



DANA POINT

Landmark With a Native Face

The bold promontory that announces Dana Point from the sea has been a navigational landmark ever since men first sailed the Pacific. For thousands of years before that, the area was inhabited by native people who enjoyed a self-sufficient life, dining on vegetation of the land as well as food from the ocean.

At certain places in the harbor — such as the marine preserve and the west end of Dana Island — an echo of that past transports the viewer to earlier days. The dramatic profile of an Indian, chiseled by nature on the rock face of the point, seems to watch for new arrivals from the sea while guarding the ageless treasures of the local environment.

Several-sided Dana Point is composed of an ancient rock formation called San Onofre Breccia. Fragments of even older angular rocks are cemented within it, including a rare bluish schist rock formed some 150 million years ago. It is thought that, in geologic history, erosion-resistant Dana Point may have been part of a mountain range connected to Catalina and the other Channel Islands. A rise in sea level left only the tops above water. (see Headlands)

Called "Punta de San Juan" in Spanish days, the promontory was renamed Dana Point in the 1884 U.S. Coast Survey. It marks the north-western boundary of Capistrano Bay, which curves southeast along the coast to San Clemente, where it ends at San Mateo Point. That promontory can be seen from Dana Point, identified by the dense palms that cover the estate that was President Richard Nixon's Western White House in the 1960s.

Near Base of West Breakwater