

HUNTINGTON BEACH UNION HIGH SCHOOL

by  
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Community Information File  
Regular Loan

Huntington Beach Union High School, first established under the name of Los Bolsas Union High School, was known as "The School on Wheels," because it moved frequently during the first few years of its somewhat uncertain existence. The school was founded in 1903 and comprised eight elementary districts: Westminster, Garden Grove, Los Alamitos, Bolsa, New Hope, Fountain Valley, Chico, and Ocean View--from which Springdale was later formed. The attempt to start school in Los Alamitos was unsuccessful; only one student appeared, and after four days it was abandoned. A second try was made at Bolsa where forty acres of the Ward tract was obtained on Bolsa Avenue, but local opposition brought an injunction which removed the school to the hall of the Grammar School at Garden Grove<sup>24</sup> in 1904. Mr. Edward Solomon was principal, and Mr. F. D. Reed, president of the board.

The following year the school travelled to Wintersburg and was ensconced in the old Armory Building. Although the enrollment was very small, Mr. Solomon introduced basketball. He induced the six boys in the school to participate in this sport and succeeded in defeating every other school with which the team competed.

A strenuous effort was made to abandon the school, with all districts withdrawing except Fountain Valley, Ocean View, and Springdale. At this time Huntington Beach and Newport Beach petitioned to become parts of the district and were received into it.

In 1906 the high school was again on the road, settling finally in the basement of the old Methodist Camp Ground Auditorium in Huntington Beach, where it remained until the completion of the building on a part of the present site in 1909.

The first class was graduated in 1906 and comprised Estell Preston, Morris Cain, Willis Warner, and William Johnston. There were only twelve other students enrolled at this time. The seven boys in school won the Orange County championship in basketball against much larger schools.

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<sup>24</sup>Las Bolsas Union High School classes were on the second floor.

These years of formation were scarred by almost continuous local struggles. Bonds were voted for a school building over and over again, and as often declared illegal. Through the assistance of State Senator Anderson, a law was passed permitting the change of name to Huntington Beach Union High School. The Huntington Beach Company offered the trustees the choice of three sites and a new building was erected on North Main Street and Union Avenue. The cornerstone was laid in 1908 and in the fall of the following year, the faculty and students moved in.

The high school won its first debating championship in 1910 and held a high position in forensic activities for a number of years. Beatrice McKenney, '10, was the editor of the first yearbook, The Cauldron. The book was printed by the Huntington Beach News, under Louis Paul Hart, editor.

From 1911 to 1914 there was an average of fifteen seniors graduating each year, and the average attendance grew to more than one hundred. By 1916 the graduating class had doubled.

During the turbulent years from 1906 to 1910, Mr. H. G. Steans served as principal. He was followed by Mr. Arthur E. Paine who served for seven years, to be succeeded by Mr. Verne Brown, who, the following year, was replaced by Mr. E. L. Mitchell. A year later, in 1919, Mr. McClelland G. Jones succeeded to the principalship which he held until 1945, an unparalleled record of 26 years. The present principal-superintendent, Raymond M. Elliott, came as a teacher of mathematics in 1923 and served as Mr. Jones' vice-principal for 14 years before taking the helm in 1945.

Not only was the passage of \$35,000 in bonds to build a new plant a source of contention within the district, but the purchase of a two-ton truck to serve as a conveyance to transport students to and from school almost brought the demise of the high school in 1912. More unfavorable criticism was engendered from this action of the Board than from any action taken for a long time. But the new bus made it possible for students living in the Westminster area to come to high school, and Westminster came back into the fold. The bus also met electric cars from Newport Beach and Balboa. Nearly 75 students were thus transported and the school enrollment increased by that much. In 1921 oil was discovered in Huntington Beach and the financial worries of the young school were correspondingly eased. The school has had a continuous growth to its present enrollment of 1223 and a teaching staff of 61. The 1908 building was replaced in 1926 by one of the most attractive and complete high schools in California, a plant which withstood the 1933 earthquake without the slightest damage--a most unusual record.

Huntington Beach has had an outstanding athletic record. The basketball success started under its first principal, Mr. Edward Solomon, set the stage for the state championship teams of 1910, 1911, and 1912, starring Leo, Leonard, and Locksley Livernash, Arthur Worthy, Lewis Blodgett, William Newland, and Irwin Farrar. Scores of over 100 points per game were common, and all games were played out in the open, windswept courts. In recent years, the varsity teams coached by Lee Mossteller have been uniformly successful. In the last quarter century, this high school has been host to the two oldest and most famous athletic events of the southwest: the Southern Counties Basketball Tournament, and the Southern Counties Track Meet. A number of world's records have been established here.

Among the earlier, well-known athletes were Boyden Hall and his brother, Walter A. Hall. The latter was the only athlete ever to have made his varsity letter at the University of Southern California for each of his four years in four major sports--football, baseball, basketball, and track. He also won the medium-weight and heavy-weight championships in wrestling. He later became head coach at Chaffey Union High School and was vice-principal there for many years.

The year 1922 was outstanding in track. The team, composed of "Bud" and "Milt" Nash, Charley Bickmore, Bill Kerr, Virgil Elliott, and Ross Nichols won successively the Orange League Meet, the California State Meet, and took second place in the National Meet in Chicago. Ray D. "Feet" Walker was the coach who inspired his handful of boys to their superhuman efforts. Dr. Walker, who died in 1954, donated a wonderful trophy to perpetuate the meet. Our annual Southern Counties Meet is ably handled by Harry M. Sheue and his staff in physical education. Mr. Sheue was awarded the Helms trophy in 1950 for the coach to have done most for boys' athletics over a twenty-five year period. He developed Eddie Morris into a national sprint champion, record holder in the 100- and 220-yard dashes.

In 1930 Huntington Beach won the league championships in football in varsity and Class B competition. Again, in 1946 the varsity won the Sunset League Championship and entered the C. I. F. play-offs. Defeating Chaffey at Ontario, the team met Loyola at Gilmore Stadium where it was defeated.

Credit for the settlement of the turbulence which marked the early years of this "School on Wheels" should go to Mr. M. G. Jones and his assistants who brought this community to a realization of the possibilities of education in the modern manner. In 1919 the enrollment was 264; in 1933 it had grown to 637. At the present time the school provides each of the 1223 boys and girls with opportunities in tune with their many interests and varied capabilities, developing good citizens while

directing each one into a life of usefulness and self-sufficiency. In the last thirty years the community has experienced several oil booms, during which attendance fluctuated markedly. The increased valuation of property has greatly benefited the entire school district. Students attending Huntington Beach High School have many advantages seldom attained elsewhere.

In 1931 a swimming pool was added to the facilities for recreation. Students and faculty were instrumental in the establishment of a municipally-owned golf course on adjacent property, recently enlarged to the full 18 holes. The adult recreation program of the school is closely coordinated with that of the city and its recreation center.

Outstanding courses are offered in the various industrial arts in a building that is noted for its conveniences and facilities as second to none in the state or nation. The course in automobile driver training developed here has been taken as the model for other high schools in California. Students are given behind-the-wheel driver experience until each is competent to handle his own car. Classes in aeronautics, with actual flight experience, are becoming increasingly popular and useful in this age of air transportation. Boys and girls both are given training in homemaking and family living. The music department has long been noted for the excellence of its productions, and the two vocal teachers--Ruth Meyer Harlow and Margaret Squires--collaborated to write music and lyrics for a full-length opera in three acts which has been acclaimed by musicians as equal to the best. The new music and home-making buildings are among the best in California.

Huntington Beach Union High School is unusually well-equipped throughout. Each student in automobile mechanics has his own engine to work on. There are ample machines in woodworking, machine shop, welding and metal shop. The school owns considerable audio-visual equipment and owns or rents much material of this character for classroom use.

In 1951 the school plant was enlarged by the addition of a classroom building of twelve rooms. In this there is a visual education room and a study hall, in addition to classrooms. Bilateral lighting and the most modern light control system was incorporated. Other recent additions include a drive-in-and-out bus garage with capacity for 15 large buses, a far-cry from the two-ton truck of 1912 which almost wrecked the school district; a snack bar where a variety of refreshments and food may be obtained at luncheon time and during games; and a second heating plant.

The 1913 "announcement" published by the school expressed the aim of the school: "It is the desire of the school authorities to make the school fit the needs of the pupils who will come." The aim has not been altered by the years. The spirit of the students is reflected by the many events which are regularly planned each year to bring students from all over Southern California to our campus. The cordial treatment extended by Huntington Beach High to these visitors has won an enviable reputation for the school.

The unprecedented influx of new residents into the district, particularly in the Westminster area, will necessitate a second high school in the very near future. A site has been procured at Newland Street and Westminster Avenue, and present plans call for the opening of classes there in September, 1957.



One View of Huntington Beach Union High School