

REGISTER Thursday Evening, March 8, 1923

"HUNTINGTON BEACH RESULT OF DREAM NEWSPAPERMAN HAD"

Regular Loan

(This is the first of a series of articles written for The Register on the early history of Huntington Beach. These articles will appear from time to time and will trace the progress of the beach oil center up until the present time.)

Similar to the romantic origin of Kansas City and Long Beach, Huntington Beach, as a town site was conceived in the dream conceived by a newspaper man.

Stopping his horses and spring wagon on the ridge of the hill where the grammar school now stands, near the crest of Seventeenth street, George McPhee, at that time city editor of the Weekly Blade of Santa Ana, turned to W. T. Newland, the owner and driver of the team and exclaimed:

"My goodness, what a place this would be for a town."

WROTE BOOSTER ARTICLE

True to his imaginative foresight, Mr. McPhee returned to Santa Ana and wrote the first booster article ever printed about Huntington Beach.

In his issue of Friday, August 4, 1899, Mr. McPhee headed a two-thirds of a page article, "The Willows Peatlands, A Poor Man's Paradise."

Little did he realize that this same "poor man's paradise" would some day be a rich man's stamping grounds; little did even his fertile imagination picture the stretch of vast peat lands "most of it under water from two to six feet nearly all the year" as the storehouse of one of the world's richest treasures - underlaid with oil all of the year.

DEVELOPMENT STARTED

But he pictured enough to give a group of men the nucleus for a practical plan of development. he spared no space in writing about the advantages of this section as a poor man's opportunity and described in detail the land of the farmers who had already taken the plunge onto the Willow's lands and were making steady progress toward success.

Among the names he mentioned were John S. Bushard, E. S. Talbert, Silas Wright, B. Courrages, Fred E. Mills, J. V. Robertson, Bruce Wardlow, W. D. Lamb, J. W. King, and his friend, W. T. Newlands.

In describing the latter's homesite he says it is on a shell mound which is evidently the site of an ancient Indian village." And to those who have been privileged to inspect the remarkable collections of Indian relics, including the smallest basket in the world compiled by Mrs. Newland, one is led to wonder again at this man's knowledge of the "poor man's paradise."

In concluding seven columns on the subject Mr. McPhee says: "With such a rich valley as a feeder it should not be considered the dream of an enthusiast to picture, in the not distant future, a thriving town, tapped by two railroads and situated on the mesa at the western edge of thousands of acres of rich bottom lands of which an imperfect description is given in this article."

And little by little, Mr. McPhee's oft-repeated publicity of his dream brought interest to this new region as publicity is wont to do, until in 1902 twenty men, thirteen from Los Angeles and seven from Santa Ana, including some of the "native" farmers such as Mr. Newland, pooled their investment resources and bought 1600 acres for \$100,000.

That was the origin of the present Huntington Beach company and the nucleus of the present Huntington Beach.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"HUNTINGTON BEACH WAS 'PACIFIC' CITY IN FOUNDING DAYS"

HISTORY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH (CONTINUED.)

And they named it "Pacific City," this 1600 acres of willow lands, purchased for \$100,000 by a group of twenty men. And now they had the land, how were they to secure the houses and the _____ to put on the land?

Newport Beach furnished the first house for W. T. Newland, a member of the company who owned the prospective "Pacific City," furnished sixteen horses and the necessary implements to drag in the first residence. Unfortunately, it has long been burned and only those who labored to bring it in and a few of the old residents of Newport Beach, who joined in the general laugh that went up from that city, remember where it stood "somewhere on First street."

LIFE BEGAN TO APPEAR

For two years there was a gradual awakening of life in the new hamlet. Lots on Ocean front established their permanent reputation of being the most valuable by selling, or advertising themselves for sale, at \$50.00 apiece. Those on Main Street, for the main thoroughfare acquired its name early in the annals of history, followed by a close second at \$25.00 apiece. And the rest of land? Oh, had there been some fairy to whisper in those pioneers' ears what flowed under the ground, how little they would have worried about what flowed over the ground during the rainy season, when the majority of its were valued from \$10 to \$15 apiece.

It began to look as though the folk in Newport Beach might not have laughed in vain, when in the spring of 1904 an event occurred which saved the life of the town. On July fourth, 1904, the Pacific Electric ran its first car into the city. Not that there had been no communication before. Indeed there had. During 1903-1904 the Southern Pacific ran an accommodation train through Pacific City twice a week. You arrived at twelve o'clock and had your choice of remaining two hours until the same train pulled out, or waiting three days until it pulled in again. There are those who say three day guests were possibilities, but never realities!

It was at this transformation period of 1904 that the city changed its name. Indebted to Mr. Huntington of the Pacific Electric for acquiring enough stock in the company owning the city, for which he paid some of the original owners seventeen cents a share, to guarantee his railroad's right of way, the town rewarded his investment by changing its official cognomen to Huntington Beach. However, C. W. Gates, Los Angeles, and his

HISTORY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH CONTINUED:

associates retained the controlling interest in the company, and it is this controlling interest which was transferred a few weeks ago to the Standard Oil company at a figure repeatedly rumored to have been around the \$20,000,000 mark. Quite a contrast to the seventeen cents a share proposition!

BOOM BEGAN IN 1905

Of course there came a boom. Not immediately, but gradually, for no apparent reason except the optimism of the property owners and the tenants of the seven or eight residences then in the "City" and their persistent boosting, until in June, 1905, a regular Southern California land boom was in full swing. And according to all reports it was not equalled even by the one which followed the discovery of oil.

At this time there was one house in town which boasted laths and plaster, and Ed Manning had moved into that one in the fall of 1904. As said before, there were only about eight residences. Walter Smith ran the grocery store in a building which occupied practically the same spot as the Huntington Beach Hardware company does today. He handed out the mail, brought in on horseback from the recesses of an old piano box marked with a conspicuous "P.O." Yet, at this same time, one could stand on the site of the present plot and count twenty-five real estate signs without changing position.

As for lots, they were "out of sight," and yet they sold. Inside lots changed hands for \$2,000 and \$3,000 apiece. In fact, real estate reached a figure not yet exceeded by the oil time prices.

BUT THE BUBBLE BURST

Then it was all over. By August people awakened. They realized that it had been a false boom with no solid commodity or industry to sponsor it. The real estate signs came down, the "Shylocks" left town, and the settlers resumed their routine everyday life, getting their mail from the depths of the piano box, buying their potatoes by the pound from Walter Smith, since he couldn't get enough to sell them by the bag, and leaving their doors, which were "innocent" of lock and key, hospitably open while they took the car to the big city for a holiday. In other words they settled down to the work of making "Huntington Beach" a prosperous town in the regular routine way.

The growth was gradual, very gradual. In 1909 the city was incorporated and the first city council chosen. In 1910 the first census was taken, attributing Huntington Beach with a total population of 815 people, which by 1920 had just double, totalling 1,687 town folk.

And from that first census.....(article was not finished)