

How Well Do You Know Your Town’s History?



The Manhattan Beach Post Office, built in 1948, is now the location of the Memphis Café at the Beach restaurant.

Abridged from *A Walk Beside the Sea*
By Jan Dennis

The late 1940s was a time for both large and small projects in the business world as well as the cultural world. On a bright sunny day in June 1946, Frank Bauer stood on Sepulveda Boulevard at 2nd Street watching a section of the world’s largest flying boat being transported to Long Beach. The “Spruce Goose” had been built in Culver City in a

time span of 17 months. The plane threaded its way along back streets, down freeways and along city streets like Sepulveda here in Manhattan Beach.

Other projects: the South Bay Civic Symphony Orchestra made its debut, the Soap Box Derby events were held for boys 12-14 years of age, a swimming pool located at 1804 Pine Avenue was built for the young people of the community, and a youth canteen called

the “Teen Time Club” was established in the octagonal building at the end of the pier.

By 1948, according to the returns of the special census taken as of December 2, 1948, Manhattan Beach had a population of 14,641. Of the total, 7,094 were males and 7,547 were females.

With resident numbers moving higher, burdens were put on City services. Thus, the need for more water was necessary. In September 1949, two additional water wells were dug with a capacity of 1,500 gallons each. Construction of wells had been a major item, being carried on all during the previous 10 years. Six additional wells had been incorporated into the City’s water system, making a total of 12 wells to handle the water needs. Six of the older wells were abandoned due to saltwater intrusion. A two million-gallon, reinforced concrete storage reservoir had been also put into commission, holding Colorado River water, which was flooding into the Metropolitan Water District.

Another service was the construction of a new post office, located at 1140-44 Manhattan Avenue. The structure contained an area of 4,800 square feet and was built at a cost of approximately \$30,000. Employing 40 workers, the new post office was designed by John Paul Jones and constructed by Young and Shoemaker. Jones, Young and Shoemaker were residents of Manhattan Beach and well known in their fields. The new structure opened its door in January 1950.

Things were changing, even the old familiar streets. In July 1949, by way of resolution, West Railroad Drive was changed to Valley Drive, and East Railroad Drive became Ardmore Avenue. It was not felt by property owners along the divided streets that Railroad Drive sounded socially acceptable. It was also felt that the two roads had nothing in common. Therefore, they should not both be named Valley Drive. Center Street had become Manhattan Beach Boulevard in 1947.

As the 1940s came to an end, architecture was changing with more demands put on the amenities of the facilities. Nowhere was this more evident than in the development of the new high school.

Property once earmarked for a nursery was found to be the only land large enough for a high school site. There were many obstacles left from previous projects that had to be contended with before the high school could be built. Water wells (one estimated to have been 75-feet deep), irrigation systems and deep oil shafts had to be removed. Utilities, water and sewer lines had to be installed.

In March 1949, plans were approved for the 600 to 700 students at Mira Costa Public High School, formally to be known as Manhattan-Hermosa High School. By May that same year, the groundbreaking ceremony took place. Note: The name “Mira Costa,” meaning “view of the coast,” was submitted by a Redondo Beach High School teacher. Another 85 suggestions for names were submitted by South Bay citizens.

The architectural style featured a series of open one-story buildings where classrooms gave access to a grassy area. The open hallways were designed for an airy uncluttered appearance.

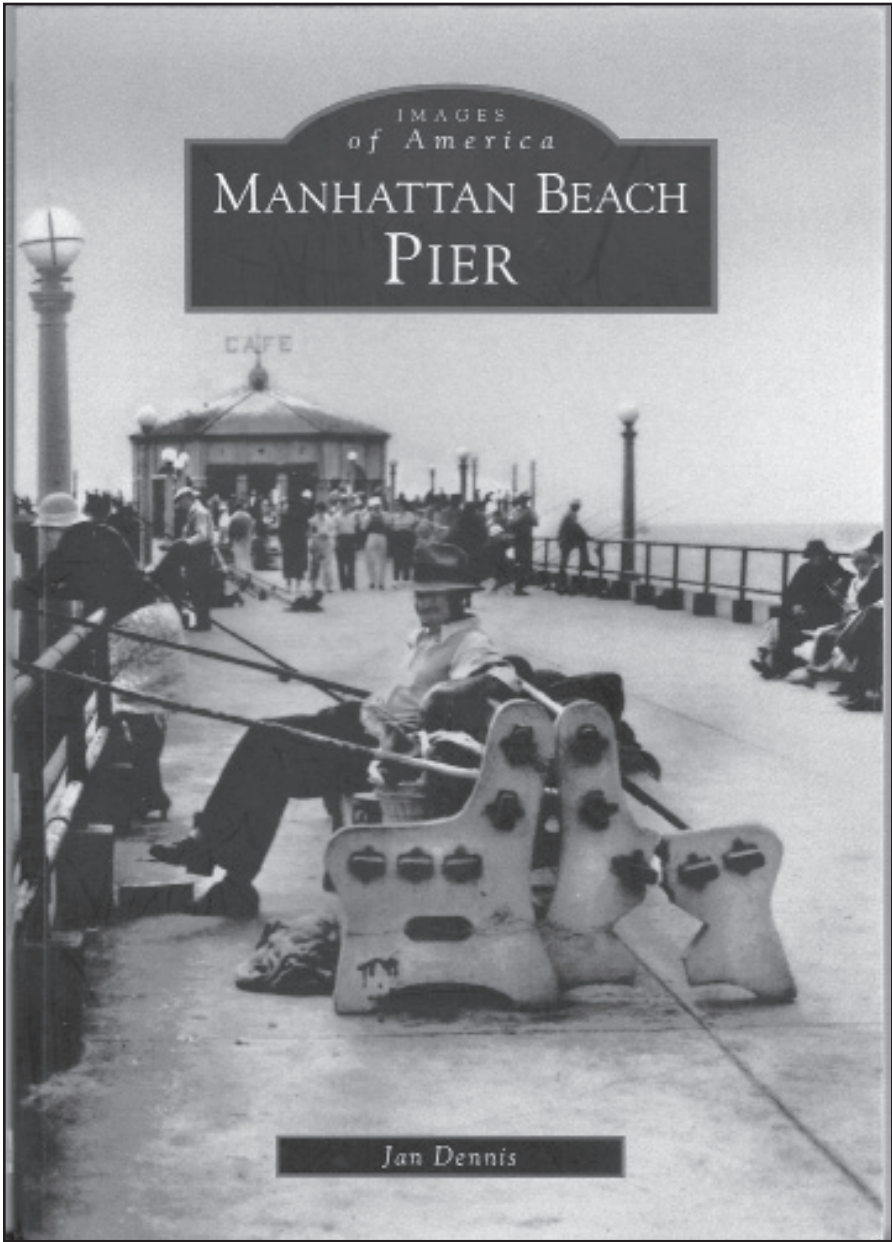
Long rows of rectangular shaped structures formed the first four classroom buildings. Architect Samuel Lunden, well known for his designs of hospitals and a strong believer in sturdy construction, prescribed thick, reinforced concrete and steel walls, while using rows of windows at the upper level of an otherwise blank expanse.

By 1950, Curlett Construction of Long Beach finished construction of the classrooms, locker and shower buildings, a combination assembly/library/study hall building, an administration building, and necessary support buildings. Mira Costa High School opened its doors on August 10, 1950. On September 30, 1950 at 3 p.m., the facility was dedicated with Dr. Roy E. Simpson, State Superintendent of Schools, as the chief speaker. The complex became a four-year high school in 1952.

By the end of the 1940s, building increased at such a pace that the City of Manhattan Beach Building Department was issuing permits for more buildings during a one-month period than it had in an entire year in the past. Building valuations quickly passed the \$6 million mark. This was remarkable when one considers that 90 to 95 percent of construction in the city was residential.

To be continued... •

30TH ANNIVERSARY



Jan Dennis

Come celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Manhattan Beach Oceanographic Teaching Stations - Roundhouse Aquarium, on October 9, 2009 and meet local author and Manhattan Beach historian, Jan Dennis.

Jan will be signing her book, *Images of America, Manhattan Beach Pier*, which will be on sale with a percentage of the sales donated to the Station.

The 6.5 x 9.25 soft covered book contains more than two hundred photographs from

the first pier and development of the teaching station, to the 2002 volleyball activities around the pier.

Many of the historic photographs will also be shown in a Powerpoint presentation.

Seniors from page 4

world of the caregiver. It is the aim of the support group to prevent that, and for the caregivers to see caregiving of a loved one with memory loss as one more step in life’s journey that many others are living through as well. But while caring for the patient, caregivers need to care for themselves, too.

For more information or to attend the caregivers group, call Madonna Newberg at 310-546-1876.

“Renewal Through Art for Seniors,” with instructor Mary Jane Casey, meets on Thursdays from 10:30 a.m. to noon until November 19. You will engage your imagination with a variety of materials and techniques. If you miss the first class but would like to attend, call 310-802-5447.

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