

Point Loma Assembly



Established 1911

Point Loma Assembly History Booklet

Our Point Loma Assembly History booklet was lovingly researched, created, and designed by the following local historians, as a La Playa Trail Association project for Point Loma Assembly:

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We thank you all. Your time and talent made this a reality!

The Story of Point Loma Assembly



The homes of Eliza Jennings Smith (left) and Frank and Inez Jennings (right) served as early meeting places for the Point Loma Assembly.

Situated on a Point Loma hillside above San Diego Bay, the Point Loma Assembly Hall has been an iconic structure since 1914. It is home to a group of women and men who meet monthly to promote literary, social, educational, philanthropic, civic and artistic work in the community. The idea for the first women's civic organization in

Point Loma started in 1911. At this time the women had no clubhouse, so they would gather in one another's homes. Two of the homes that hosted meetings were the William and Eliza Jennings Smith home and the home of Frank and Inez Jennings. Only the Eliza Jennings Smith residence still stands.

The women decided to call themselves the *Point Loma Assembly*, and began to adopt club goals and duties, always looking toward improvements for the good of the community. Within the first year the membership had grown to 40 women. With the popularity and growth of the Assembly, the building of a clubhouse became its number one priority.



An early gathering of Point Loma Assembly.

In January 1912, the *San Diego Union* noted, "The Assembly is rapidly becoming one of the most pleasant features of the

social life of the Point, as well as being materially beneficial in regard to the promotion of much-needed improvements of the section.”

Roseville pioneer, real estate mogul, and San Diego County Sheriff, Frank Jennings stepped in to help the ladies of Point Loma Assembly plan their clubhouse. His wife, Inez, and sister Eliza were two of the original organizers of the Assembly. In 1913 Frank Jennings offered to lease four side-by-side Talbot Street lots to the Assembly at no cost for 30 years. The lease stipulated that the Assembly would incorporate and build a clubhouse within a year for no less than \$2000. Jennings also pledged that for every dollar donation the club could collect, he would pitch in another dollar himself.

On August 30, 1913 Point Loma Assembly was incorporated under California state law and was thereby entitled to own property and transact business.

Frank Jennings hired San Diego architect John B.

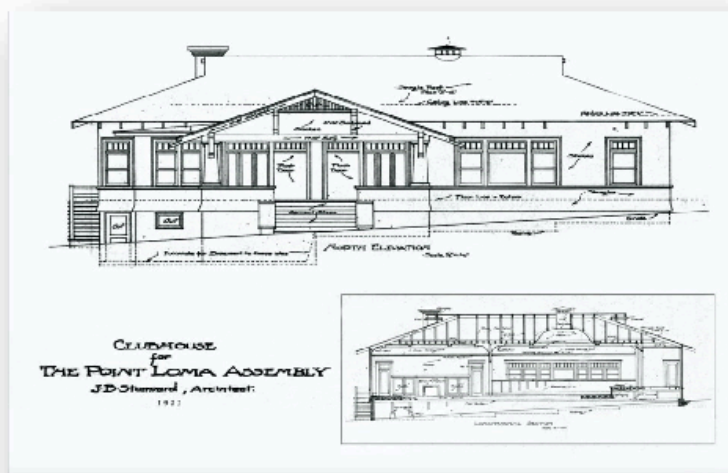


Inez and Frank Jennings circa 1915.

Stannard to design the new clubhouse for Point Loma Assembly. Stannard's resume included one of San Diego's most iconic structures, the beautiful Queen Anne-style Louis Bank of Commerce building which still stands today on Fifth Avenue in the Gaslamp Quarter. Jennings had previously commissioned Stannard to design the Roseville School on Byron Street and the new Jennings house on the bay.

Work began on the new clubhouse in June 1914. The Assembly members on the building committee succeeded in getting the electrical wiring donated. Shades for the clubhouse windows were also donated, and the price tag on the lumber was reduced. Assembly records show that the clubhouse construction was completed for \$3,400. In September of that year Point Loma Assembly held the first meeting in their new clubhouse. It was an Open Day, when all women of the Point (including Ocean Beach and Loma Portal) were welcome.

January 4, 1915 marked the formal opening of the Point Loma Assembly clubhouse at 3035 Talbot Street.



J.B Stannard's design for the Point Loma Assembly Clubhouse, c. 1911.

In its first year of existence, the clubhouse was put to excellent use. It served as a venue for community meetings, a Sunday school and church, a polling place for Point Loma, and a home for the Point Loma Campfire Girls. Plays and dance classes were held at the clubhouse and the ladies of the Assembly hosted their first Christmas party for the children of Roseville School.

When the United States entered the First World War in spring 1917, Point Loma Assembly and its clubhouse became part of the war effort. The club raised money for knitting yarn to be used in making garments for soldiers and sailors. It created Red Cross workrooms for sewing and knitting and hosted dances for service members.

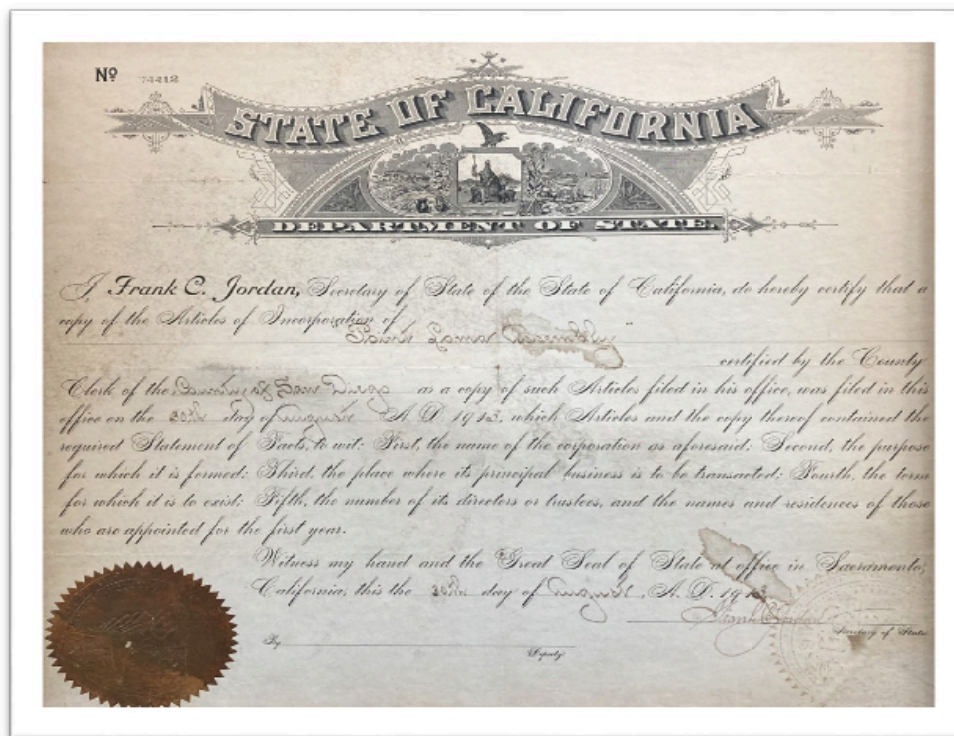
“The men said they were made to feel more at home at these Assembly dances than at any others, and after the second dance the attendance was always near 200.”

Assembly member and Red Cross volunteer Charlotte Perrill c. 1917



The Assembly Clubhouse became the home of Civil Defense meetings and volunteer port security classes during the Second World War. The hall was again used as a Red Cross distribution center for sewing, preparing surgical dressings and knitting hospital slippers. The Assembly also held first aid and nutrition classes and was very involved with the USO.

In 1935 upon Frank's passing, his sons recorded a Grant Deed to the Assembly which stipulated that if the building were maintained as an Assembly Hall, kept free of mortgage, with taxes and assessments punctually paid, the land would become property of Point Loma Assembly for \$5.00 on January 1, 1946. Thus ended the lease of 1913 that Frank Jennings had provided.



Point Loma Assembly was incorporated in the State of California August 30, 1913.

During the next few decades Point Loma Assembly continued to grow and flourish. A Junior Assembly was added for succeeding generations of the original members. Members carried on their work of contributing to the community by hosting teas, parties, lectures, and programs. Nearby Cabrillo Elementary School utilized the Hall as both an auditorium and a kindergarten classroom. In the early 1960s the Assembly Hall became home to the Peninsula Cotillion. “White-gloved little girls and well-scrubbed little boys” learned to dance and socialize under the watchful eye of their director, Mrs. Harry B. Adams. The program became a generational tradition in the hands of Mr. Donald Benjamin.



Mr. Benjamin’s famous dance class at Point Loma Assembly.

As members aged out or moved away the enrollment of Point Loma Assembly declined and by November of 2011 there were only 14 members left. Renting the clubhouse and maintaining it became a burden to the dwindling group who became intent on gifting the hall to one of their long-term tenants. Edwina Goddard, one of the 14 remaining mem-

bers, and a Point Loma resident for most of her life, became incensed that the property could be gifted away from the Assembly and the community. She contacted Dorothea Laub, a philanthropist and powerhouse in the community. Dorothea became passionate about reinvigorating the Assembly and had the connections to do so. She called on many of her friends to join the Assembly and when it came time to vote on the fate of the Assembly building, the membership was solidly in favor of keeping and restoring it.

In the next few years many improvements were made to the building, often funded by Mrs. Laub. Seeing the value of the building and the organization to the community, many people joined in the renaissance of the Assembly and the restoration of the Clubhouse.

We like to think that Frank Jennings would be pleased with the work the members of Point Loma Assembly have carried on since the clubhouse became theirs. In recent years the venerable venue has been the scene of many popular programs, including concerts, the La Playa Trail Association Lecture Series and the live theatre of the Point Loma Playhouse.



Dorothea "Dottie" Laub.

The Assembly is still home to a group of motivated women and men who meet monthly to promote literary, social, educational, philanthropic, civic, and artistic work in the Point Loma Community. Point Loma Assembly still retains its homey atmosphere, its message of good fellowship, and its feelings of small-town community spirit.

President's Message

Point Loma Assembly's Board of Directors meets monthly to discuss maintenance, capital improvements and enhancements to our 100+ year-old Arts and Crafts era landmark. A Legacy Fund was established in 2016 with donations from members and the community. The Fund supplements monthly rental income to ensure that excellent stewardship of the property continues.

Annual memberships and rental income mainly provide necessary funds for monthly meetings and for financial gifts to important local non-profits. Peninsula Shepherd Center, Point Loma Summer Concerts, Point Loma Association and others are recent beneficiaries.

A collaboration between Point Loma Assembly and neighboring Cabrillo Elementary School has recently allowed the children access to an art program at the NTC Foundation's Liberty School. Members and friends of Point Loma Assembly raised the funds needed to provide bus transportation for the students.

The future looks bright for Point Loma Assembly as it continues as a gathering place for the peninsula community, and as a shining example of a neighborhood organization working together for the greater good.

Sally A. Bixler, September 2023

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Join us on the second Thursday every month from September through June for fellowship and interesting programs.

Point Loma Assembly is a 501 (c) (3) organization.