

Shape of Memory

- Collected Stories and Images from North Park's Past -

Images used in "Shape of Memory" installation that are not included here are courtesy of **North Park Historical Society** and **San Diego History Center**. Special thanks go to Katherine Hon at North Park Historical Society and Natalie Fiocre at San Diego History Center for the permission to use their images in this project.

Not all images submitted made their way into the installation. Nevertheless, every story and image I received helped shape the final project, and I am very grateful for everyone who took the time to contribute.

Stories and images submitted by: Brian Black, Seth Comb, Stanley Cordova, Bronle Crosby, Tom Demello, Lauren Becker Downey, Tom Driscoll, Patricia Frischer, Katherine Hon, Traci Hong, Mary Leary, Terry Matsuoka, Lori Mitchell, Marilyn Orbann, Barbara Smith, Lynn Susholtz, Johnny Tran, Melissa Walter, Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe.

*Reference: "North Park: A San Diego Urban Village 1896 – 1946"
by Donald. P Covington*

By Brian Black

My first memories of North Park are when I moved to San Diego in 2000. I worked in City Heights and lived in Hillcrest. I would walk home from work and pass through North Park everyday. As I entered North Park, I knew I was about halfway home.

I think I visit this area of town a lot more now with Art Produce, Visual, and Swish being so close to each other. I like that it has retained some of its original character while new stores and restaurants seem to pop up there all the time.

My favorite memory in North Park is the BLM car protest in May of 2020. Being there to hear and record the honking cars for almost 2 hours from Art Produce was incredible. (I have some video if you want to hear the honking.)

My second favorite memory was decorating Mutant Kitschmas cookies at Visual gallery. (Pictured is my son Charles decorating a cookie.)



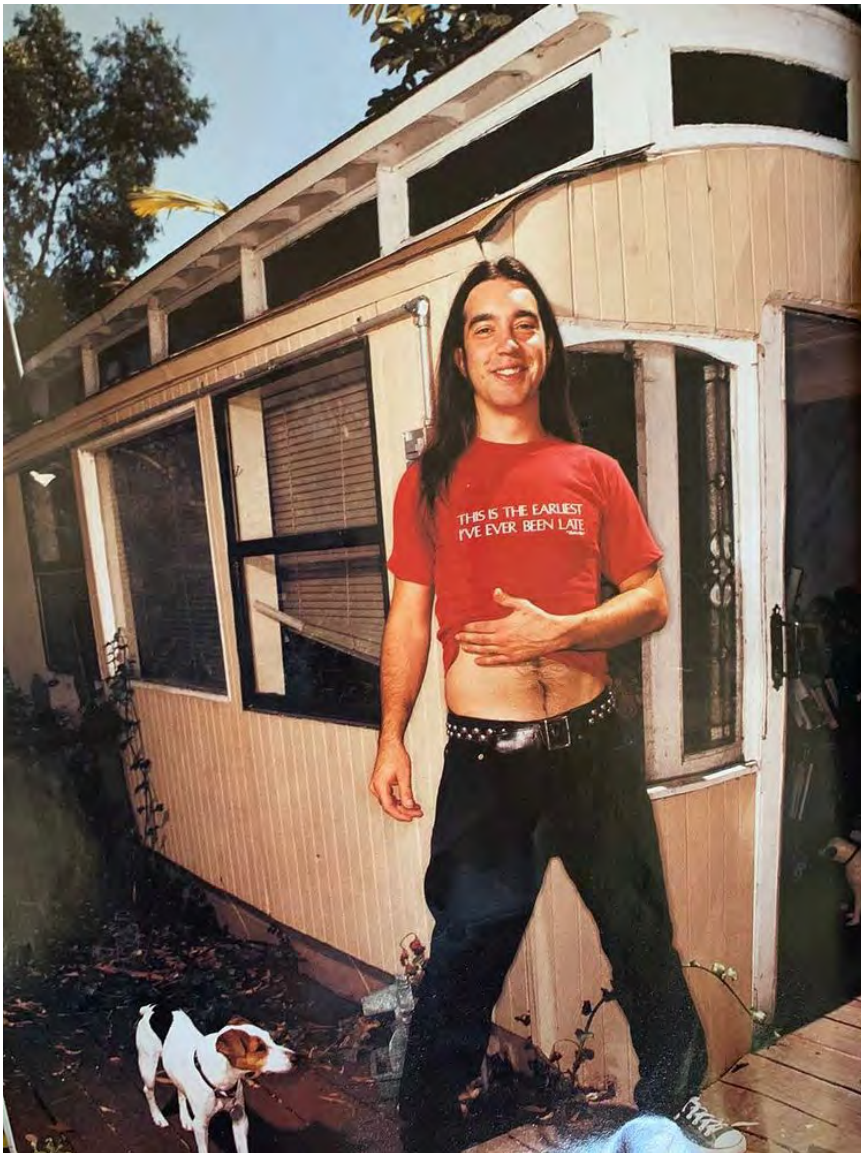
Photos courtesy of Brian Black

By Seth Comb

I moved to North Park around 2000 and ended up staying at the same place for over 20 years. Not only was it my first apartment ever, but the living room was actually an old trolley car from back when North Park had trolleys. I think it just got dumped into a canyon and my first landlord just converted it into an apartment.

This picture was taken sometime around 2004. It was around that time that North Park really began to change. Cheap pizzerias were replaced by fine dining. Dive bars became craft cocktail joints. And the colorful, sometimes creepy characters in my neighborhood were slowly replaced with affluent gentrifiers looking to buy property in a “promising” neighborhood. It’s not surprising my property was eventually sold to a developer as something they could flip. I was evicted in the middle of the pandemic and tearfully said goodbye to North Park for good. I knew it wouldn’t last forever.

Photo courtesy of Nathaniel Welch



By Stanley Cordova

This photo was probably taken in 1963 when San Diego was “America’s finest little city”. Mike Morrow Little League eventually merged with North Park Little League and all games were at Morley Field. I am front row center and 11 years old. It’s ironic that our sponsor was the Plumbers Union, and I made my living as a plumber. But my dream was to make my living as a ball player and made more money as a plumber than I would have playing ball.

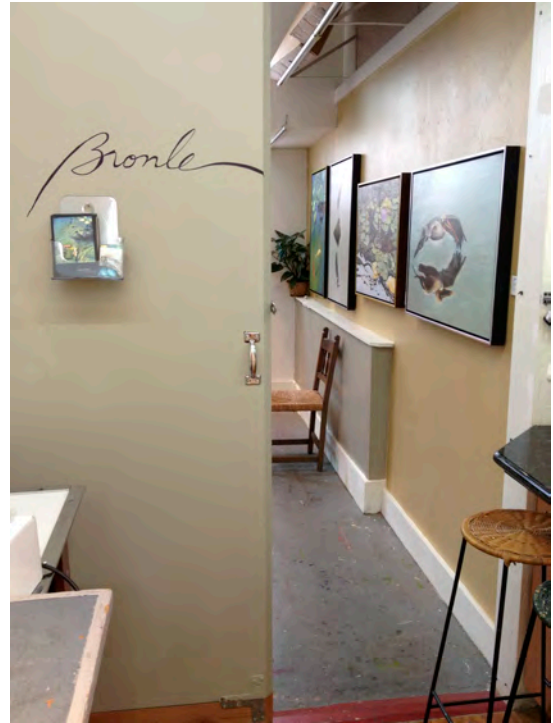
Photo courtesy of Stanley Cordova



By Bronle Crosby

I miss San Diego Art Department on Ray Street, where I had a studio for several years, and Ray At Night, the art walk held once a month in North Park.

Photos courtesy of Bronle Crosby



By Tom Demello

These photos were taken when Lee Lavy and I started renting this building for an art gallery before we did any improvements around 2007. We ran Ice Gallery there and showed mostly site-specific artwork at this location from 2007 until April 2013, when the building was demolished. Currently, Ice Gallery is located at Bread & Salt in Barrio Logan, and ran by Michael James Armstrong with the same focus on site-specific installations.

Photo courtesy of David Harrison



By Lauren Becker Downey



For 6 years, I rented a rambling 3-bedroom Craftsman house for \$950 a month. I miss that house, the low rent and friends who visited there. I lived in it with my first dog Melvin and a roommate who was a chef. Our kitchen was huge with a long orange formica countertop and a really great old O'Keefe and Merritt stove. We had a garage to park a car in, a long driveway, rosebushes, an apple and a meyer lemon tree, fireplace, hardwood floors, built-in shelves, a front porch, large picture window.

I also miss collectable and antique stores, specifically Gypsy Office Supply that was on 30th Street at Upas. In 1993 I bought tables and 10 chairs that I still use in my art school today.

The photo above was taken about 1996 in the dining room of the Craftsman house. This is a photo of my friends and me at a brunch we had when my Mom came to visit from Florida. My friends in this photo are still in my life and I have seen each of them during the last year.

Below is a photo of my dog Melvin and me on the porch of my house 1991. I really miss my dog who I loved so much. I got Melvin, when he was 9 weeks old. He was the best companion and buddy ever. He LOVED the beach. Melvin taught my next dog how to be the best dog and lived until he was 16.

Photos courtesy of Lauren Becker Downey



By Tom Driscoll

Cable cars

I have a memory of seeing cable cars running up and down University Avenue in San Diego. I must have been 2-3 years old, 1947-1948, I remember sparks coming from the cables running above the cars. As a child, I saw the cable cars not as scary-looking, rather as intriguing. The streetcar in San Diego came to an end April 24, 1949.

At the Movies

My brother and I would go to matinees at the North Park Theater and spend long afternoons at the movies. I recall being engrossed in cartoons and westerns. Our grandmother's house was close by so we walked to the theater. The movies in the 1950's usually opened with a news reel, bunch of cartoons, serials, i.e., Commando Cody, and the featured film: sometimes a double feature.

Morley Field

Morley Field turned into a playground for us as kids during the summer. There was a shallow fly fishing practice pond, which no longer exists. From the wooden bridge, we spent many a sunny day catching minnows using mason jars tied to a string. The deepest part of the pond was 2 feet.

Annual 'Toyland' Parade

My step grandfather was a barber. He had a shop on the corner of Arnold Avenue and University where on parade night, we gathered. We watched the horses, marching bands, stunt men and more. Looking through the large glass window, I felt privileged.

This is a photo of my family gathering at my Grandma's house in North Park... late 1950's. The little guy on the left is me.

Photo courtesy of Tom Driscoll



By Tom Driscoll

North Park Studio

I had a studio briefly on 30 th Street and Upas which I rented in 1998. I had moved out by the time the old ICE Gallery opened across the street. My studio is now The Smoking Goat Restaurant. In this space, I created the large cement half spheres.

Photo courtesy of Tom Driscoll



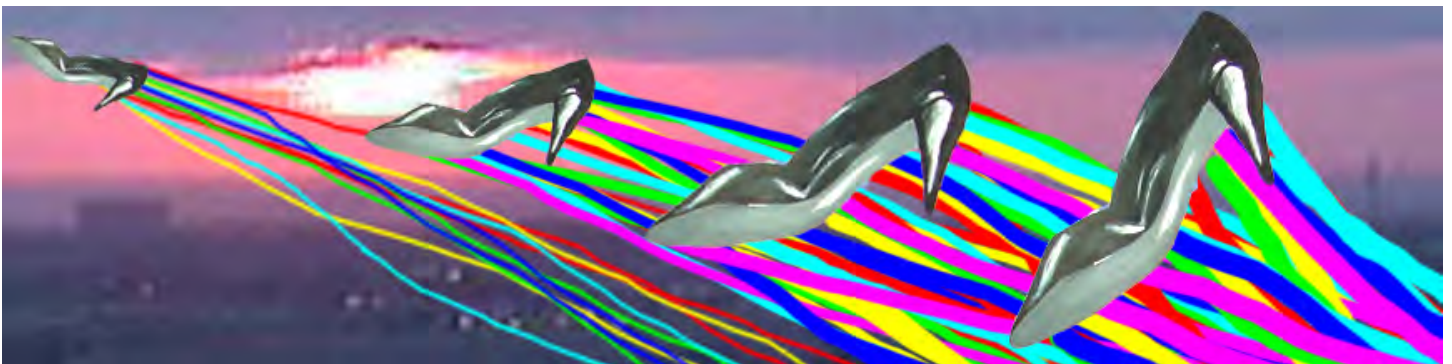
By Patricia Frischer

In 2001, I was asked to participate in a utility box painting project in North Park. I am attaching a photo of the final design that I painted wrapped around the circumference of the box located just east of Art Produce in front of a bank. It was painted over about a year later never to be seen again, but this was my first participation in a public art project when I arrived from London and started living in San Diego. I had not shown my work at Art Walk yet, or started the San Diego Visual Arts Network or had a show at Mesa College. The North Park Main Street and North Park Gallery were in charge of this project and they supplied special paint suitable for the metal boxes. I had never painted at that street level and remember I was quite sore from squatting for an entire day!

I was sad when it disappeared, but the flying shoe made it's first appearance in my work for a show in Oxford, England called [Train of Thought](#) and most of those works are now sold and I never see them anymore, so as an artist you get used to disappearing work. Back then I was still taking slides of my work and phones had no camera, so I don't have an image of the work painted on the box that I could find.

I am glad to see that utility boxes are still be painted by artists in SD. This little 3-D canvas is a challenge and I believe artists need to be challenged. Now there is a whole generation of artist that know me from the SDVAN and the SD Art Prize and don't realize that I am an active artist still creating work in my studio. Here is a link to my latest work. <http://drawscrowd.weebly.com/not-your-mothers-finger-bowls.html> in glass, plaster, glycerin and bronze.

Photo courtesy of Patricia Frischer



By Katherine Hon

I miss this restaurant! We had our wedding rehearsal dinner catered by Pekin Café in 1988. This photo of their exuberant neon sign makes me nostalgic for the food and anxious that the sign may not be maintained now that the family has sold the business. I hope the new owners will restore the sign and keep the wonderful 1930s façade of the building, which is an important part of North Park's history.



Photo courtesy of Steve Hon

By Katherine Hon

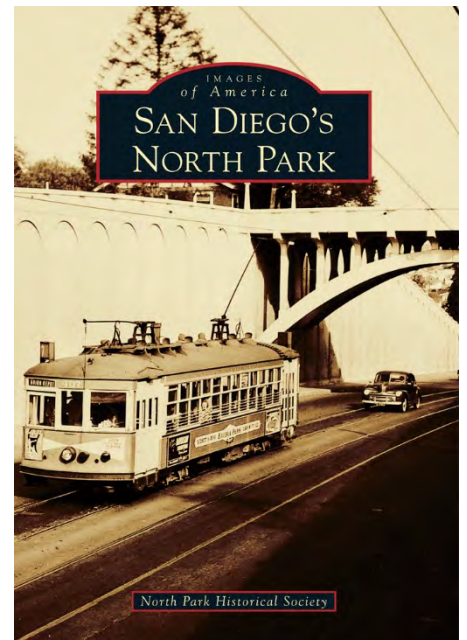


Streetcar Number 7 heading west under the Georgia Street Bridge in 1949. The bridge was built in 1914 and rebuilt above the grand arches in 2018.

(Photo courtesy of Randy Sappenfield)

It makes me feel a little sad that the original 1914 bridge no longer exists, but happy that the city and Caltrans invested about 14 million dollars in rebuilding the bridge to closely match its original appearance. This photo is also special because the North Park Historical Society used it for the cover of our book, "Images of America: San Diego's North Park" published by Arcadia Publishing Company in 2014 (photo on the right).

Book cover photo courtesy of the North Park Historical Society



By Katherine Hon

The Toyland Parade in 1958 featured camels from the San Diego Zoo. This photo is at Kansas Street and University Avenue, looking at the building that recently hosted Tamarindo Restaurant. Look at the crowd of observers! This level of participation in the Toyland Parade no longer occurs, which makes me sad.



(Photo courtesy of Joe Schloss and the North Park Historical Society)

By Katherine Hon, North Park Historical Society Secretary



David Owen Dryden, a master builder in the Craftsman style, built 12 homes along 28th Street between 1915 and 1918, including this one at the southwest corner of 28th Street and Myrtle Avenue in 1916. The house was designated an individually significant historical resource through the efforts of our treasured late North Park historians Donald and Karon Covington, who lived there from 1973 to the early 2000s. Their research helped the North Park Historical Society achieve designation of the 6-block North Park Dryden Historic District in 2011, which this house is in.

(Photo courtesy of the Covington family)

This current 2021 photo shows how well the house has retained its historic character. It makes me feel very proud to see this house when I walk in the neighborhood, and fondly remember Karon Covington. Together we finished the book of North Park history, "North Park: A San Diego Urban Village, 1896-1946" after Don died in 2002. In the photo below, which Karon said was one of the last pictures taken of Don, they are contentedly on their front porch swing, which is still there. This picture is on the back of the cover of the book, which was completed and first printed in 2007. (Photo courtesy of Katherine Hon)



Karon and Don Covington, 2002. (Photo courtesy of the Covington family)



By Katherine Hon



This classic pony picture from 1947 is of young Donald Taylor, a cowboy fanatic, in front of his home at 3426 Texas Street. He is riding a pony provided by a traveling photographer who appeared one day and offered to take his picture for 50 cents. Happily, "Mother consented," Donald wrote on the back of the photograph. Donald gave this photo to the North Park Historical Society to use in our 2014 book, "Images of America: San Diego's North Park."

(Photo courtesy of the North Park Historical Society)

A friend asked me to send the photo on the right for the art project, as it brings her feelings of nostalgia, stating, "Yes, I have a picture just like it of me about the same age. Memories..." The photo was taken during the 1950s in Tennessee.

Photo courtesy of the North Park Historical Society



By Traci Hong



These photos were taken during Chinese New Year, February 2017-2019 at Pekin Cafe (Peking Restaurant), often also referred to Chop Suey thanks to the neon sign above the front doors.

Some of the photos show the last weekends leading up to March 2019 closure of the nearly 90-year old family restaurant, owned by three generations of the Fong family.

The San Diego Lucky Lion Dancers have roots also dating back to the 1930s. As long as I have been a member of the Lucky Lion Dancers, we have performed at Peking. The annual New Year tradition brings good luck and fortune to the restaurant in the New Year. The youngest daughter of the family, Stephanie, was also a member of the Lucky Lion Dancers. The restaurant was a favorite performance of the dancers because of the parallel walls that the lions could walk along to the amazement of patrons as they ate popular American-style Cantonese dishes.

My sister and I would always make sure to order our favorite house special chow mein, with a variety of beef, shrimp, chicken and char siu pork along with water chestnuts, snow pea, celery, mushrooms, bean sprouts and more. My stomach misses it still.

Photos courtesy of Traci Hong



By Mary Leary

Having lived in North Park on and off since the early '90s, I miss lots of things, but especially the feeling that it was still a "found" neighborhood that was overlooked or avoided by San Diego's more cautious population. Before all the yoga places, upscale eateries and microbreweries, it was a great place for anyone on a budget (working class; poor artists). Lots of reasonable and cheap places to eat, more dive bars, and several large thrift stores. La Herradura was just one of those cheap eateries. I took the photo attached at La Herradura around 2010.

I also miss Bar Pink, which was one of San Diego's best places to see mostly rock 'n' roll bands, for its relatively brief run: 2007-2020 - it folded during the pandemic. I covered and enjoyed a lot of shows there. I've included a pic that was taken of me behind the bar, with Gary Wilson, after one of his shows there. I don't remember who took it; it was just a cell phone pic taken by a friendly person. Bar Pink needs to be mentioned, if no one else does. Who knows when Swami John will do anything like it again? Best not to hold one's breath...

Photos courtesy of Mary Leary



By Terry Matsuoka

I miss the North Park Indoor Soccer Center. It was an odd place situated right next to and under the iconic water tower of North Park. There were 4 "indoor soccer" fields crammed next to each other on a platform elevated a whole story above street level. There were games going on from 5pm-12am Monday through Friday as well as games going on day and night on Saturday and Sunday.

I probably played regularly on 5 different teams on 3 different nights during a 10 year span. It was a great space for the adult soccer community to come together to play. The great thing is they had so many different leagues: Coed Mondays and Tuesdays, 30+ Mens Wednesdays, Womens 4 on 4 Wednesdays, etc. For each demographic, they had different levels so that you could play like-skilled teams.

It was diverse, friendly, people made friends, had exercise, shared a love of soccer, and had a good time. Unfortunately, because some safety issues with the structure, "Let's Play Soccer"/ North Park Indoor Soccer Center had to move... They never found a new home... It's been gone since 2018.

Photo courtesy of Terry Matsuoka



By Terry Matsuoka

I think that when I was barely 21 I went to Aztec Bowl several times to go watch some punk/ noise bands play in the Turquoise Room. My memory of it was an old run down bowling alley, the kind that are slowly disappearing one by one in San Diego... From my recollection, the Turquoise Room was the bar inside of bowling alley, it served the bowling alley but was also its own entity that people would hang out at and that people would go to shows at. I remember it being 50s/60s era furniture and super dark. It felt dingey, divey, and felt really cool. The bands were so loud in the space. It was very punk rock but also very strange. I miss it.

It was torn down to build apartments or condos... I found this article on the Aztec Bowl's closure-

<https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2001/aug/02/change-not-accepted-north-parks-aztec-bowl/>

The funniest part of the article is a guy's quote- "Who's going to buy condos off 30th and Adams?" That's when Noth Park was considered a kind of shitty area... little did he know.



Dan Soderberg

dsoderblog.com

By Lori Mitchell

I miss Ray street at night. It was fun to see all the artwork and people and music and food. The first picture is from a gallery that was on the corner of Ray Street. I think it was like the lobby of a doctor office by day.

I miss Chop Suey. I just loved the look of the front of the place and the inside was like walking back in time. I can't say I completely loved the food but I loved the look of the whole place.

Photo courtesy of Lori Mitchell



By Marilyn Orbann

This picture was taken in the backyard of the house I grew up in. My immediate memories are of all the time that I played in that yard, by myself mostly. You see the wooden structure, which we called “the arboretum”. It had many plants and a small flagstone path to walk on. There was a swing attached on one side of the arboretum and I loved swinging or twisting and spinning the swing until I got too big and it broke!

After my parents died and we sold the house I took some of these flagstones and put them in the backyard of my current house which is 2 short blocks away, on the same street. I will always feel connected to my childhood home through those stones.

See my long hair? I had long hair for many years and as a child I laid down on the kitchen counter with my hair in the sink to be washed by my mother.

Photo courtesy of Marilyn Orbann



By Barbara Smith

While this stoop still exists, the nuclear family of four that inhabited this house no longer does. At least as a tidy little family of four. The photo shows my daughters Rosalind and Magnolia dressed up in their Halloween costumes, looking rather ghostly. I took this photo before a Halloween party, on the exact day that ushered in a turning point, or the beginning of the end for my marriage, and the dreams of living in a charming old house in a desired neighborhood where we could walk to school in the morning and say hello to neighbors on every street. The dream of living under one roof and growing old together died in this house--our first house-- after living in several apartments in many other cities.

Time has healed some wounds, but still, driving by this house on 32nd and Thorn can bring up those naive hopes, and a whole catalogue of memories of the two sweet girls that did their best to weather the storms of the years to come.

Happy to say they are doing well, but sometimes I miss those golden years we had when they were young and innocent and had no idea that the definition of family could change so suddenly. I always wondered what other families' lives had been like in that house...I hope the new inhabitants have found better luck.

Photo courtesy of Barbara Smith



By Lynn Susholtz

These are photos the boarded up North Park Produce building in 1999. We transformed this building into our current Art Produce Gallery and built the garden where it used to be a parking lot.

Photos courtesy of Lynn Susholtz



North Park Produce 1999

By Johnny Tran

This is in 2011 at Thumbprint Gallery I owned in North Park. Open-mic event we used to hold called Stanza. It got really popular for a while. This was my co-host Mary Leary who has been in the poetry scene here forever.

(Photo courtesy of Johnny Tran)

#2/North Park (about 10 months before Obama began his first term) Poem by Mary Leary
3/18/2008

For a block I walk close to the ice cream man,
cart garlanded by bells oddly Tibetan,
a gentle garden ringing mystery, before
we cross the street, our ways part, before
the female vagrant anxious she'll be asked
to leave the café,
and glaring orange streetworkers' cones and fences,
before
a garden of purples and pungence and then
crossing another street to find
the cart approaching from
an alternate route - no way
not to keep pace at this point,
like two cunning lovers balancing
love's shimmering, invisible ties
from opposite sides of the street.
Yes, that's the kind of risk and heat here
where so few of us walk on wet grass,
and the ice cream man's bells pace my steps,
and everything, like America, feels about
to fall apart or into delicious infinity.
Despite high rents and pockets of pretense
I still pass a rumpled-up car wreck. The faces
I pass so often sun-lined, stricken, sticking to alleys
the better to weave pictures of our drunken, vagabond
future. Sweet bells
have faded, sun is weary, and
near my doorstep pounds the obvious thunder
of George Thorogood "moving it on over,"
my tight neighbor's squeals punctuating the breaks
between whatever she avoids and her party .



Another neighbor's abandoned dog yaps at the music before
a bigger dog drones in, down the street,
one kind of song or another, and
the moon way upstairs, pale, nearly full,
watching, blessing, anxious, beautiful
as a man whose bells now approach faster
with air cooling and night-blooming creatures.
around the corner he appears again, anxious, beautiful

By Johnny Tran

This is a hand-painted sign that we used to put right outside of Thumbprint Gallery in North Park. Our intern at the time Jeff Donndelinger made it.

Photo courtesy of Johnny Tran



By Melissa Walter

I miss Scolari's Office. It was the best dive bar in town. But then we moved away for 5 years and when we came back it got renamed and fancied up with a line of overdressed people on the weekends.

I have nostalgia for the people in my life at that time and bringing them together at our house in North Park. These are photos from the Halloween party Travis and I put together there.

Photos courtesy of Melissa Walter



By Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe

I am 77 years old and have lived in Houston Texas for the past 30 years. I was born in San Diego in 1944 and spent the first 18 years of my life on Pentucket Ave on the south east edge of North Park in what is now called Burlingame. I attended McKinley School for kindergarten and grade 1 through 8th grade at St. Patrick's School in North Park. High School was Rosary High School in East San Diego. I raised my own family in Clairemont from 1965 to 1989. I have been a photo taker and collector all my life and am the unofficial historian for my family and former classmates. All that said, I received an email from a St. Patrick's Classmate whose sister who lives in North Park forwarded some information on a project you have started.

Circa 1953 St. Patrick's School Convent steps. Peggy & Anna



Photo courtesy of Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe

By Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe

There were 42 graduates in the St. Patrick's School Class of 1958 with one teacher Sister Mary Raymond who was also the principal. Ten girls and 8 Boys started together in First Grade and graduated. We were quite a class with many accomplishments including championship sports teams and a school newspaper "The SPS Monthly" which I was editor of. It was the last year that Bruce Shield's was the volunteer football and basketball coach as he took a job as Fire Chief at Navy Hospital. He was much loved. I have permission to use the photo in the middle from the other two people in it. Photos was taken on the steps of St. Patrick's Church.

Photos courtesy of Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe



By Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe

St. Patrick's Catholic Church May 1951 – Father Austin was the Pastor in the center of the photo.

This was a very special memory for me. It was Mother's Day and my Grandma came from Santa Barbara to be there. My mother made my beautiful dress from left over pieces of fabric that a friend of hers who worked at a "collar factory) gave her. I loved wearing the veil. It can also be noted that at the time Catholic's had to abstain from all liquids and food from midnight in order to receive Holy Communion. All the water fountains were tied up so we would not "accidentally" take a drink of water.

Photos courtesy of Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe



By Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe

My sister Paula and I in our St. Patrick's School Uniforms that my mother made for us because the commercial ones were made of worst wool which my sister was allergic to. The uniforms were dark (Shamrock) green with a white cotton blouse. We had green beanies to wear when we attended Mass at St. Patrick's Church.

My sister Paula Carter was in the photo of the crossing guards. It said in the article that the photos are from St. Patrick's School archives. It was kind of a big deal to be a Crossing Guard and as I recall only boys got to do it. They were stationed in front of the Church on 30th and Dwight St. At the time the parish did not own that entire block. The Patrol Guards wore red sweaters and white pants. Most schools at the time had them if they were close to a busy street. 30th Street was considered a busy street even in the 1950's. There was a bus stop going south on the corner and my sister and I would sometimes take the Number 4 Bus to 30th and Juniper where we got off and walked home via Juniper Dip. We would sometimes buy a popsicle at the Burlingame Market to eat on the walk home.

Photo courtesy of Peggy "Margaret Carter" Wehe



ST. PATRICK'S SCHOOL COMPLEX, 1949. Expansion of the school, a convent for the teaching nuns, and additional playground space remained a vision for the parish. The new complex of school buildings, a parish hall, and convent opened in the fall of 1949, with seven nuns teaching 254 students in eight grades. This view is along Ray Street to the right at Capps Street. (Courtesy of St. Patrick's Church.)



ST. PATRICK'S STUDENTS, 1952. Dapper school-safety patrol boys stop traffic along Thirtieth Street at Dwight Street so students can cross the busy street. (Courtesy of St. Patrick's Church.)