

County's longest pier

HUNTINGTON
BEACH PIER
(Reference
Pamphlet File)



Marc Martin/Independent

Jeffery Gibbons, Gary Harrison and Craig Wilson of the Huntington Beach Public Works Department made a startling discovery — that the Huntington Beach Pier is indeed the longest pier in the county.

For Reference
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Huntington Beach claims honors

City and independent measurements determine downtown landmark to be longer than Seal Beach's wooden pier by 20 feet.

By Morgan K. Sales
Staff Writer

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Nya, Nya. My pier's longer than your pier. My pier's longer than yoooor's ..."

When the Huntington Beach Municipal Pier reopened July 18, it was thought to be the second longest in Orange County, outdistanced only by the 1,865-foot Seal Beach Pier. But recent independent measurements taken of the two structures revealed that Huntington Beach rightfully owns bragging rights.

The precise length of the local pier is in dispute, however. City surveyors measured it as 1,856.07 feet, while a design firm representative ran his tape to 1,855.61 feet — a difference of about 4½ inches.

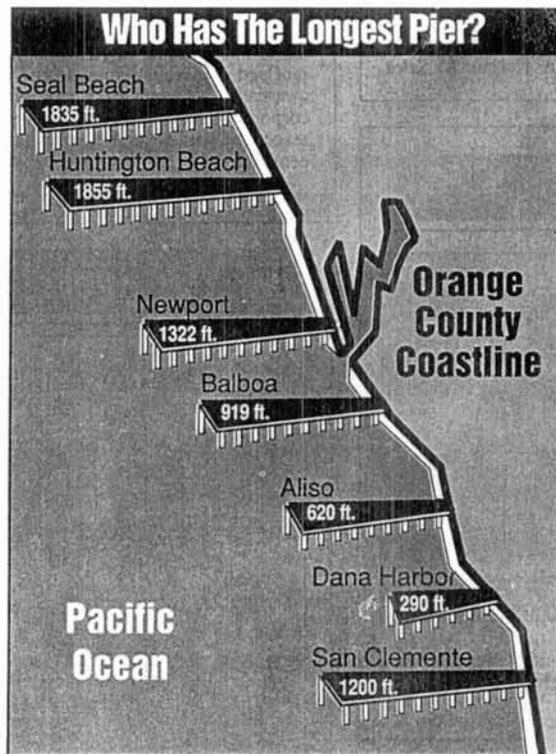
Although in disagreement on the local span's length, both surveys agree Seal Beach's structure is exactly 30 feet shorter than claimed.

"For (the local pier) to be brand new and not be some kind of record holder would be inconceivable," said Craig Wilson, one of three city surveyors to measure both piers. "We had to have the longest pier. It was a matter of pride."

Pride, mixed with their curiosity and the suspicions of former city administrator Paul Cook, prompted city surveyors to venture unannounced — on their own time and in a private vehicle — into Seal Beach on a quest to determine if that city's pier deserved its claim to fame, or if the honor should belong to Huntington Beach's resurrected structure.

"We just wanted to settle this thing once and for all, to set the record straight," said Lou Sandoval, Huntington Beach public works director. "It was a chance to reclaim some

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Graphic by Marc Hansen

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From A1

pride for our pier, and bragging rights."

Since both piers were first built in the early 1900s, they have competed to attract beachgoers and tourists to the neighboring seaside cities.

Touted for years as 1,865 feet, blueprints indicate the Seal Beach pier's length is five feet shorter, said Dennis Jue, city engineer for the municipality since 1984.

"The length according to the plan designs is 1,860, but I don't know when it was measured last. I don't think it has ever been actually measured," he said.

Gary Harrison, a survey party chief for Huntington Beach, said for Seal Beach's pier to be the length claimed it would have to be measured from a point other than the cornerstone.

"They had to have come from an unknown point that we can't find," he said. "To get 1,865 feet, they would have to measure beginning in the street in front of the pier."

When measured last weekend, the pier came up short — finishing at the 1,835-foot mark.

Before he measured the Seal Beach Pier, Jim Ross, project engineer for Long Beach-based Mofat & Nichol Engineers, said the firm's plans — drawn when a 1,140-foot stretch destroyed by a winter storm was replaced in 1984 — showed the pier's length at

1,860 feet. Afterward, he said the city's plans dated August 1983 that the engineering firm relied on were incorrect.

"Our estimates were based on what existed before, according to the recorded drawings of the city. We didn't do any survey work on the pier, so how they got that measurement is unknown to me," he said. "The information on those drawings was inaccurate for some parts of the pier. I don't know of any drawing that has dimensions on it."

While plans for Seal Beach's span may lack accurate dimensions, diagrams for Huntington Beach's edifice show it as 1,856-feet long. Measured by city surveyors, the pier was built three-one hundredths of an inch longer than designed.

But Ross contends the survey crew, which has a combined 46 years experience, mistakenly measured the structure from a survey marker placed 4½ inches behind the entrance to the pier.

"We've known we had the best pier; now we have the biggest and the best," Mayor Jim Silva said. "Now, when people want to go for a long walk, they know which pier to walk."

Whether 1,855 or 1,856 feet, Huntington Beach's is still the longest pier in the county.

"Before there was talk that (Seal Beach) was supposedly the longest pier," Jue said. "For sure it's the longest wooden pier in the county."