ENCINITAS, Calif. — Encinitas was a quiet little seaside community and the population of San Diego was one-third what it is today, when Cary Bickler dreamed of designing a golf course on the Ecke Flower Ranch. Now, golfers can play Encinitas Ranch Golf Course, which opened on the flower ranch on March 1.

"I lived on a country road across from the Ecke flower fields, a spectacular site for a golf course, where I would stand visualizing green, rolling fairways," Bickler said. "Then I would go to my office, and back to the reality of being a young designer starting a golf course design practice, hoping the phone would ring."

Time marched on. The flowers fields continued to grow and so did Bickler's golf course design practice. While the Southern California population multiplied and demand for real estate spiraled, the secluded agricultural fields remained hidden, high on a mesa, overlooking the Pacific Ocean and the La Costa Spa and Country Club below. Three years ago, Bickler opened his mail and found a Request for Proposal from the city of Encinitas for the design of an 18-hole course on the very property where he had stood dreaming 27 years earlier.

In honor of Encinitas' worldwide recognition for flower-growing, Bickler has designed the 11th, or "Flower Hole," at the entrance to the golf course. Golfers will be greeted by the colorful array of flowers which local growers will display year-round as a proud symbol of the City's commerce.

"When the opportunity to design the course presented itself, I was elated," Bickler said. "My dream came rushing back to me, and the time had come. I knew the job was meant for me."

The Encinitas Ranch Golf Course is in time as a proud symbol of the City's commerce. The Ocean Links is slated to open in the fall.