



HUNTINGTON
BEACH PIER
(Reference
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Not to be taken from this room

Mike Kitada/The Orange County Register

A surfer rides a wave next to the new Huntington Beach pier, scheduled to reopen to the public Saturday.



H. Lorren Au Jr./The Orange County Register

The old pier is buffeted by winds and waves during a storm in 1983 that destroyed a restaurant. Damage from a 1988 storm forced city officials to condemn the pier, which took four years to rebuild.

Landmark pier to come alive again

By Jeffrey Miller
The Orange County Register
From Huntington Beach

HUNTINGTON BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY
7111 Talbert Avenue
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Standing on the sidewalk in front of his Main Street shop, Emil Verona took a moment away from selling leather jackets, blue jeans and Doc Marten boots to talk about the magic of the Huntington Beach Pier.

"To me, the most exciting (thing) is to walk along the pier at night, listen to the sound of a baseball game in extra innings, smell people catching fish, see couples holding hands," said Verona, who is better known by his biker nickname, Jinx.

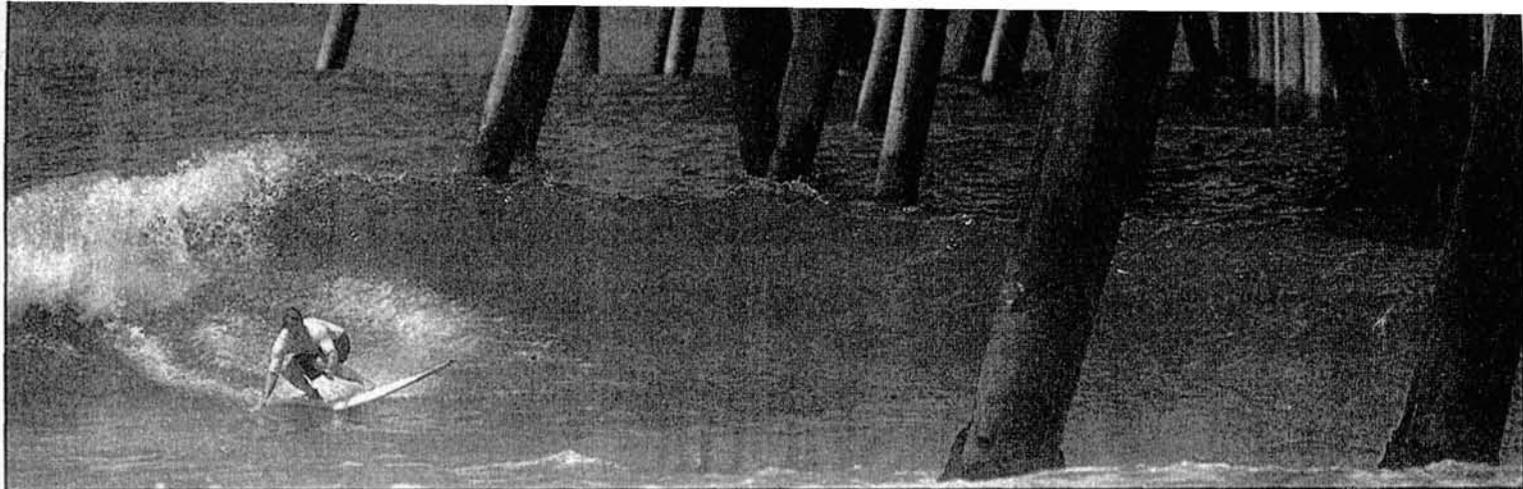
"Wherever you go in New England, you have your village green where everything surrounds it. In Boston, it's called the common. Here we call it the pier."

The pier is back — four years and six days after the city condemned the storm-ravaged landmark and set out to replace it. The new pier opens Saturday with a gala celebration designed to last the weekend and draw 300,000 beach-goers.

It's the longest Huntington Beach has gone without its landmark. In a town that has pinned the success of a half-billion-dollar down-

Please see PIER/5

- **HISTORY:** The pier has had collapses, expansions since 1904/5
- **FESTIVAL:** Three-day Pierfest '92 will celebrate the new pier/5



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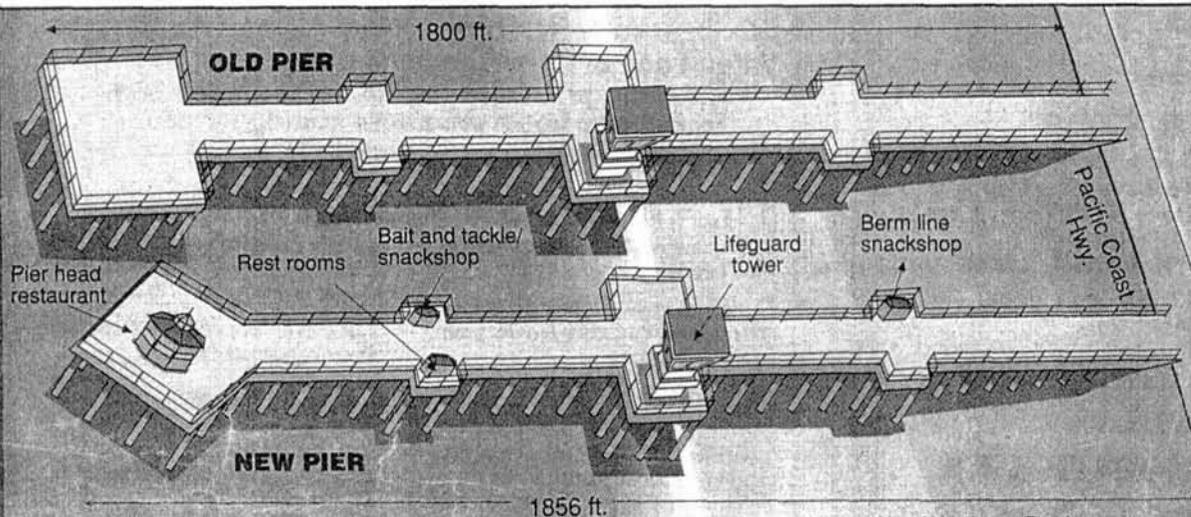
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Please see **PIER!**

Pier almost ready

The new and improved Huntington Beach pier opens Saturday at a cost of \$10.8 million and after almost two years of construction. Unlike the other piers in Orange County, which are wooden, the Huntington Beach pier is concrete and required 5,400 yards of concrete for the decking alone. 312 pilings were used to support the structure. The city must raise \$1.3 million for the restaurant and snack shops. They are not expected to open until 1994.



Source: City of Huntington Beach



David Walker of Westminster serves during a volleyball game on courts adjacent to the new Huntington Beach pier. Mike Kitada/The Orange County Register

PIER: Huntington Beach landmark to reopen with celebration

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town redevelopment effort on its status as 'Surf City,' the \$10.8 million pier is more than just a long slab of concrete on stilts.

"This town revolves around that pier," said Diane Baker, president of the Huntington Beach Conference and Visitors Bureau, which has mounted a fervent campaign to market Huntington Beach as Surf City. "It's a real draw to Huntington Beach, and people have really missed it."

For civic leaders, business owners and residents, the reopening of the pier is a giant step toward the economic and spiritual rejuvenation of downtown Huntington Beach.

"It's not the final piece of the puzzle, but it's the biggest piece of the puzzle," said Paul Cook, former city administrator and chairman of the Pierfest '92 committee. "For the redevelopment to be successful, the pier has to be there and be open."

Although downtown Huntington Beach is regaining its landmark, the image of its Main Street has changed considerably since the pier closed four years ago.

The original Jack's Surfboards, at Main and Pacific Coast Highway, is gone, eventually to be replaced by Main-Pier, Phase II, a

has compromised its character.

"I liked the old town," said Steve Atkinson, as he hung out under the pier with his friends. "It was like an old surf town and stuff, and now they're trying to make it into some kind of tourist trap."

Councilman Jack Kelly said he has heard the nostalgic pining of those who complain that downtown has lost its soul, that the new development is too big, too modern and too peach.

"The place was falling apart," he said. "It was dingy. It was dark. It just wasn't attracting people. ... We had nothing to attract anybody unless you wanted to buy a surfboard."

Milkovich, who had argued for the preservation of older buildings downtown, questioned whether the city has improved the type of retail businesses operating in old town.

"You still have the same bikini shops," she said. "What has changed is the mass and the scale and the familiarity. ... I think we've lost a great deal of what was unique about Huntington Beach. I guess I should be philosophical and say that the city fathers are trying to create a new image, but there'll never be another downtown Huntington Beach that means the same thing."

But for younger visitors and recent arrivals, memories of old Huntington Beach hold little ap-

a lot of its character," he said.

"That's what was nice about Huntington. It wasn't like Newport. It wasn't like Laguna. It was a city

built on surfing. ... But I don't want to sound too negative. I really do like it here. And it's still a great place to surf."

placed by Main-Pier, Phase II, a retail-office project. A vacant lot, the former home of the Golden Bear, is now Pierside Pavillion, a towering office-theater complex. Down PCH, the Waterfront Hilton

“Although downtown is certainly an improvement, it is not, by any stretch of the imagination, the village concept we thought we were buying into.”

Dave Sullivan, president, Huntington Beach Tomorrow

is trying to woo better-heeled visitors.

Wooden buildings with peeling paint have given way to pastel stucco. Instead of rowdy bars, liquor stores and head shops, civic leaders seek to encourage “visitor-serving commercial outlets.”

“It really has been an opportunity to add character to the town,” said Deputy City Administrator Rich Barnard. “It’s given people many more options, things they can do when they go down there.”

Still, some residents complain that in its zest to promote itself as Surf City, while wiping out its grungy, beach-town past, the city

cent arrivals, memories of old Huntington Beach hold little appeal.

“It was scary — it was like LA,” recalled Katy Burnett, 16, as she balanced precariously on her in-line skates while eating a snow cone on the beach walk under the pier. “I wouldn’t come down here before Pierside (Pavillion) went up. My parents thought it was too dangerous.”

Her friend Jack Campbell, 18, also believes downtown is looking much spiffier, but doubted that Main Street will become a commercial mecca.

“The quality of Huntington Beach is the pier, the beach and the waves,” he said. “Anybody who looks any farther than that is blind. If you come here from out of town, (the beach) is what you come for. If you want to go shopping, you go down to Fashion Island or to South Coast Plaza.”

Greg Ostron leaned against the railing on the pier head one hot afternoon last week and looked out at the surf. Ostron, 32, had first seen the beach and pier while on vacation from Arizona as a child. He had resolved then to live in Huntington Beach some day. He has for the past five years. As the pier opens, he is filled with mixed emotions.

“It seems like downtown has lost

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Pierfest '92

Here are some of the activities to take place during the Pierfest '92 celebration for the new pier in Huntington Beach:

Friday, July 17

6 p.m. VIP celebration on the pier

Saturday, July 18

9:45 a.m. Marja and Annika, the Kay Sisters, sing “The Star-Spangled Banner”

10 a.m. Ribbon-cutting ceremony on the pier

10:45 a.m. Pier opens to the public

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Continuous live music, primarily rock and surf music, in big tent next to the pier

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Children’s fun zone and live music in the beach parking lot north of the pier

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Continuous entertainment, including country music, choral groups, tap dancing, “Nifty After Fifty” jazzercise routines and Lucy Johnson’s Orange Blossom and Candy Apple Cloggers in the Showmobile on Main Street

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Children’s activities, minicarnival, and folk and blues music, Sixth and Main streets

Noon to 3 p.m. Dory races, simulated ocean rescues and water-scooter demonstrations offshore; volleyball tournament on the beach

4 p.m. Open jam session, Sixth and Main streets

7 p.m. Evening concert by Frey and the Spys, featuring Glenn Frey, formerly of the Eagles

8 p.m. Performance by reggae band Irieturn

Sunday, July 19

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Rock music in the big tent next to the pier

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Children’s fun zone, jazz, gospel music, vocal groups and surf music in the parking lot north of the pier

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Singing and dancing, drill team and country music in the Showmobile on Main Street

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Blues and folk music, library arts and carnival, Sixth and Main streets

Source: Pierfest '92 committee