By Patricia Weber, 95
La Jolla Resident Since 1953

Ellen Browning Scripps is a name well known in La Jolla. Hospitals, parks, clubs and institutions bare her name. We know her for her exceptional philanthropy and devotion to humanity. We know she charged La Jolla. What else do we actually know about this woman? What was her political affiliation? Did she have an English accent? Did she sing in the choir? Was the waltz her favorite dance? Did she bathe in the ocean at Casa Beach? Did she swim with the seals? Let’s go ahead with the story. Miss Ellen was born on Oct. 18, 1836 in England. Her father was a prominent London bookbinder with a vast library of the finest English literature of the time. Ellen was 4 years old when her mother died. Her next three years were spent at a boarding school. It could have been that Ellen’s father, recognizing his daughter’s exceptional abilities at that early age, wished to give her the best start in her education. In 1844, James M. Scripps took his six motherless children (ages 3-13) on a sailing vessel bound for America. The voyage took six weeks. They landed in Boston and proceeded to Albany, then to Buffalo via the Erie Canal, and on to Rushville, Illinois to join other family members. In Rushville, her father married Julia Osborne and Ellen gained five half-siblings. As one of the older children, Ellen had multiple responsibilities, but she did not neglect her studies. James Scripps valued his book collection and had it with him on the voyage. It is reported that Ellen developed her love for learning by reading almost all of the volumes in her father’s vast collection. This gold mine of literature may also have helped to shape the future of her brothers James E., Sarah, and Julia Osbourn.

Ellen Browning Scripps’ lasting contributions to La Jolla are many. COURTESY

See Miss Ellen, B9

La Jolla Landmark Businesses

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Established in 1932, Ross Thiele & Son is a third generation family business and one of the oldest interior design firms in San Diego. Originally located downtown, Ross Thiele moved the business to 1227 Prospect Street – La Jolla in 1940 and son, John Thiele, joined the business. In 1982 the brick façade from their Prospect Street building was dismantled and reconstructed into the office they designed and built at 7425 Girard Avenue-La Jolla. This building continues to house the family business of interior design and a showroom of fine European and Continental antiques. In 1986, John Thiele’s daughter, Elizabeth Barkett, joined the business and is the current Principal Designer with team Susie Kerent, Lacey Colmore and Jessica Caviness.

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80 YEARS

Since 1932

Ross Thiele & Son, LTD.
Ellen Browning Scripps' legacy includes founding:

- Scripps Institute of Oceanography
- The Bishop's School
- Scripps Memorial Hospital
- Scripps College in Claremont
- La Jolla Children's Pool
- Land for the Village and Torrey Pines State Reserve

In 1900, Ellen's younger brother George left her a large fortune. The oldest brother, James, contested the will in court. His suit failed. In 1903, Ellen founded what is now the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in honor of her late brother.

To preserve and enhance the charm of La Jolla, Miss Ellen's generous philanthropy began in earnest. In 1909, this fine lady started The Bishop's School. She acquired property in the Village and large land plots, such as the Torrey Pines State Reserve.

In 1912, the Women's Club was built on the corner of Faye and Wall Street. It was there that she gave her speeches for women's suffrage and held classes to educate women on the voting process. Some reports state that she was shy, but that is hard to believe. It is more likely that she spoke forcefully with perfect diction and with her English accent. The 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote finally passed in 1920.

The La Jolla Recreation Center, first called La Jolla Playground, came in 1913. What is now the Birch Aquarium came into being in 1915 along with Scripps Park. While recovering from a broken hip, Miss Ellen found the need for better healthcare, which led to the building of Scripps Memorial Hospital on Prospect Street in 1924. The adjoining Scripps Metabolic Clinic soon followed.

At age 90, Miss Ellen's passion to help educate and elevate women brought about the opening of Scripps College for Women in 1926, now known as Scripps College, in Claremont. It is dedicated to encouraging women to perform at their highest capacity.

In 1931, Ellen's last great gift to La Jolla was the Children's Pool and the seawall built to create a safe beach for children at Casa Beach. Now, 80 years later, this

SEE MISS ELLEN, B10