

City's Oldest Church 75th Anniversary On Weekend

PAMPHLET

By Maresa Archer
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At the turn of the century, well before surfers ruled the waves in Huntington Beach, the sands were dominated by throngs of Methodists.

Southern California Methodists converged first in Long Beach for revival meetings and summer camps. But as the railroad brought more people from Los Angeles to Long Beach, the Methodists became disillusioned with the bustling area, according to Barbara Milkovich, chair of the Huntington Beach Historic Resources Board.

Promoters in Pacific City, the forerunner of Huntington Beach, saw the Methodist unrest as an opportunity to draw their business to the flourishing seaside resort.

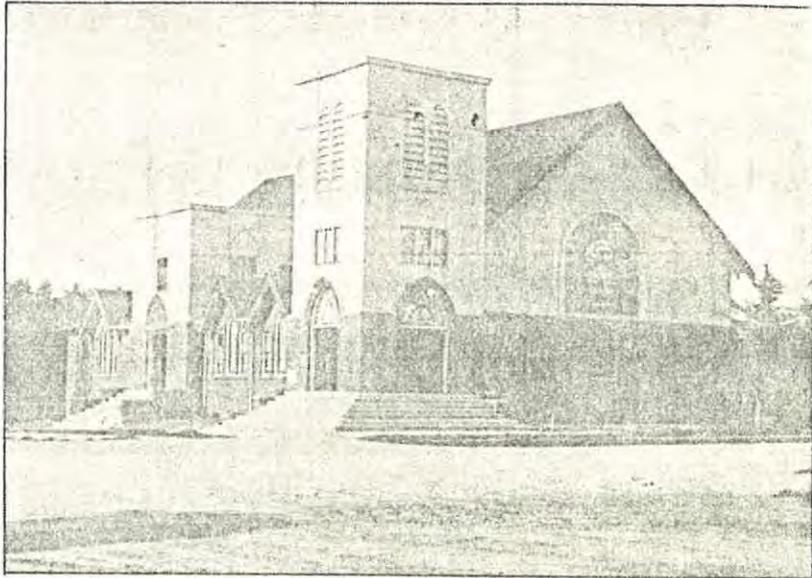
In June 1904, the First United Methodist Church of Huntington Beach was established. The congregation had an abandoned church building moved from Costa Mesa to the corner of Seventh Street and Orange Avenue.

Today, it stands as the oldest church in the city.

During the boom of the revival meetings, the Southern California Methodist Association bought land in the area to insure the future of their summer festival.

The Methodist Church thrived during the camp days and at one point, in 1905, boasted one-fifth of the community as members, according to Milkovich.

By the time the city was incorporated in 1910, church leaders realized that the original church was too small for the burgeoning congregation. The Methodist Association donated



VIEW FROM THE PAST — First United Methodist Church before street signs and pavement began dominating Huntington Beach.

land on 11th Street for a church that was built in 1914.

As a special gift to the new sanctuary, William Newland donated a stained glass window that has survived 75 years, one move and the 1933 earthquake. The window was slightly damaged during the historic temblor, but the congregation dug deep into their pockets and restored the piece, according to the Rev. Gary Beard.

The Methodist church and camp continued to be popular through World War I and the following recession. So successful in fact, that the association made plans to expand the operation.

Those plans screeched to a halt when Standard Oil struck petroleum in 1920.

Land prices skyrocketed and the Methodists could no longer

afford property in Huntington Beach. The camp closed the same year.

Through it all, the church survived. A modern church was built in 1967 at 17th Street and Delaware Avenue, where it remains today.

To celebrate its June 24 anniversary, the church will hold camp-style meetings every Sunday evening from June 25 to July 2.

"We won't have the big tent, but we will be under a canopy to give the effect of those times gone by," Beard said.

On June 24, the church is hosting a parade of the decades with costumes and music representing its 85 years in the city.

For more information, call (714) 536-3537.

