

The Old Town San Diego Project - Status Report September 2003

Project Director:

Dr. Steven Schoenherr, professor of history USD

Project Goals:

- (1) to create an interactive computer model of Old Town San Diego from 1830 to the present. This model will be designed to run in a touchscreen kiosk in the new Old Town Visitor Center. It will also be designed for video/data projection onto a large screen if the Visitor Center includes a theater.
- (2) to produce a CD-ROM version of this model for sale and distribution to schools and the general public. The program will be authored with Macromedia Director software to run on both Macintosh and Windows platforms. The retail price of this computer compact disc should be about \$25, allowing recovery of some production costs and continued development of the simulation.
- (3) to publish a digital html exhibit on the Internet World Wide Web using parts of the model. This exhibit will require a computer to act as a server (the ideal location would be the Old Town Visitor Center) and will also require an Internet connection.
- (4) to develop techniques and train students in digital multimedia production at USD.

Project History:

The project began in September 1993 when Engstrand and Schoenherr decided to revise their multimedia slide show on Old Town that was originally produced in 1979. Gladis Herrera enrolled in an independent study course to begin research of photographs. A Planning Grant of \$750 was awarded to the Project Planning Team in November 1993 to produce a five-minute demo program (alpha version .01). This demo was completed in March 1994 and submitted to the California Council of the Humanities with a grant proposal asking for \$10,000 to complete the project. The proposal was not funded but the project went forward with funds from the Irvine Foundation, Thornton Foundation, Hansen Foundation, and Sefton Foundation. A partial version of the simulation (alpha version .02) was presented September 17, 1994, to a standing-room-only session of the California Historical Society annual conference at the Red Lion Inn in San Diego. The response to this presentation was very positive and work has continued on the project. Alpha development version .03 was ported to run on the PowerPC Macintosh during January of 1995. The article "Professors Bring Historic Old Town to Life" by Jill Wagner was published in the April 1995 issue of the USD *Alcala View*. The next version .04 included a 3D model of the McCoy House and was presented in May 1995 at an Irvine Foundation Faculty Conference. The article "Re-Creating History" about the project was published in the Summer 1995 issue of *USD Magazine*. New software was adopted in 1996 to overcome limitations that were discovered in the Virtus 3D program that had been used since 1993. The version .05 was developed in the fall 1996 semester with 32 completely new 3D building models drawn with Specular Infini-D software. The Faculty Research Grant of \$4800 awarded in September 1996 helped to purchase new graphics and accelerator boards to speed production of the 3D model. Version .06 was produced during Dr. Schoenherr's sabbatical leave in the fall of 1997 and included improved models of the Estudillo, Bandini and Wrightington buildings. Version .07 in 1998 added renders from the model of how the Old Town area looked in the early years from 1769 to 1830. This version included an improved terrain model that was developed by Thor Brickman, and with the assistance of Chad Dennis from GDE Systems who provided 1 meter DEM files of the San Diego terrain. Version .08 was produced for a presentation to the meeting April 19, 2000, of the local San Diego chapter of the international society of graphics professionals known as SIGGRAPH. This version added 3D models of the interiors of the Wrightington and McCoy buildings. Due to a lack of funds, no new versions have been produced since April 2000. Also, the Specular company went out of business and no longer supported the Infini-D software. Version .08 of the CD-ROM history was been used in the summer of 2003 to provide information on the history of Old Town to Diane Powers and to the Rothweiler Group of Minneapolis, both of whom were writing applications for the Bazaar del Mundo lease in the state park district.

