

Rancho del Mar Shopping Center in Aptos is now celebrating its fifteenth year of existence.

The shopping center, which opened June 21, 1961, now has about 60 tenants on 11 acres and employs 300 people, according to general manager Betty Harrison.

Original tenants were Safeway, Vessey Drugs, Aptos Liquors, County Bank and the Shell station, with the coin laundry, coffee shop and cleaners going in shortly afterward.

Expansions in 1964, 1965, 1968 and 1970 brought the center to its current size, with many of the tenants changing locations within the center as their businesses expanded.

The center was developed by James Fenton, who now lives in Idaho but still maintains a home in Santa Cruz County.



Four of the first businessmen at Rancho del Mar shopping center, from left: developer Jim Fenton; Robert Vessey of Vessey Drugs; Ron Vevoda of Safeway; and Russ June of Rancho Liquors. See below for story.