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A Shade of History

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Grade 7

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Reaching for the sky, magnificent eucalyptus trees sway above Rancho Santa Fe, welcoming birds to their branches. During spring, they blossom with small, furry puffs of gold which soon float down to the land below. These trees are one of the great beauties of our community and behind them is an interesting history.

On August 17, 1906, a local news headline in the San Diego Union said, "Santa Fe Buys San Dieguito Big Ranch Consisting of 8,650 Acres Sold for \$100,000. Eucalyptus Trees Will Be Planted for Railroad." Thus, the Santa Fe Land Improvement Company, a part of Santa Fe Railroad, bought the San Dieguito Land Grant, today known as Rancho Santa Fe, and began to plant eucalyptus seeds, hoping the trees would provide suitable wood for railroad ties. Planting these seeds also contributed to the reforestation

program supported by Theodore Roosevelt, president at that time. Seeds were bought from Australia and, by the end of three years, 3,000,000 small eucalyptus seeds of many varieties had been planted on the rolling landscape, to become the beautiful giants they are today.

After the planting, experiments with eucalyptus wood proved that it could not hold railroad spikes well. Thus, the trees were left to grow untouched by ax.

Today, nearly seventy years later, the seeds planted in error to become railroad ties tower over us all. Rustling with the wind over old homes and new, these trees touch Rancho Santa Fe with a special shade of history.