

IMAGES  
of America

# HUNTINGTON BEACH

## CALIFORNIA



Chris Epting



*PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY AND WARNER, TODAY. (Photo by author.)*

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# Huntington Beach, California

Chris Epting

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*I would like to dedicate this book to Alicia Wentworth. Alicia first came to Huntington Beach in 1947. In 1961 she became Deputy City Clerk and in 1973 was appointed City Clerk. After retiring in 1988, the City Council appointed her City Historian, which is an understatement. My son Charlie and I have spent some valuable mornings and afternoons with Alicia, looking through photos and asking questions, all the while listening to vivid recollections of what this city used to be like. Thank you, Alicia.*

*Huntington Beach would not be the same without you.*

*(Photos compliments of Alicia Wentworth, City Historian, except where indicated.)*



*MAIN AND CLAY STREETS, C. 1950.*

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Working on this book has been a wonderful experience for me, one that brought me closer to this special city and to those around me.

Thanks to my wife Jean, for her overall patience and the shuttling back and forth to Bill's Camera for whatever it was I needed that particular day. As usual, I couldn't have it without her. To my daughter Claire, for patiently watching me shoot photos off the pier before we kicked our shoes off and played in the ocean. To my son Charlie, for exploring with me, helping line up the "Then and Now" shots, taking some of the pictures, and just for being such an incredible, all-round helper. How a seven-year-old child can possess such a keen, innate interest in history is beyond my comprehension. Though just maybe, (as we uttered to each other more than once during this adventure), "Like father, like son." To historian Alicia Wentworth, for her knowledge, kindness, and good company. To City Clerk Connie Brockway, for the gracious use of her office while Charlie and I pored over old photos in her office. To Keith Ulrich at Arcadia Publishing, for his guidance, tips, and advice. To the ladies at the International Surfing Museum, for letting me shoot some photos there and for running such a cool place. To surfing legend Corky Carroll, for hanging with me for a few so I could get the details right. To the guys at Bill's Camera for turning stuff around so fast. To my mom and sisters just because.

And to each one of you holding this book right now.

Thank you so much for your interest.

Images of America  
Huntington Beach



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# INTRODUCTION

Though we've only lived here for little over a couple of years, it's hard for me to imagine my family and I not spending the rest of our lives in Huntington Beach. The weather is near perfect; never too hot or too cold. All year, gentle breezes carry the scent of the ocean throughout the city and with it, the innocence and promise of summer. It's situated close to all of the area's major cities from Los Angeles to San Diego to Palm Springs. Points of interest including Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm, and my personal favorite, Anaheim Stadium, are all no more than a 30-minute drive.

The snow-covered San Gabriel Mountains provide a picturesque backdrop in winter, when daytime temperatures can still linger in the 60s and 70s. On clear days, even though it's 26 miles out at sea, Catalina Island seems close enough to touch. While it's been developed more than I'm sure some of the locals would prefer, Huntington Beach still retains a good amount of small town, beach city charm. The beaches are roomy and far-reaching, yet within a mile are some of Orange County's most beautiful parks and recreational areas. There are lots of great restaurants and hangouts. And if you like to surf, well, this town is called "Surf City" for a reason.

It's a unique place with an interesting history, which is why I started looking for some sort of historical picture book when I moved here. I love books like that. Lots of pictures. Good captions. Books you can wander with. But one didn't exist. So I thought I'd propose the idea to a publisher who creates books like that. And so here we are. Now, had I found a book like this in the first place, I'd want it to have brief history of Huntington Beach. So here goes.

The birth of this city occurred more than 100 years ago. Originally a 30,000-acre Spanish land grant, the Stearns Rancho company ran cattle and horses and raised barley on what is now Huntington Beach. Around 1890, the city was called Shell Beach, becoming Pacific City in 1901 when P.A. Stanton formed a local syndicate and bought 40 acres along the beach. In 1904, the town name was changed to Huntington Beach in honor of H.E. Huntington, who sponsored the extension of the Pacific Electric Railway to the seaside village. Incorporated in 1909, Huntington Beach remained a quiet seaside town until the famous oil boom in the 1920s. Almost every major oil company began producing oil from the rich field below. Wells sprang up literally overnight and in less than a month, the town grew from 1,500 to 5,000 people, and many folks got rich instantly. In fact, many east coasters who were given lots of Huntington Beach land years before as part of an encyclopedia sales promotion now found themselves scrambling to find the deeds that would make many of them rich. In addition to the oil production, Huntington Beach also became known for its agricultural strengths. Produce like lima beans, sugar beets, chili peppers, tomatoes, celery, and more grew easily in the fertile soil. From 1957 to 1960, Huntington Beach exploded in size to 25 square miles. In 1956, construction started on the huge Edison generating plant along Pacific Coast Highway and in 1963, the Douglas Aircraft Systems Center opened. This brought major industry to the city, and nearly 8,000 people were employed at the plant. During the 1960's, Huntington Beach earned the nickname "Surf City" when the popular duo Jan and Dean released the song of the same name. All across the nation, the allure and carefree spirit of the beach lifestyle took root. Today, Huntington Beach still earns its

nickname—it's home to the International Surfing Museum, the U.S. Open Surfing Championships, and some of the best year-round recreational surfing in the country. The famous Huntington Beach Pier, first built in 1904, rebuilt in 1914, 1940, 1988 and finally to its current length in 1992, remains the focal point of the city's Main Street district—a symbol of rejuvenated dreams, hope and determination.

A few details about the book. Whether you live in Huntington Beach or you're just visiting, I've tried to create a book that's fun to wander with. I tried to find some of the best photos available, though I'm sure there are hundreds more hiding in boxes someplace. Although the city's nickname is "Surf City," I did not do an extensive chapter on surfing. There are many great surfing books available, and the surf culture took shape relatively late in the city's historical development. My purpose and intention was to simply gather classic images as a souvenir of the city's earlier history and origin, because to my knowledge, it has not yet been done. While I wish more detailed notations had been recorded on many of the old photos, I found some good source books, most notably the *Historical Data Collection* prepared by Alicia Wentworth, *From Barley Fields to Oil Town* (Claudine Burnett, 1995), and *Huntington Beach, The Gem of the South Coast* (Diann Marsh, 1999). However, there may still be some inaccuracies, which I regret.

Lastly, the day I went out to photograph the final pier shot for the "Then and Now" chapter, my son Charlie and I had Chinese food on the beach. Afterwards, I got the following fortune: "The past is theirs; the future is ours." (Lucky #1, 6, 8, 28, 29, 40)

This struck me as an ironic message to receive the day I was to wrap up shooting photos for this book, which for me, had become a rich, historic journey. Philosophically, I agree with the thought. However, I'd like to believe that this book does sort of let the past become yours, at least for a little while.

Enjoy.

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# One

## **GENERAL HISTORY**

### **BUILDINGS, PEOPLE, AND LANDMARKS**



***OCEAN AVENUE, ABOUT 1909.** Before it was called Pacific Coast Highway, this road was called Ocean Avenue. This view is looking east toward the intersection of Main Street. The “Red Car” is seen at the Huntington Beach train depot on the right, with the Pier Pavilion (later to become the Pier Restaurant) on the far right.*



*MR. BILL MANSKE, C. 1900. One of the earliest area-photographs available, a gentleman identified as “Mr. Bill Manske” poses with his horse and buggy on Main Street near the ocean, c.1900.*



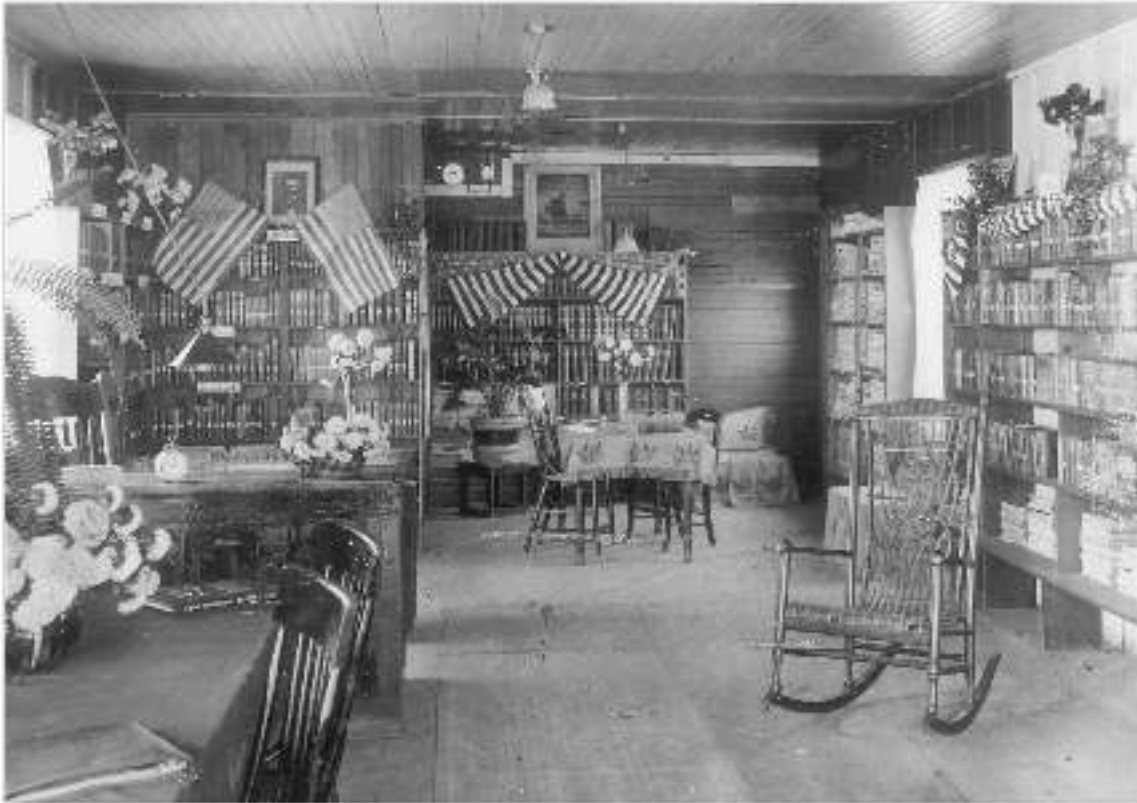
***STUDENTS AT THE FIRST GRAMMAR SCHOOL, ABOUT 1908.*** As these students pose on the steps of the fist grammar school in Huntington Beach, notice that the boys in the front row are barefoot and the girls are not. Supposedly, it was not considered proper behavior for young girls to show their bare feet in public.



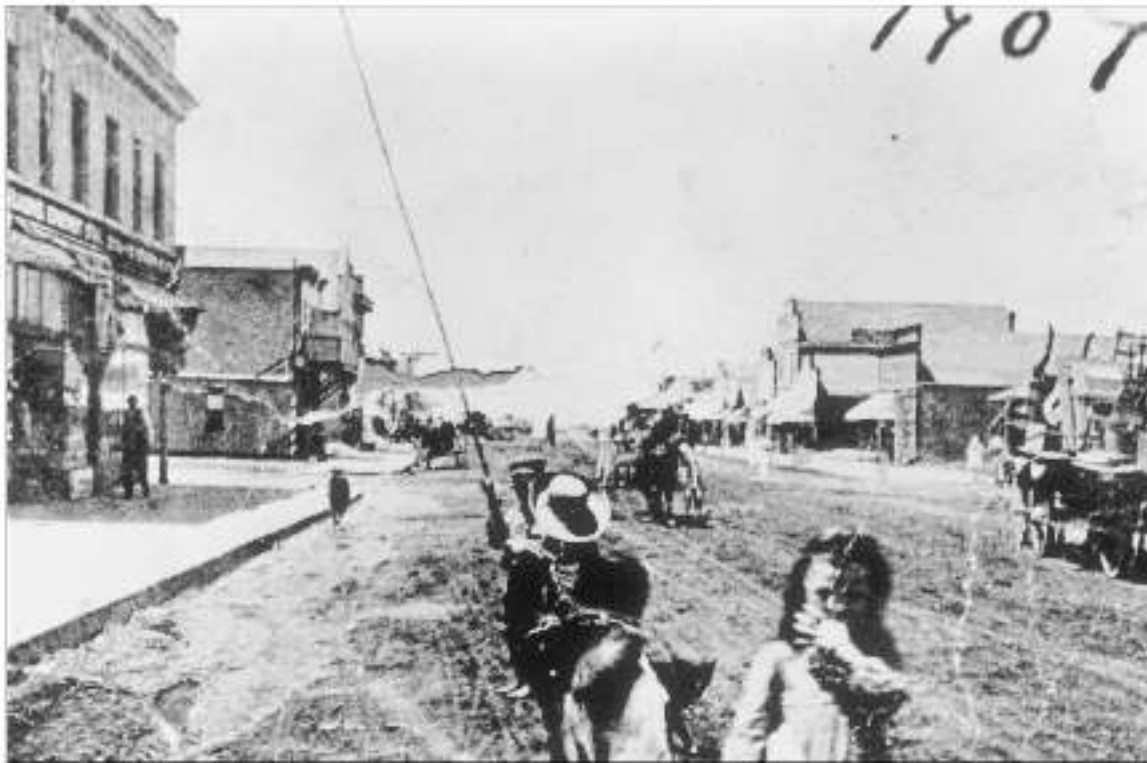
***MAIN AND WALNUT, 1910.*** Some horse and buggies and even a couple of dogs are seen wandering Main Street toward the beach in the quiet, pre-oil era of Huntington Beach. Nothing is left of this

today, save for the scent of the salty sea air.

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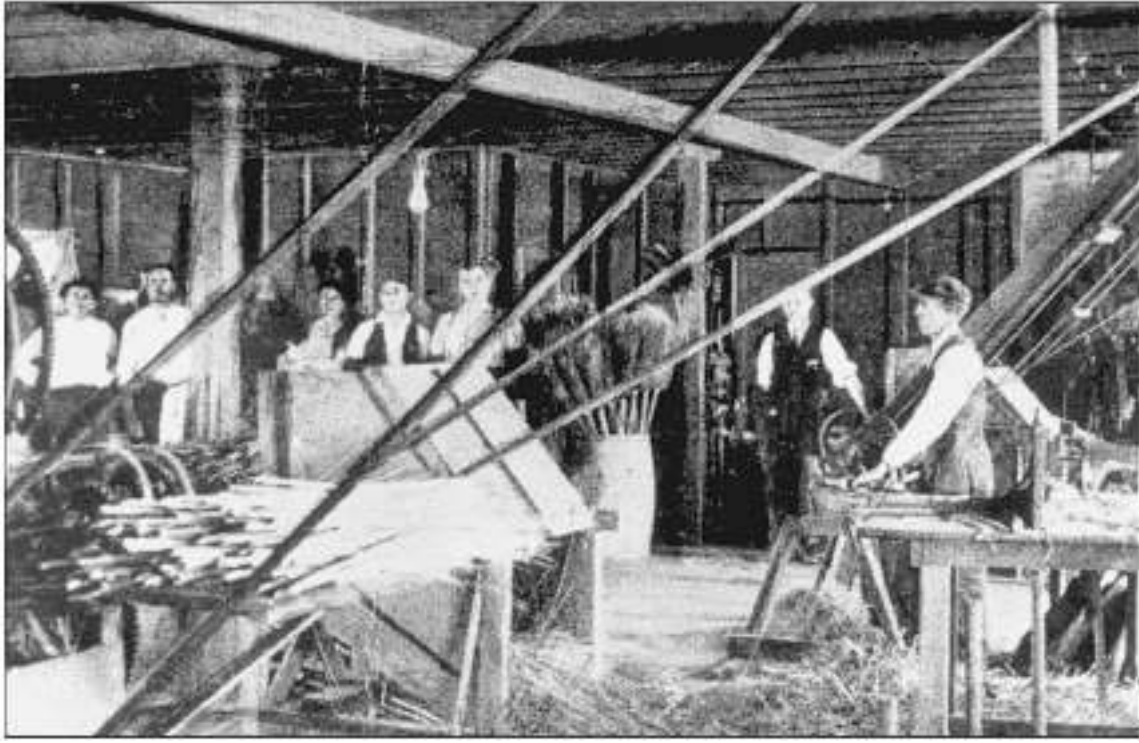
**PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1907.** This is the main room of the first library built in Huntington Beach. Several years later, the Carnegie Foundation would help build the city a bigger and better public library.



**MAIN STREET, 1907.** This shot (looking toward the ocean), though not a clear image, struck me as interesting. Maybe it's the little girl near the center of the frame, who looks as if she might be mugging a bit to the photographer. How strange a contraption a camera must have seemed in 1907!

someone so little.

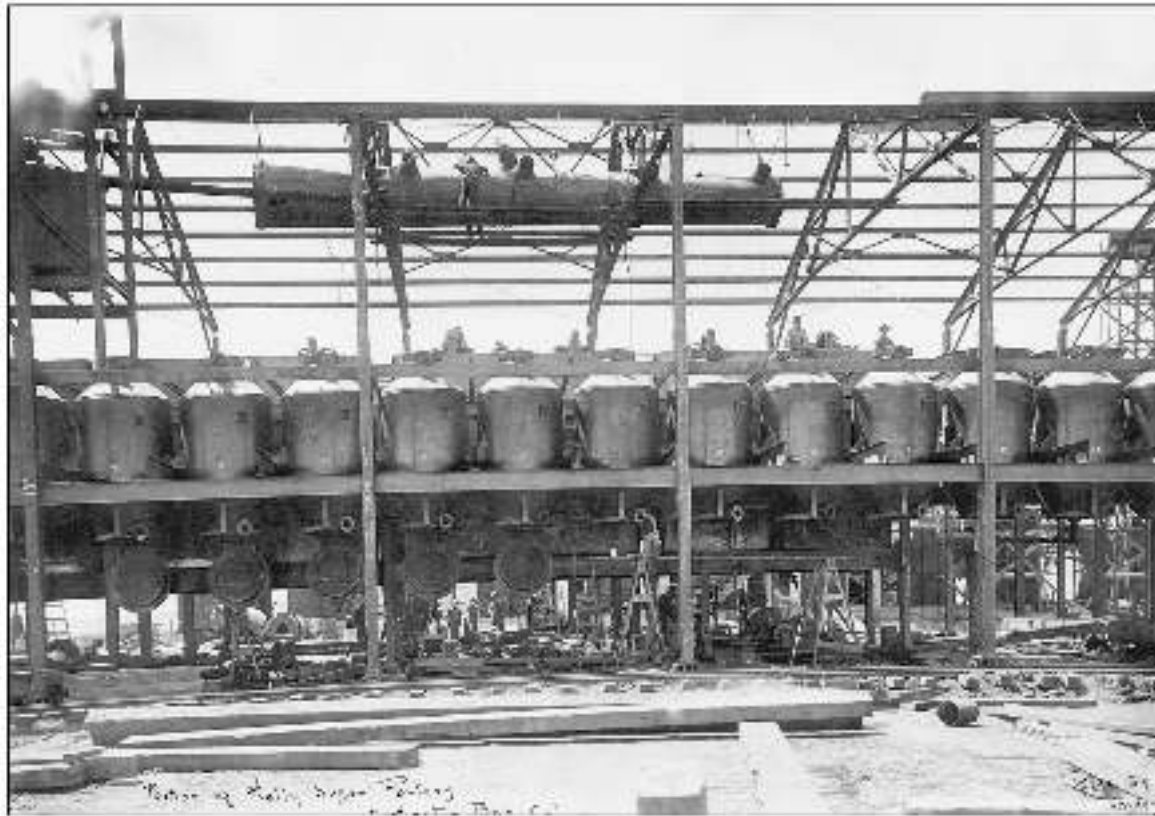
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**HUNTINGTON BEACH BROOM FACTORY, 1910.** Located next to the railroad at Garfield, this company operated from 1906 until it burned down in the mid-1960s.



**HOLLY SUGAR FACTORY AT MAIN AND GARFIELD, 1911.** The Holly Sugar Factory was opened in 1910 and began processing sugar beets in 1910. By the late 1920s, it would be converted to function as an oil refinery.



**HOLLY SUGAR FACTORY, C. 1920.** *These vats represented just one step in the sugar making process once the beets were crushed.*



**HOLLY SUGAR FACTORY, SUMMER, 1911.** *As the picture caption reads, at one time this was the second largest sugar factory in the U.S.*





***“UNOFFICIAL” CITY HALL AT MAIN AND WALNUT, C. 1910.*** W.L. McKenney may have sold groceries out of this old building, but the structure was perhaps best known for being Huntington Beach’s “unofficial City Hall”. This was the gathering place for those wishing to discuss municipal affairs and many who decided to run for city council did so because of discussions held here.



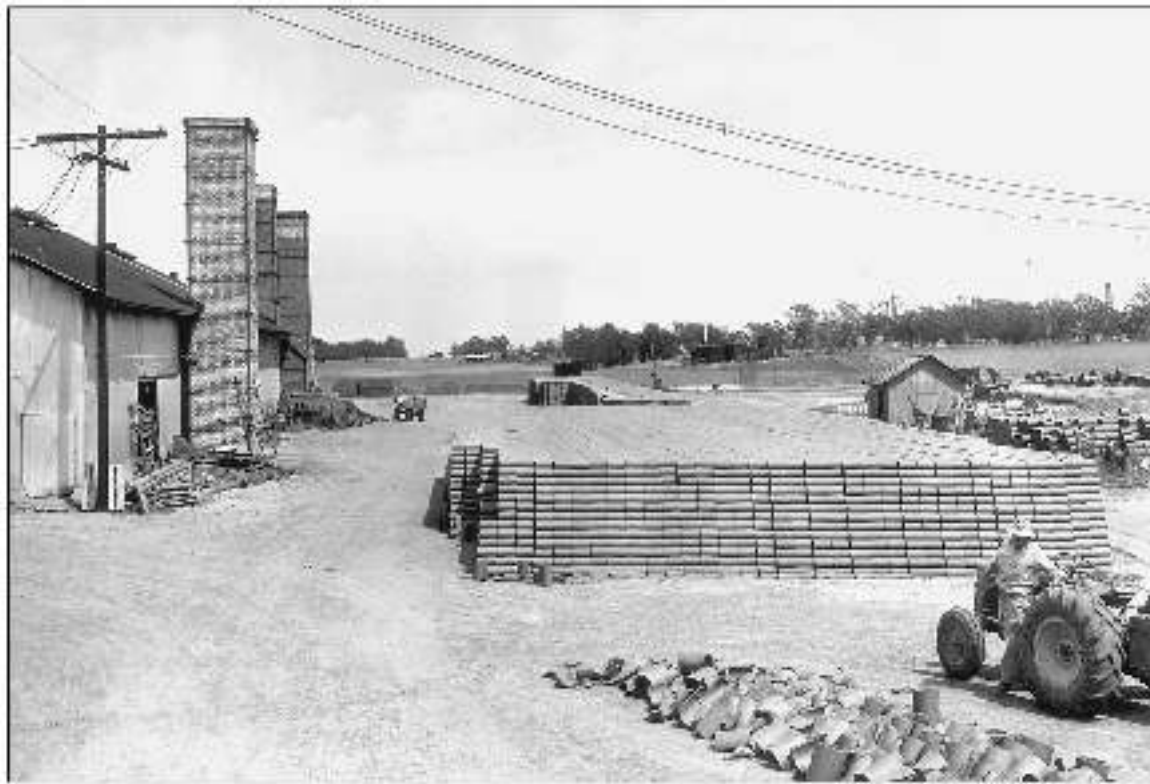
***FIRST SCHOOL BUS, 1910.*** These teenagers are being transported to Huntington Beach Union High School on the town’s first real “school bus.”



***LARGE BEAN WAREHOUSE, C. 1910.*** Just after the turn of the century, Huntington Beach provided substantial agricultural supplies to much of the area, resulting in warehouses like this one, primarily located on the outskirts of town.



***LA BOLSA TILE COMPANY LOCATED AT GOTHARD AND ELLIS, C. 1910.*** At one time, this became the largest clay tile factory west of Chicago, and provided year-round employment for many Huntington Beach residents.



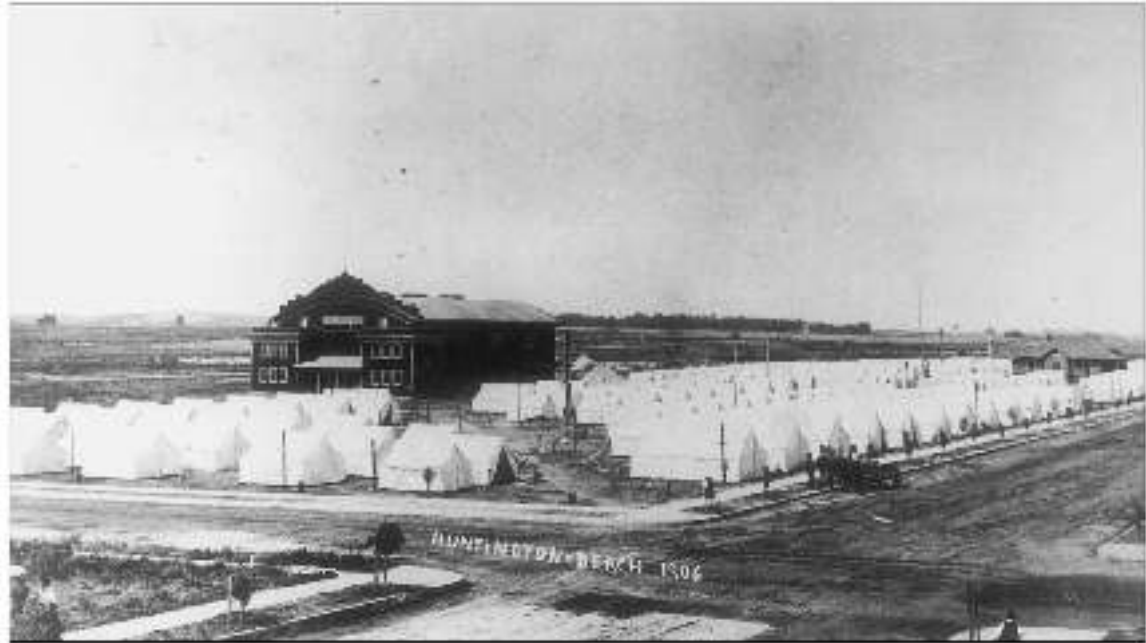
***LA BOLSA TILE COMPANY, C. 1930s.** Here you can see some of the huge stacks of clay tile produced at the plant. Off in the distance on the right, oil wells can be seen.*



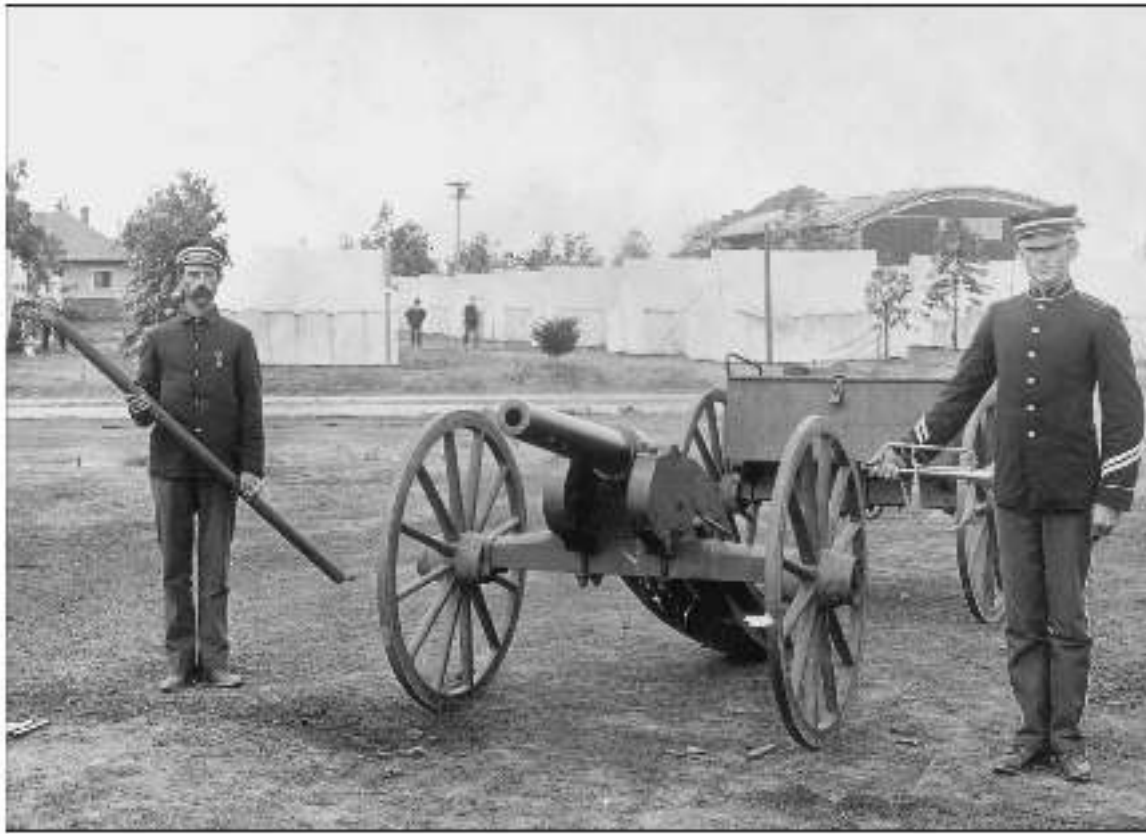
***TENT CITY, C. 1907.** The Women's Christian Temperance Union of Huntington Beach ran a rest cottage for women visitors at the Southern California Methodist Association Tent City campsite during the summers of 1905–1920. As many as 15,000 people gathered to hear major speakers and participate in Bible study.*



***TENT CITY, C. 1910.** In the left of this photo, the Methodist Tabernacle Auditorium is visible. It cost \$1,000 to build and could hold up to 3,000 people.*



***TENT CITY, 1906.** This view from Twelfth Street gives you an idea of how organized this area was. The camp sat in what is now a residential area bordered by Orange and Acacia Avenues and Eleventh and Thirteenth Streets.*



*TENT CITY, C. 1918. Two soldiers at the encampment prepare to fire a cannon during a ceremony.*



*MAIN STREET, 1906. A horse and carriage waits for passengers outside the Huntington Beach Realty Company. Note the ornate hats on the two women at far right.*



**MAIN STREET, 1906.** Looking toward the ocean, the Dameron and Hallicy Meat Market is visible on the right; the Sundbye Department store on the left boasts, “It pays to trade with us.”



**UNIDENTIFIED MAIN STREET LIQUOR STORE, C. 1930.** A few name brands are visible, most notably Coca-Cola, 7-UP, and Wonder Bread.



**VINCENT'S ON MAIN STREET, C. 1912.** This was the Corner Confectionery, owned and operated by Ervin L. Vincent, the town marshal.



**HUNTINGTON BEACH UNION HIGH SCHOOL, 1909.** In 1908, the cornerstone for the new high school was laid and students moved in the next year. The building stood at the corner of North Main



***THE NEWLAND HOUSE, C. 1940s.*** Built in 1898 by W.T. and Mary Newland near the intersection of Beach Boulevard and Adams Avenue, this beautiful two-story farmhouse has been lovingly restored and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Newlands, one of the most notable families in the area, lived here for 54 years. Today, an excellent tour is offered by the Huntington Beach Historical Society.



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