

PLEASURE PIERS & PROMENADES: THE ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA'S EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY BEACH RESORTS

by

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(Under the Direction of John C. Waters)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the pleasure piers and promenades along the Southern California coastline in the early twentieth century. A brief social history of the origins of pleasure piers and seaside architecture is provided, as well as a brief history of Southern California beach towns. There follows an evaluation and description of seaside architecture during this time period. Finally, these pleasure piers today are examined, and a presentation is made of recommendations and opportunities for the future of beach resort architecture in Southern California.

INDEX WORDS: Pier, Amusement Park, Southern California, Beach Resort, Hotel, Pavilion, Bath House

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B.S, Belmont University, 2004

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2009

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Pop, Mama K, Grandma, Grandpa, Lola & Lolo for their patience and their love. I'd also like to dedicate this to all of my friends who keep asking me when I will be done with it. Thanks, guys.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Waters for all of his patience and support in this process as well as Dr. Reinberger, Professor Fox and Melissa Roberts for being my reading committee. I'd also like to acknowledge Pop for helping me research the obscure and helping to fund this endeavor.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“A leading feature in every beach resort is a pleasure pier, around which other attractions are gathered.” –William Bittle Wells, ed.

The natural beauty of the Southern California coastline has been drawing tourists for generations. The warm climate, sunny skies and beautiful white beaches still make Southern California one of the top tourist destinations in the world. Today these beaches boast pristine sandy shores with modest contemporary albeit dense architecture and the occasional unassuming pleasure pier denoting the next beach town along the coast. However, the shoreline of the early 20th century represented a very different culture. Before Disneyland the pleasure piers in Southern California were the ultimate vacation destination of the early 1900s. Known as, “The Coney Island of the West,” these pleasure piers of Southern California brought the splendor of the Pacific Ocean and its famous beaches together with the excitement of the American amusement park. Roller coasters, music and dance halls, billiards, casinos, curios and souvenir shops sat atop these massive piers which lined the Southern California coast. The architecture of this time period represented the unveiling of Southern California fame before the peak of the motion picture industry and Disneyland. As the precursor to these famous Southern California attractions, study and exploration of this topic is a necessary chapter in architectural history.

The preservation challenges with pleasure piers are their inherently temporary nature. Being susceptible to fires, bugs, storms and faulty engineering, very few of the buildings which adorned the piers remain. Other buildings such as the bath houses, pavilions and hotels which sat beachside played an important role to the pleasure pier environment. Pavilions contributed to the draw of tourists at the beach by providing a venue for dancing and music as well as other recreational activities. Bath houses, much like piers, allowed the vacationer to experience the ocean without going into the ocean. Hotels allowed the tourists to extend their stay at the beach. The purpose of this thesis is to recognize the history of early beach pier architecture which includes the pier as well as these three building types of Southern California from the late nineteenth century to its peak and its decline in the 1930s.

First this thesis will present the history of the pleasure pier in Southern California. The geographic parameters will include Los Angeles and Orange Counties in California. Examples of pleasure pier architecture will be identified and analyzed through architectural descriptions and historic photographs. This era is part of the earliest history of the coastal region of Southern California, from the late 1870s to the pleasure pier peak in the 1920s to its decline in the 1930s and finally its nearly total demise in the 1950s and 1960s.

Next this thesis will identify the remaining historic architecture of the pleasure pier era in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. This will be outlined through a chart which will indicate which pleasure piers and related buildings are still standing. Through this chart and identification, this thesis will then identify recommendations for the preservation of pleasure piers, recommend tools for future seaside architecture in these beach cities, as well as identify tourism development strategies and ways to increase public interest in this subject through commemorating the pleasure piers and architecture that are no longer standing.

Research questions include determining how many seaside resources remain from this era, identifying these resources and their condition, determining their historic significance and historic designation status, as well as identifying potential avenues to increase public interest and/or tourism opportunities with the remaining architectural monuments.

CHAPTER 2: EARLY BACKGROUND OF THE PLEASURE PIER

The Appeal of the Seaside Resort

Beach amusement parks and piers can trace their conception back to the idea of a resort. In America as well as in England, the Victorian era offered a time of great leisure and free time for many citizens. With growing technology and a burgeoning middle class, resorts began to take shape not only on beaches, but in woods and park-like gardens.¹ On the coast, beaches were a popular resort for patrons. The first beach resorts appeared in Great Britain, where the English seaside became a resort for the upper echelons of society during the eighteenth century. With the advent of the railroad and steam liner, travel to the seaside became more accessible for the middle and lower classes, and soon it became a regular tourist destination for leisure and pleasure-seekers.

One of the first recorded letters to describe the appeal of the seaside is dated 1736.

Reverend William Clarke wrote of the English seaside town of Brightonhelmstone,

We are now sunning ourselves upon the beach at
Brighthelmstone...The place is really pleasant; I have seen nothing in
its way that outdoes it. Such a tract of sea; such regions of corn and
such an extent of fine carpet that gives your eye the command of it all.
But then the mischief is, that we have little conversation besides the
clamor nautilus, which is here a sort of treble to the splashing of the
waves against the cliffs. My morning business is bathing in the sea,
and then buying fish; the evening is riding

¹ Dale Samuelson. The American Amusement Park (St. Paul: MBI Publishing, 2001), 16.

out for air, viewing the remains of old Saxon camps, and counting the ships in the road, and the boats that are tawling.²

This explanation of the pleasure found at the seaside likely encompasses the general opinion of those who resort at the seaside. The beach, in its quiet glory, with its menacing shores and vast wonder, brings people to experience feelings of awe, wonder and pleasure.

By the 1800s, the railroad was the new main transportation vehicle for goods and passengers. Steam liners and railroads soon became the main transports of goods across great distances. Together, they made international and intercontinental transport easier and more efficient. However, because of their massive size and the varying seabed depth, liners had to dock away from shore. From ship to shore, passengers and goods utilized small boats for docking as close to shore as possible during low tide and letting people brave the shallow sea.³ Soon, long landing stages were constructed along the shoreline, making the ship-to-shore transport easier.

The First Pleasure Piers: A British Invention (1840s)

A pier is defined as,

...an artificial structure in water deep enough to permit vessels to tie up against it and load or discharge cargo. The function of this structure... is to afford direct connection between the water carrier and the land with its many vehicles. The wharf is the point of contact between water and land carriers.⁴

This definition of a pier explains the traditional purpose of the pier: a landing stage.

² Fred Gray. Designing the Seaside (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 17.

³ Ibid, 202.

⁴ Roy S. MacElwee. Ports and Terminal Facilities. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1918), 119.

The first piers were wooden structure cheaply made with no ornamentation. Soon, the appeal and innovation of these new constructions started to draw people recreationally. Eventually piers were seen as a place to promenade. It was an exciting experience, to walk over the water,

No construction is more appealing, or more redolent of mortality, than a jetty that sticks out from the shore. It tells men they can walk on water, and suggests they can stroll as far towards infinity as their engineering can take them. Piers symbolize escape from the everyday, from the shore, from work, from life itself. For that purpose, they are more reassuring than a ship: though planked and decked like one, and originally manned with pier-masters in crypto-naval uniforms, most are attached to solid rock. It can come as a sudden, giddy surprise, amid the fairground tat of piers, to see the sea crawling darkly under your feet as you sip your cup of tea, or a seagull flying below you. Early piers were mocked as 'disappointed bridges,' fixed at one end but, at the other, yearning towards the void. A man on a pier never quite lets go of the land. But, seeing it from a distance and another angle, he becomes a little disoriented, and much more daring.⁵

The treachery and majesty of the ocean appealed to people. As a vast, dark element of the coastline, the ocean evoked a sense of fear and mystery. Yet it was also a necessity of transport and communication. The sea was temperamental and merciless, but the advent of the pier created a way for people to temporarily temper the sea and face it with little danger.

The earliest pleasure pier was constructed in 1812 in Weymouth, England.⁶ King George III frequently resided in the beach resort of Weymouth and soon the pier increased the attraction of the seaside. The following year, another pier was constructed at the Isle of Wight in Ryde, England. Soon, piers were constructed all along England's coastline; mainly

⁵ "The End of the Pier." *The Economist*. December 2007
<http://www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=10278674> (10 June 2008).

⁶ Roger Bray. "Return to the pier." *The Times*, 4 April 1996, p. 1.

as landing stages. During the years of 1837-1901, there was an upsurge of leisure activities in Victorian England as a result of the mobility of rail travel, increased income, and a less demanding work schedule. With more free time spread amongst the masses, cities developed more public facilities such as public parks, museums, and art galleries to accommodate the popularity of leisure destinations along the British seaside.⁷ It was said,

Piers are so much part of the English seaside life- the Scots have never gone for them and the handful in Wales or on the Continent were largely for English visitors- that it takes a moment to realize quite how strange they are. Foreigners have always reckoned that the English take their pleasures in curious ways, but none surely is as curious as this fad for the seaside pier. What bizarre imperative drove the English to build long promenades out into an often tempestuous sea and then cover them with theatres, concert halls, winter gardens, bandstands and slot machines? From Coatham on the Tees overlooking the North Sea to Plymouth facing the Atlantic, from Deal within sight of France to Morecambe on the Irish Sea, piers could be found at every self-respecting English seaside resort...It is tempting to think that there must be some deep-seated explanation, a psychological need that drove a nation surrounded by water to stamp, if only symbolically, its control over that treacherous element. Or could there be some strange link with the self-confidence of Empire? The great age of the seaside pier came when the Royal Navy's control over the sea was allowing the British to dominate the globe.⁸

Piers were also seen as a source of pride for the British during the mid-nineteenth century. The Chain Pier, in Brighton, was one of the most popular in England and remains so today. A *London Times* review of the opening of the pier stated, "...whether viewed as a national monument or as a novel invention, it is a gratifying evidence of the resources and

⁷ Pamela Horn. "Victorian Recreations." *British Heritage*, June/July 2001, Vol. 22, Iss. 4, p. 42.

⁸ Giles Worsley. "'How Britain's piers could rule the waves once more [London Edition]." *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 May 2003, p. 4.

intellect of our country.”⁹ At its peak, approximately 100 piers adorned England’s coastline in the early twentieth century.¹⁰

When it became evident that money could be made from piers, the pier heads became bigger and the promenade wider. Turnstiles were put in as well as benches, telescopes, and camera obscuras which were devices used to project images- a primitive version of today’s camera. In Victorian England, early piers were an opportunity for not only leisure but learning. “Self-improvement and piers went together. Self-knowledge, too: your picture taken, your voice recorded, as soon as technology allowed it.”¹¹ There was also an emphasis on the natural elements of seaside leisure such as health. It was believed the salt-water in the air at the end of the pier could cure ills. ‘Floating baths’ and mineral water booths were constructed at the end of the piers. These rooms had tubs filled with ocean water allowing people to sit in the ocean and breathe the salt air without having to actually be in the ocean. At the base of the pier were reading rooms and libraries, saloons and musical entertainment venues. The early piers of Victorian England provided opportunities for not only leisure but also self-enlightenment.

By the 1850s and 1860s, British pleasure piers began to incorporate more leisurely buildings such as theaters, music halls, roller-skating rinks, bowling alleys and ballrooms. Piers became larger and more flamboyant in design and architecture. The Chain Pier is known as the most iconic pleasure pier of England, if not the world. The elaborate and grandiose Oriental kiosks and open deck promenade influenced the architectural style of

⁹ Gray, 204

¹⁰ “Welcome to the National Piers Society.” 2009.

http://piers.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=157&Itemid=1

¹¹ The Economist, 4.

other piers in Victorian England. (Figures 2.1-2.2) England's new invention would spawn a trend of piers around the globe. Construction of these piers involved an understanding of pile-driving, water movement and capable material.



Figure 2. 1: The Palace Pier, Brighton, Date Unknown, (Lindley)



Figure 2. 2: The Palace Pier, Brighton, c. 2000 (Pearson)

Early Pier Construction

The early seaside piers were constructed of large wooden posts, called piles or pillars connected by a lattice framework. This construction was cheaper than masonry and less resistant to water movement.¹² Piers were constructed of upright piles that were driven into the seabed by piling engines. (Figure 2.3) Horizontal members called girders connected the piles on their top ends and decking, usually in a herring-bone pattern, was placed above the girders. Struts and bracing members linked the three elements to make a pier. Because early piers were built solely of timber, engineers quickly found that they were more susceptible to marine worms and borers. By the mid-1840s, the wooden piles were replaced with cast iron piles. At first the piles were square in cross-section, but they were soon changed to circular for less water resistance. In the 1850s, England's foremost Victorian pier builder, Eugenius Birch, came up with the idea of the screw-pile, which is constructed of piles with large fitted blades that screwed into the seabed, reinforcing the strength and sturdiness of the pier.¹³ By the 1860s, a new technique called "jetting" was used in pier construction. Jetting entailed water pumped down through a tube within the pile, stirring up the sand beneath and allowing the pile to sink into place. Cast iron piers were replaced by wrought iron piers which by their own torsional strength were better suited for water movement than cast iron.¹⁴ Wrought iron was then replaced by steel in the late nineteenth century. Most of these early pier construction methods continued into the early twentieth century.

¹² Lynn F. Pearson. Piers and Other Seaside Architecture. (Buckinghamshire: Shire, 2002), 6.

¹³ Ibid, 7.

¹⁴ Ibid, 7.

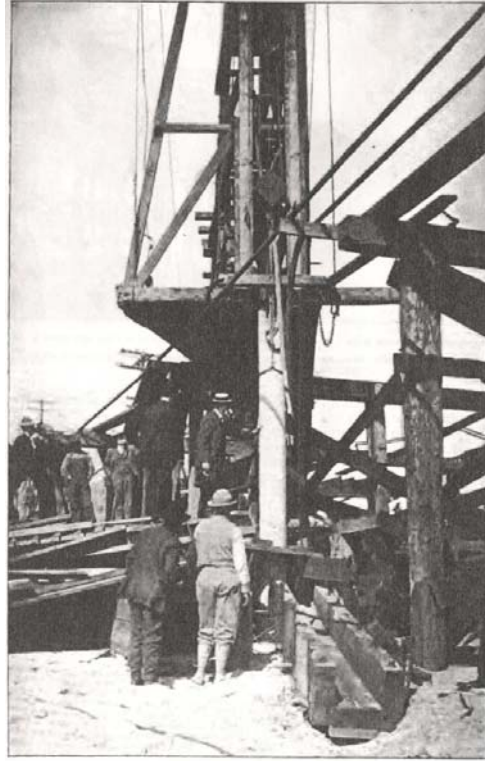


Figure 2. 3: Pile Driving at the Santa Monica Pier, ca. 1910 (Dunn)

Pleasure Piers in the United States

The first pleasure piers in the United States were constructed on the east coast around the 1860s and 1870s. Most of these were located in New Jersey and New York. Unlike England these first pleasure piers were not as ornate or grandiose, nor did they promote education or self-refinement. Instead they were used for leisurely promenades and beachsides were accompanied by hotels, bath houses and other entertainment venues.

Atlantic City and Coney Island had major influences on the pleasure piers in Southern California. Atlantic City was a major tourist attraction by combining amusement activities such as casinos and carnival rides with the natural draw of the beach. Coney Island was one of, if not the first, amusement park in the world. Built in the 1860s, on an island outside of

New York City, Coney Island was an important influence on Southern California pleasure piers- the first amusement park built on a pier was in Venice Beach, California. The name “Coney Island” came from the Dutch settlers who first lived there. Some sources say the island was overrun with rabbits. The Dutch word for rabbits, “konijn,” eventually transformed to the American vernacular of “Coney.”¹⁵ Soon, rail lines, steamship lines and access to the beach brought hotels, horse racing, amusement parks, and other less savory forms of entertainment such as gambling and prostitution. It established a new form of recreation. With its innovative fun houses and roller coasters, this form of entertaining the masses significantly differentiated American leisure from the rest of the world. In the same way, pleasure piers in America would look different from their European counterparts.

Because of more frequent trade and commerce traffic on the east coast, these piers were built substantially bigger than those on the west coast. Piers were also built differently according to the climate. Southern California piers were never subjected to freezing weather or snow, so the piers in this region were built without the necessary accommodation for winter conditions. The draw to Southern California pleasure piers were the year-round pleasant climate which conveniently kept the pleasure piers open just as long.

¹⁵ Samuelson, 20.

CHAPTER 3: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PLEASURE PIERS

1870s-1900: Early Development of Beach Resorts in Southern California

Los Angeles and Orange Counties are the heart of Southern California. . Established by shared ranchos of the eighteenth century, Los Angeles and Orange Counties are geographically and historically linked. (Figure 3.1) Similar key entrepreneurs of the early twentieth century share the credit for the development of many of the coastal towns in these two counties. The arrival of the Pacific Electric Railway was also instrumental in that development. The coastal area of these two counties realized the Southern California dream of a fabulous and exotic seaside resort that has a unique place in history among seaside architecture in America.



Figure 3. 1 Map of Los Angeles and Orange Counties

From 1542 to 1821, Spain ruled what is now California. By the time Mexico declared independence from Spain in 1821 several land grants had been distributed by the Spanish governors, subdividing the land into several ranchos. Mexican governors took over land grants, and the ranchos continued to divide the land. After Texas was taken from Mexico by the United States, the Mexican-American War broke out, eventually ending in the Treaty of

Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which resulted in the U.S. taking California from Mexico. In 1850, California became the thirty-first state in the Union. That same year, the County of Los Angeles was established, and the land now known as Orange County was part of that designation.¹⁶

Being the heart of Southern California, the City of Los Angeles was an important part of the development of the region. The ranchos that were established between the succession of ownership from Spain to Mexico and then to the United States were then passed down from one generation to the next, being subdivided each time. Eventually, most of this land was sold to the American pioneer families who moved west in search of gold, oil, and new opportunity.

By the early 1800s, the southern coast of California was being explored by early American settlers. The white sandy shoreline and the medley of different landscapes on the California coastline drew wagons of pioneers. The first beach resort in Southern California was Santa Monica.¹⁷ Located about 10 miles northwest of the City of Los Angeles, the Santa Monica Mountains and Canyon first started drawing the Conestoga wagons of families to relax by the beach as early as the 1870s. Families would enjoy the idyllic setting, play in the sea, or hike up and down the canyon. The beautiful palisades offered a grand view of the Pacific Ocean. (Figure 3.2) A few miles south of the Santa Monica Canyon, the new community of Santa Monica was being established. In 1875, Santa Monica became a township and people were drawn away from the canyon to the city, where the beach was accessible by major transportation routes and hotels were being set up for longer stays. Santa

¹⁶ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land*. (Peregrine Smith: Salt Lake City, 1983), 12.

¹⁷ Ernest Marquez, 34.

Monica was not only appealing for its bucolic natural beauty, but also because it was a prime location for a port. The town being about ten miles west of Los Angeles, investors saw this opportunity to create the Los Angeles Harbor in Santa Monica. In what is now known as the Santa Monica Bay, the beach was accessible by train and the seabed deep enough for ships to dock close to the shoreline. In 1893, Long Wharf was constructed on the northern end of the Santa Monica Bay. With all of these new investment opportunities came more people to the thriving town of Santa Monica. To accommodate them, more seaside resort buildings were constructed such as the Arcadia Hotel.



Figure 3.2: The Palisades of Santa Monica, 1900s, (Jezek)

Arcadia Hotel, 1886

The Arcadia Hotel opened in Santa Monica in 1886. It was one of the first beach resort hotels in Southern California and it was named after Arcadia Bandini, the wife of Colonel

Robert Baker, one of the founders of the township of Santa Monica.¹⁸ This four-story hotel was the first of its kind- featuring the west coast's first rollercoaster ride which took patrons on a scenic ride from the hotel to the beach. According to an article from the *Los Angeles Times* from 1887, the Arcadia Hotel featured,

3 floors on the land side and 4 fronting the ocean. Everything provided for the comfort of guests in the leading hotels of the world will be found in this establishment. Each room has an electric bell. There is a handsome billiard-room for ladies, and a "sun-parlor" overlooking the beach, where invalids can enjoy the solar rays without any wind. The carpeting, decoration and furniture are extremely elegant, the latter having been carefully selected in the East. Some of the sets are made of rare and costly woods. Some idea of the size of the hotel may be formed when it is stated that about 1000 yards of carpet were required for the halls alone.¹⁹

The Arcadia Hotel was a five-story hotel building (or four stories and a basement level ocean-side) constructed in a Victorian style. It was located on a cliff overlooking the ocean. Connected to it were the famous "99 steps" which led to the beach. The hotel was likely clad in wood board siding. It had a complex multi-gable roof composed of a front gable and wings that had hipped roof dormers on either end. The roofline was decorated with a cresting. Also on the roof was a turret which was located off-center next to the front main gable. The land-front façade was composed of three stories. Three front gables adorned the nearly-symmetrical façade, one in the center and two on either end. The main entryway was located in the center of the façade. A shed-roofed porch stretched most of the length of the façade and terminated at the projecting corner pavilions. Windows included likely-double hung wood sashes with awnings as well as angled bay windows. There appear to be enclosed balconies on the ocean-front façade. Architectural features included elements of gingerbread

¹⁸ Marquez, 34.

¹⁹ "The Arcadia." *Los Angeles Times*, 25 January 1887, p. 5.



Figure 3.4: Arcadia Hotel, Santa Monica, 1887 (Howard)



Figure 3.5: Arcadia Hotel, Santa Monica, 1880s (Marquez)

Arcadia Hotel was torn down in 1909 but is a good example of the early style and type of beachside hotel architecture in Southern California.

During the early development of Southern California, much of the coastal area was utilized as shipping ports. In 1888, the McFadden Wharf, later to become Newport Pier, and the oldest pier in Southern California, was constructed and in full operation as the main port for the Orange County region.²¹ Newport Beach became the major hub of shipping business in Orange County. To the north, San Pedro, Redondo Beach and Santa Monica were prime locations for sport hubs for Los Angeles. For the most part the development of the coast was focused on commercial shipping. A few hotels adorned the bluffs of the coastal region; even fewer residential buildings were constructed on the landscape. The Southern Pacific Railroad was the main railroad in operation during this time in Southern California, but only rail lines leading to the port towns were laid in route.

During the mid to late 1880s, Southern California experienced a real estate boom and several other beach towns were established. This real estate boom was the result of years of Southern California promotion from investors and developers who enticed immigrants, potential homeowners and tourists alike.²² Manhattan, Hermosa and Redondo beaches make up the area referred to as the South Bay (the bay being the Santa Monica Bay). While Manhattan and Hermosa were important beach resorts in shaping the Southern California coastline, Redondo Beach was the main rival to beach cities to the north. Established in 1887, Redondo Beach was originally a harbor town. At one point, Redondo Beach had at least four wharfs to boast along its shoreline. As a major rival to other port cities, Redondo Beach

²¹ "Newport Beach, California." Orange County Online. <http://www.orangecounty.net/cities/NewportBeach.html> (9 June 2008)

²² John W. Reps. Cities of the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 265.

constructed a large hotel to accommodate the upper class who came to resort here in the late 1800s.

Hotels gauged the success of development in these early beach resort towns. They were necessary in keeping people at the beach for extended periods of time. The first hotels in the beach resort area of Southern California were located usually on bluffs overlooking the ocean, such as Hotel Redondo. The early hotels were grand in scale and made of wood frame construction with moderately-pitched roofs and Victorian-esque towers. Stylistically, these hotels were vernacular and modest compared to later editions.

Hotel Redondo, 1890

Hotel Redondo was built in 1890, at the same time as the famous Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego. Like Hotel Del Coronado, Hotel Redondo was a lavish new hotel, equipped with 225 rooms, and “equipped with all modern conveniences.”²³ Built on a bluff overlooking the ocean, Hotel Redondo was a popular destination for tourists until its slow decline and eventual demise in 1925. According to a Los Angeles Times article, the hotel was built for several aristocratic events in Southern California. The hotel was to accommodate the lavish lifestyle of upper-class tourists who came to Redondo Beach to resort by the seaside. In addition to modern conveniences, the Hotel Redondo also accommodated,

...employees, from the office to the scullery, are all selected with a view to their perfect fitness for the places which they are to occupy; tables are supplied with the best of everything which the management of this popular hotel can possibly do to please the guests of the Redondo. But, while first-

²³ “Forty Years Ago.” Los Angeles Times, 11 January 1893, p. 2.

class in every respect, the cost of living at the Redondo Hotel is quite moderate- much below that usually found at houses of this class.²⁴

According to an 1891 Sanborn Map of Redondo Beach, the Hotel Redondo also featured a large dining room, a ball room, a parlor and barber, and a large flower garden to the rear of the building. The railroad station was situated east of the building.

The Hotel Redondo was located on a high bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The wood-framed structure was built in a high Victorian style and sheathed in redwood siding.²⁵ The three-story hotel had a complex multi-gable roof adorned with several dormers and turrets. The main entryway is not visible from historic photographs, but there was a shed roof one-story porch which ran most of the length of the asymmetrical façade. A squared tower was a dominant feature on the façade and could likely be the main entryway to the hotel. The windows appear to be double-hung wood sash. There were also several angled and circular bays on the building. Architectural features included several brick chimneys, squared and circular turrets. American flags were placed at the peaks of the turrets. (Figures 3.6-3.7)



Figure 3.6: Hotel Redondo, c. 1900s (LAPL Collection)

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Famous Hotel to Disappear.” Los Angeles Times, 10 January 1919, p. 111.



Figure 3.7: Hotel Redondo, Redondo Beach, 1904 (LAPL Collection)

Designed by the architects Ainsworth & Thompson, the Hotel Redondo was noted as one of the first lavish hotels on the Pacific Coast. At the time of its inception, Redondo Beach was a major port for the city of Los Angeles. It was accessible by railway- either the Redondo branch of the Santa Fe or the Redondo Railway. The hotel was a monument of Redondo Beach's early success as a port town. By the turn of the century, the hotel unfortunately fell into disrepair and by 1925 the Hotel Redondo was demolished to accommodate the more exotic architectural styles of the early twentieth century.

Establishing a Harbor

Because Los Angeles was becoming the major metropolis in the Southwest United States, an established harbor was needed. A battle among Santa Monica, Redondo and San Pedro harbors ended in San Pedro's victory in the late 1890s. Efforts were also made for Newport Pier to become a major rival to San Pedro, but Southern Pacific Railroad ensured it remained

a fishing pier by charging high taxes on shipping. From the 1870s to the early 1900s, Newport Pier remained a pier for trains only and was the major harbor for Orange County.

It was after the battle ended that Redondo, Newport, and Santa Monica could focus on their other asset: being beach resorts. Because their piers, for the most part, were no longer in major competition for transport duties the pleasure pier became the main seaside commodity. Developers began to plan the cities that would appeal to potential commercial investors, residents and tourists.

By the mid 1890s, the beach resort in Santa Monica had grown, boasting several hotels and bath houses on the beach. Santa Monica had the luxury of becoming a premiere resort town to rival the other beach cities that were not as urbanized. Developing the shoreline around the pier was a key to appealing to the crowds that would travel to the beach in the summertime. A major appeal of the beach resort was the bath house.

The bath house is distant relative of the Roman bath houses in ancient times, which re-emerged in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. The bath house of the late nineteenth century was different in that the codes of conduct and dress were very different from the liberal Roman lifestyle. Modesty being an ultimate virtue, women and men wore almost full-bodied outfits and sat in pools of salt water indoors instead of on the beach. As early as the eighteenth century, bath houses were being built in England. These usually catered to the elite classes and were heated to allow the extractions of all “poisonous humours.”²⁶ In Southern California, the bath houses were not exclusive and catered to whoever could make it to the coast. Because of the bulky clothing and the general lack of swim training among the

²⁶ Gray, 178.

Victorians, a large, thick rope was usually fastened to the bath house and led into the ocean so people could hold onto it as they swam deeper out. (Figure 3.8)



Figure 3.8: Ocean Bathing, Newport Beach, c. 1904, (Delaney)

The bath house was usually a large building with men's and women's dressing rooms on opposite sides of the building. Bathing suits could be rented out for the day. In the center of the building was typically a huge indoor pool, usually filled with saltwater pumped directly from the ocean. To accommodate the more modest population, private smaller bathing tubs were available in other rooms in the building. Sometimes skylights were put in to light the main pool, sometimes called The Plunge. Architectural styles varied, although in the earlier years, the architecture was generally wooden structures with a vernacular style.

North Beach Bath House, 1894

One of the first bath houses on the Southern California coast, the North Beach Bath House was built in 1894. According to *The Los Angeles Times*,

The structure is the largest and finest of its kind on this Coast, being 440 feet long by 125 feet wide. The southern end is two stories high, containing, in the basement, machinery for heating water for the bath-tubs, of which there are about fifty, also for washing and drying the bathing suits, and for other purposes. On the first floor is the main entrance leading from the broad veranda, which runs the entire length of the building. Connecting with the main hall are the 300 dressing-rooms, on one side, and the other, which is supplied with literature and other conveniences...On the roof is a broad and pleasant promenade, commanding an excellent view of the beach in all directions. Located at the north end of the building, and adjoining the dressing-rooms, are the plunges, 150x50 feet in size. The smaller for women and children, varies in depth from 2 ½ to 4 feet; the larger one from 4 to 14 feet. At night they will be electrically lighted from below the surface of the water.²⁷

During this time, the bath house was not just a place for taking a dip in the salt water, but also had other amenities. On the second floor of the bath house was a restaurant, accommodating a “commanding view of the ocean.”²⁸ Also on this floor was a photograph gallery, barber shop and manicure parlor. On the main floor was a large ballroom, 50 x 75 feet in dimensions. This early example of a bath house accommodated several leisurely wants along the seaside. (Figures 3.9-3.10)

²⁷ “Opened Today.” Los Angeles Times, 9 June 1894, p.4.

²⁸ Ibid.



Figure 3.9: North Beach Bath House Interior, The Plunge, late 1890s (Marquez)



Figure 3.10: North Beach Bath House, Santa Monica, c. 1890s (Marquez)

Tent Cities

Although hotels and bath houses were constructed during this time, the early beach resorts could not accommodate the fast-growing demand of people quickly enough, so tent

cities and temporary shanty towns were established along the beaches. Until major development could be incorporated, entrepreneurs like William I. Hull sold tents to visiting families from 1884 in beach cities like Santa Monica to allow for longer stays.²⁹ Beach resort towns were growing as more and more pioneers were drawn to the beautiful coast of Southern California. Wooden piers were mainly used as landing stages at this point, but with the growing appeal of the California seaside, that was about to change.

The success of Santa Monica encouraged the growth of the areas just miles south of Santa Monica, known as Ocean Park. Ocean Park grew into its own while maintaining Santa Monica township after building the Ocean Park Pier in 1897 at the end of Pier Avenue in Santa Monica. Built by real estate tycoon Abbot Kinney and his partner Francis Ryan, the Ocean Park Pier became wildly popular. Other California entrepreneurs were scoping the Southern California coastal towns and investing fortunes on the beach resort ambiance. To the south, Colonel Charles River Drake was helping build the beach resort town of Long Beach. These investors as well as the arrival of a more accessible coastal rail line helped develop the beach resort towns in Southern California at the turn of the twentieth century.

1901-1925: Establishment of Beach Towns and the Pacific Electric Railroad

The Pacific Electric Red Car, owned by the railroad tycoon Henry Huntington, was the main inter-urban transportation route in Southern California from the late nineteenth century to World War II. It was incorporated in 1901 and immediately began to build tracks, including along the shoreline of southern California. The first line built under Pacific Electric

²⁹ Ernest Marquez. Santa Monica Beach: A Collector's Pictorial History. (Santa Monica: Angel City, 2004), 18.

was the Long Beach line, which opened July 4th, 1902.³⁰ Capitalizing on the success of the beach communities, Huntington institutionalized several convenient routes, not just inland from the beach, but also tourist routes that permitted visitors to see several beaches in one trip. The Balloon Trolley Route could be taken for \$1.00 in 1904. The 101-mile trip took passengers on an all-day excursion from Los Angeles to Hollywood down to the beaches of Santa Monica, Venice and Redondo Beach. It was “the only ocean voyage in the world on wheels; and never any sea sickness.”³¹ It was highly popular among tourists.

The Pacific Electric’s Red Car played an important part of the development of southern California; it helped establish permanent residency in the beach towns and linked the beach resort cities along the coast. (Figure 3.11) Before the railroad, people had to travel by stage coach or horse and wagon to get to the beaches. The undeveloped land between these beach cities and inland cities such as Los Angeles kept people from setting up permanent residency at the beach. The railroad created a more efficient way for people to travel to the beach. As investors saw this as an opportunity to set up commercial establishments in the beach cities, permanent housing was developed. Entrepreneurs such as Colonel Charles River Drake bought land along the shoreline in Long Beach and brought in engineers and developers to create the ideal beach resort area for tourists. In 1902, the same year the Pacific Electric rail road laid tracks through Long Beach, the Long Beach Bath House was built.

³⁰ “A Short History on the Pacific Electric.” www.oerm.org

³¹ The Electrical Railway Historical Association of Southern California. <http://www.erha.org> (9 June 2008)

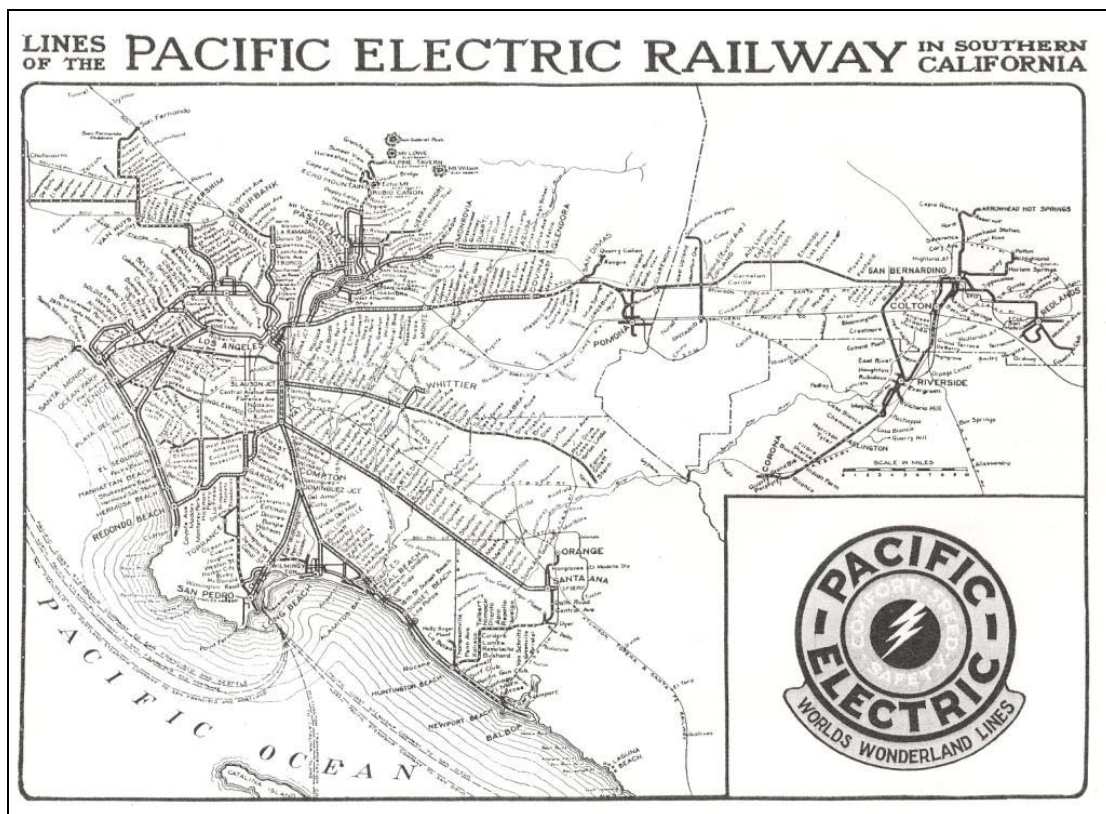


Figure 3.11: The lines of the Pacific Electric Railway in Southern California, Date Unknown (Seal Beach Historical Society)

The Long Beach Bath House, 1902, c. 1920s

The original bath house was built approximately “340 feet in length by 250 feet in depth.”³² The building included a 60’ by 120’ concrete pool for adults and a small pool designed for the “Ladies Plunge.”³³ According to the Long Beach Heritage Calendar, the plunge was open until 10 o’clock in the evening and accommodated dressing rooms, a café, bowling alley and two 10,000 gallon water tanks.

³² “Modern Bathhouse And Commercial Hotel to be Erected Next Fall.” Daily Telegram, 12 January 1920.

³³ “Long Beach Heritage Calendar.” 1995. Source Unknown.

The Long Beach Bath House was located below Ocean Avenue, west of Pine Avenue on 201 West Pike. It was built in the Classical Revival style. The wood frame building was sheathed in horizontal wood siding as well as what appears to be concrete columns and balustrades on the façade. The bath house had a hipped roof with a squat hipped turret located in the center of the ridgeline flanked by two smaller spires. Along the façade, the full-length double portico had a flat roof with a balustrade along the roofline. The roof on the rear main section of the building was clad with what appeared to be clay tiles. Along the roofline was a section of glass sky-lighting which was used to light the plunge inside. At the west-facing façade, eight large concrete columns in the Composite order formed a rounded symmetrical front. A second-story balcony encompassed the length of the façade which was supported by smaller Ionic columns. Several windows are visible on the façade. The main entrance is not visible from historic photographs. However, after the 1920s renovation, the main entrance was clearly defined through signage on the south façade. Architectural features include a squared turret with a domed top located on the southern portion of the building to the rear of the façade, as well as elaborate entablatures with swag décor. American flags were placed at the peaks of each turret and spire.

In the 1920s, the interior of the bath house was expanded to accommodate a larger beach population. The footprint increased, but the facade was mostly retained. Small one-story wood frame buildings were located along the front of the façade, and the rear main building was expanded to accommodate a larger plunge. (Figures 3.12-3.14) Unfortunately, the building was dismantled in the 1960s when Long Beach's seaside was redeveloped. Several early twentieth century beach resort buildings were lost in this redevelopment.

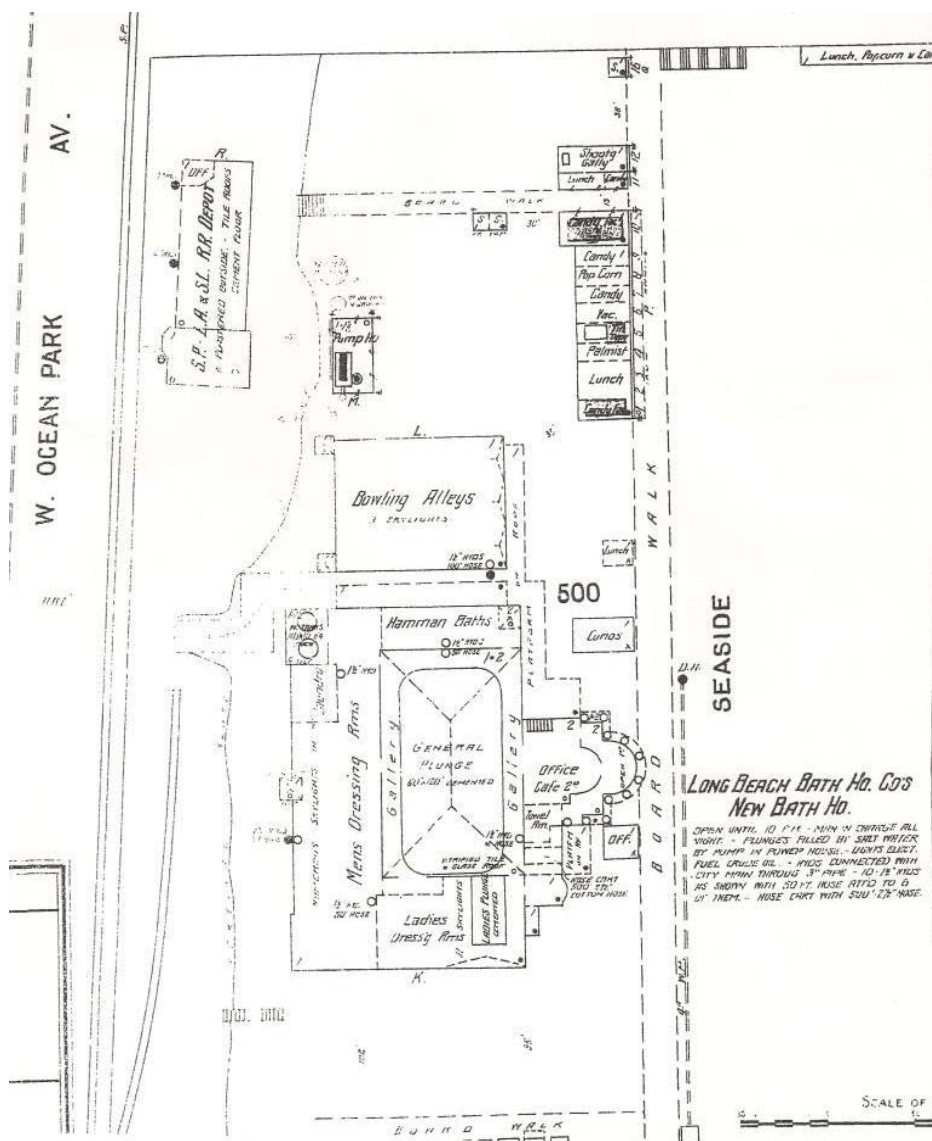


Figure 3.12 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of the Long Beach Bath House, 1905



Figure 3.13: Long Beach Plunge, c. 1905, (Long Beach Public Library Collection)



Figure 3.14: View from the Long Beach Plunge, c. 1905 (Long Beach Public Library Collection)

Another example of successful investors was Henry Huntington himself. He bought land and created the Redondo Beach Improvement Company in 1904, which immediately developed the beach into a pleasure zone. Huntington brought in engineers to create pleasure piers and accommodating architecture in Redondo. Roller coasters, carousels, a casino, hotels and other entertainment venues were constructed along the shoreline. The pavilion and heated plunge, built 1907 and 1909 respectively, were two of the major attractions in the city. Soon, Redondo Beach became one of the most popular beach resorts rivaling Santa Monica to the north and Long Beach to the south. (Figure 3.15) Built by Henry Huntington in 1907, the Redondo Beach Pavilion, simply referred to as “The Pavilion,” was one of the premier features of the Redondo Beach resort.



Figure 3.15: Street Scene of Redondo Beach and the Redondo Pavilion, 1900s (LAPL Collection)

Redondo Beach Pavilion, 1907

The main feature of this building was the Mandarin Ballroom which seated up to 4,000 people. The ballroom was on the second story and, “featured a beechwood dance floor with space for 500 couples.”³⁴ On the first floor were shops, a theater, and a restaurant. It was located near Emerald Street along the ocean in Redondo Beach. The Pavilion was a 34,069 square foot structure, built three stories in height in the Mission Revival style. The wood frame structure was clad in white stucco. The roof was covered in red clay tiles and ornamented with finials. There was a one-story open arcaded porch which appeared to have surrounded the entire building. On each corner of the arcade was a squared tower, two stories in height and covered by a squat pyramidal top. Over the arcade was an open pathway. The main arched entryway was larger than the other arches and topped with an inset dome and Mission-style parapet. Along each elevation on the second story were windows; on the third story there were ocular windows. The windows are indiscernible through the historic photographs of the building. American flags flew at the peaks of each tower and dome on the building. (Figure 3.16) The Redondo Beach Pavilion is no longer standing today, but has been replaced by high-rise apartment complexes and condominiums.

³⁴ Historical Commission of Redondo Beach, Redondo Beach 1880-1930: Postcard History Series, San Francisco: Arcadia, 2005, p. 23.



Figure 3.16: Redondo Beach Pavilion, Redondo Beach, c. 1906 (Historical Commission of Redondo Beach)

The same year Huntington developed Redondo Beach, Abbott Kinney bought land to the north with dreams of creating the “Venice of the West” complete with canals, gondolas, and Venetian architecture. In building this new city, Kinney wanted to educate the public while incorporating fun elements like the Venice Pier. (Figure 3.17)



Figure 3.17: The canals of the Venice of America, circa 1906, (Stanton)

The Chautauqua Method

This concept of teaching in a manner less formal and more recreational is derived from the Chautauqua Method. Established in the late nineteenth century as an adult education movement in the United States, its general philosophy was to bring entertainment and culture to the whole community. This was typically done with speakers, teachers, musicians, entertainers, preachers and specialists of the day moving in circuits to locations all around the country teaching the public. Abbot Kinney, a big proponent of this cultural rebirth in Venice established The Venice Assembly, which “was a series of educational and cultural presentations modeled after the popular Chautauqua programs in New York State. Lectures,

music and other entertainment were combined to give the program mass appeal.”³⁵ It was also incorporated in other less obvious ways and Venice was not the only beach with these aspirations. Redondo Beach too, had laid the original city plan in the shape of an oil lamp, representing a symbol of the Chautauqua philosophy. Redondo Beach also built a Chautauqua Meeting House in the shape of a decagon (ten-sided) where the traveling circuits of speakers could come to teach the masses. Between Hermosa and Manhattan Beaches was an area once called Shakespeare Beach- established to promote a literary writers colony with streets named after famous writers, such as Longfellow, Homer and Duncan.³⁶ While the Chautauqua Method was and is still widely used and effective, only architecture lasted during this time period. Abbot Kinney’s Venice Assembly, which was set in the Venice Auditorium, lasted one season, as Jeffery Stanton, author of Venice of America: Coney Island of the Pacific notes,

...unfortunately for Kinney, most people didn’t share his enthusiasm for culture. Even though he hired the best lecturers and performers of the time including Helen Hunt Jackson, author of “Ramona” and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Chautauqua-like Assembly lost \$16,000 the first summer. The Assembly failed to attract patrons simply because there were too many distractions to lure them elsewhere. They preferred to play hooky on the beach.³⁷

Much like early Victorian British pleasure piers, attempts were made to create both a recreational and educational atmosphere at the beach resort. The attempts were noble, but in these beach cities, most Americans wanted to have fun.

³⁵ Tom Moran & Tom Sewell. Fantasy By The Sea. Beyond Baroque Foundation: Venice, CA, 1979, p. 25.

³⁶ Jan Dennis. Manhattan Beach. Arcadia: Chicago, 2001, p.13.

³⁷ Jeffery Stanton, Venice of America, “Coney Island of the Pacific.” Donahue Publishing: Los Angeles, 1987, p. 14

Two of the most popular pleasure pier amusement parks were in Venice and Ocean Park. Ocean Park was in silent competition with Venice, being adjacent to each other. However, both pier amusement areas together attracted people from all over the world. In 1911-12, the first piers built in Ocean Park and Venice incorporated full amusement parks because on shore there was no more land for further amusement structures. This only added to the excitement of walking over the water; one could also ride a rollercoaster over the water. (Figures 3.18-3.19) These piers not only changed beach pier architecture in America, but created a national distinction for Southern California's beach architecture.

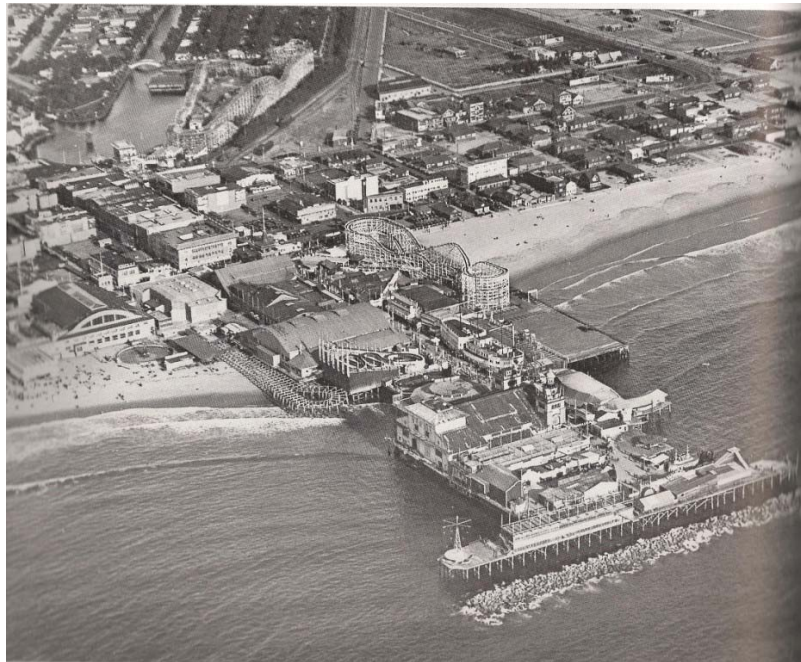


Figure 3.18: Abbot Kinney Pier, 1920 (Stanton)

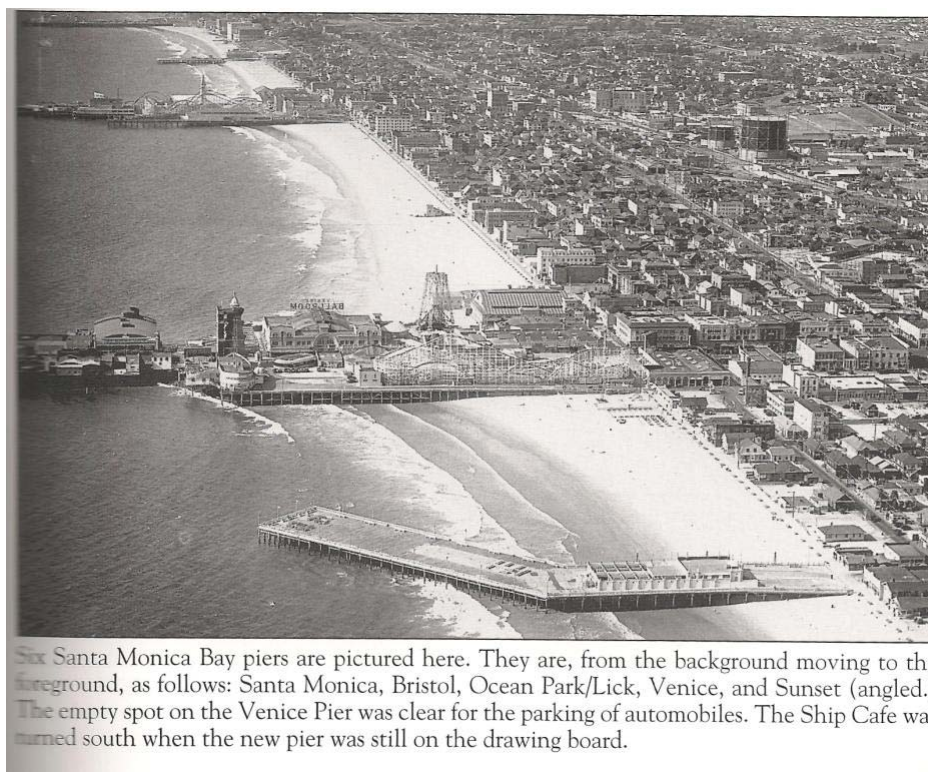


Figure 3.19: Aerial of competing pleasure piers, Date Unknown. (Alexander)

Ocean Park & Venice Pleasure Piers

The architecture along the piers in Venice and Ocean Park was a collection of styles, ranging from Classical to Venetian, Byzantine and Moorish. (Figure 3.20-3.21) The buildings in this area had architectural features of classical columns, arcaded entryways, decorative cupolas, and towers. American flags flew from the top of each peak. Walking down Windward Avenue in 1910, one could see classical ornamentation on the buildings such as cartouches and medallions. Ornate cornice lines and Gothic arched fenestration lined other buildings which featured a variety of rooflines such as castellated parapets and spires. The architecture in the early beach resort towns was high style vernacular. After the turn of the century, there was a shift in style to the exotic and fantastical. An example of this was the Ocean Park Bath House, opened to the public in 1905.



Figure 3.20: Ocean Park Promenade, Ocean Park, c. 1920s (Marquez)

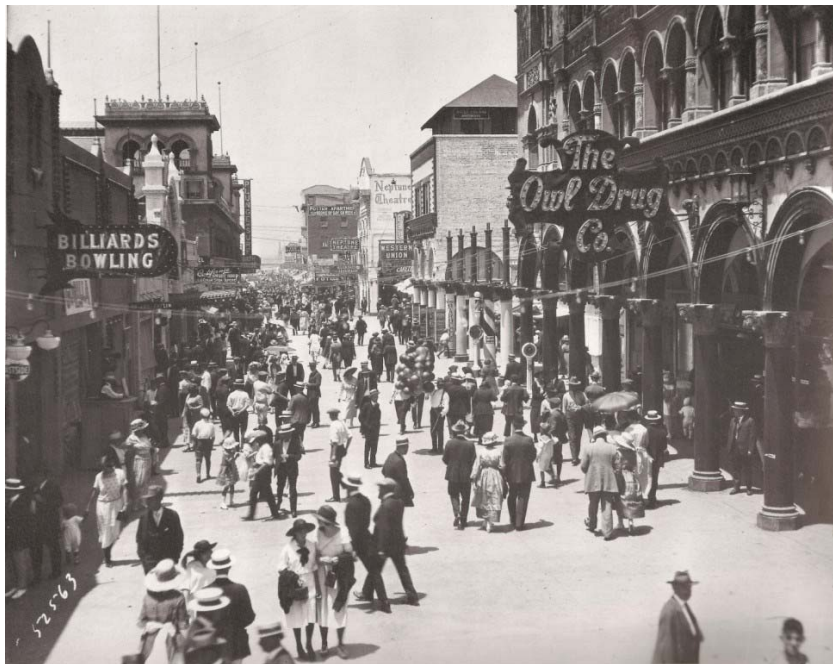


Figure 3.21: Ocean Front Walk looking north from Windward Avenue, Ocean Park, 1921 (Stanton)

Ocean Park Bath House, 1905

This building was a four-story bath house building located on the beach close to the pier.

The wood frame building was sheathed in stucco. The bath house had a flat roof with three

onion-shaped domes, one on each corner and a larger one in the center. The façade hid the building to the rear which appears to have been a wooden structure with wood siding. Over the main entryway of the bath house was a large dome which had four square decorative Egyptian-influenced columns on each corner with spires. The grand arched entryway was adorned with engraved ornamentation. On either side of the entryway was a Moorish-style arcade reminiscent of the Doge's Palace in Venice. Architectural features included a line of quatrefoil windows above the arcade. American flags were placed at the peaks of each turret and spire. (Figures 3.22-3.23)



Figure 3.22: Ocean Park Bath House, Ocean Park, early 1900s (Alexander)



Figure 3.23: View of Ocean Park Bath House looking south, Ocean Park, 1924 (Stanton)

Like the Venice Plunge or the Long Beach Bath House, the Ocean Park Bath House had several amenities. According to a 1906 article in *The Pacific Monthly*,

There is an elegant massage department for women, with eleven artistically equipped rooms. There is a tub department, with twenty-eight private porcelain tubs and the latest modern appliances. There are two plunges, one surrounding the other in L shape, making together a tank 65x130 feet, and said to be the largest heated plunge in the world.³⁸

During the early 1900s, there was a sweeping trend across the nation in which exotic and eclectic styles were used in architecture. This became more prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s,

³⁸ William Bittle Wells, ed. *The Pacific Monthly*, Volume XV. Portland: Pacific Monthly Publishing, January 1906-June 1906.

but in the early 1900s, going on vacation to the beach was almost the equivalent of going to a new country. The Ocean Park Bath House is a good example of this architectural trend.

The Pike, Long Beach, 1906

Meanwhile in Long Beach, Colonel Drake also bought up much of the ocean front property just south of the downtown area, with the intention of building a beach amusement area with a boardwalk. In 1906, the Long Beach Bathhouse was one of the first buildings along the “Walk of A Thousand Lights,” known as The Pike. In the years that followed, Drake and others expanded upon The Pike with a variety of roller coasters, theaters and concessions. The Pike became known as “The Coney Island of the West.”³⁹ Thousands of people flooded the Long Beach shoreline daily in the early 1900s. As the Pike became more popular, it grew with more rides, roller coasters and concessions. At one point, Long Beach was the most popular beach resort town in the west. The Pike, as it was simply referred to, was a promenade not located on a pier, but along the beachfront. Nonetheless, this amusement area incorporated the same architectural styles and types as its pleasure pier counterparts to the north. Built in 1906 by Col. Charles Drake, the same entrepreneur who orchestrated the construction of the Long Beach Bath House, the Pike started out as a 15-foot wide wood plank boardwalk that extended from the Long Beach Bath House which later became a 35-foot wide concrete walkway which extended from Cedar and Chestnut Avenues (Figures 3.24-3.25) along the beach. In a *Los Angeles Times* newspaper article from 1906, it was written, “There will be thirteen iron pillars standing fifty feet apart in the center of the walk, on each of which will be a cluster of electric lights.”⁴⁰ In another newspaper article, it

³⁹ Collins, Larry Jr., Pike to Get Spring Face Lifting, Source Unknown, February 27, 1949.

⁴⁰ “South of the Tehachepi” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 1906, p. 118.

was written, “These lights were worked out on plans submitted by Mr. Drake and will remind sightseers of the Broadway lights in Los Angeles.”⁴¹ Along the Pike was built a variety of wood frame buildings, mostly one- and two-story storefronts ranging from restaurants, amusement stands, sideshows, curios, theaters, and dancing pavilions. Along Ocean Boulevard to the east of the Pike, several high-rise hotels and apartments were built in the late 1920s. A unique architectural aspect of Long Beach today is its high-rise buildings on the waterfront. While these multi-story luxury hotels were built after the peak of the pleasure pier era, they are a reminder of the popularity of the Pike and the beachfront in Long Beach. There were also larger buildings clad in stucco or concrete, such as the Municipal Auditorium, built in 1932, or the bandstand built on the sand, built about the same time.



Figure 3.24: Pike, Long Beach, late 1920s (Silverstrand)

⁴¹ “First Authentic Plans For the New White City.” Daily Telegram, 7 May 1906, p. 1:6.

Figure 3.25: The Pike, Long Beach, Sanborn 1908 (Sanborn 1908)

Other beach resort towns had boardwalks similar to the Pike, but none as popular or more world-renowned. Ocean Park had the Ocean Park walkway which featured similar kiosks and architecture. At Seal Beach, the Joy Zone was built with roller coasters constructed on the sand. These venues only added to the splendor along the beach. Roller coasters and concessions were hugely popular amongst the architecture of the beach resort in Southern California in the early twentieth century.

The architecture of the smaller kiosks was wood frame one- and two-story buildings typically with awnings and large vertical signage on the facade or along the awning front. Signage was a major character-defining feature of these walkways. Bright lights illuminated the word “Vaudeville” and other venues along the Pike. The buildings were typically vernacular western false front style. In the *Evening Tribune* in 1905, an article briefly describes the buildings, “All along this particular portion of the beach stands the row of stands, some of quaint design, is an interesting sight to the tourist. It is here that the hot tamale vender, the peanut crisp man and the pretty girls who sell sweets of all kinds, find a living for themselves.”⁴² Other buildings along the Pike were two- or three- story buildings with a variety of stylistic elements, such as Gothic arched windows with latticework, Edwardian canopies protruding from the upper stories, angled Victorian bay windows, and with a variety of exterior materials such as brick veneer, wood clapboard, stucco, and concrete block. This variety in architectural style and material dismissed the academic attitude of architecture present in other types of buildings. Along the Pike and other boardwalks and piers, the architecture was all about enticement, enchantment, and fun.

⁴² “A Short Trip Along The Pike.” *Evening Tribune*, 18 March 1905, p. 2:2.

The Balboa Pavilion, 1906

When the Santa Ana River changed course in the 1820s, sand and silt was carried from inland and the mountains to form the Balboa Peninsula. In 1906, the Balboa Pavilion and a pier were built to attract people to the area. The same year, the Pacific Electric Red Car laid tracks to the peninsula to bring tourists and beach vacationers. The Balboa Pavilion was Orange County's premier dance hall and brought tourists, and the area grew with more buildings and amusements. The original use of this pavilion was a bath house and boat house. In 1923, the pavilion was transformed into a dance hall- one of the premier dance halls on the Orange County Coast.

On weekends at the Pavilion, you could listen to Count Basie, Benny Goodman, and the Dorseys. Phil Harris and his band played regularly on weekdays. The dance step called the "Balboa," with variations sometimes nicknamed the "Balboa Hop" and/or the "Balboa Shuffle" originated at the Balboa Pavilion and swept across the United States. According to Bette Tozer, it was more of a hop than a shuffle. "You go 'bong, bong, bong,' hop. It's the beat." According to dance expert and instructor, Joel Plys, "the dance of Balboa [had] numerous forms. The 'hoppier' version is similar to Collegiate Shag. There was a very smooth/shuffly style that was very popular back then and today."⁴³

Today, the Balboa Pavilion still stands and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It has housed several activities such as, "a post office, art museum, bowling alley, gambling establishment, speed boat rides and a host of other marine recreational activities."⁴⁴ Its opening in 1906 was accompanied by the opening of the Pacific Electric Red Car line which brought visitors to the Newport Beach and the Balboa Peninsula. Its sister project was the Balboa ocean pleasure pier to attract landowners. Soon, the Balboa Pavilion which once

⁴³ "History of Balboa," <http://www.balboapavilion.com/history.html>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

stood alone as the first landmark in this beach resort area was surrounded by a variety of building and activity that made Newport and Balboa a premier beach resort in Orange County.

Originally built on a sand spit, the Balboa Pavilion is a two-story Scandinavian style building with a large sloping roof and turret which sits center on the roofline. The wood frame building is sheathed in horizontal wood board siding. The building has a large sloping gable-on-hip roof and had a squared turret with an onion-domed cupola. The turret held an open porch with decorative bracing around the balustrade. The original land-front façade of the building had the words “Balboa Beach” written on the roof in large white letters. Both the ocean-front and land-front façades were adorned with large gables with fanlight windows or vents as well as large knee braces. A recessed two-story porch with decorative bracing and simple wooden balustrades and squared posts surrounded the building. The windows appear to have been double-hung wood sash. There were also fanlight windows within the two gables on the roof. There was also an American flag placed at the peak of the turret. (Figures 3.26-3.27) Although the building has been renovated several times since 1906, the Balboa Pavilion stands today as one of the last remaining buildings of the beach resort culture in Southern California.



Figure 3.26: Balboa Pavilion, 1906, (Jezek)



Figure 3.27: Balboa Pavilion on Main Street, Balboa Peninsula, 1924 (Delaney)

The Seal Beach Pavilions, 1915

Also in 1906, entrepreneur, politician and Orange County developer Philip A. Stanton purchased a section of the Orange County Coast just south of Long Beach and called it Bay City. Families from the newly formed city of Anaheim would escape the inland heat and resort here in tents and wooden shacks. By 1904, the Red Car had already laid tracks through what would later be called Seal Beach, probably for the seals found nearby. In 1915, Bay City changed its name to Seal Beach, so as not to confuse itself with San Francisco, also called Bay City.⁴⁵ That same year, Philip Stanton built the Joy Zone, an amusement park which featured the Derby rollercoaster that had been brought down from the 1915 San Francisco Panama Exposition. In 1916, the pier at Seal Beach was rebuilt to accommodate the site of the Joy Zone. Two pavilions were built on either side of the pier entrance. One pavilion held a plunge and bath house and the other pavilion held a ballroom and bowling alleys. The pavilion located on the north side of the Seal Beach pier housed the famous Jewel City Café and a bowling alley. The building was built in a Victorian-era style in 1916. The wood frame structure was clad in channel drop wood siding along the lower section of the building and stucco on the upper portion. On all four corners of the two-and-one-half story building there stood an opened squared tower with a cupola. Originally, the roof was a front gable. In between the towers on the north and south elevations was a shared walkway with a low balustrade connecting. The façade faced south and had a double portico. The ground floor entrance had four Tuscan-looking columns. Above this entryway was a small diamond-patterned balustrade with the word “Café” situated in front of it. On the second story was a small arcade with both squared and cylindrical columns. The windows of the building were

⁴⁵ Jean B. Dorr. A Story of Seal Beach. (Seal Beach: City of Seal Beach, 1976), 13.

double-hung wood sash. On the angled towers were arched windows with an ornamented spandrel panel and keystones. The tower tops had arched openings and were topped with American flags.

The pavilion located on the south side of the Seal Beach pier housed the dance hall and bath house. Like the pavilion to the north, this building was built in a Victorian-esque style. The wood frame structure was clad in channel drop wood siding on the lower portion of the building and likely stucco on the upper portion of the building. There were also four squared towers on all four corners of the three-story building. The roof on the main block was front gable. The main entryway is partially visible through historic photographs. However, the flat-roof one-story recessed porch was supported by Tuscan-looking columns. Sitting atop the entryway was an open porch area with a diamond-patterned balustrade. Only the oceanfront elevations are visible through historic photographs. As such, a two- and three-story flat roof extension was located on the west elevation. This part of the building had a diamond-patterned balustrade with what appear to be lamp posts along the roofline. The windows were primarily double-hung wood sash as well as casement windows on the uppermost story. The squared towers were adorned with cutaway corners in which Tuscan-like columns sat. There were open arches beneath the cupola tops. Finials were placed on all four corners of the domed tower tops. American flags were flown above each tower dome. (Figure 3.28)



Figure 3.28: Seal Beach Pavilions from the Seal Beach Pier, 1916 (Dorr)

Later alterations to these two buildings added rear stories and additions. These two buildings were demolished in the 1950s due to redevelopment along the seaside in Seal Beach.

Around the same year the Seal Beach Pavilions were built, the pleasure pier beach resorts of Southern California reached their peak and the architecture was once again shifting. The Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Diego in 1915 reintroduced the Spanish Colonial Revival style which became the standard architectural style of the American Southwest. The Southern California coastline was no exception. One of the later beach resort monuments of this time period and style was the Balboa Inn.

The Balboa Inn, 1929

The Balboa Inn, constructed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, opened in 1929. Located at the base of Balboa Pier, this hotel offered a different kind of entertainment to the public. Deemed, “the finest hotel on the Orange County Coast,” the Balboa Inn featured “Breakers Pharmacy” which was “known as the ‘drugless drugstore’ because customers would have struggled to find so much as an aspirin on its shelves. But for \$.25, the druggist

would dispense an ounce of straight grain alcohol.”⁴⁶ Some knew the “pharmacy” as, “Breaker’s Drugstore,” a local shop which bootlegged grain alcohol to the local thirsty clientele. Built by Walter Roland Hagedorn, the builder of Union Station in downtown Los Angeles, the Balboa Inn was a hangout place for celebrities including Gary Cooper and Humphrey Bogart. According to several newspaper articles, the Inn was also the place of several seedy operations such as the bootlegging but also one report stated that while undergoing remodeling, workers found a stash of counterfeit money in the walls.⁴⁷

The Balboa Inn featured 34 rooms, with the ground floor storefronts full of shops. It was located at the end of Balboa Pier. Although today it has undergone several facelifts and alterations, historic photographs show that the hotel featured a hipped roof with red clay tiling and a nearly-squared corner tower located on the southwest corner of the building. The wood frame building is clad in stucco. The main entrance is not discernible, but there is a main entryway on the southwest corner of the building where Breaker’s Drugstore used to be. A full-length arcade was found on the west elevation of the building on the first floor. Architectural features include a corbelled banding between the first and second stories. There was also an American flag which flew at the top of the corner tower. (Figures 3.29-3.30)

⁴⁶ Delaney, 70.

⁴⁷ James S. Granelli and Gordon Edes. “Balboa Inn Goes From A Landmark to a Liability.” Los Angeles Times, 8 April 1987, III:4.



Figure 3.29: Balboa Inn, Balboa, 1929 (Delaney)



Figure 3.30: Balboa Inn, Balboa, Date Unknown, (Delaney)

Los Angeles and Orange Counties' coastal development was very integrated. With similar key players and the important role of the Pacific Electric Red Car rail line bringing boom towns to each stop along the coast; it is not by chance that similarities in architectural development of the pleasure piers would occur. Although the architecture and layout is different and unique in each beach resort town, there are similarities in buildings and features. Unfortunately, this peak in pleasure pier tourism was declining by the 1930s. Several factors contributed to the decline of the Southern California pleasure pier.

1930s-1950s: The Decline of the Amusement Park in Southern California

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The pleasure pier architecture of the early twentieth century in Southern California would never be the same after the Great Depression. Up until this point in history, the beach amusement piers had been thriving. Although the Great Depression did not hit as hard in Southern California as it did in other parts of the country, attendance to these beach piers still suffered. People did not have expendable income for tourism.

WORLD WAR II

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States increased naval and military presence on the west coast. Southern California, which was once a beach amusement park, turned into a military zone. While the beach piers were still in business, military presence was certainly there. This change in demographics started to clash with the family-fun zones along the seaside. To accommodate sailors, bars were established next to areas where families once came to vacation. In some areas, brawls between civilians and sailors would break out. The times had changed from the early twentieth century when the biggest concern

was dancing in the street. The styles of dress and attitude had changed. Southern California was being established as one of the most diverse areas in the country, as it remains today. This diversity was not always seen as a welcome commodity in the region. One Southern California historian notes,

There was also a different type of uniform seen on the ocean front. Zoot suits had become the style with a large number of Mexican-American youths who frequented the beaches. The boys had duck-tail haircuts, pancake hats and peg-top trousers with “reet” pleats. They carried long glittering watch chains that hung out of openings in their drape coats. Their dress and attitude contrasted sharply with the military uniforms, and problems soon developed.⁴⁸

A large population of Japanese immigrants had settled in Southern California, particularly in the Santa Monica Bay. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, factions amongst this diverse community arose. “Wartime suspicions focused on the easily visible and often clannish Orientals. Hostility was directed against anyone of Japanese descent, whether overseas- or American-born.”⁴⁹ The beach amusement pier scene had changed drastically from its early inception. No longer seen as a vacation area that was fun or safe for families, attendance started to decline. The physical area looked different as well, especially in Venice,

Civil defense brigades were formed and demonstrations of air raid safety techniques were staged at the intersection of Windward Avenue and Trolleyway (Pacific Avenue). Windows and lamp globes were painted black and “dimouts” darkened the amusement area.⁵⁰

Not only was this happening in Venice, but elsewhere along the Southern California coast. Because of the various changes in the beach amusement pier areas, attendance

⁴⁸ Stanton, p. 83.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 84.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 83.

declined. It seemed that after the war, the beach amusement atmosphere would return but by 1945 many beach amusement piers had been neglected and were deteriorating. Also, newly developed Recreation and Parks commissions wanted to bring the sandy beaches back to the public.⁵¹ The piers had grown to mammoth sizes and because of their decline they were diverting crowds from the beach. Some revitalization efforts were made to some of the beach piers, but the majority were demolished or reconstructed to smaller sizes and converted back to mere fishing piers. Then came the final blow; one of the biggest boons for Orange County's history changed the course of beach piers in Southern California.

The End of Pacific Electric

Parallel to the decline of the beach resort towns, the Pacific Electric Railway was replaced by major highways, known as freeways, and the automobile. By the 1950s, most of the beach resort towns were taken off the trolley route. Today the beach resort towns are mainly accessed by cars, with the exception of places in Long Beach which have Metro Transit Authority (MTA) accessibility. Nonetheless, limited parking and traffic have changed the number of people that could access the beach in trainloads by the day.

Disneyland

In 1955, a man named Walt Disney proposed that the Magic Kingdom be established in the city of Anaheim in Orange County. The amusement park had been twenty years in the making for Disney and was to be a big economic boon for Anaheim and the county. To everyone's surprise, the Magic Kingdom was more popular than originally anticipated. The

⁵¹ Moran & Sewell, 88.

city of Anaheim's land value skyrocketed and business boomed immediately. Tourism shifted from the Southern California beaches to the new fantasyland that is Disneyland.

Other amusement parks opened such as Knott's Berry Farm, also in Orange County. Some efforts to compete with these two amusement parks were attempted, such as in Pacific Ocean Park in Ocean Park, but the Disneyland competition was too much for the park and it soon had to be shut down. Today the beaches of Southern California do not boast the fantastic pleasure piers of yesteryear. Exploring the architecture and construction of these great monuments of early Southern California is necessary to the history of this era. To understand what once adorned the shoreline and to see the difference from today's beach culture gives one a sense of history.

CHAPTER 4: PLEASURE PIER CONSTRUCTION & STYLE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Construction

By the 1910s, the coastline of Southern California was lined with pleasure piers. As opposed to the Victorian pleasure piers, these were an extension of the town, constructed to be utilitarian as well as pleasurable, and the technology had changed to make inherently temporary structures more durable. The first pleasure pier to have a full amusement park constructed on it was in Venice. This began a trend of several amusement park pleasure piers along the coastline. The weight of these structures, as well as numerous fires and storms, kept engineers and developers recreating the piers differently each time.

Piers are historically narrow in size because, “the city or state had title to land under water at the extension of the streets and the pier was therefore no wider than the streets of which it was an extension.”⁵² Several piers in the beach towns were named by the street of which they were an extension, such as the Pier Avenue pier in Long Beach, and the Center Street Pier in Venice. MacElwee continues to say, “The piers were large enough for the ships at the time they were built.”⁵³ The wideness of piers changed due to the change in usage and also because the modern ships grew in size, providing a need for a wider pier. Also, piers needed to be constructed wider to accommodate the changing use of piers, such as the full amusement parks built on top.

⁵² MacElwee, 121.

⁵³ Ibid.

Pier construction in the early twentieth century had improved from the mid-1800s in England. Piers were not only getting larger but the construction and functions were varied as well. In the early twentieth century, wood piles were still used to construct a pier but they were typically creosoted, or filled with concrete or some kind of wood preservative to prevent marine borers from entering the timber.⁵⁴ The piers in Southern California were made of plain wood piles, typically of Douglas fir, long-leaf pine, tamarack, redwood, cypress, and the best grades of cedar and oak. For temporary structures, hemlock, maple, elm or other less durable woods were used.”⁵⁵ Also, because California was relatively untouched at this time, the trees in this era were much more mature, making the wood sturdy and durable. Timber with little sap was the ideal because it would not rot as quickly. “The usual specification requires that piles be cut from sound, live trees, and must be free from the usual timber defects, except that a small amount of heart rot be allowed in cedar.”⁵⁶ Along with being a cheap material at the time, wood was a sturdy and reliable source for pier construction. According to a noted expert on pier construction in the early twentieth century,

Pile construction, where the marine borers are not present, in water full of sewage and in northern waters, is remarkably permanent. Wooden piles, when constantly submerged are practically immune to decay. This condition may be maintained to a height of the mean between high and low tide. Up to that point it is possible for the pile to remain always wet. Air, heat, and moisture are necessary for the decay of wood. Were the air is shut out by water, the decay is very slow.⁵⁷

Piers which were only partially creosoted had a life expectancy of about fifteen to thirty years until either marine borers or interior decay disintegrated the pilings. Marine borers and

⁵⁴ MacElwee, 121.

⁵⁵ Fowler, 76-77.

⁵⁶ Fowler, 77.

⁵⁷ MacElwee, 122.

other water creatures ate away at the submerged wooden piles, so encasing the piles in concrete was a method used to prevent the destruction of piers. This problem was typically more prevalent on the West coast than on the East, and especially in Southern California because of the warmer climate.⁵⁸ Creosoted piles had a longer retention rate. These wood preservatives were used to slow the decay process of wood piles.

Wood may be treated by the pressure process, in which the material is placed in a closed cylinder and after being treated with steam to remove the sap is then impregnated with the preservative under heavy pressure; by dipping in a tank containing the preservatives; and by applying the preservative with brushes.⁵⁹

Generally, a pier was considered more economical and permanent when it was constructed wider than 250 feet.⁶⁰ Creosoting the piles was more cost-effective in pier structures such as these. However, even the creosoting process was not enough to ensure the longevity of the pier. “On the Pacific Coast, where the teredo is very active, creosoted piles are said to have a life of one year for each pound of creosote to a cubic foot of timber. The usual practice is to impregnate the piles to a depth of about 2 inches.”⁶¹ Nonetheless, it was not the marine borers, but the frequent fire damage that was a constant threat to the piers in Southern California.

The first concrete pier on the Pacific Coast was in Santa Monica. After the 1904 storms pummeled many of the pleasure piers on the coast, Santa Monica Pier engineers incorporated

⁵⁸ Biennial Report of the Board of State Harbor Commissioners for the Two Fiscal Years Commencing July 1, 1896 and ending June 30, 1898. (California State Printing Office: Sacramento, 1899), 67.

⁵⁹ Carleton Greene. Wharves and Piers: Their Design Construction and Equipment. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1917), 9.

⁶⁰ Greene, 69.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 10.

a new system of pier engineering by using concrete reinforced with steel beams to handle harsh storms and water movement. The new pier was finished in 1909, but a year later the pilings needed to be replaced. The porous concrete allowed saltwater to infiltrate and corrode the reinforced steel. In 1919, the end of the pier where the famous La Monica Ballroom was placed ended up sagging from the weak pilings. Hundreds of people on the pier fled, and fortunately the pier did not completely collapse. But this near-tragedy did make city officials close the pier and reconvene with engineers to make a safer pier. The end result was to replace the concrete pilings with creosoted wooden piles and timber caps and struts, retaining the existing deck structure.⁶² Growing technology allowed for better-built piers. Most of the piers of Southern California in the early twentieth century were built of creosoted wooden piles or reinforced concrete with reinforced steel piles. While this was sturdier than earlier piers, they were not completely storm proof or fire proof.

Fire was a major problem with wooden piers especially in Southern California. “The usual risk to the pier is from burning oil, cotton, or wreckage from ships burning in the vicinity.”⁶³ For the pleasure piers, fires started from the equipment and amenities used on the pier. Kitchen fires in the restaurants that were built on the pier, electrical shorts, and shoddy gas-burning equipment were some causes of fires on the pleasure piers. Fire hydrants were established on some piers to extinguish flames with the saltwater readily available. The problem with this design was accessing the fire hydrants in a timely matter, but this was not always fast enough for fire fighters. When a pier caught fire, it was likely to be completely destroyed within a few hours. (Figures 4.1-4.2)

⁶² Marquez, 41.

⁶³ MacElwee, 126



Figure 4.1: Ocean Park Pier destroyed in 1924 fire, (Stanton)



Figure 4.2: Ocean Park Pier after fire, 1912 (LAPL Collection)

Massive sea storms of the early twentieth century would pummel the piers, which was not only costly, but dangerous. (Figures 4.3-4.4) If other piers were destroyed in storms, the floating piles left from the destruction were a threat to the piers left standing. As was the case with the Santa Monica Pier, the destruction of the Long Wharf pier left piles battering the pier and the piles had to be removed from the waters.⁶⁴ Breakers, or mounds of sand and stone used as a wall to deflect powerful ocean waves were laid hundreds of yards from shore helping to control the tides that would hit against the pier and pilings. Fires and storms usually brought brand new pier construction and with the new construction of piers came new amenities and amusements.



Figure 4.3: Seal Beach Pier swept away from a storm in 1983, (Alioto)

⁶⁴ Marquez, 34.



Figure 4.4: Damaged Wharf No. 1 after storm, Redondo Beach, 1915 (LAPL Collection)

Pier usage varied from landing stages to full amusement parks. In Redondo, several wharves were built, one of which was in the shape of a Y, with train trestles on one side and a pedestrian walkway on the other. In Newport, Manhattan, and Huntington Beaches, fishing was very popular and hundreds of people would line the deck on either side with their fishing poles hanging off the railing. Another use of the pier was utilitarian for the city. In Manhattan Beach, for example, a wave-driven engine was built at the end of the pier to produce electricity for the Strand, the main street next to the shoreline. When the waves were strong, the streetlights were always on.⁶⁵ At Seal Beach, a large generator placed at the end of the pier was used to generate power for the city. The public had no access to this part of the pier, but it did serve a public purpose. (Figure 4.5) Piers were also inherently breakwaters for

⁶⁵ Jan Dennis. Manhattan Beach Pier. Charleston: Arcadia, 2005.

small boats docked close to shore. In the *1898 State Harbor Commissioner's Biennial Report*, it was noted that, "They could create breakwaters, and in time of stormy weather the one located to the north against northerly storms and the one to the south against southerly ones, thereby giving protection to the wharves and ships lying between same."⁶⁶ The Rainbow Pier, constructed in 1932 in Long Beach was constructed as a breakwater for the Municipal Auditorium. It was a horseshoe-shaped pier sealed over with concrete for automobile access; one could literally drive over the Pacific Ocean. (Figures 4.6)

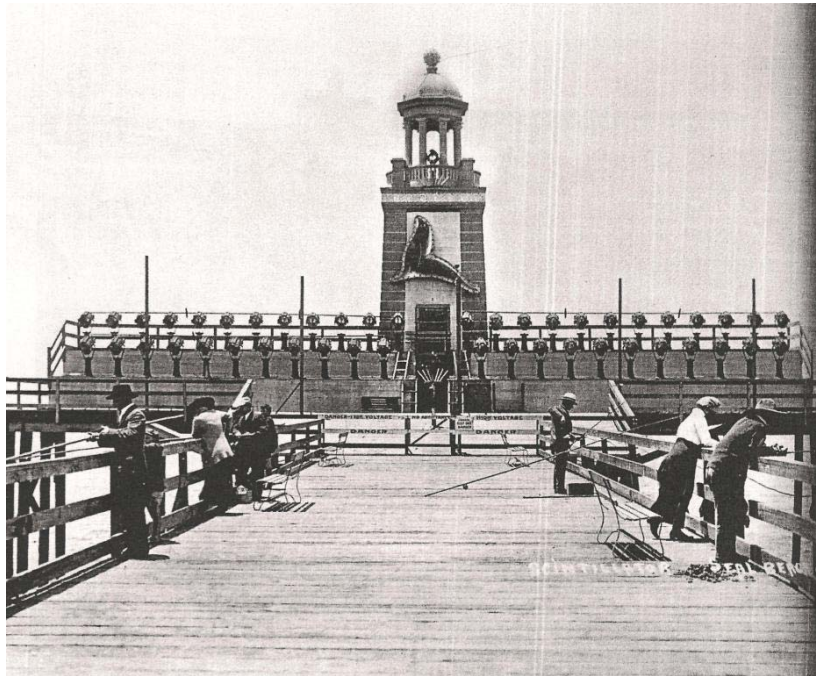


Figure 4.5: Seal Beach Pier General Scintillator, c. 1916, (Alioto)

⁶⁶ "1898 State Harbor Commissioner's Biennial Report," Sacramento, p. 68.

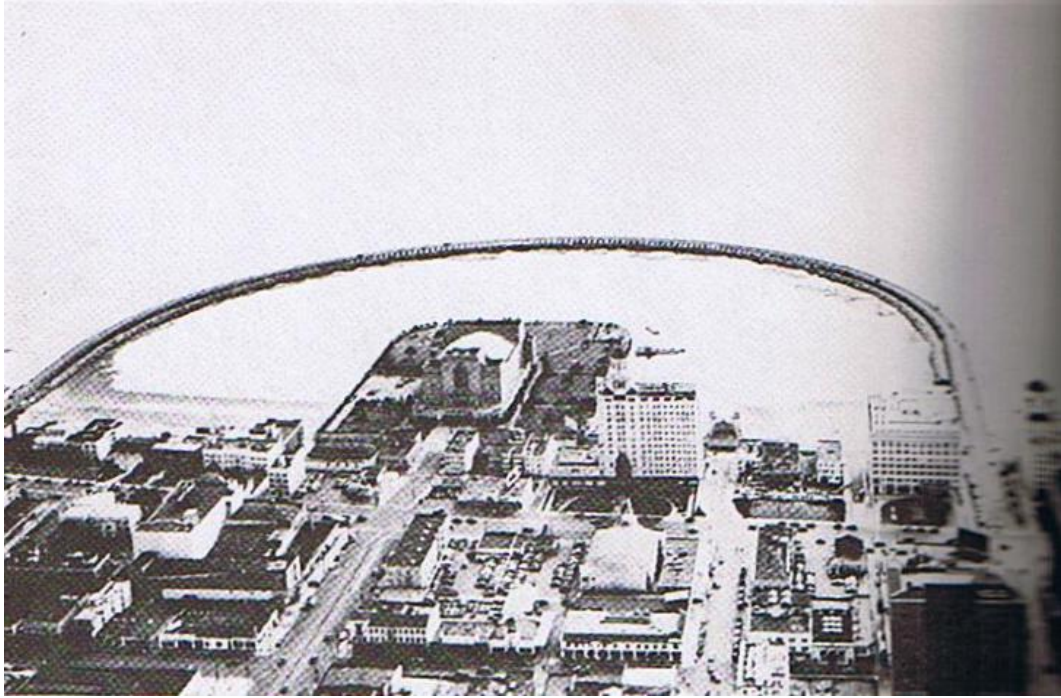


Figure 4.6: Rainbow Pier and Municipal Auditorium, Long Beach, (Howard)

Sewage outfall pipes would also be attached to piers to help alleviate the sewage problems in the city. Piers were frequently used in the sewage systems. In the *1898 Biennial Report of the Board of State Harbor Commissioners* for California, it was written,

Such structures would also serve as an outlet for the main sewage of this city, which could be carried in sewers built of any requisite size to deep water and discharged directly into the current of the bay, thereby doing away with the present system by which the sewers discharge their polluted waters along the waterfront, distributing obnoxious materials all along the seawall and generating unhealthy gases.⁶⁷

As described by a noted Santa Monica historian, the City of Santa Monica used the pier for this purpose in the early twentieth century. Eventually, more advanced sewage systems

⁶⁷ State Harbor Commissioner, 1898, p. 68.

were installed, but for the early twentieth century, piers served more than a pleasure-driven purpose.

The swelling numbers of tourists and residents and the destruction of the outfall pipe during the storms presented Santa Monica with a problematic sewage situation. In 1908 the town leaders decided to build a cesspool and a sewer outfall at the foot of Colorado Avenue. Engineers were hired to design a pier that would hold the outfall pipe. The revolutionary design the engineers presented would be the first of its kind on the Pacific coast; a steel reinforced all-concrete pier sixteen hundred feet in length. Experts argued that the effects of the seawater on the concrete over time were unknown and that the plans for the new pier were too risky. In spite of the controversy, the city proceeded with construction. A temporary sewer pipe was placed on the North Beach Bath House Pier while the concrete pier was under construction.⁶⁸

Constructing buildings on the pier became more popular when the technology of pier construction became more advanced and produced a more stable structure. The piers of Southern California varied in that they all had different features and buildings and were used for various things. Some piers were simply used for fishing and had very little or no architectural features on them. Other piers featured whole amusement parks, such as the Santa Monica Pier, the Venice Pier and the Ocean Park Pier in Los Angeles County. (Figures 4.7-4.8) Most piers featured a building, sometimes a restaurant, like the 1930s Ruby's Restaurant on the Balboa Pier. These buildings were typically wood frame structures and were of a whimsical style and design. Other features of the pier were light fixtures and lampposts which lit the pier at night for promenades. Small furnishings such as benches and gazebos could be found as well.

⁶⁸ Marquez, 39



Figure 4.7: The Santa Monica Pier, 1928, (Marquez)



Figure 4.8: The Piers at Santa Monica, Ocean Park and Venice, 1921 (Marquez)

Because the pleasure pier was inherently used for leisure and entertainment, it would only make sense that the shape of the pier would accommodate the amusing ambiance. For example, in Redondo Beach, the Endless Pier was built in 1915. In the shape of a horseshoe, this pier offered restaurants, cigar and candy shops, bandstands, ballrooms and dance halls and bowling alleys. (Figure 4.9) This shape remains today, although the pier is the fourth or fifth generation of the original. Other piers were L and Y-shaped depending on the buildings on them and how they were used by the public. As aforementioned, the Rainbow Pier in Long Beach was built around the Municipal Auditorium in 1932. This horseshoe-shaped pier was built solely for automobiles to drive on the ocean and around the Municipal Auditorium. The pier is a long road with no buildings or attachments, but simply built for automobiles to enjoy a leisurely drive around the Municipal Auditorium and to literally drive on the Pacific Ocean.



Figure 4.9: The Endless Pier at Redondo Beach, 1920 (Howard)

Evolution of the Architectural Styles of Beach Resort Architecture in Southern California

Stylistically, pier buildings were possessed whimsical, pleasurable and engaging architectural design. Flags, towers and turrets adorned many of them. The idea of a pleasure pier was reflected in the architecture of these piers. Several types of buildings could be found on or near the pleasure pier. The hotel, bath house and pavilion were the notable standard structures associated with the pleasure piers and the main buildings of the beach resort towns. The architecture of these buildings evolved as the attitude of the beach-goers changed from the Victorian era and mindset of the late nineteenth century to the exotic architecture that conveyed a message less elite and more pleasure-seeking. To understand the evolution of these buildings is to understand the evolution of the pleasure pier architecture of the early twentieth century in Southern California as a whole.

The architecture of these pleasure piers evolved from the Victorian and Neoclassical styles to the Exotic Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. The architectural styles evoked the changing mindset of the pleasure pier atmosphere and the societal standards of the beach resort in Southern California.

VICTORIAN & NEOCLASSICAL STYLES

The pleasure pier architecture in Southern California from the late 1880s to the turn of the century was a Victorian era style. Hotels and piers were adorned with Queen Anne features such as bay windows, hipped and gabled roofs, and tasteful asymmetry. The beach resort was still a place of required propriety and cultural enlightenment. The architecture was

academically pleasing and the philosophy behind it evoked character defining features of Victorian ideals: beauty, elegance and elite.

The Arcadia and Redondo Hotels were large buildings with ballrooms and elegant baths and bedrooms that held conventions and meetings for the upper class who came to resort at the beach. These buildings had features of the Queen Anne style. Character defining features were asymmetrical facades; round, square or polygonal towers; partial, full or wraparound porches; steeply-pitched roofs; various wall textures such as patterned shingles; classical features such as columns and dentils; as well as spindle work or gingerbread ornamentation.

Another early style used during this time was the Neoclassical style used in the Long Beach Plunge. This architectural style has character defining features of a façade dominated by a prominent full-height porch supported by classical columns; as well as a typically symmetrical façade flanked with side wings and porches. Other architectural features include roof-line balustrades.

These styles reflected a time in pleasure pier architecture when modesty was the utmost virtue, the upper echelons of society resorted at the beach and attempted to provide education to the masses through Chautauqua assemblies. The architecture reflected this elite attitude toward how to vacation at the beach. Victorian and Neoclassical architecture are American styles used in high style residential houses. These styles were used by the elite of society. It is telling who dictated the beach atmosphere by virtue of the architecture. In his book, *The American Amusement Park*, Dale Samuelson writes,

The genteel self-conscious elite that had assumed cultural leadership throughout most of the nineteenth century, did not give up that position easily. Ruling- at least in their minds- as the official culture, they believed that all activities, both work and leisure, should ultimately be constructive. These

reformers, as they became to be known, took it upon themselves to instruct, refine and discipline this new urban-industrial society by preaching the Victorian values of moral integrity, self-control, and industriousness to the masses.⁶⁹

Dressed in full garb, modesty was still a virtue even at the beach. Bath houses had separate baths for men and women. These values reflected the Victorian mindset of the turn of the twentieth century. As such, the early pleasure piers were still places of learning and natural enchantment.

EXOTIC REVIVAL STYLE

In England, exotic and international architecture was prevalent along the seaside architecture from the early 1800s, when Brighton Pier was established as the first pleasure pier in England. The grand exotic and oriental architecture of this pleasure pier was designed by architect John Nash for the Prince Regent. One author on seaside architecture wrote, “According to Nash, it was the Prince who decided on the “Hindoo style” of the Pavilion’s exterior ‘in the expectation that the turban domes and lofty pinnacles might from their glittering and picturesque effect, attract and fix the attention of the Spectator.’”⁷⁰ The Brighton Pavilion and pleasure piers reflected the romantic mood of the seaside resort. This kind of architectural style evokes a sense of the seaside being another place entirely, a fantasyland.

The American Exotic Revival style was influenced by several foreign styles, particularly Egyptian and Moorish architecture. This style was typically used in hotels, theaters and

⁶⁹ Samuelson, 11.

⁷⁰ Gray, 91.

garden pavilions; in short: places of pleasure. It is no surprise that Southern California's pleasure piers embraced this architecture in the early twentieth century in its seaside architecture. Fred Gray, author of Seaside Architecture, writes,

Western seaside resorts have always sought to provide out-of-the-ordinary experiences and, particularly from the early twentieth century, architecture was used to intimate other exotic and pleasurable places and times. Visiting the seaside came to mean not only journeying to the edge of the land – in itself a unique experience – but also encountering a fantasy architecture designed to transport users to alternative worlds.⁷¹

By the early 1900s, the mentality and ambiance of the beach resort evolved into a place of fantasy and fun. Catering more to the burgeoning middle class of America, the next generation of architecture expressed notions of exotic enchantment, international wonder and overall a philosophy of pure American fun. The pleasure piers had changed from places of the elite to amusement parks that appealed to the masses. Chautauqua assemblies failed and the American population wanted to play.

The Ocean Park and Venice Bath Houses of the early 1900s looked like exotic Arabian and Venetian palaces. The Redondo Beach Pavilion was a huge building with Moorish style architecture. These examples of exotic architecture made going to the beach a trip to another country; an escape from typical America. The beach resort of Southern California was marketed as another world unto itself. Character defining features are ogee arches, onion domes, prominent entryways with intricate ornamentation, towers and exotic ornamentation.

⁷¹ Ibid.

SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE

By the 1920s, Spanish Colonial architecture was well-established as the defining architecture present not only in beach resorts of Southern California but everywhere in the southwestern United States. Several historians have noted that the Panama-Pacific Exposition at Balboa Park, San Diego in 1915 spurred the Spanish Colonial Revival style epidemic that is so characteristic of American Southwest architecture. The Balboa Inn is a good example of this architectural style. Character defining features include a prominent arched entryway, arched windows, light-colored stucco siding, red tile roofs, decorative chimney tops, flat or low-pitched roofs, and squared towers. This architectural style was not only used in major resort buildings but also in residential and commercial architecture. It is the main architectural style of Southern California and reflects the history of the American Southwest.

The beach resort in Southern California had several components: the pleasure pier and the buildings surrounding. Each served a pleasure-seeking purpose and each was designed to evoke emotion. The styles of seaside architecture in Southern California in the early twentieth century reflect a high style architecture which evokes moods of pleasure, relaxation and escape from the everyday. The history of pleasure piers and the evolution of a small wooden jetty to an amusement park over the ocean transformed the recreation of the beach resort in Southern California in the early twentieth century.

CHAPTER 5: PLEASURE PIER ARCHITECTURE TODAY

The pleasure piers of today have substantially changed from the early twentieth century beach resort era. The buildings have changed from large-scale exotic palaces to souvenir shops and boutiques. Entertainment venues have changed from roller coasters to small restaurants and music venues. The piers themselves have become substantially smaller in size and do not jut out into the ocean as far as their predecessors. The architecture of the pleasure pier today has changed somewhat from grand palaces with flags and lavish ornamentation to modest-sized shops with a contemporary vernacular style.

The pleasure pier is no longer a place of fantasy and wonder, but more of a place of leisurely shopping and a nightlife catering to the bar crowd. The shoreline is no longer covered by giant piers, but has been given back to the sandy white beaches. (Figure 5.1)



Figure 5. 1 Santa Monica beach today

In Los Angeles and Orange Counties, very few buildings remain of the early pleasure pier era. The piers themselves are the fifth or sixth generation of the original and have all been completely reconstructed. No original bath houses from the early beach resort remain and, for sanitation reasons, they have been replaced with chlorinated pools. Large pavilions have been replaced with smaller buildings that do not block ocean views. Many hotels remain, but they are mostly later hotels from the late 1920s, after the peak of the pleasure pier era. Most of these buildings have become city, state or even national landmarks. The piers are all municipally owned and the buildings are privately owned. (See Appendix)

In Los Angeles and Orange Counties especially, these once small beach resort towns have become a homogeneous residential and commercial area along the entire coast of Southern California. Because all of the neighborhoods in Los Angeles are connected, there is no longer a sense of “getting away.” The beach towns have become very densely-populated. The summer is still a popular time for tourists, but the crowds are dispersed in the multiple

hotels along the beach, and the pier is only a small attraction in the contemporary beach resort.

All of the beach towns cater to different crowds in Southern California. Beach towns such as Santa Monica, Manhattan, Hermosa, Huntington and Seal Beaches have a large population of surfers and a younger crowd drawn to the bar scene and nightlife. (Figure 5.2)



Figure 5. 2 Seal Beach Pier today alongside a surfer

Places like Redondo Beach are a much quieter community of retirees and small young families. Venice has gained the reputation of being a very bohemian artist community, and those that traverse to the beach should be expected to see the unexpected. Long Beach has lost most of its beach to overdevelopment and has lured today's tourist through chain stores and outdoor shopping malls. (Figure 5.3) Restaurants, bars and fishermen adorn most of these piers. (Figure 5.4)



Figure 5. 3 The New Pike, Long Beach



Figure 5. 4 Redondo Beach Pier today

Several of the beach cities have historic preservation ordinances but have yet to incorporate a sophisticated and appropriate system of preserving buildings according to their

city's needs and history. Most of the buildings that are protected and recognized on their local historic registers are those individual buildings of either outstanding architecture, buildings relating to an important person or event in history, or are buildings of a certain type that express a broad pattern of history that is unique to the state, the region or city. In some instances, contemporary monuments have been erected to signify the importance of the pier, such as in Newport Beach.



Figure 5. 5 View looking inland from the Newport Beach Pier

Because of this, there are several additional aspects of preservation that can still be utilized for these buildings. The next chapter will offer recommendations to preserving the historic remnants (or the memory) of these pleasure piers of the early twentieth century.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The pleasure pier of Southern California underwent an evolution from the 1880s to the present. The earliest piers reflected a Victorian mindset of modesty and catered to the elite. Chautauqua Assemblies were established to educate the lower classes. The Victorian architecture boasted notions of upper class and high style. Soon, it was realized that the more lucrative approach to the pleasure pier business was through amusements and fun.

At its peak, the pleasure pier was one of the most popular sights to see in Southern California. Giant piers boasting roller coasters and amusements, all in competition with one another, adorned the Southern California coastline. Thousands of people came to the beach daily; the promenades were swamped with groups of people ready to have fun at the beach. Large-scale bath houses, pavilions and hotels adorned with outlandish décor and exotic styles faced the beachfront. All types of entertainment could be found at the beach; the possibilities were endless.

With the advent of depression and war, the beach resort towns of Southern California experienced a slow decline. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, the shoreline was transformed for war defense. The opening of Disneyland was the final blow to the pleasure piers of Southern California. Redevelopment from the 1950s and 1960s onward transformed most of these beach towns to quieter residential areas which reclaimed their

white sandy beaches. Most of the larger piers were destroyed in fires or by neglect.

Revitalization of the shoreline planning by the beach cities incorporated more modest styles and smaller structures so as not to obstruct the ocean views. The pleasure pier became smaller and more modest, maybe featuring a restaurant or small pavilion at the end of the pier.

Today pleasure piers still remain but play a smaller role in the beach resort atmosphere. Shops and boutiques have replaced amusement venues and roller coasters. The atmosphere of the pleasure pier is more relaxed and leisurely. Fishing, surfing or simply playing at the beach by the pier are the main activities available to the public. The architecture of the beach resort around the pleasure pier has always reflected the role and atmosphere and societal standards of what the beach resort means to the public.

Preservation of the early twentieth century pleasure piers of Southern California is important to the history of the area. Southern California has grown tremendously since its inception. The beaches and beach resort towns have transformed from vacation spots to extensions of the City of Los Angeles. The architecture remaining today in the beach resorts are no longer differentiated from architecture inland. At one point in history, going to the beach in Southern California was the equivalent to travelling to another land. The historic architecture of the early twentieth century beach resorts is mostly gone, but for future generations, there should be participation from historical societies and organizations, future planning tools and memorials to what Southern California's beach towns once looked like and how that important time in history made Southern California the popular metropolis it is today.

Architectural Recommendations and Design Guidelines for Current Pleasure Piers

The beach pier architecture of today reflects the needs and wants of the beach-going crowd in the twenty-first century. In the early twentieth century, the beach-goers wanted to come to a place of fantasy and carnival. The beach goers of today want to shop and take leisurely strolls along the piers. The pleasure pier is still a main feature of the shoreline, but it does not have the dominant role it once had. For this reason, the architecture of the early twentieth century is not appropriate for the pleasure pier for today.

The architecture should reflect the atmosphere of the pleasure pier of today. For each city this will be different, according to the beach resort area. For example, Santa Monica is still an amusement park, so the architecture should reflect a fantasy amusement style with bright colors and catching signs. For the other beach resort towns, entertainment and leisure is more modest and subtle. Small boutiques, shops, bars and restaurant should reflect a leisurely atmosphere and architectural style. The architecture should be interesting and the storefronts should reflect the type of business inside. Large signs should be placed on the storefronts. General design guidelines can include:

- One-and two-story buildings: obstructing ocean views with high-rise apartments and condominiums may not be appropriate for today's coastal line. These buildings will overwhelm the beach environment. One and two-story buildings are more appropriate and will not obstruct ocean views.
- Storefront shopping: The Pike and Ocean Front Walk had storefront shopping. The tourist to the beach could walk along the boardwalk and easily access shops that had

groundfloor storefronts with large display windows. Several beach cities still have boardwalks and shops along them.

- **Public Transportation:** Southern California's density is famous for its expansive highway system. In the 1940s the streetcar and railway system was dismantled, leaving Southern California residents to brave the L.A. freeways. Since the beaches are a main tourist attraction to Southern California, a light rail or trolley system should be reinstalled at least for the coastal region. This would alleviate traffic along the Pacific Coast Highway (the major road along California's coast); and perhaps decrease the demand for street parking.

Other Suggested Guidelines

- **Adaptive Reuse** of original structures for the present businesses

Pleasure Pier Exhibits on Site

Also, a small exhibit should be placed somewhere near the pier or where the pier once stood. In these exhibits should be historic photographs of what the pleasure pier area once looked like as well as a brief history of the development of the beach resort town, particularly around the pier. These exhibits should be placed in an area that is accessible to the public. Any artifacts should be placed with the local historical society or in a library with an appropriate poster description of the artifact or artifacts.

Thematic National Register Nomination

The history of the pleasure piers of Southern California is an opportunity to explore the possibility of a thematic National Register nomination for the buildings that are still extant today. Most of the outstanding examples of early beach resort architecture have been listed

on the National Register, but have not been placed in a thematic grouping. This possibility may allow for other buildings and piers to be placed on the National Register under this provision. In the same way historic districts can include buildings that are not able to portray their significance on an individual level; this thematic grouping will allow honorable designation for less significant buildings included.

The California Register of Historic Places may also provide this honorable designation. Those designations that are on the National Register are automatically placed on the California Register. This will then add to the audience of tourists and or historians who are interested in this subject.

Southern California Pleasure Pier Trail

Along with a thematic grouping nomination is the possibility of a Southern California Pleasure Pier Trail, which could be a booklet outlining and mapping a route of the pleasure piers and their buildings from the early twentieth century in Orange and Los Angeles Counties. This could also extend to San Diego County, with additional research on their pleasure piers and beach resort buildings such as Hotel Del Coronado. Along with highlighting a group of buildings and piers that may or may not still be standing, this trail can boost tourism along the Southern California shoreline. There are at least 16 monuments (original, altered or reconstructed) of this pleasure pier era in Los Angeles and Orange Counties alone. (See Appendix) Further study in Ventura County (north of L.A. County) as well as San Diego County (south of Orange County) could increase this number, resulting in a potential four-county coastal trail. Plaques, markers or small exhibits can be used to highlight these sites.

Southern California Pleasure Pier Historical Society

In conjunction with the local and/or city historical societies, an additional historical society or organization can be established that focuses solely on the pleasure pier era of the early twenty-first century. This organization can be responsible for further documentation and perhaps publication of this and topics related. This organization can also be home to a physical exhibit or museum that stores and preserves artifacts and photographs of this era. With an organization such as this, education and awareness will be spread, attention to extant yet endangered resources will be identified and highlighted, and possible preservation efforts and lobbying could be undertaken. An organization such as this would be an invaluable resource not only to Southern California but to the entire State of California as it provides additional information on the history of this young state and could stimulate heritage tourism.

A Future Planning Tool for the Beach Cities

A study of the history of the early twentieth century pleasure pier and beach resort architecture provides awareness these nearly extinct historic monuments. More than anything, it provides education to the generations of people who were unable to see these original structures and buildings. Also, it can be used as a planning tool for cities to better understand the historic context of the Southern California shoreline and the role their city played in the history of this era. With this knowledge, planning departments can then make well-informed decisions on future development of the shoreline, the preservation and/or commemoration of their city's historic pleasure pier and beach resort buildings, tourism development strategies, and an opportunity for additional documentation on this topic.

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- Long Beach: 1895, 1888, 1898, 1902, 1905, 1908, 1914-1949
- Seal Beach: 1931
- Newport Beach: 1912



List of Repositories:



- Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles
- Seal Beach Public Library, Seal Beach
- Long Beach Public Library, Long Beach
- Santa Monica Public Library, Santa Monica
- Newport Beach Public Library, Newport Beach
- Laguna Beach Public Library, Laguna Beach
- Redondo Beach Public Library, Redondo Beach
- Venice Beach Public Library, Venice Beach
- San Diego Public Library, San Diego
- Seal Beach Historical Society, Seal Beach
- The Historical Society of Long Beach, Long Beach
- Redondo Beach Historic Society, Redondo Beach
- Santa Monica Historical Society, Santa Monica
- Newport Beach Historical Society at Sherman Library, Corona Del Mar
- California State Library, California History Room, Sacramento



APPENDIX




Seaside Resources Remaining from the Early Twentieth Century (from 1880s-1930)




Los Angeles & Orange Counties



<i>Resource</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Building/ Structure Type</i>	<i>Year Built</i>	<i>Historic Designation</i>	<i>Picture Today</i>
Santa Monica Pier	Santa Monica, Los Angeles County	Pier	Original Pier, 1909 Current Pier, 1980	Declared a Santa Monica City Landmark, 1976	
Santa Monica Looff Hippodrome	Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica, Los Angeles County	Three-story building built to house the Looff Carousel	1916, by Charles I. D. Looff	Building Declared a National Historic Landmark in 1987	


Venice Beach Pier, Venice Beach	Venice Beach, City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County	Pier	Original Pier, 1904 Current Pier, 1997	No historic designation; no historic reconstruction	
“The Venice Arcades” Address: 67-71 Windward Avenue: originally called that Windward Promenade	Venice, but in the jurisdiction of the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County	One, two and three-story buildings on Windward Avenue that had a colonnade along the ground floor storefronts	c. 1904	Adopted as a Historic Resource by the City of Los Angeles in 1991	

Manhattan Beach Pier, Manhattan Beach	Manhattan Beach, Los Angeles County	Pier	Original Pier, 1920 Current Pier, restored 1900s	State Historic Landmark, 1995	
Hermosa Pier, Hermosa Beach: Pier Avenue	Hermosa Beach, Los Angeles County	Pier	Original built 1904		

Redondo Beach Pier, Redondo Beach: Torrance Avenue	Redondo Beach, Los Angeles County	Pier; one part in the shape of a horseshoe (Endless Pier); and a fishing pier connecting (Monstad Pier)	1993-1995	No historic designation; rebuilt in the same style as the original piers (7 th generation)	
Blackstone Hotel: 330 W. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach	Long Beach, Los Angeles County	Six-story apartment hotel building	1923	City of Long Beach Historic Landmark	
Ocean Center Building: 110 W. Ocean Boulevard	Long Beach, Los Angeles County	High-rise office building; lower archway linked with the Pike	1929	City of Long Beach Historic Landmark	

Cooper Arms Apartments: 455 E. Ocean Blvd.	Long Beach, Los Angeles County	Twelve-story high-rise apartment building with a basement that contained facilities for beach bathers	1923	City of Long Beach Historic Landmark	
Villa Riviera: 800 E. Ocean Blvd.	Long Beach, Los Angeles County	Fifteen-story high-rise apartment that used to be a hotel	1929	City of Long Beach Historic Landmark, National Register of Historic Places, 1996	
Seal Beach Pier, Main Avenue, Seal Beach	Seal Beach, Orange County	Pier	1984	No historic designation; reconstructed in 1984	

Seal Beach Red Car Museum: Electric Avenue near Main Street, Seal Beach	Seal Beach, Orange County	Original Pacific Electric Red Car No. 1734	1925	Now the headquarters of the Seal Beach Historical & Cultural Society; Orange County Historic Site, 1976	
Newport Pier, Newport Beach	Newport Beach, Orange County	Pier	1940	No Historic designation; rebuilt in 1940	

Balboa Pavilion: 400 Main Street, Newport Beach	Balboa Peninsula, Orange County	Two-story dance hall and restaurant	1906	California state Landmark, 1968; National Register of Historic Places, 1984	
Balboa Inn: 105 Main Street, Newport Beach	Balboa Peninsula, Orange County	Three-story hotel	1929	California state Landmark; National Register of Historic Places, 1986	