

## HARBOR VIEW MEMORIAL PARK AND CHAPEL

Gayle Williamson

Grand Avenue dead ends just south of 24th Street. Here wrought iron gates open onto a cemetery, Harbor View Memorial Park, where a tall narrow structure stands at the south end of the park, Harbor View Chapel. Brass plaques commemorate the building as Historic-Cultural Monument No. 53, "San Pedro's oldest church and first cemetery". Although they now reside together, they were once at opposite ends of town.

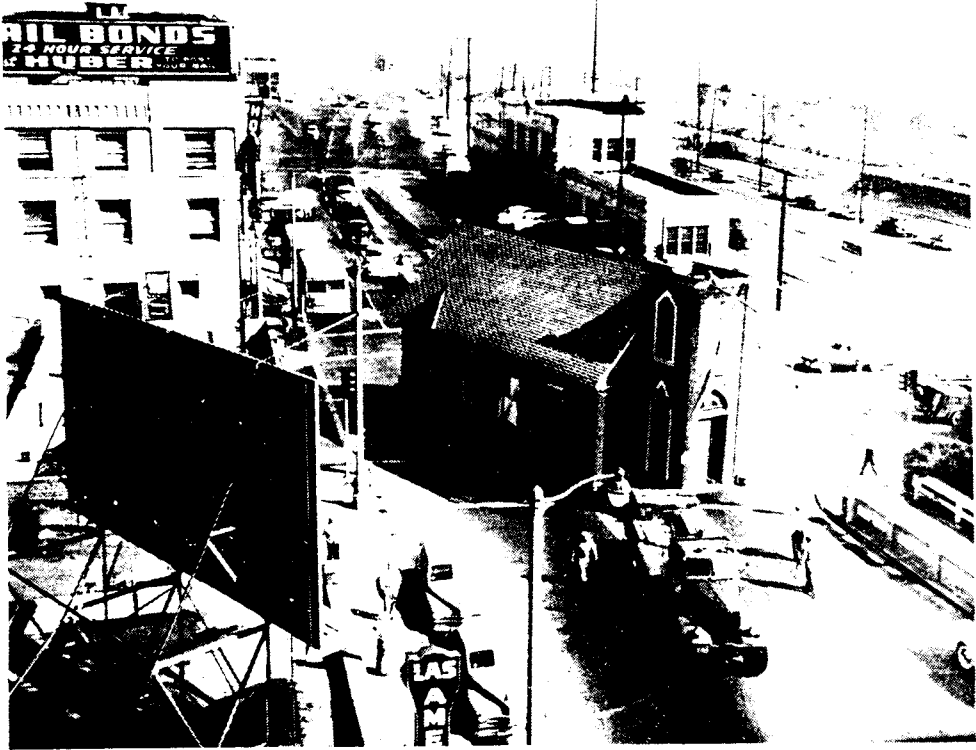
Prior to the 1880's, Wilmington had been the heart of the port. However, during this decade, San Pedro began to come into its own. One sign of San Pedro's growth was the construction of its first church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Located in the fashionable neighborhood of Nob Hill, the Carpenter's Gothic style church was built on Beacon between Second and Third Streets. The first service in the structure was held on Easter Sunday, April 13, 1884.

San Pedro Cemetery was created in 1888, when August W. Timms presented three acres to the newly incorporated city for a cemetery. He paid \$1.00 to reserve the central plot, block No. 17, for himself. That same year, Timms died.

By the turn of the century, San Pedro's population began to shift to the south. St. Peter's also moved to the Vinegar Hill section of town at Tenth and Mesa Streets in 1904, where it was joined by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in 1909. A belfry replaced the steeple, which was lost during the move.

San Pedro continued to grow during the next century. A new cemetery, Green Hills Memorial Park, was created on Western Avenue in 1948. The San Pedro Cemetery, which had been acquired by the City of Los Angeles as part of its consolidation of San Pedro in 1909, was turned over to the Department of Recreation and Parks. Its name was changed to the Harbor View Memorial Park.

In 1953, St. Peter's, with a seating capacity of only 110, was determined by the congregation to be too small. A new facility was constructed further "up the hill" on Ninth Street between Dodson and Malgren Avenues. The old wooden building stood empty and was in danger of demolition. A group of citizens of various faiths banded together to find a new site for the church. Led by the Thirty Year Club of San Pedro, the committee approached Councilman John S. Gibson who persuaded the Department of Recreation and Parks to accept and maintain the building if the committee could raise the \$5,000 needed to move the church. By September 1956, the money was raised and the church moved to the cemetery.



St. Peter's Episcopal Church, deconsecrated, in transport to Harbor View/San Pedro Cemetery (1956)

Over the past two decades the church and cemetery have often been visited by vandals. Many of the grave markers have been damaged and the chapel and Rudecinda Crypt, built in 1928, as a burial place for the Sepulveda and Dodson families, have been defaced with graffiti. The community has been quick to respond to this problem as in 1986, when a group of Fort MacArthur residents, Harbor College students and others cleaned and painted the chapel. The chapel continues to serve the community as a site for weddings and musical recitals.

The Harbor View Memorial Park and Chapel are a monument to San Pedro's founders and to those who have sought to preserve its history. San Pedro's first church has found its home in the town's first cemetery amid many of its founding citizens who are at their final resting place.

Adapted from Anna Marie Hager's article entitled "San Pedro's Historic Three Acres," which appeared in the September, 1981 Shoreline.



Harbor View, former San Pedro, Cemetery at 24th and Grand Streets. Monument for the buried sailors of the U.S.S. Tennessee 1908 disaster in foreground. St. Peter's Chapel in background. Photo by Victor Carvellas.