Fletcher Cove Park -- and mile of ocean frontage to the County. He later told the Citizen that he had envisioned building a "splendid concrete pier" for commercial fishing.

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## *Cove Still is "Pillbox" to Many Long-time Residents, cont...*

That plan was not realized, but stones moved from the Hodges worksite were used to create a walled entry to the beach, part of which remains today. They were also used to build a bathhouse/latrine. In front of that, County lifeguards erected a watch tower that was rumored among area surfers to be the remains of a World War II pillbox. It wasn't, but the idea became a nickname for the beach. Or maybe the nickname arose in the 1970s when the cove became, according to some reports, "a haven for drugged-out beach bums." Either way, among long-time locals, "Pillbox" still is the cove's "proper" name.

It wasn't until 1987, a year after Solana Beach's incorporation, that City Council voted to officially name "Fletcher Cove." The decision was not without controversy -- reports of the developer's segregationist "whites only" home sales policies naturally surfaced. But Council members pointed out that such clauses were common in the county in the 1920s and had been outlawed in the late 1940s.

In 2007, the City completed long-planned \$2.3 million improvements to replace a two-acre parking lot with today's grassy park, basketball court and tot lot, as well as improved storm drainage. Residents were invited to join artist Betsy Schulz in decorating the surrounding walls with marine-themed mosaics and project supporters' names. The park and adjacent community center have become treasured assets in our City.



Improvements continue to this day, including a 150 foot widening of the beach in 2024 by adding 700,000 cubic yards of sand "borrowed" from the San Dieguito River mouth in Del Mar. Also this year, the tot lot was upgraded and celebrated with a grand reopening.

There is more to come: the City's Public Arts Commission recently solicited proposals from area artists for ideas to beautify the storm drain dissipator



structure below the beach-side seating platform. The goal is to replace the aging metal outlet grate with a distinctive and attractive new design.

***Join us Sept. 12, 5 to 7 p.m. at Fletcher Cove Community Center to celebrate the Cove's anniversary! To learn more about Col. Ed Fletcher, read 'La Colonia & Solana Beach' and 'Early Solana Beach,' by former SBC&HS president Jim Nelson. Both books will be available at the celebration. Or, [click here](#) to purchase online.***

## City Council Election Cancelled



Three incumbent candidates for our City Council -- Lesa Heebner, (Mayor), Dave Zito (District 1) and Jewel Edson (District 3) -- were unopposed for reelection as of the deadline for filing on August 9. At City Council's August 21 meeting, members

voted unanimously to reappoint the three to their current positions, foregoing the need for an election.

Since the City's incorporation in 1986, there has never been a write-in candidate for City Council or Mayor. Cancelling the election saves the City \$33,000 in associated expenses.

### Save the Dates!

## 2024 SBC&HS Meetings & Events

*Monthly meetings start at 5 p.m. at La Colonia Community Center unless otherwise indicated.*

- **Thursday, September 12:** Fletcher Cove's 100th Anniversary Party at Fletcher Cove Community Center with direct descendants of Ed and Mary Fletcher
- **Thursday, October 10:** Representatives from the San Diego League of Women Voters explain 2024 ballot measures
- **Saturday, November 2:** Holiday Boutique at La Colonia Community Center, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **Friday, December 6:** Holiday Luncheon at Lomas Santa Fe Country Club starting at 11:30 a.m.

*The SeaWeeders meet on the second Tuesday of the month, 10:30 a.m. to the Center for a Healthy Lifestyle cottage behind the Boys & Girls Club on Lomas Santa Fe Drive. The Crafts Group meets on the second Thursday of the month, 1-3 p.m., at La Colonia Community Center. All are welcomed!*

## Get Ready for our 71st Holiday Boutique!



The Crafts Group has enjoyed gathering and making holiday items during our summer sessions and we continue to work on personal projects at home.

We've received some lovely items for the November 2 Holiday Boutique and ask that anyone creating or donating something to please contact us as soon as possible. We are also recruiting volunteers to help with Holiday Boutique set up, day-of

help and making baked goods for sale. To offer items or sign-up to help with the Boutique, please email [kschmied@roadrunner.com](mailto:kschmied@roadrunner.com)

Our next workshop is 1-3 p.m. on Thursday, September 12 at La Colonia Community Center All are welcome!

### The Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society. . . a 501(c)(3) organization

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 Parliamentarian, Programs.....Carol Childs  
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Research Historian .....Richard Moore

President's Message, cont....



Staples provided coupons and give-aways for attending school kids, as did student ambassadors from Mira Costa Community College, Education Begins in the Home and the County Sheriff's Department. The Foundation loaded free bags of popcorn and, after sunset, hundreds of participants snuggled into lawn chairs and blankets to enjoy viewing the Disney musical Coco, in English with Spanish subtitles.

Judging from the cheesy smiles we saw at our nachos table, and throughout, the evening was enjoyed by all. Organizers hope to make La Colonia Movie Night an annual event to complement the Beach Blanket Movie Nights held at Fletcher Cove Park.



Another fun opportunity to get involved with your community is a Fletcher Cove beach clean-up on the morning of September 21. Register to participate starting September 1 at [cleanupday.org](http://cleanupday.org) and show your 100-year-old Cove some love!



*Jojo Dodson Bogard*

## Look What's New at Your Post Office

*The Society has commissioned local artist and muralist extraordinaire Kevin Anderson to paint a series of iconic Solana Beach scenes on interior walls of our Solana Beach Post office. Thanks to our postal*



*employees and Postmaster Richard Zamora for supporting this project!*

*Thanks also to our SeaWeeders' P.O. Posse for installing more pavers in the strip between the parking lot*

*and the sidewalk on the south side of the building. They have been expertly leveled to make it safer to transition from parked auto to sidewalk. Kudos to Betsy Penberth and Mark Meenie for taking on that project.*

