

HUNTINGTON BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Information & Resource Center

Text by Janet Brosan  
Photography by Owen Riss

*"Your Town" is a new feature in the SEACLIFF BREEZE.*

*Its purpose is to give you a handle on your community. In future issues we will explore Huntington Beach from many different perspectives. What is its history? Who are the people that make it up? What are the services and issues that residents need to know about?*

*In this first installment, The Growth of a City, we'd like to acquaint you with some basic demographics of Huntington Beach — the people and businesses that are the basis of its economy. We hope you find these glimpses of your town entertaining and enlightening.*

When Huntington Beach was incorporated in 1909, it was little more than a sleepy surf town of 915 residents. The big oil boom of 1920 saw

oil wells spring up right and left, and the young men who came to work in the oil fields drove the population from 1,500 to 5,000 in the space of less than a month. To help relieve the housing shortage created by the influx of oil workers, it was necessary for hotels and rooming houses to rent each bed to three people who took turns sleeping in eight-hour shifts.

During the '60s and '70s there was a second population explosion. As one of the fastest growing cities in the nation, the population of Huntington Beach swelled from 11,000 in 1960 to 167,000 in 1979. At the same time, the city became one of the leading commercial and industrial centers of Orange County. In fact, in one year the number of building permits jumped from zero to 100,000.

Who are the people who live in Huntington Beach? Where do they live? Where do they work? What are

their ethnic backgrounds? How much money do they make?

Huntington Beach is becoming a stable, better-established community as the years pass. This is shown by the fact that the city's median age has risen from 26 in 1973 to 28 today. The most significant change has occurred in the number of people under 18. In 1970 this group accounted for fully 40 percent of the population. By 1979, however, the percentage had dropped to 15.

Still, Huntington Beach is primarily a family-oriented community. Families are attracted to its slower-paced suburban lifestyle, recreational facilities, and its schools. The city boasts a number of fine schools including Golden West College.

According to a 1979 special census, 65 percent of the city's population, or 108,000 residents, are in the labor force. The median income of

Huntington Beach wage earners was slightly over \$22,000 per year in 1978. This was 13 percent greater than the median income for all of Orange County.

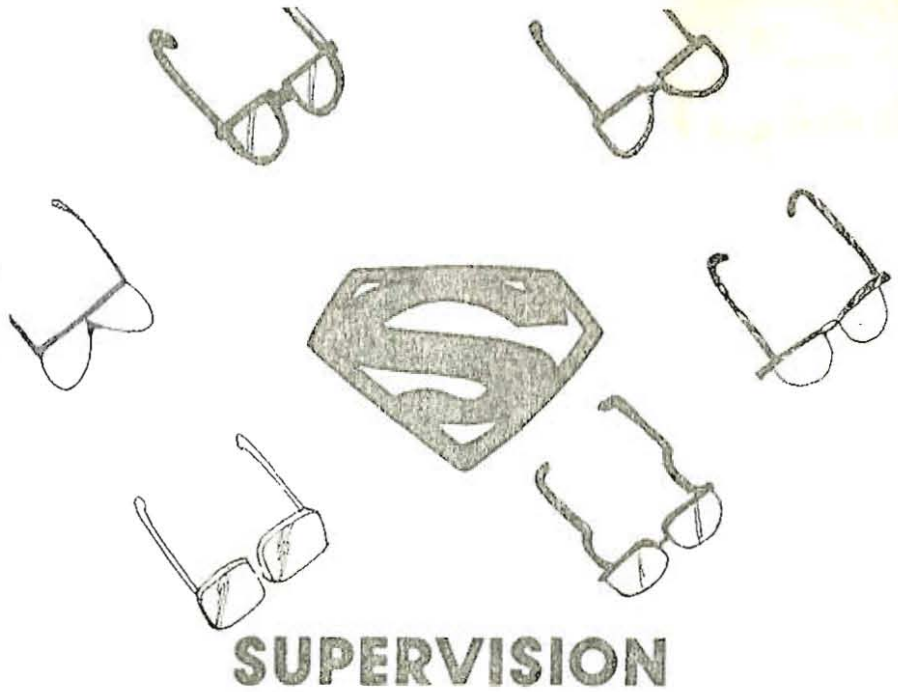
Huntington Beach is ideally suited for business and industry because it is close to Los Angeles, yet still has open land on which to build. In 1959 McDonnell Douglas established an aerospace plant in the city. Until that time city revenues came mainly from the oil industry. Today, McDonnell Douglas is one of the largest and oldest companies in Huntington Beach.

Other major employers in Huntington Beach include: Golden West College, the City of Huntington Beach, Pacifica Hospital, Signal Oil, Huntington Intercommunity Hospital, the United States Post Office, Southern California Edison, J.C. Penney, General Telephone, the Huntington Beach Union High School District, the Broadway Store, Borg-Warner, Montgomery Ward, and Cambro Manufacturing Company.

In spite of the recent industrialization of Huntington Beach, it is still primarily a bedroom community. As of January 1979, only 16 percent of the wage earners who lived in the city also worked there.

As of 1979 there are some 62,000 residence dwellings in Huntington Beach. Of that total slightly more than half, or 33,000, are single-unit houses; 15,000 are apartments, and 11,000 are duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes. For homeowners, the median monthly mortgage payment is \$339, while renters pay a median monthly rent of \$293.

Huntington Beach has a number of recreational facilities available to the public. According to figures listed in the 1979 Community Economic Profile, Huntington Beach has eight-and-a-half miles of public-access beach used for swimming, boating and fishing, sunbathing, scuba diving, water skiing, and surfing. There are also three public golf courses, 51 public parks, 72 tennis courts, along with a public marina, and many private clubs. ■



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