



## ¡Viva Diegoland!

### A tribute to the sights and sounds of San Diego

by Pollywog Gardenvale

**DIEGOLAND** — The long-awaited grand opening of Diegoland took place, quite fittingly, on Cinco de Mayo as a tribute to San Diego, California—hometown of Second Life resident, Champion Valiant.

The project grew from an informal discussion with childhood friends who were reminiscing about growing up in San Diego. Hey, wait a minute! I might as well just be out with it—Surfdaddy Orca and I were the other two in that discussion. The three of us have known each other since we were kids. So what started out as a “wouldn’t it be fun” kind of thing to do, took on a life of its own and became a major build-out of an island sim under the direction of Sitearm Madonna, the project manager brought in to oversee the development.

The result is a montage of Champ’s favorite places and haunts around the city with enough local flavor to satisfy a native San Diegan. Many historical landmarks are represented at near-enough scale with beautifully rendered photorealistic textures, while others are interpretations and symbols of life in this Southern California city that shares a border with Mexico.

The development of Diegoland was a collaborative effort that called upon the talents of terraformers, builders, landscapers, seascapers, soundscapers, scripters, animators, and visual artists. Sitearm Madonna, a curator for the USC Public Diplomacy and Virtual Worlds Project, in association with the Annenberg School of Communication, served as a pipeline into the community of experienced builders and developers.

Most buildings in Diegoland were constructed by Dane Benford, a young and talented artist who has not yet had the opportunity to visit the real world city of San Diego. After much research and months of work, Dane has succeeded at capturing the grandeur of San Diego’s Balboa Park—an urban park considered by many to be the most beautiful in the world. The California Tower complex was faithfully reconstructed and serves as the teleport hub into Diegoland. I always wanted to go to the top and look around—and now you can!

As a child growing up on the edge of Balboa Park, I learned to tell time by listening to the chimes of the California Tower. The sound of the Diegoland chimes was recreated by Yrek Gran on her Yamaha keyboard and is synchronized with the actual time—which happens to be the same as real world time in San Diego. So at the very moment you hear the chimes in Diegoland, the real world chimes are also playing in Balboa Park. Listen for the chimes when you visit Diegoland. On the quarter hour you will hear the typical, Westminster four notes descending, followed by eight notes on the half hour, twelve notes on the three-quarter hour, and finally on every hour, a full Westminster, St. Michaels, and Canterbury, followed by a count of



The California Building and Tower is a fusion of Spanish Colonial and Latin American architecture and was originally built as a temporary structure for the Panama-California Exposition in 1916. Its Second Life recreation was constructed for Diegoland by Dane Bedford with tile textures provided by MadameThespian Underhill.



Horton Plaza fountain with Cabrillo Bridge in the background. A tire swing hangs on the eucalyptus tree in the background. And no, of course, you can’t really see Cabrillo Bridge from Horton Plaza, but this is Diegoland—and there really was a pond under the bridge at one time.

the hour. If you like fine clocks, you will enjoy a visit to Yrek’s clock store Diegoland.

Hastur Pierson of Acoustic Alchemy, created the rest of the Diegoland soundscape that changes as you travel from one region to another. Out on the tip of Point Loma at the Cabrillo National Monument and lighthouse, you will hear the daytime sounds of sea gulls, harbor seals, and humpback whales switching to distant fog horns after dark. On the streets of Diegoland, you will hear the sounds of pedestrians in the background—and then of course, there is the ever present sound of Mexico, our neighbor to the south.

The Spreckles Organ Pavilion houses the world’s largest outdoor pipe organ and its free organ concerts in the park are a long-standing Sunday tradition in San Diego. Although very few people have had the privilege to play the Spreckles pipe organ,

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Surfdaddy Orca's mother was, at one time, understudy to the organist in the park. MadameThespians Underhill has carefully recreated the Spreckles pipe organ for Diegoland, along with scripting that lets anyone sit down and play.

The Botanical Building is one of San Diego's most beautiful and beloved landmarks and houses a lush collection of tropical plants. The building and reflection pond were skillfully reproduced for Diegoland by Dane Benford and Selena Gateaux. It is currently being used as retail space.

The Ford Building was built for the 1935 World's Fair and was based on a similar building that was designed by Albert Kahn for the 1933-34 Century of Progress exhibition in Chicago. Its art deco design represents the gears of a car. Today, the Ford Building is home to the San Diego Aerospace Museum.

Richard Amero, writing for the San Diego Historical Society, described its "perpendicular blue fins that separated the gear segments on the tower. Overlapping layers of light, coming from behind the fins, emphasized the curves of the white tower. Some 18,000 hidden electric light bulbs provided lighting to shape the building's convex-concave surfaces." In 1936, the building had "the appearance of a block of translucent blue ice, surmounted by a rim of gold" in a style reminiscent of Maxfield Parrish.

If there's anything that avatars like to do more than shop, it's dance—and there's plenty of both at Diegoland. Cafe Diego is the social hub of Diegoland and is a recreation of the Whaley House in Old Town. The Whaley House is considered to be one of the most haunted houses in the United States and was built on the site of the 1852 demise of "Yankee Jim" James (Santiago) Robinson, who was convicted of attempted grand larceny and hung on the gallows off the back of a wagon.

Each year the city of San Diego hosts the prestigious Orchid and Onion Awards to recognize the best and the worst in architecture and urban planning. If Diegoland were in the running for the award this year, it might be a winner in both categories: an Orchid for its beautiful rendition of the California Building and Tower, and an Onion for the commercial use of historic landmarks. There is also the lack of any good, surfable beaches that characterize and define the San Diego beach culture. But that being said, there is still much more to like, than dislike, about Diegoland. As is true with everything else in Second Life, it is a work in progress. ☼



The Spreckles Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park. The pipe organ reproduced and scripted by MadameThespians Underhill.



The Botanical Building was at one time called the "Lath Palace." Dane Benford reproduced the giant lath house and Selena Gateaux created the lily pond.



The Ford Building has been transformed into a scene out of a nightmare for a club called "Wicked."

Miss Gardenvale is wearing a peasant skirt, ruffley blouse, belt, and sandals are from Kaimi's (Diegoland).

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Diegoland (219, 25, 45)