

Emil and George Klicka

The Klicka brothers, Emil and George, moved to San Diego from Chicago in 1921 and established a number of businesses including the Klicka Lumber Company. Emil, an experienced banker, managed the financial affairs of the businesses and was the driving force behind the construction of the Fox Theatre on University Avenue in North Park. George became the manager of the lumber company and the developer of the Studio Bungalow, which was patented in the early 1930's.

The Studio Bungalow was an attempt to make it possible for the average wage earner to own his own home. In an effort to meet that goal, George Klicka and his company of builders simplified the costly construction techniques and design styles of the 1920's. The result was a pre-fabricated package of wooden frame-and-panel construction offered in several price ranges beginning as low as \$2,222.22.

The ready-cut house package was introduced as a model home on the grounds of the 1935 International Exposition in Balboa Park. In 1936, the model was approved by the Federal Government for a twenty-five year FHA loan. By the close of 1941, over 1100 had been sold for construction at sites throughout San Diego. Although more than one hundred were erected in North Park and University Heights, most of those have been replaced or drastically altered by additions and "modernization."

A few rare examples do still survive at 4362 Arizona, 4575 Shirley Ann Place, and the five-unit bungalow court on Lincoln near Kansas.



Sketch taken from an illustrated brochure distributed by the Klicka Lumber Company.

Stern's Gym

From 1940 to around 1948, a billiards parlor occupied the second floor at 3829 Granada Avenue above the poultry shop. The billiards parlor was replaced by its present occupant, a weight-training gym. The gym, formerly owned and operated by Leo Stern, has been a fixture in the North Park community for almost fifty years.

In 1939 Stern, who started to lift weights in high school, founded the Hillcrest Barbell Club. While stationed at an Air Force Base in Las Vegas, NV during World War II, Stern was in charge of its weight-training program. After the war, Stern returned to San Diego where he opened up his gym above Raitzas' Poultry Shop.

A modest sign points to a stairway leading up to the gym. The walls of the stairway are lined with black and white photos of weight lifters who have known Stern and worked out at his gym. Among them are Bill Pearl, Mr. Universe from 1953 to 1971; Brooklyn-born John Davis, the first man to clean and jerk 400 pounds; Lou Ferrigno, TV's 'The Incredible Hulk'; and 'The Terminator' himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger.



The mission of the History Committee of the North Park Community Association is to educate our citizens on North Park's historical value and to advocate for our community's historic preservation. We hope to encourage research into North Park's human past and culture in order to preserve what draws people to North Park, such as its architectural and cultural heritage and historic character and charm.

For further information on the history of North Park or the History Committee of the North Park Community Association visit our website at www.northparksd.org.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTH PARK*

North Park Entertainment

There were two theaters on University Avenue, the Romona and North Park. For the price of 5 or 10 cents on a long Saturday afternoon you could see two feature films, a cartoon, weekly serial, and the newsreel. Two cents for candy was enough for the afternoon. A short walk a mile west under the Georgia Street Bridge was the elegant Egyptian Theater, a replica of the King Tut tomb.

Depending on your age and finances you could enjoy a soda after an evening movie at Caller's Confectionery (soda fountain) next door to the North Park Theater until 10:00 pm (curfew), or Bailers Confectionery at 28th and University, famous for their malted milk shakes.

Palisades Gardens Skating Rink, at University Avenue and Utah, opened in 1946 and closed in 1978. Admission was 25 cents when the rink first opened, and \$2.60 when it closed. If you could "rex" you were very popular because that meant you could skate backwards. "Rexing" and skate dancing were the "in" thing.

On Friday and Saturday nights, one could enjoy the numerous dance halls in North Park. Two of the most well known were Vasa Hall on El Cajon Boulevard and the Tent Ballroom "Teeners" on University Avenue, where there was dancing to the music of Clarks Brothers Band. These were favorite hangouts for high school students in the 1930's.

*Excerpts from "Once Upon a Time in North Park" articles are provided by the History Committee of the North Park Community Association.

North Park's Beginning

In the summer of 1893, James Monroe Hartley purchased 40 acres of land northeast of Balboa Park from pioneer San Diego merchant, Joseph Nash.

That summer of '93, the Hartley family was busy clearing chaparral from the mesa and preparing the earth for a lemon grove. Water for the trees was always a problem, but especially during times of drought, when it had to be carried in barrels from San Diego's town center up the wagon trail, that in the next century would be named Pershing Drive.

Years later when the growing city caught up with the plot, it became bordered by University Avenue to the north, 32nd Street to the east, Ray Street to the west, and Gunn Street to the south. From the very beginning, James Hartley referred to the plot as Hartley's North Park, a name which stuck, and decades later was used by the city of San Diego to identify its new suburb. In 1911, the oldest son, "Jack" Hartley and his brother-in-law, William Jay Stevens, developed the plot into one of the first residential and commercial tracts.

Stevens & Hartley established themselves as North Park's first real estate firm in 1905 and built its first high-rise commercial structure, the Stevens Building, on the northwest corner of 30th and University in 1912. From that beginning, the community got its symbolic place-name Thirtieth & University, ten years later, the heart of San Diego's busiest commercial center outside the main business district.



The Stevens Building

1912

The Ice Machine

There was a wonderful 14-hour-a-day ice machine in the gas station across 30th Street from the Pioneer Drugstore. In a time of icebox refrigeration, it was a godsend, for Prohibition booze needed all the ice it could get, and convivial souls often found that the supply on hand wouldn't last until the next visit of the iceman. So, taking care to stay clear of night-running freight trains, they drove to Miller Brothers gas station, inserted a dime into the ice machine, which soon sent a 24 lb. block rumbling down the chute. This they stowed in the handy space between the front bumper and fender and were on their way, prepared to meet the demands of the most unbridled revelry.

Memories of an Usherette



I worked at the North Park Theater as an usherette and cashier. Our uniforms were (to me, at the time) gorgeous. The top fitted bodice with puffed sleeves, embroidered collar and lapels was light blue and beige. The fitted trousers were beige and full at the lower leg, like palazzo pants.

The inside walls of the theater were of a very elaborate scroll-and-leaf pattern, the trim from the period of construction (1928). The carpet was thick, in a maroon swirl pattern that followed down the aisles. The ornately designed curtain opened and closed with each feature.

Three of us were good friends, Barbara, Mabel, and me (Nellie). We were called the cute "gruesome" trio for some reason – I can't remember why. The picture shown here was taken at the corner of University Avenue and 29th Street in 1945, before the war was over.

Sports Legends of North Park

Maureen Connolly, better known as the fabulous "Little Mo" of the tennis world was born in her home at 3984 Idaho Street. She learned how to play tennis at the University Heights Playground (North Park Recreation Center), where she was taught by the prominent Wilbur Folsom. She was one of only three women in the world, in the entire history of tennis, to have won the Grand Slam. Three times she was named America's "Woman Athlete of the Year" and by the time she was 19 had won three straight U.S. National and Wimbledon titles in 1952, 1953, and 1954. Her career was curtailed by a severe leg injury from a horseback riding accident in Mission Valley. In a fitting memorial, the Championship Court at the San Diego Balboa Tennis Club was named after her.

In 1924, the five-year-old **Theodore (Ted) Williams** moved from 13th Street with his parents to 4121 Utah Street. He spent many hours at the University Heights Playground (North Park Recreation Center) swinging the bat under the tutelage of playground instructor Rod Luscomb. After graduating from Hoover High School in 1936, he signed a \$150.00 a month contract with the Padres and continued to live in the Utah Street house until he signed with the Red Sox in 1937. This Hall of Famer is considered by many to be the greatest batter who ever lived. His mother, Mrs. May Williams, the "Salvation Army Lassie", best known for her charitable fund-raising activities during the 1920-40's, lived in the house until 1960. The house was designed by architect, J. C. Cordrey, in 1921 for the B.K.S. Building Company. This local real estate development company was one of many which were involved with developing spec houses in the North Park area.

