They made

Chula Vista History!

Greg Rogers

Greg Rogers: a Banker and City Leader

Greg Rogers in 1925

A native of the Midwest, Greg Rogers brought his family to Southern California in the early 1900s. Settling in the small community of Chula Vista before it became a city, Rogers was one of the pioneers who played a major role in shaping the city in its early years.

Gregoire Rogers was born on Aug. 9, 1875. The family lived on Catawba Island, which is part of Ohio and

This is the log cabin on Catawba Island, Ohio, where Greg Rogers was born in 1875. His sister, Eva, was also born here.

Greg's school photo in Port Clinton, Ohio, in 1888. Greg is in the top row, the second boy from the right.

located in Lake Erie. For the residents of Catawba Island the only way to get to the mainland of Ohio or to the other nearby islands was by boat. Greg's father, Eli Rogers, made his living as captain of a two-masted sailing ship called the "Nellie Strong" which provided that necessary transportation. Greg went to school on the island where he also learned to swim, sail, hunt and fish—sports which he would continue to enjoy throughout his life.

When he was only 14, Greg moved to Texas to work for his uncle at a Western Union Telegraph Company office. Although he was working as a messenger boy, Greg also learned Morse Code and how to operate the telegraph. His job paid just $15 a month—with an opportunity to earn an extra $5. He stayed at a boarding house that cost

$3 a week for a room and meals, which didn't leave much spending money after those expenses were paid.

In his early 20s, a friend offered Greg a job with the Westinghouse Machine Company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This company later became known as the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. Greg did very well at Westinghouse. In 1906, just 10 years after moving to Pittsburgh, he became assistant treasurer of the company.

While working in Pittsburgh, Greg met Rose Morgan when she was visiting the city. Rose was the youngest daughter of a very successful businessman from Cleveland, Ohio. Greg and Rose married in 1906 and

Greg Rogers brought his 1909 Cadillac with him to California.

The Rogers' large "Bay Breeze" orchard house at 699 E St. under construction in 1910. The property was near the current intersection of E Street and I-5.

moved to Cleveland where the first three of their five children were born.

Because of Rose's health and her desire to leave Cleveland, the couple wanted to move. Although Greg had never been to California, Rose had vacationed at the Hotel del Coronado with her family several times before she was married. They loved the climate and a slower pace of life in Southern California, so the young couple left Ohio. Their 1909 train ride west reflected the couple's wealth. They were accompanied by their young children, a nurse, a cook, 10 rooms of furniture and a new 1909 Cadillac.

Greg and Rose Rogers celebrated Christmas in 1910 at "Bay Breeze" with friends. From left are Hester Uhl, George Uhl, Rose Morgan Rogers, Greg Rogers and Getty Uhl.

The family lived in Coronado for about a year while they built a house on a large property near the waterfront on E Street in Chula Vista. The house, named "Bay Breeze," was one of the most modern built in the region at the time. Its 5,700-square-feet included electricity, several baths with indoor plumbing, four fireplaces and five stairways.

Chula Vista was known then as the "Lemon Capital of the World," and groves of lemon trees were planted around Bay Breeze. Greg became an active member of the Chula Vista Citrus Association.

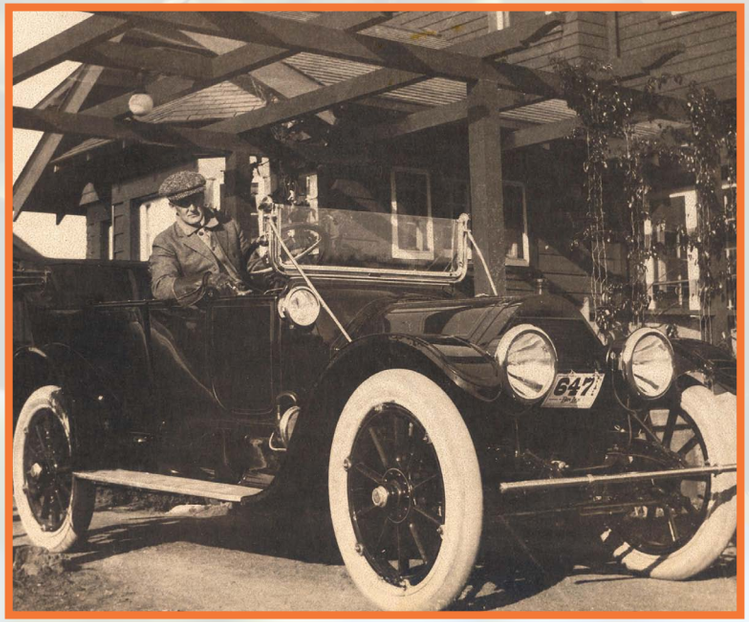
In addition to growing lemons, Greg quickly became a leader in the small community of Chula Vista. While it was home to only 550 residents, in 1911 a successful vote was held to officially make Chula Vista a city. Greg was elected to the first City Council and served on the Council until 1914.

Around the same time, Greg co-founded the community's first bank—Peoples State Bank. The bank was located in the city's business district on the corner of Third Avenue and F Street. In the 1920s, the Peoples State Bank was sold to the Bank of Italy which later became Bank of America.

Greg Rogers was the president of Peoples State Bank. It was located on the northwest corner of Third Avenue and F Street.

Greg brought his love of the outdoors to his new California home. He enjoyed sailing and was the first Commodore of the original Chula Vista Yacht Club. He also helped start two yacht clubs in San Diego.

His boating experience was put to good use after heavy rains in the winter of 1916. The Otay Dam broke and the Sweetwater Dam overflowed. During the flooding a number of people and many animals drowned, crops were destroyed and roads washed away. After the tragedy, Greg and a number of yacht club friends joined others



Greg Rogers enjoyed driving his new cars around Chula Vista even though most of the streets were not paved when he moved to the city.

Fishing and sailing were among the sports that Greg Rogers (second from left) enjoyed his whole life.

to form rescue teams in the bay. Later they helped carry people in their boats across the flooded rivers.

Greg continued to serve the community as a member of the elementary school board from 1916 to 1922. Greg was also a member of the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce, Chula Vista Rotary Club, San Diego Country Club (located in Chula Vista) and the Upper Otay Duck Club.

After Rose Rogers died in 1949, Greg moved to Fredericka Manor where he lived until his death in 1955 at the age of 80.

Twenty years later a controversy started when the owner of the "Bay Breeze" house wanted to build something else on the property. Although nothing happened right away, eventually a new owner offered to donate the house to the city—if it was moved to another location.

In 1984, a crew moved the 140-ton house to the city's public works yard just a few blocks away. That same year, the city approved moving the home to 614 Second Avenue. Although it was to be a private residence, the new owners agreed to restore the home and open it for public tours.

Today while enjoying tours of Greg Rogers' historic home, school children and adults learn about Greg Rogers' role in shaping early Chula Vista. His contributions to the community are memorialized at Greg Rogers Elementary School and the adjacent Greg Rogers City Park, which were named in his honor.

In rhe 1980s "Bay Breeze" was moved to 614 Second Avenue where it was restored.

This booklet is one of five produced cooperatively by the Altrusa Club of Chula Vista Inc. Foundation; the Chula Vista Elementary School District; and the Chula Vista Public Library. Altrusa initiated the project and its Foundation printed the brochures as the club's contribution to the celebration of the City of Chula Vista's Centennial in 2011. The project leads were Altrusa member Jeri Gulbransen Gustafsson, who researched and wrote the brochures; CVESD Assistant Superintendent John Nelson, who edited the copy and coordinated use of the booklets with the third grade local history curriculum; and CVPL Librarian Donna Golden, who provided research materials and photographs from the library's Local History Collection. In addition, the photographs on the cover and pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 11 were provided by Pamela Bensoussan, who now owns in the Greg Rogers house. The graphic design was completed by Komin Design.