

# Oil Boom Led and Huntington Beach Followed

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## Orange County

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HUNTINGTON BEACH — The men who first set out to develop Huntington Beach looked only at the surface of the land without realizing they were standing on an underground reservoir of immense richness.

Signs of oil were there for all to see in the black, sticky substance and even lighter oils that oozed to the surface.

Even the surface deposits represented a kind of wealth to the early-day Indians.

They used the tar-like material to help fasten spear points to shafts, as trade goods with other tribes and for waterproofing baskets and even the reed canoes in which they ventured as far as Catalina Island to trade for highly prized steatite (soapstone).

They used lighter oils to treat coughs, colds, cuts and burns.

Like the Indians, the Spanish padres never dreamed of great deposits of underground oil, but they used asphaltum (which they called brea) as fuel and waterproof coating for roofs.

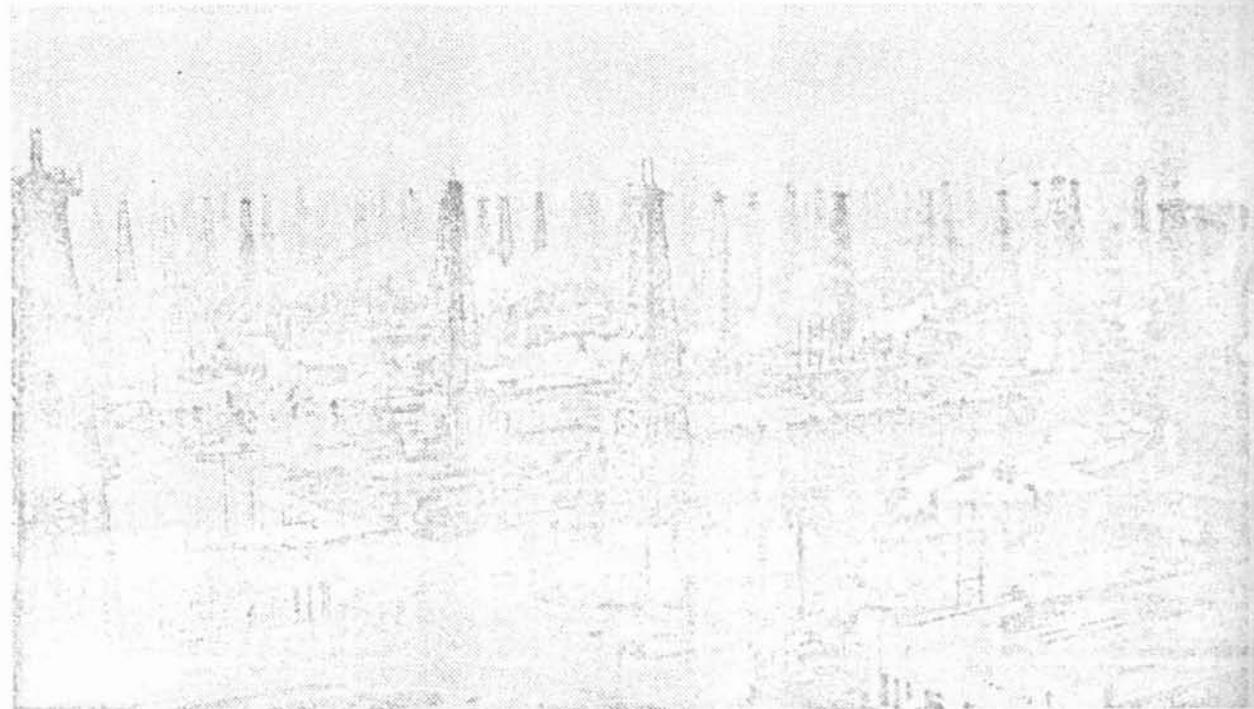
Although California's first oil well was drilled in Humboldt County in 1855 and E. L. Doheny opened the Olinda field in Orange County in 1897, oil was not as valued as it is in today's automobile-oriented society.

Huntington Beach, first called Shell Beach, was part of Rancho las Bolsas with miles of marshlands and

willow thickets stretching inland from the beach.

But Philip Stanton thought it had possibilities for development as a resort area and in 1901 he and his associates, operating as the West Coast Land and Water Co., bought 1,500 acres of Rancho las Bolsas.

The settlement was named Pacific Beach, and the first buildings, a church and some houses, reportedly were hauled from Fairview, a town that came to life near Costa Mesa in



BOOM TIME — Huntington Beach, in the 1920s, was a virtual forest of oil wells. The wooden derricks

sprang up after the 1920 oil strike and at one time numbered up to 1,750, historians say.

Photo furnished by First American Title Co.

the boom of 1887 and slipped into oblivion in 1889.

In 1901, city lots, some of them doubtless over rich oil-bearing sands, sold for \$100 to \$200 and Pacific Beach rocked along as a quiet little resort town and a favorite place for religious camp meetings.

New impetus came in 1904 when Henry Huntington extended his Pacific Electric line into Huntington Beach and on to Newport Beach, an

act which gave the town its present-day name.

By the next year the \$100 and \$200 lots of 1901 were going for as much as \$3,000 and scores of real estate agents had set up shop.

But the boom died after a short time and Huntington Beach once more became a quiet resort town whose principal attraction was its fine beach.

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