

Field Guide to Coronado History:

The Grande Dame of Coronado Homes

By Bruce Linder



Spreckels Beach House 1940s

Coronado is a beach community, so it goes to reason that one of its finest and most historic homes should be right on the beach ... and should rightly carry the sobriquet “Beach House.”

It’s also good that, when seeking historical prominence in Coronado, a home be built by one of the city’s great forefathers and one of the richest men in California. And it doesn’t hurt that an esteemed architect design the house ... no, make that two esteemed architects.

The Spreckels Beach House, aka 1043 Ocean Avenue, aka the Spreckels Mansion, has reigned supreme along Coronado’s shore since its completion in 1908. Its most superlative attribute is not its 12,750 square foot size, or immense lot, or 9 ½ baths. No, its claim to the most commanding vista of any home on the island is the real key. At a single glance one can take in the dazzling beach, the Coronado Islands, bold Point Loma, passing ships, a host

of skimpy bathing suits, and brilliant sunsets. John D. Spreckels had his choice, quite literally, of any plot of land in town to build his beach house, and he chose wisely.

Spreckels, likewise, could have picked any architect, and he chose Harrison Albright of Los Angeles who would brighten Coronado's history with other dignified buildings including Spreckels' manor home (today, the Glorietta Bay Inn), the Coronado Library, the impressive Coronado Bank Building, the Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park, and the Spreckels Theater and US Grant Hotel in San Diego.

The Beach House was designed in an Italian Renaissance Revival style and is notable for Albright's use of steel-reinforced concrete, an innovative architectural method of the time. The house also enjoys the influence of a second renowned architect, Richard Requa, who designed the home's guesthouse and influenced the design of the rear of the main house.

John D. Spreckels presented the Beach House as a wedding gift to his son, Claus, and his bride Ellis Moon, in 1910. The house stayed in the Spreckels family until 1970.

In a community with an active sense of historic preservation, the home today has just finished a spectacular historically-correct restoration – aimed to restore the house's dignity and standing ... as THE Beach House on the nation's number 1 beach.

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