

The Growth of a City

PAMPHLET

1904-1922

Huntington Beach has a long, colorful history that stretches from Orange County's early days as a cluster of Spanish ranchos, through an oil boom, to its present status as California's tenth largest city.

Part of the Las Bolsas Rancho eventually spawned the city of Huntington Beach, but not before undergoing several interesting transformations.

In the 1880s, Abel Stearns, owner of the old Spanish rancho, sold part of his land to Colonel Bob Northam, who used it to grow and sell barley. The area was then known as Shell Beach.

In 1901 its name was changed to Pacific City when P.A. Stanton bought 40 acres of land and subdivided 20 acres on each side of Main Street. In 1902, Stanton sold out to a group of business men from Los Angeles who formed the Huntington Beach Company. In 1904, the growing town was finally christened Huntington Beach in honor of Henry Huntington, the man responsible for extending the Pacific Electric Railroad whose famous "Red Cars" routed themselves through the city.

The year 1904 hailed another landmark in the growth of Huntington Beach with the inception of the annual Fourth of July parade, still a popular tradition which brings floods of tourists to the city.

The years from 1903 to 1909 gave rise to many developments in the growing city. The Huntington Beach Company built water, electrical and telephone systems and also effected 27 miles of road improvements. In 1907, the first library was begun at Eighth and Walnut, and in an effort to beautify the area, trees

were planted throughout the town and streets were named after them.



Sites for the town's first schools — a grammar school at Fifth and Orange and a high school at Union and Main — were sold to the Pacific City School District by the Huntington Beach Company. Work was begun on the schools in 1905 and in September of that year, the school district changed its name to the Huntington Beach School District.

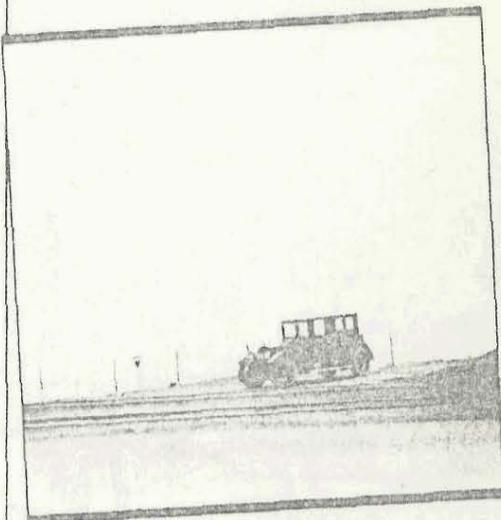
As it grew, Huntington Beach developed an interesting appeal to religious settlers near the turn of the century. Four city blocks were donated to the Methodist Church in 1906 to establish a religious community. Hundreds of tents were set up in the area around the Methodist tabernacle, an auditorium erected for the purpose of religious revival meetings. This part of town became known as "Tent City" or "Gospel Swamp," and the tabernacle on the site served as a meeting place for conventions of the Grand Army of the Republic — an assembly of Civil War veterans, and as a

school house until the city's first high school was built.

Agriculture flourished as the community grew. The fertile soil produced particularly fine crops of celery and, more importantly, sugar beets. Because of this, and because there was access to a railroad, the Holly-Sugar Company established a plant in Huntington Beach in 1911 which brought many families from out of state to live in the small town.

Incorporation of Huntington Beach took place in 1909. Voted in as a sixth class city on February 17 of that year, Ed Manning was selected as the city's first mayor, a position he held for almost four years. Manning governed an area of 3.57 square miles and a population of 915 people. A room in the bank building at Main and Walnut served as Huntington Beach's first city hall.

The city experienced slow, steady growth over the next few years, but the period was marked by several interesting improve-



ments and developments. In June of 1914 voters passed a \$70,000 bond issue for construction of

the "longest, highest, and only solid concrete municipal pleasure pier in the United States." The Main Street pier has weathered time, been partially destroyed by the elements and periodically repaired. The site of numerous prestigious surfing championships, it remains a Huntington Beach landmark today.

1918 witnessed public land auctions in Huntington Beach. The Encyclopedia Britannica Company bought 35 acres in Huntington Beach. Believing the land to be almost worthless because of its many hillsides and ravines, the encyclopedia company subdivided this area into 420 lots which they gave to people who bought sets of encyclopedias. Not until 1919, when the Standard Oil Company of California leased 500 acres from the Huntington Beach Company to drill for oil, was it known that these seemingly worthless lots were actually very valuable. Those lucky enough to have been given land

by the Encyclopedia Britannica Company ended up making varying degrees of fortunes.



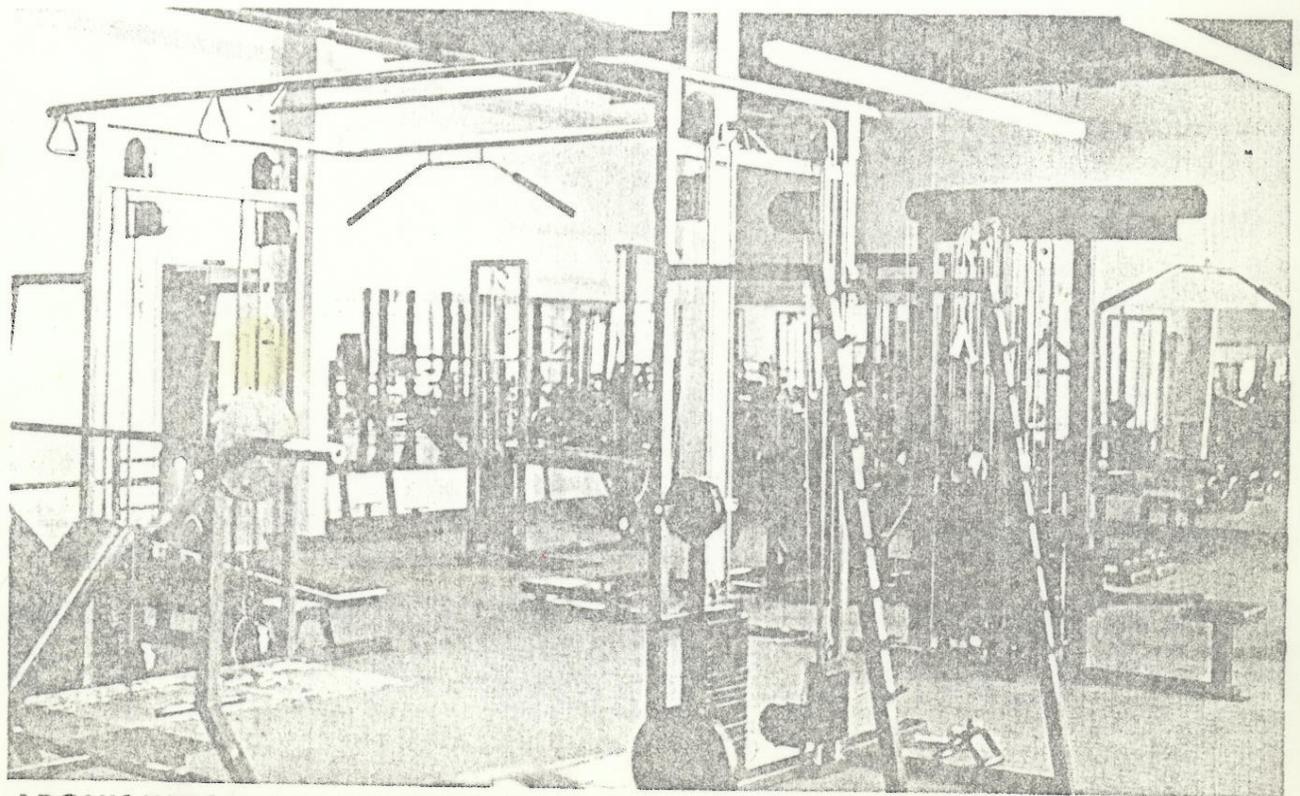
The discovery of riches beneath the soil sent the population of Huntington Beach soaring from 1,687 in 1920 to 6,000 by 1924. Most of this growth, however, occurred virtually overnight as thousands poured into the area to work in the oil fields.

The early 1920s were a time of growth sparked by the discovery of oil. During this period, Standard Oil of California acquired roughly 64% of the Huntington Beach Company's stock, which it maintains today. Since then, Huntington Beach has been a city whose growth and progress can be attributed, in large part, to its oil fields, which were reported to be the third largest in the State of California as of 1966.

Be sure to watch for coming issues of this publication to see how the city has advanced since the discovery of oil.

Editor's Note: To Local Historians

Please let us know if you enjoy the series on The Growth of a City. Also, if you or any of your friends have amusing and interesting stories about Huntington Beach history, we would like to hear from you. Please submit your ideas or articles to: Seaciff Breeze Magazine, 2110 Main St., Huntington Beach, CA 92648.



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