

Boulevard
of the
Bells

City of La Habra, California



The Boulevard of the Bells

La Habra Boulevard

La Habra, California

After the first Franciscan missions were founded in Southern California (San Diego, 1769; San Gabriel, 1771; San Juan Capistrano, 1776), La Habra Valley was on the pathway between them. This route became known as "El Camino Real" (the royal road), since the missions were founded to colonize these fertile lands to be useful to the kingdom of Spain.

The route changed through the years. The first "camino viejo" (old road) through La Habra angled from the Olive area to the base of the Coyote Hills at the southeastern end of the valley, then the road traversed the valley toward the Puente Hills and on to the northwest and San Gabriel Mission. Indeed, this early trail formed the southwestern boundary line of Rancho Canada de la Habra, the 6,900-acre rancho granted by the Mexican government to Mariano Reyes Roldan on October 22, 1839. Thus we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the granting of this rancho in Orange County's centennial year, 1989.

As settlers established farms and built homes, the pathway changed. During the 1870s and '80s the land was used for sheep pasture and barley growing. R.J. Northam, who was then the real estate agent for the Stearns Ranchos Company which owned the land, planted a walnut grove near the northeast corner of the present Imperial Highway and Harbor Boulevard in 1891. Shortly after, the T.P. Warne ranch was laid out at the southeastern corner of the present Harbor and La Habra Boulevards. Land in the valley was surveyed for subdivision in 1893, and much more acreage was sold. During this period, the old route was called the "County Road" and was moved to the north as it was squared off to go around these ranches.

W.J. Hole, La Habra's founder, became the resident land agent for the Stearns Ranchos Company and became actively involved in promoting land sales to settlers for \$65 to \$75 per acre. Hole and a real estate partner, S.W. Barton of Whittier, promoted small parcels of five and ten acres north and east of the present La Habra Boulevard and Euclid in 1894-95. A small general store was started at the southeast corner of La Habra and Euclid in 1895 by Mr. and Mrs. Zachary T. Coy, relatives of Mrs. Hole. W. J. Hole also was actively involved in the formation of the local school district and the building of the La Habra school in 1896 at the present location of Washington School. Naturally, the County Road passed these major buildings then extended west to "Smith Corner" (Beach and La Habra) where S.M. Smith grew walnuts, starting in 1895. The County Road then turned north to the present Whittier Boulevard (called the "road to Whittier" by the settlers) and followed the present Whittier Boulevard route into Whittier.

The Sansinena-Eseverri sheep ranch was located in the foothills to the north of the road to Whittier. Indeed,

the present Hacienda Boulevard was close to the driveway to the Sansinena ranchhouse in those early days.

In 1904, the first Camino Real convention was held in Los Angeles. The goal was to establish a permanent route between the missions and mark the route with El Camino Real bells. The "sentimentalists" wanted the route exactly as traveled by the padres in mission days. Others realized that the path would be extremely difficult to document since it had changed constantly through the years due to winter rains, founding of ranches, etc. So, a more realistic approach was taken, and the route that was commonly used between the established communities was chosen. In La Habra, that meant the Fullerton Road (Harbor) - Central Avenue (La Habra Boulevard) - La Mirada Road (Beach) - Whittier Road route.

Since every community was asked to select sites and pay for their own bells, the very active Woman's Club in La Habra selected a site where the road curved into the village of La Habra, at the corner of Central and Fullerton Road, for the first El Camino Real Bell in La Habra. The bell was placed in January 1908 but was demolished by a team of runaway horses later that same year.

When the route for the paved state highway was chosen in 1913, the "upper road" (Whittier Road) was chosen over the 1906 El Camino Real route through the village of La Habra. The argument was that the upper road could curve around the town of La Habra, avoiding two boulevard stops. (Traffic was minimal in those days!) Actually, this was a political maneuver by some landowners on the upper route to get a paved highway close to their property. The businessmen in La Habra were irate when they found that the route had been changed in Sacramento without their knowledge. It prompted them to gather forces with the town leaders in Brea, and they paved Central Avenue, connecting these two important north Orange County communities.

When the state highway was completed, there was renewed interest in marking the route as El Camino Real. The Automobile Club was actively involved in the placement of new bells along the highway. Of course, in the La Habra area, the bells were placed at several locations along the present Harbor and Whittier Boulevards, but all of these bells have disappeared.

Because the route of the originally marked El Camino Real in 1906 traversed Central Avenue, replica 1906 bells have been placed at significant historical sites along that route, establishing this historical corridor as "The Boulevard of the Bells."

Pioneer families included in this history arrived before 1930.

SMITH CORNER

(Beach and La Habra Boulevards,
formerly La Mirada Road and Central Avenue)

Named because several Smith families lived on or near this corner at one time, this is where the old "El Camino Real" turned north to join the road to Whittier. S.M. Smith built a two-story house on the southwest corner in 1895. His daughter's, Matilda Smith McMasters, home was on the northwest corner in later years. Guy and Lillie Smith lived near the southeast corner. On the northeast corner was the pioneer Henry Bush ranch. The Bush ranch was the site of the first church in the valley, a small Free Methodist chapel. The Horatio Landreths were other pioneers just to the north. The J.M. Johnson walnut ranch became the largest Hass avocado grove in the world when Claude Ridgway planted it in the early '40s. (The original Hass avocado tree is in La Habra Heights near West Road. This is the official City tree of La Habra.) Other early ranchers in this area were: Macy Smith, C.J. Hinshaw, C.W. Milhous, W.S. Randall, C.E. Parsons, George Eaby, L. Guthrie, C. Chase, and A.E. Harris. In the hills to the north was the Sansinena-Eseverri sheep ranch. Hacienda Boulevard is close to the driveway to their ranchhouse, which was built around 1890, but now gone. After José Sansinena died, Mrs. Sansinena married Ysidora Eseverri, and the home they built is at 185 Villa Rita.



SMITH RESIDENCE, Circa 1895

To the south along Beach Boulevard, was the Des Moines Station on the Pacific Electric line. (Station was named for a wildcat oil well in the area.) The Index Mutual packing house (1914) was on the west side at the tracks. It burned in 1988. An earlier walnut packing house (1908) was at the same site.

Families living in this area were: Reynolds, Hudspeth, Wolfe, and Oxarart. The W.H. Toler family once owned a square mile of property east of Beach from Whittier Boulevard south to Lambert. They built one of the first homes in the valley in 1878.

The old Murphy-Coyotes lease of the Standard Oil Company is now the Chevron Research facility, southeast of Beach and Imperial. The discovery well (1903) was on the hillside south of this corner. The small settlement of Lubert was in a eucalyptus grove just to the southwest.

The shopping center at the northeast corner was formerly a marshy area on Coyote Creek. The La Habra Valley Riding Club met there during the '30s and '40s. At one time, La Mirada Road, now Beach Boulevard, had walnut groves from Whittier Boulevard to Imperial Hwy. Coyote Creek formed the boundary of Orange County when the County was carved from Los Angeles County in 1889.

LA HABRA FIRE DEPARTMENT

840 W. La Habra Boulevard

La Habra's fire department was founded in 1916 by a group of concerned citizens and operated on a volunteer basis. Ralph Glazier, one of the owners of Glazier Brothers' General Store, was the first "fire chief". At that time, 40 water plugs were installed around town, and a small chemical engine which could be pulled by hand or hitched to the back of any vehicle was purchased. Five hundred feet of firehose completed the fire equipment which was housed in a small building at the back of the lot on the northwest corner of Euclid and La Habra Blvd. In 1917, fire whistles were installed, one at each end of town.

The Business Men's Club reorganized the fire department in 1922. After many community fund-raising events, in 1923 the first pickup truck was purchased. The first pumper (a 1929 pumper) was purchased from the City of Long Beach in 1930. When the City was incorporated in 1925, all the fire equipment was turned over to the City. However, the department remained voluntary for awhile. The first full-time person was hired December 1953.

In 1935, a fire station was completed in the "Spanish-style" civic center. It remained there until the new stations were built in August 1960 (850 W. La Habra Boulevard) and February 1964 (530 S. Harbor Boulevard). today, La Habra's Fire Department has 41 employees and equipment worth approximately \$1.1 Million.

Just to the west of the fire station is the magnificent Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church which was built in 1970. The first Catholic mission church in La Habra was constructed in 1929 on West 4th Street. It was also named Our Lady of Guadalupe. A bell and tower were added in 1931, and a meeting hall was added in 1935. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed this church in 1944. Masses were held in private homes, under shady trees, and at the Red Camp Hall until a new church could be built in 1947 on South Hillcrest Street (now Guadalupe Center). As the City and congregation grew, more space was needed. Classrooms and the third church were finished in 1956. A rectory and convent were added in 1959. Today's church was completed in 1970, and the altar dedicated in 1971 by the Archbishop of Los Angeles.

To the south, at the southwest corner of Monte Vista and the railroad, is the location of the 1919 Red Camp (Campo Colorado), named for the color of the buildings, built by the La Habra Citrus Association for workers brought from Mexico. The Corona Tract, built on the old McFadden Ranch, was also nearby. Among those living in this area and active in the community were the Molina, Gomez, Flores, Reynoso, Garcia, Mejia, Martinez, Castro, Luna, Macias, Guzman, Espana, and Zuniga families.

Owners of early ranches near this section of La Habra were the Luehm, Butler, S.D. Wester, Spotts, and Graham families.

WALNUT STREET

This was another of the early La Habra streets which led north to the road to Whittier. W.J. Hole, the founder of La Habra, established his ranch north of Whittier Boulevard between Walnut and Citrus. The brick mansion he built in 1896 was the showplace of La Habra. Hole lived in the house until 1902. John Scott, wealthy grain grower and county road supervisor bought the ranch in 1910. The Cawston Ostrich Farm was just east of Citrus Drive, near the Hole ranch, from 1904-1909.

The Klein house (501 N.) (1923) has been preserved by the family. The old brick Lincoln School (1923) was located where the La Habra City Schools' Administration offices now stand. Other older houses remain on this street: the Journigan and J.W. Burch houses on the corner of Greenwood and Walnut are examples. The Don Hill property (400 N.) has one of the last remnants of an orange grove in La Habra. The old store at 425 N. has served the neighborhood since the early '20s.

J.C. Knudson owned the property on the southwest corner of La Habra and Walnut. F.C. Little owned the southeast corner. C.O. Cook owned the northeast corner. The Wilson School (1920) was located south at California Street and Second. La Habra Home Acres, an early subdivision, is located east of Walnut between Electric and Lambert, providing small homesites from the '20s. West of South Walnut were the homes of many of the early Mexican immigrant families that arrived in the '20s to work in the agricultural industry of the area.

The prestigious Hilbert Mercantile store was located in the building at the southeast corner of California and La Habra Boulevard. The first post office building was at 224 W. La Habra Boulevard. Jennie Cramer's 1920s house is at 221 W. This became the home of Jesse Flores, famous baseball player.

There are dozens of examples of homes built in the '20s and earlier in this area. Erna Avenue has some of the oldest homes remaining in La Habra. The Luehm house (319 W. Erna) is a good example.



HOLE MANSION, Circa 1896

EUCLID STREET

This street was first named La Media but was changed to Eucalyptus Drive before the turn of the century. It was renamed Hiatt Street when Robert Hiatt submitted his townsite map in 1903. When it was paved in 1915, the first north-south street to be surfaced, La Habra gained the reputation for having more paved streets than any community its size in Orange County. The street's name was changed to Euclid in 1961 when the major thoroughfares in the County were renamed to conform with County-wide street naming.



COY STORE, Circa 1895

This was the intersection considered the "center of town." The "birthplace of La Habra," where the old Coy's store/post office stood, is marked with a bell monument on the southeast corner. The first La Habra post office, officially naming the community, was started in the general store in 1896. In 1907 W.H. Mills took over the operation of the village store. In 1909 Glazier Brothers bought the store and later tore down the old wooden building and built the first brick building in La Habra, completed in 1914. In 1922, the most expensive building in town was erected on this corner by the La Habra Investment Company, headed by Ray Frantz, C.O. Cook, and James H. Walker. This marble and cream-colored-glazed-brick building housed the Lumsden and Evans Drugstore (later Sutton's) and a physician's office downstairs, and offices, and boarding-house rooms upstairs. This was demolished in 1967.

The two-story Masonic Lodge building, also on the south side of La Habra Boulevard, east of the drugstore, was also removed in the mid 1970's.

Many of the older business buildings are still standing near this intersection. However, the important R.W. George block on the southwest corner, which housed the Hilbert Pharmacy (later Caplinger Pharmacy), a restaurant, a mercantile store, meat market, a bakery, and a pool hall is no longer standing.

Near the northeast corner are a few of the old buildings remaining from the early years (1922). Additions and changed store fronts conceal their past appearance. These are at 111 E. La Habra Boulevard, where a dry cleaners and shoe repair shop were located, and 125 E. La Habra Boulevard, where the La Habra Domestic Water Company and Launer and Sutton Real Estate had offices.

The buildings on the northwest side of this intersection are being preserved as an historic district. The El Camino Real bell stands on property where there was a turn-of-the-century blacksmith shop, and the first fire equipment of La Habra was housed in a small building on the back of this lot. One of the most prestigious buildings in town, the First National Bank, was built on this site in the late '20s. It was purchased by the Bank of America in the late '30s but was demolished in 1982 to widen Euclid.

- 107-115 W. -- The Southern Counties Gas Company and Christian Science reading room were here.
- 121-125 W. -- This was the Wester Hotel (1916) upstairs. Downstairs W. Philip Mills had a general store from 1916-23, with the post office in the rear of the store. Espolt and Wester had offices here later.
- 127 W. (1917) -- This was a Rhodes Building. Mills Store and post office were here from 1920-23. A feed store then moved in. Frank Taylor's store was also in this location.
- 135 W. -- Citizen's Commercial Bank was started here in 1920. Benjamin Roberts and Sons' real estate offices and former President Richard Nixon's first law office was in this building.
- 139-143 W. -- Wilson's Furniture Store (1919) and later, Rentz Furniture. This was also a Rhodes building.
- 147 W. -- This was a department store, later Munford's Men's Store and a liquor store.
- 155-157 W. -- An early business and later a sign shop.
- 163 W. -- Edmonds Department Store. A residence was located here earlier.
- 169 W. - Rich's Hardware Store, later Berry's 5 and 10 Cent Store.

North on Euclid were many early residents, including the Bishops and Goulds north of Whittier Boulevard, and the Harts, Berdines, Calderwoods, and Perrines were other early settlers. The Luther Lindauer (Dr. Kraushaar) home is now a nursery school (323 N.). W.P. Mills, store owner, built the home at 215 N. in 1916. It is now the Coleman Mortuary. R.M. Jackson, early inventor and contractor (whose wife was Clara Luehm one of the earliest settlers), built the house at 201 N. in 1917. Several churches, including the United Methodist, Missionary Baptist, First Church of Christ Science, and the Temple Baptist are on North Euclid.

Just to the west of Euclid at 200 W. Greenwood is the La Habra Community Clubhouse, which has been an important community building since it was built by the Woman's Club in 1923. Across the street, at 505 N. Lois, is a residence designed by famous architect, Cliff May.

South on Euclid are several homes remaining from pre-WWI days, but the homes of pioneer families, such as Robinson, Leutwiler, Chaffee, E. Proud, Resseque, and Varney are no longer standing. The D.J. Bastanchury house (900 S. Euclid) was moved from South Harbor to this location. Bastanchury was a son of Domingo Bastanchury, a Basque who was the first settler in the La Habra-Fullerton area in the 1870s. The house is now owned by the Lockman Foundation. Dewey Lockman owned much property along Imperial Highway during the 1940s.

The Pacific Electric Station (1909) was moved by the City from across the street to its present location at 311 S. Euclid and has been restored and converted to the Depot Theater. The Union Pacific Station (1923) at

301 S. Euclid has been refurbished by the City to become the La Habra Children's Museum. The Old Settlers' Historical Society (1898) has a collection of historical artifacts displayed inside the adjacent Southern Pacific caboose. Portolá Park, just north of the Museum, was named for Gov. Gaspar de Portolá, first explorer of La Habra Valley in 1769.

MAIN STREET

This street led south to the large Sunkist citrus packing houses, major sources of employment in the community in the early days. It also passed the community church (Methodist Episcopal Church, now the Vine Church) built in 1913, located at the southwest corner of First and Main. Note the original bell in the belfry. The Community Hall, a large wooden building where clubs met, important civic meetings were held, basketball games were played, etc., was part of the property of the church.

North Main leads to the La Habra Civic Center with City administration buildings and the Orange County Branch Library. Two of the buildings of the 1930s civic center (The Americ Legion Hall and Library) remain as part of the modern civic center complex.



LA HABRA CIVIC CENTER, Circa 1935

The first La Habra library building, a former restaurant moved from Central Avenue, was on the west side of the street just north of La Habra Boulevard in the '30s.

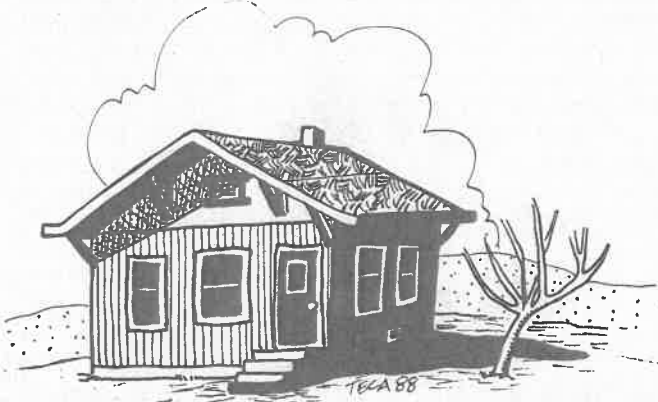
The John Launer ranch (1898) was on this street, and the family gave the property for the library building. Many early La Habra businesses were on Launer property. John Launer was the first official "mayor" of La Habra, although Dr. Ervit Boice was the first "president" of the board of trustees after the City was incorporated in 1925. Mrs. Launer named Erna Avenue, the name formed from the first initial of the names of the Launer sons, Erwin, Richard, Nelson, and Albert. Many Pre-WWI homes are on Erna Avenue.

Florence Avenue, named for Florence Rhodes Wilson, was in the Rhodes subdivision. Several interesting homes have been retained in the 300 block east, including: H. Roberts (304), H. Peabody (306), E. DeGray (Scott) (314), Harpster (302), Lucien Proud, Mayor, 1928-32, (327), J. Kneier (Dysinger) (318). The Moore, Kelton, Upton, and Robinson families were others who lived on this street.

West of Main on the north side of La Habra Boulevard was the first La Habra theater, a large hardware store and apartment building, and several small businesses. East of Main on the north side were several garages and auto dealerships during the '20s. The La Habra Star office was also in this area.

CYPRESS STREET

This street was one of the earliest cross streets in La Habra. It has been called Cypress since the streets were named by the La Habra Woman's Club, starting about 1900. The "English Colony", founded in 1894 by a group of young Englishmen led by the Graves brothers, was along the west side of Cypress. Some of the other families who owned property on north Cypress were: Schlagenhauf, Sutton, C. Glazier (304 N.), D. McGill (541 N.), C.L. McGill (550 N.), R.B. Warne (631 N.), F.R. Aldrich, J. Morris, Stephens, Good, Cusick, Dillavou, Morlan, Ansley, Davis, C.A. Ridgway, N.M. Launer, E. Johnson (1020 N.), Grimm, A.V. Douglass, E. Luehm (1350 N.), Walker, Randall, Stevens, and White. On the George Beck ranch the first commercial avocado grove in Orange County was planted in 1910. (The ranchhouse is at 1051 N.) Cypress Street also led to one of the important industrial sites, the W.J. Hole gravel pit in La Habra Heights (Cypress at Nabal). This was acquired by Frank Proud and then sold to Luther Lindauer and his sons, Gus and Gold. Heavy sand and gravel trucks traveled up and down Cypress Street until the '50s.



Brown & Dauser Lumber Yard, Circa 1907

At the intersection of Cypress and La Habra Boulevard were several important businesses. The Brown and Dauser Lumber yard (1907) was on the northwest corner. The Livingston-Threlkeld service station was on the northeast corner. (Some buildings remain.) The Austin barn, part of the English Colony, stood near the southwest corner. The first school classes were held in the barn before the schoolhouse was completed in 1896. The Austin property became part of the W.H. Redfern tract in 1915. On the southeast corner was a service station and next to it a dance hall/skating rink which was later used as a Boy Scout Hall but torn down during the 1960s. Ed Dunbar's concrete works were also near this corner.

South on Cypress were the Varney, Snow, Tucker (Keeler), Boatman, Knupp, and Kellerman ranches. The home of Cecil Allen, famous pilot and stepson of W.H. Redfern, early developer and businessman, is at 330 E. Second. Many pre-WWI homes are on First and Second Streets between Cypress and Main.

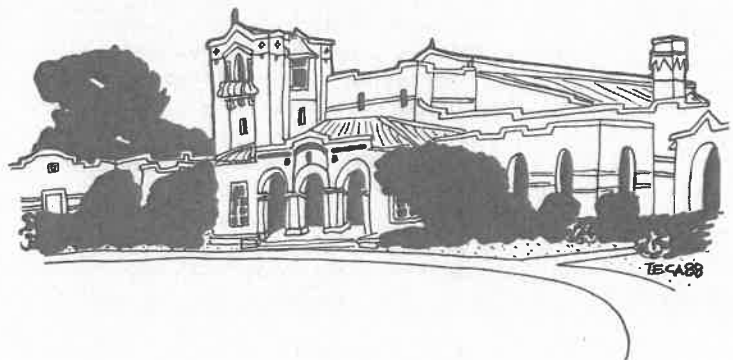
FIRST LA HABRA SCHOOL SITE

700 E. La Habra Boulevard

In 1896 the most important building in the community was erected on this site. The two-story schoolhouse served as a community gathering place, and club meetings and Union (Methodist) Church services were conducted in the unfinished upstairs space. The bell in the monument in front of the present Washington School is from the belfry of the original schoolhouse, which served students of all of La Habra Valley from Brea to East Whittier, until other schools were built. A hitching post and a watering trough were part of the facilities, so the youngsters could leave their donkeys or pony carts tied outside.

There has been a school building on this site continuously since 1896. The La Habra Grammar School, built in 1915, serving all grades through the 8th, was a beautiful "Moorish style", designed by well-known architect, J. Flood Walker of Santa Ana. It was renamed Washington School in 1923. With its sunken lawn and picturesque arches, it stood until the present junior high school was built in 1964.

Near the school were many pioneer residences. Lou Wester, one of the important early developers of the community, lived at 607 E. La Habra Boulevard. The Nathan Garretson's home is at 525 E. La Habra Boulevard. Anna Garretson was La Habra's first paid librarian. The W.L. York and C.H.H. Parker houses were just west of the school on the south side of La Habra Boulevard. An interesting "court" type of apartment, popular in the 'twenties, is just east of the school (740 E.). There are numerous homes dating from the 'twenties and earlier in this area.



WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Circa 1915



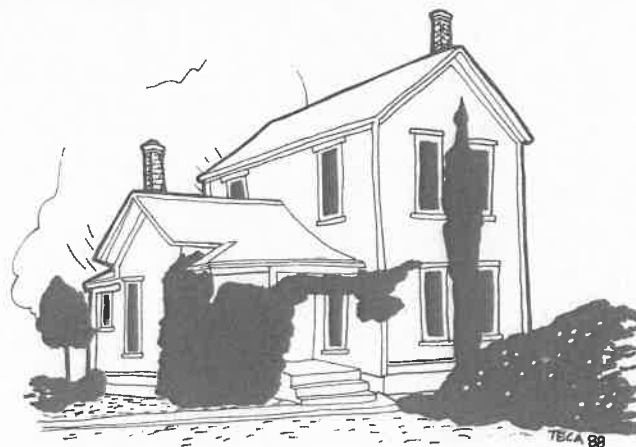
FIRST LA HABRA SCHOOL HOUSE, Circa 1896

BELL CORNER

**Harbor and La Habra Boulevard
(Formerly Fullerton Road and Central Avenue)**

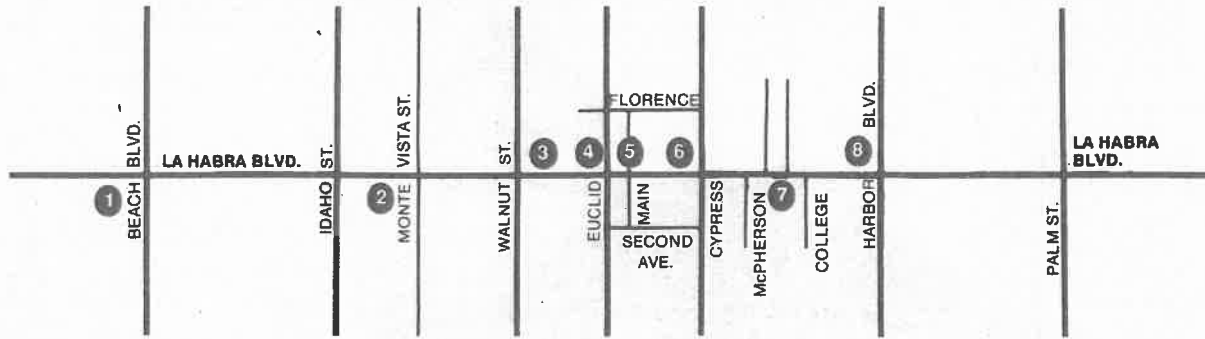
This important intersection was marked by one of the original 1906 El Camino Real bells, thus the name given the corner by the pioneers. The first bell was placed by the Woman's Club of La Habra in 1908 on the northwest corner. However, a team of runaway horses demolished the bell later in 1908. When the state highway was built in 1914, the route chosen went north and curved around the M.J. Pickering property (Pickering Corner, now Constitution Plaza) to become Whittier Boulevard. Another El Camino Real bell was placed at that time on the southeast corner of this Bell Corner intersection on the Sargent Ranch (formerly the T.P. Warne ranch). The Nixon family and later the Leimer family had a service station on the northwest corner, called the Valencia Service Station. Early families who lived north on or near Fullerton Road included: F. Proud (1000 N.), J.E. Arnold, B.W. Elliott, McClain, Shannon, R. Frantz, F. Thuet, H. Little, Beckwith, Tresslar, Lippiatt, and Weisel. South on Fullerton Road, families included: Raggio, Warne, Osborne, Hunter, Good, Williams, Bastanchury, Chewing, Lynch, Sievers, and Zinn.

Palm Street was another important early residential street east of town. Those living on or near north Palm included: Hodson, Leutwiler, Sucksdorf, Espolt, Thornton, Randall, and Canfield. Among those living on or near south Palm included: Baldwin, Akers, Welch, and Kessler. The oldest ranchhouse still standing in La Habra is the 1897 Porter (Stone-Welch-Sutton) place at 2351 E. Lambert. The Wardman Ranch was further east on Puente Street, and the Guy Steele's house is also on Puente Street.



T. P. WARNE HOUSE, Circa 1895

BOULEVARD OF THE BELLS



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