

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH

Bruce's Beach Task Force: History Subcommittee Report

May 3, 2021

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THE PROCESS

The Bruce's Beach history subcommittee was tasked to go through publicly available documents and sources in order to prepare an accurate factual synopsis of the timeline of events that occurred from when the Bruce family acquired their first property in Manhattan Beach in 1912 through the renaming of the park and installation of the Bruce's Beach plaque in 2007.

As part of this process, the subcommittee sought to verify facts and clarify folklore surrounding the events of the eminent domain proceedings in Manhattan Beach in the 1920s. We compared the master's thesis of Robert L. Brigham and doctoral dissertation of Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson, as well as Dr. Jefferson's book, "Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era" with other reports from that time, specifically newspaper articles and government records.

In addition to the body of the report, a timeline of facts has been assembled that is annotated with source documentation as follows. Please note that these annotations are not weighted:

- Eyewitness account (1)
- Interview (other than first-hand/eyewitness) (2)
- Legal document (3)
- Newspaper/magazine report (4)
- Other archival document (5)
- Brigham's thesis (6)
- Allison Rose Jefferson book/thesis (7)

This is by no means a final draft. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and a flood at the Los Angeles Hall of Records, we were unable to obtain documentation needed to clarify many claims. We've noted these instances where appropriate.

This is a "living document" that we are dedicated to updating as more time and resources become available.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1900-1912



Charles and Willa Bruce, Circa 1886. Courtesy of the California African American Museum.

Willa¹ Ann Bruce (b. 1862, Missouri), and her husband, Charles Aaron Bruce (b. 1860, District of Columbia) lived with their son, Harvey (b.1888) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Charles worked as a cook². Between 1900 and 1904, their family moved to downtown Los Angeles and purchased a home at 1024 Santa Fe Avenue.³

During this same time, the town of Manhattan Beach was taking form. Between 1898 and 1901, the area four miles north of Redondo was known as Potencia, Spanish for “power”, and for what an ambitious group of businessmen hoped to harness from the ocean and convert into electricity⁴. The enterprise folded following a winter storm in 1899 that destroyed most of the pier and, thus, presumably, most of the wave motor.⁵

¹ In several legal documents, Mrs. Bruce’s first name was denoted as “Willie” exclusively, with the exception of the 1870 Census and her son Harvey’s 1921 marriage license where she is listed as “William Walker” (her maiden name). Her descendants have clarified that they and others consistently referred to her as “Willa”.

² Year: 1900; Census Place: *Albuquerque, Bernalillo, New Mexico*; Page: 6; Enumeration District: 0009; FHL microfilm: 1240999

³ 1904 LA City Directory, Los Angeles City Directory Co, Inc. Los Angeles, CA. Pg. 211

⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, “Los Angeles and Vicinity: Ocean Power,” December 11, 1897.

⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, “Reported Wreck of the Wright Wave Motor at Potencia-Notes,” January 15, 1899.

In September, 1901, John A. Merrill and his Manhattan Beach Company purchased the land formerly owned by the Potencia Townsite Company, to build a new resort along the Pacific called “Manhattan Beach”.⁶ George H. Peck, Jr. , would buy the area north of the pier from the Manhattan Beach Company in October of the same year, which would be called North Manhattan Beach.⁷ Despite the historic folklore claiming that the town’s name was the result of a coin flip between Peck and Merrill, there is no concrete evidence to support this story. **INSERT PASSAGE FROM MB NEWS and Courtelyou case**

In May, 1912, Mrs. Willa Bruce purchased Lot 8 of Block 5 in Peck’s Manhattan Beach Tract from Los Angeles real estate agent Henry Willard. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that she paid \$1,225 for the 33’ x 100’ parcel between 26th and 27th streets on The Strand, west of Ocean Drive, which was “a high price compared to the cost of nearby lots.”⁸ (*Please note: We were unable to access deeds of comparative properties purchased at this same time to confirm this information for this report. We will update this as soon as that becomes available.*)



(l-r) Meda Simmons, Harvey Bruce, and Willa Bruce, presumably at the first incarnation of Bruce’s Beach in 1912. (Courtesy of the California African American Museum)

An advertisement in the *Liberator* announced that the June 17, 1912, opening of “Bruce Beach Front”, a seaside resort for bathing and fishing would be a “grand affair”⁹. Guests would arrive to find “a small portable cottage with a stand that sold soda pop and

⁶ *Los Angeles Herald*, “MANHATTAN BEACH Another New Resort to Be Opened to the Public”, September 13, 1901.

⁷ Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), 1505, page 119.

⁸ *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, Jun 27, 1912; pg. I15

⁹ *Liberator*, “Bruce Beach Front”, May 31, 1912, p. 5.

lunches,” rented bathing suits and provided access to bathing showers and dressing tents.¹⁰ While her husband, Charles, worked as a dining-car chef on the train running between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, it was 50-year-old Willa who ran the business and interacted with guests.¹¹

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, “great agitation” was observed within a week of opening among white property owners of adjoining land.” Black patrons of the Bruces’ were “confronted by two deputy constables who warned them against crossing the strip of land in front of Mrs. Bruce’s property to reach the ocean.” This forbidden strip of sand owned by George H. Peck, Jr., extended more than half a mile from Peck’s pier to 24th street. It was “staked off” and “No Trespassing” signs were placed, forcing the Bruces’ guests to walk a half mile in either direction to get to the water.

Despite the impediments, Black bathers were undeterred and so was Mrs. Bruce. “Wherever we have tried to buy land for a beach resort we have been refused,” Mrs. Bruce told the *Times*, “but I own this land and I am going to keep it.”¹²

1913-1924

As the popularity of the Bruces’ resort grew within the Black community, some white residents of Manhattan Beach were concerned. In 1915, for example, H.D. Aron wrote to City Clerk Lewellyn Price requesting information on Lot 3, Block 5 in Peck’s Manhattan Beach Tract -- three lots north of the Bruces’ and two lots east. Price responded:

*Confidentially, there is something about that block that is quite a detriment to the neighborhood, and that is that there is a colored family who live the year around on lot 8, which faces the ocean. Every so often they have a coon picnic and it is attended by about seventy-five to one-hundred-and-fifty coon pullman porters and their friends. You can imagine how much this would depreciate property values in that neighborhood. It is the only colored family that lives within the corporate limits of Manhattan. If it wasn’t for that fact, I would consider this a bargain at about the assessed valuation.*¹³

¹⁰ *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, Jun 27, 1912; pg. I15

¹¹ Jefferson, Alison Rose. “Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era.” University of Nebraska Press. 2020. P. 35.

¹² “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, pg. I15

¹³ City Clerk Correspondence between H.D. Aron and Lewellyn Price, October 18, 1915. Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

Despite any neighboring animosity, the Bruces' and their resort flourished. They were able to upgrade from their portable stand to a two-story brick building to accommodate more guests and provide more services.



*Louise and Byron Kenner at Bruce's Lodge
Miriam Matthews Collection/UCLA*



Miriam Matthews Collection/UCLA

On December 25, 1915, the *Manhattan Beach News* reported that “The negro population of Manhattan Beach... have had plans drawn for one of the finest apartment houses in this section of the beach.” It would be two stories and include 30 dressing rooms on the ground floor with completion by summer 1916. The white-plastered building with a red tile roof was to resemble the Sadler building at the Strand and Marine and was slated to cost \$6,000.¹⁴

During the period between 1919-1926, at least six other African Americans purchased property in close proximity to Bruces' resort, four of them between 26th and 27th streets (blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach tract)¹⁵.

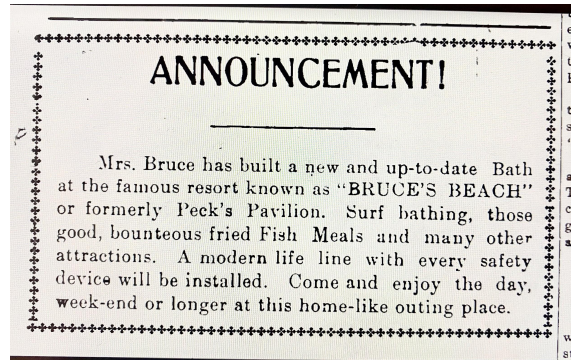
In 1919, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau purchased the southern half of lot 4, block 12. The other half of their lot was purchased by Ms. Elizabeth Patterson in 1922. In 1923, Mrs. Mary Sanders bought lot 6, Block 12, as did Mr. and Mrs. Milton B. and Anna Johnson who had lot 1, Block 12.¹⁶ Additionally, John McCaskill and Elzia L. Irvin as well as Mr. and Mrs. James Slaughter purchased property on the south side of 26th Street, across from the Bruces'. The remaining parcels of land in that area were owned by white property owners and had not been developed by 1924.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Manhattan Beach News*. “Apartment House At Peck Pavilion”, December 25, 1915. P. 4.

¹⁵ Jefferson, p. 37.

¹⁶ This information was obtained from Brigham's thesis, p. 22. We have requested the deeds from the Assessor's Office, but are still waiting to receive them.

¹⁷ It is our goal to find out more information about every family involved in the eminent domain proceedings. Unfortunately, we did not have the time to elaborate on their stories here, but we will.



Advertisement in the California Eagle

Mrs. Bruce expanded her property when she purchased Lot 9 in Block 5, the lot immediately to the south of their existing lot, for \$10 from Charles and Anna Krause and Jessie Carson Drake in 1920.¹⁸ In 1923, they allegedly built on it as well¹⁹. Bruce's Beach had become a popular destination for Black families, providing accommodations and services to enjoy a weekend on the coast.

Miriam Matthews, Los Angeles's first black librarian, said in an essay prepared for the California African American Museum, "You would take the Red Car down ... and spend a day on the beautiful beach or rent a room if you desired.²⁰ Sundays were reserved for school gatherings and families, and the resort offered a getaway overlooking the Pacific Ocean." One guest remembered, "If one tired of the sand and surf, the parlor was available for listening to music or dancing."²¹



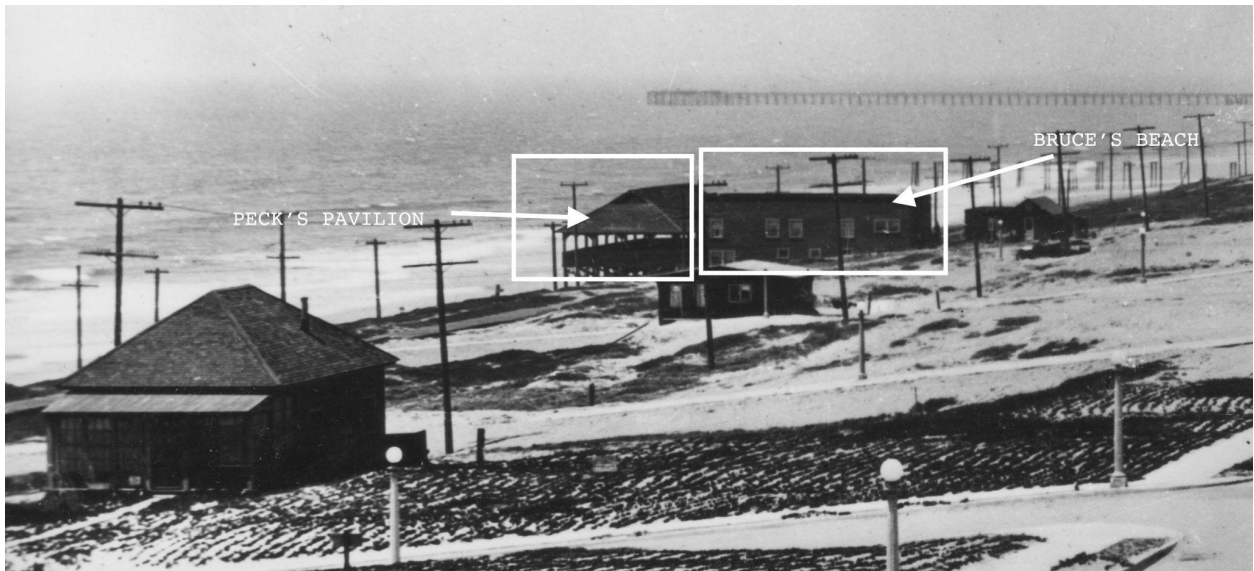
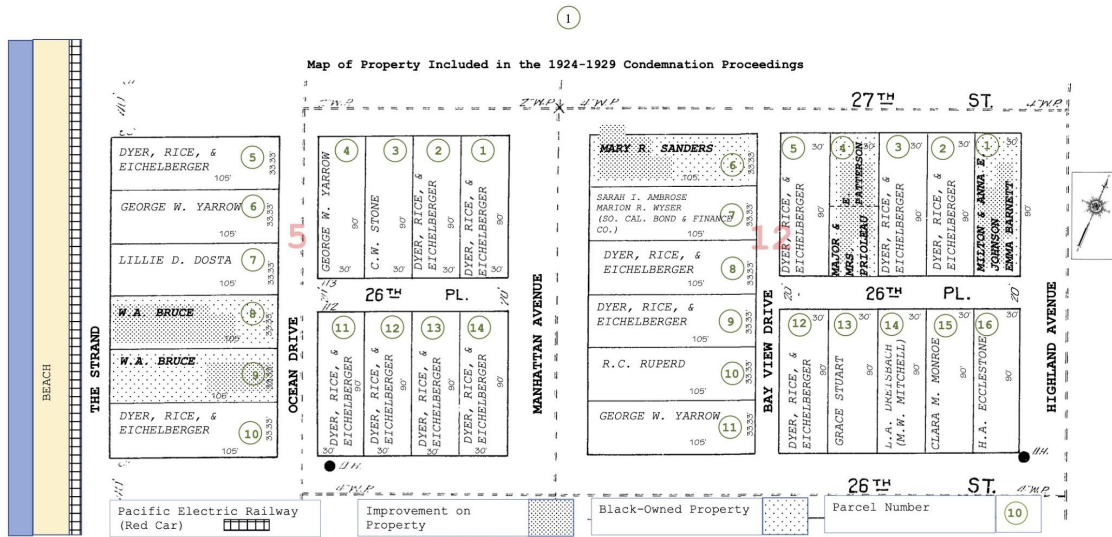
California Eagle newspaper ad

¹⁸ Book of Deeds (Los Angeles) 7351 p. 254.

¹⁹ Brigham, p. 17.

²⁰ Schoch, Deborah. "Erasing a Line Drawn in the Sand", Los Angeles Times; Los Angeles, Calif. [Los Angeles, Calif]19 Mar 2007: B.1.

²¹ Schoch, B.1.



Original Photo Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society

1924-1929: Condemnation Proceedings

George Lindsey²², a real estate agent in the North End of Manhattan Beach who arrived in the town in 1920, played a major role initiating the series of events leading to the condemnation and seizure of property from Black families residing near the Bruces' lodge. Manhattan Beach resident, Robert L. Brigham, whose 1956 thesis "Land Ownership and Occupancy By Negroes In Manhattan Beach, California" has served as a primary resource on the history of Bruce's Beach, later interviewed Mr. Lindsey, who indicated that white landowners feared an "invasion" by members of the African American community.²³ Lindsey told Brigham that "education and co-operation will eventually solve the problem... perhaps in five hundred years or so" and until that time, he was serving the community by working toward a peaceful end to the "negro 'invasion'".²⁴

In the early 20th century, discussion of the potential impact of a "negro invasion" into predominantly white neighborhoods, as Lindsey described, was often reported in the press. An article titled "The Negro Invasion" published in the *New York Times* on December 17, 1911, the year prior to the Bruce's opening of their resort, proclaimed that the presence of Black neighborhoods in the city "will increase and multiply" as long as there were "white landlords in unrestricted areas willing to sell to negro agents."²⁵ The suggested remedy was "a covenant of restriction against the sale or rental to negroes" in order to prevent the inevitable depreciation of property value when white residents, motivated by "prejudice" rushed to sell.

In accordance with this phenomenon, Robert Brigham and Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson wrote about white neighbors' resentment of the Bruce resort's growing popularity and prosperity of its African American owners by the early 1920s and that they were "concerned" about a "Negro 'invasion'" and the impact it could have on property values in Manhattan Beach. Brigham frequently referred to the phrase "Negro 'invasion'" to describe the impetus for the condemnation proceedings. (*Note: Brigham only places the word "invasion" in quotes though it is unclear if that was a word used by Lindsey or by Brigham. Brigham frequently uses the phrase "Negro 'invasion'" when describing the impetus for the condemnation proceedings.*)

²² U.S., *Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

²³ Brigham, p. 44.

²⁴ Brigham, p. 43

²⁵ <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1911/12/17/issue.html>

Lindsey allegedly approached the Board of Trustees²⁶ (what was then the City Council) in 1921, requesting action to discourage African Americans from establishing residency in Manhattan Beach. Brigham wrote: “Although sympathetic, the members of [the Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees] were reluctant to take action lest they go on record as being bigots.”²⁷

In a 1987 letter to the *Beach Reporter*, longtime Manhattan Beach resident Helen Sinsabaugh wrote that Lindsey was concerned over “some highly irregular real estate activities certain agents were operating among people in inland areas occupied by blacks.”²⁸ Sinsabaugh, who lived at 2212 The Strand and was about 14 years old²⁹ at the time condemnation proceedings began, said that the realtor and other civic leaders were concerned about growing racial tensions in the community and met with “black leaders such as church pastors” to discuss the situation.³⁰ The *Venice Vanguard* reported in 1928 that “the town itself has done its best to avoid a negro settlement being formed there.”³¹

Lindsey discovered a legal means by which to shut down the Bruces’ resort through the Park and Playground Act of 1909. Sinsabaugh wrote that Lindsey learned of the “possibility of condemnation procedures for recreational civic use” through a series of real estate courses he had taken at the University of Southern California. He and “several civic leaders” circulated a petition for support of this action and presented it to the Trustees on November 15, 1923.³²

On January 3, 1924, the Manhattan Beach City Council passed ordinance 263, claiming eminent domain for a public park. Although it has been said that Live Oak Park had just been built nearby, that is not accurate. The city accepted a gift of land that would eventually become Live Oak from George H. Peck in 1921³³, but development discussions would not begin there until 1932 and would commence in 1933 using resources from Los Angeles County.³⁴ (Please see [The History of the Park](#) for further explanation.)

²⁶ Depending on when exactly in 1921 this happened, the Board of Trustees consisted of the following: Charles Ashton, Carl Bull, Malcolm Campbell, George Conkling, Richard Launer, Ernest Pentz, J.C. Richardson, W. S. Robbins

²⁷ Brigham, p. 44

²⁸ Helen A. Sinsabaugh, letter. [The Beach Reporter](#). (1987)

²⁹ Year: 1920; Census Place: *Manhattan Beach, Los Angeles, California*; Roll: T625_118; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 542

³⁰ Sinsabaugh, letter.

³¹ "Nearby Town Now Center of Race War". *Venice Vanguard*. February 15, 1928

³² Brigham, p. 45.

³³ Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the City of Manhattan Beach, June 15, 1921.

³⁴ Minutes of Meeting of the City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach, September 1, 1932. Minutes of Meeting of the City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach, February 2, 1933.

On June 19, 1924³⁵, Manhattan Beach enacted new laws with fines and penalties for violating ordinances 273-275, which prohibited new or additional developments of bath houses east of the Pacific Electric right-of-way, gave the Board of Trustees regulating governance over the operation of bath houses, social clubs, theatres, dance halls, pool halls and other places of public amusement, and also the banning of dressing/undressing in cars, tents, and temporary structures.³⁶

These ordinances did not directly and immediately impact the Bruces' existing resort; however, Brigham reported that one of his interviewees remembered that this was clearly aimed at the Bruces and other Black property owners. He added:

*Unsubstantiated, this reaction might appear to be the result of a hyper-sensitive attitude by a member of the persecuted minority. However, the man who is perhaps the most authoritative source among the Manhattan whites of the period confirmed this opinion.*³⁷

During this same meeting, the Trustees also passed “unanimously by all Trustees present”, Ordinance 276, which repealed Ordinance 263, and indicated the intent to acquire by condemnation Blocks 5 and 12 of Peck’s Manhattan Beach Tract³⁸. On September 18, 1924, the City Clerk (Llewellyn Price) reported to the Trustees on the protests that had been filed against the taking of land by condemnation, specifically that “the apparent number of protests filed by owners of the property sought to be condemned were 1 and that 329 owners of property in the district had protested on various grounds”. It stated that the number of lots contained in the district “amounted to approximately 10,000”.³⁹ All protests against the condemnation were deemed insufficient and dismissed.⁴⁰

On October 16, 1924, Manhattan Beach officials passed ordinance 282, which initiated legal proceedings for “acquisition by condemnation for public park purposes of Blocks five (5) and twelve (12) of Peck’s Manhattan Beach Tract...” In November, 1924, the city filed a lawsuit pursuing condemnation of the included 30 lots. Five of these were owned by Black families, and had been built upon with cottages, homes, or, in the Bruces’ case, a two-story building with a restaurant, changing rooms and accommodations. The

³⁵ The Board of Trustees at this time were: President George E. Delavan, Trustees Merritt Crandall, Carl E. Edwards, J.E. Rhind, Cassius Robbins.

³⁶ Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the City of Manhattan Beach, June 5, 1924.

³⁷ Brigham, p. 38-39.

³⁸ Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the City of Manhattan Beach, June 5, 1924.

³⁹ Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the City of Manhattan Beach, September 19, 1924.

⁴⁰ *Manhattan Beach News*. “Important Business at Council: All Park Protests Denied.” September 19, 1924. P. 1

remaining 25 lots that were owned by white property owners had no structures built upon them and were uninhabited at that time.

The *California Eagle*, a prominent African-American newspaper from 1879-1964, printed a letter from E. Burton Ceruti, Attorney for the L.A. Branch, N.A.A.C.P. on July 11, 1924, wherein he stated that Mrs. Bruce was “willing to sell her property and, even if a suit be instituted, would sell at a fair price at any time, and would abandon the suit at such time.”⁴¹ But by December, the Bruces had entered into the condemnation proceedings with Attorney Willis O. Tyler as their lawyer.⁴²

Though it’s been said that the Bruces and three other Black families sued for racial discrimination⁴³, that’s not accurate. They, along with the Johnsons, Prioleaus, and Miss Patterson, answered the complaint of condemnation, challenging it on the grounds that was based on racial discrimination. As Brigham reports, the true motivation was:

*to banish them [the Negroes] from the said City, and, more particularly, from that portion of the said City which is nearly contiguous to the Pacific Ocean, and this in order to entirely free the said City from their presence because of the fact that they are Negroes, and that these defendants allege that the said proceedings are arbitrary, oppressive and inspired by Racial Prejudice.*⁴⁴

Some citizens of Manhattan Beach were opposed to the City’s acquisition of the two blocks because they felt it was bad business practice. Ralph F. Wedler wrote an op-ed for *The Manhattan Globe*, the “Official Paper of the Taxpayers Protective League”, and in it, he declared that merely buying the property in Blocks 5 and 12 would not drive Black property owners from town. They would -- as they did -- buy elsewhere in town. He claimed, “One thing all white people in the city of Manhattan Beach are in accord on and that is to make Manhattan Beach a one hundred percent white beach.”⁴⁵

The Taxpayers Protective League submitted a petition to recall the Board of Trustees⁴⁶ for a number of legislative actions related to development along the Strand, as well as

⁴¹ *California Eagle*. Ceruti, E. Burton. “Matter of Bruce’s Beach”, July 11, 1924, pp. 1 and 10.

⁴² *California Eagle*. “Bruce’s Beach Fights Condemnation”, December 26, 1924, p. 1.

⁴³ Rassmussen.

⁴⁴ While we did receive many of the documents from the Complaint of Condemnation, the copy of the Bruces’ answer was illegible; therefore, we relied on Brigham’s thesis for these quotations.. Brigham notes that this statement was part of the Answer of W.A. and Charles Bruce to Complaint, the City of Manhattan Beach v. B.H. Dyer, et al. He said that except for minor wording variations, the Answers filed by the Johnsons, Ms. Patterson, and the Prioleaus were “essentially the same in meaning.”

⁴⁵ *The Manhattan Globe*, Saturday September 25, 1926.

⁴⁶ The Board of Trustees to be recalled were: Merritt J. Crandall, Harold Dale, G.E. Delevan, Jr., Carl D. Edwards, and John F. Jones.

the park and playground proceedings. The *Manhattan Beach News* showed its support for the Trustees by publishing a statement signed by them that detailed the “Truth About Recall”, where they asserted, among other things, that their primary motivation was to “protect and enforce the rights of our City in the water front [sic] known as the Strand against the encroachment of private corporate interests.”⁴⁷

On that same front page, in an adjacent article, C.A. Bruce, Mrs. Willie Bruce and Harvey Bruce wrote a letter to their neighbors. In this letter, the Bruces expressed that “we have always felt and we hope we will be pardoned for plainly and bluntly saying so, that the attempt to make a park out of these two blocks was a direct slap at us because we were not born white people.” They went on to write that as taxpayers, this “hardship” targeting them was inconsistent with the “economy in expenditure of public money” and that the park is not filling any public need.⁴⁸

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the recall stemmed from citizens’ dissatisfaction with the condemnation and the purchase of the land under the Park and Playground Act. The *Times* reported legal proceedings began when “(t)he amount which the city officials agreed to give for the land was said to be greatly in excess of its value.”⁴⁹ Two years later, the *Venice Vanguard* would report that offering an amount in excess of the value was a strategy: “... the anti-negro forces have tried to keep the town white even buying out colored holdings at more than their true value, but in vain. Failing in peaceful means, harsher measures apparently have been resorted to in order to gain their ends.”⁵⁰

The results of the recall election favored the trustees: 549 in their favor and 135 were against.

On May 16, 1927, the Bruces sent a letter to the City of Manhattan Beach whereby they turned over their “property and all improvements thereon and consent that you forthwith wreck, tear down and remove the building on said lots.”⁵¹

In their original answer to the complaint of condemnation, Brigham reports that the Bruces requested \$70,000 for their property and \$50,000 in damages “due to the fact that if the property were condemned, they would be unable to purchase elsewhere in Manhattan.”⁵² According to an article published in the *Los Angeles Times* in July, 2002,

⁴⁷ “Trustees Signed Statement; Here’s Truth About Recall”, *Manhattan Beach News*, February 4, 1927.

⁴⁸ *The Beach Reporter*, April 16, 1927

⁴⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, “Recall Favors City Trustees at Manhattan”, February 16, 1927, p. A10.

⁵⁰ “Nearby Town Now Center of Race War”. *Venice Vanguard*. February 15, 1928

⁵¹ Letter to the City of Manhattan Beach from Willie A. Bruce and Charles A. Bruce, May 16, 1927. Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

⁵² Brigham, p. 65.

the judge in the condemnation proceedings, “put a crimp in the City’s complaint” by insisting that the ejected property owners had the right to purchase property elsewhere in the city, “just not on the Strand.” The reporter wrote that the judge said he would “throw the case right out of court” if their rights were not guaranteed.⁵³

The *Times* reported on July 24, 1927, that ocean-front property in Manhattan Beach could be purchased for \$165 per front foot.⁵⁴ According to a July, 1927 Sketch Map showing the prices of ocean frontages between Santa Monica and Long Beach, a 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 100 ocean-facing lot as was the Bruces’, could be purchased for \$12,500 or \$187 per foot.⁵⁵

Ultimately, the Bruces were granted \$14,500. When the Bruce's turned over the land, it had been 15 years since Mrs. Bruce purchased the lot. Willa Bruce was now 65 years old and Charles was 67. They purchased a home at 1042 E. 20th in Los Angeles⁵⁶, and reported to the U.S. Census that it cost \$7,500. Charles also had continued to work as a chef on the railroad.⁵⁷ Harvey, Meda, and four year old Harvey Jr. moved to 940 E. 37th st., Los Angeles.⁵⁸

A final judgement on the condemnation proceedings was delivered on June 10, 1929.⁵⁹ The amount granted to each of the condemned property holders are from the following table in Brigham’s thesis:

⁵³ Rasmussen. **Please note:** the file we obtained with the “Final Judgement” from the Complaint of Condemnation was illegible. As soon as we can access the documents at the Hall of Records, we will confirm this quote if possible.

⁵⁴ **DATA GIVE PRICE INDEX AT SEASIDE: COMPARATIVE VALUE SHOWN BY RECENT *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Jul 24, 1927; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times** pg. E4

⁵⁵ Sketch Map Showing Prices of Ocean Frontage Between Santa Monica and Long Beach, California, July, 1927, Rebecca Bates, Facebook, “Manhattan Beach Haunts That NoLonger Exist”

⁵⁶ 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932 LA City Directories.

⁵⁷ 1930 Census, Year: 1930; Census Place: Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0291; FHL microfilm: 2339879

⁵⁸ 1930 Census, Year: 1930; Census Place: *Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California*; Page: 15A; Enumeration District: 0306; FHL microfilm: 2339879

⁵⁹ Brigham, p. 67.

TABLE III
 AMOUNTS GRANTED IN FINAL JUDGEMENT
 TO HOLDERS OF CONDEMNED PROPERTY*

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Property</u>	<u>Settlement</u>
B. H. Dyer, R. L. Rice, and H. M. Eichelberger	Lots 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, Blk. 5. Lots 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, and 12, Blk. 12.	\$21,147.31
C. W. Stone	Lot 3, Blk. 5.	1,325.71
Geo. W. Yarrow	Lots 4 and 6, Blk. 5. Lot 11, Blk. 12.	6,461.13
Lillie D. Dosta	Lot 7, Blk. 5.	2,911.23
W. A. Bruce	Lots 8 and 9, Blk. 5.	14,500.00
M. B. Johnson	Lot 1, Blk. 12.	1,273.04
Anna E. Johnson	Lot 1, Blk. 12.	1,273.04
Emma K. Barnett	Lot 1, Blk. 12.	1,342.08
Elizabeth Patterson	No. 1/2 Lot 4, Blk. 12.	1,865.66
Geo. and Ethel Prioleau	So. 1/2 Lot 4, Blk. 12.	1,874.37
Mary R. Sanders	Lot 6, Blk. 12.	4,129.09
Sarah I. Ambrose	Lot 7, Blk. 12.	1,075.00**
Marion R. Wyser	Lot 7, Blk. 12.	75.00
So. Calif. Bond and Finance Corp.	Lot 7, Blk. 12.	128.09

*Satisfaction of Judgement, The City of Manhattan Beach
 v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

**Amount of settlement not shown in Satisfaction of Judgement. This estimated amount is based upon award made at time of Interlocutory Decree.

TABLE III
(continued)

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Property</u>	<u>Settlement</u>
R. C. Ruperd	Lot 10, Blk. 12.	1,565.08
Grace Stuart	Lot 13, Blk. 12.	1,200.00
L. A. Dreisbach	Lot 14, Blk. 12.	913.95
M. W. Mitchell	Lot 14, Blk. 12.	25.00
Clara M. Monroe (Darlington)	Lot 15, Blk. 12.	1,200.00
H. A. Ecclestone	Lot 16, Blk. 12.	1,755.85
<hr/>		
TOTAL		\$66,040.63

The N.A.A.C.P., the Ku Klux Klan and the “Race War” of 1928

After the release of *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, it ignited a rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan across the United States, but it wasn't until the 1920s that it became significantly active in Southern California.⁶⁰ The *Los Angeles Times* reported in January, 1921, that efforts were underway by Klan members to make its presence more pronounced on the west coast, and, in July of that same year, it reported that a federal investigation had been initiated regarding attempts to organize a branch of the KKK in Los Angeles.⁶¹

In 1922, members of the KKK raided the Inglewood home of Basque immigrants who were illegally selling alcohol. Fidel and Angela Elduayen, their daughters and Fidel's brother, Mathias, were threatened, bound and beaten up, according to Sam Gnerre's South Bay History blog, because the liquor they sold had purportedly sickened one Klansmen and killed another.⁶² The result of the raid left one Klan member, M.B. Mosher, who happened to also be an Inglewood constable, dead⁶³, and led to a grand jury investigation of 46 alleged Klansmen, including George Cate, Mayor of Redondo Beach, and Redondo's Chief of Police John Henry.⁶⁴ Ultimately, Cate and Henry were not among those 43 indicted⁶⁵ nor were they confirmed as members of the KKK. This would not be the last time Cate was accused of being a Klansman, however, though he routinely denied any involvement with the organization.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ “From the Archives: Ku Klux Klan images from 1920s Southern California”, Scott Harrison, October 4, 2017.

<https://www.latimes.com/visuals/framework/la-me-fw-archives-ku-klux-klan-images-from-the-1920s-20170825-story.html>

⁶¹ “Ku Klux Klan!”, *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times (1886-1922); Los Angeles, Calif. [Los Angeles, Calif] 24 Jan 1921: II4. “FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATING KU KLUX KLAN IN LOS ANGELES ...” *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); Jul 19, 1921; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. II1

⁶² <http://blogs.dailybreeze.com/history/2014/03/15/the-1922-ku-klux-klan-inglewood-raid/>

⁶³ PLAN ARRESTS IN MOB KILLING: Quick Action Expected to Follow Inquest; ... *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); Apr 25, 1922; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg I1

⁶⁴ WIZARD CALLS; COBURN AMBLES: Grand Goblin Summoned to Atlanta by ...By WARDEN WOOLARD *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); May 16, 1922; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. II1

⁶⁵ KLANSMEN INDICTED: Forty-three Are Accused; Grand Jury Action Based .. *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922); Jun 8, 1922; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. I1

⁶⁶ BEACH MAYOR NAMED IN SUIT: Klan Leader of Redondo Made Co-respondent ... *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Jan 19, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 22

On January 12, 1924, *The Redondo Breeze* published an ad that invited readers to a free lecture on “The Principles of the KKK and Ideals of Pure Americanism.”⁶⁷ On Friday, January 18, the *Redondo Reflex* reported: “It is quite evident from the great crowd last Monday night that Redondo Beach has many in sympathy with the ‘hooded organization’.”⁶⁸

The *California Eagle* reported on the front page of its July 4, 1924, issue that the KKK was operating unrestricted along the waterfront.⁶⁹ Cited in the article was an incident in Redondo Beach where KKK pamphlets were handed out to Black fishermen. In that same article, the Bruces and their resort are specifically mentioned:

The Bruces have been at Manhattan for thirteen years, and were among the first settlers of that end of the beach... But it is understood that some Ku Klux who recently moved in the vacinit [sic] objects [sic] to the presence of Colored folk, and have so manipulated their objections that they have reached and influenced the servants of the people (who reside [sic] over the city council) and this august body has condemned Bruce Beach as a pleasure resort for Colored people.

While there was no evidence definitively linking acts of harassment to the KKK, many of Brigham’s interviewees reported racially-motivated incidents to Black Manhattan Beach visitors that they attributed to the Klan. In one instance, Hugh Macbeth, lawyer for Ms. Sanders and the Johnsons, said air was let out of tires in cars parked near the Bruces’ resort while owners were at the beach.⁷⁰ Cassius Robbins, a member of the 1924 Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees, claimed that one night he “followed a siren to Bruce’s Lodge where someone (supposedly a Klansman) had set fire to a mattress under the main building.”⁷¹ Mrs. Emma Barnett Holt relayed a story of a Black-owned home on 23rd Street that was partially burned in 1926, allegedly by a white neighbor, upset that an African-American woman had purchased it.⁷² Mrs. Ethel Atkinson reported “10 Minutes Only” parking signs that were posted on Highland near the home of her mother (Mary Sanders) to make parking inconvenient for their friends and visitors.⁷³

Although these first-person accounts were related nearly 30 years after they were alleged to have occurred, further research uncovered a number of newspaper articles from the time that substantiate these stories.

⁶⁷ Brigham, p. 41.

⁶⁸ “K.K.K. Meet Crowded to Street”, *The Redondo Reflex*, January 18, 1924, p. 1.

⁶⁹ “Klans Operations”, *The California Eagle*, Volume 39, No. 10, July 4, 1924, p. 1

⁷⁰ Brigham, p. 40.

⁷¹ Brigham, p. 41.

⁷² Brigham, p. 77.

⁷³ Brigham, p. 82.

MOVE THE BESSONETTE/NAACP STUFF UP, THEN GO TO KLAN STUFF?

In May, 1927, the City entered into a series of leases with local businessman Oscar C. Bessonette⁷⁴ that would allow them to treat the beachfront as private property and thus arrest unwanted visitors. The initial lease was passed by the Board of Trustees on May 19, 1927, the Board of Trustees leased all of Block 12 of Tract 8867 and Lot 1 of Block 10, Tract 8867.⁷⁵ This included the entire beach between 16th and 19th Streets, and then a small section at the base of 25th Street.

On Memorial Day, the *California Eagle* reported that the names and addresses of some 25 bathers were taken by the Manhattan Beach Police Department in what they called a “bulldozing attempt in disguise to coerce and browbeat the Negro into keeping away from those quarters.”⁷⁶

According to the *California Eagle*, another incident took place on June 26, 1927, “petty officials” ran “some 40 or 50 persons” from the beach until they tried to threaten Walter Gordon, Sr. with arrest. Gordon allegedly explained some “fine points of law”, and the officials, “after listening with some emotion, beat a hasty retreat.”⁷⁷

Then, on July 4, 1927, a 19-year-old Black UCLA student, Elizabeth Catley, was arrested for swimming and “trespassing” on the “private beach.”⁷⁸ Manhattan Beach police imprisoned her for five hours in a cold jail cell in Redondo in only her wet bathing suit to protect her. Catley would file a suit in Superior Court of Los Angeles County the following June seeking \$35,000 in damages against Alexander Haddock, the arresting officer, and members of the Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees.⁷⁹ **(NOTE: Due to COVID restrictions, we are currently unable to access records for the outcome of this case.)**

⁷⁴ The National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; *World War II Draft Cards (4th Registration) for the State of California*; Record Group Title: *Records of the Selective Service System*; Record Group Number: 147

⁷⁵ Minutes of the City of Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees, May 19, 1927.7

⁷⁶ “Attempt to Bulldoze Negro Bathers”, Dick Cromwell, *The California Eagle*, Friday, June 10, 1927, p. 1.

⁷⁷ “What’s the Matter with Bruce’s Beach” *The California Eagle*, Friday, July 1, 1927, p. 1.

⁷⁸ “Jailed for Bathing”, *California Eagle*, Friday, July 8, 1927.

⁷⁹ “Bather Seeks Damages”, *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Los Angeles, Calif. [Los Angeles, Calif]02 June 1928: A2.. Saturday. June 2, 1928



Elizabeth Catley Slaughter
November 28, 1928-June 15, 1969

According to Brigham, it was at this point that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People took action.⁸⁰ On July 17, Dr. Henry C. Hudson, President of the Los Angeles Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P.⁸¹, was driving in Manhattan Beach around 5:00pm when he saw police officers talking to some Black men by the water. He would later testify: "I asked these officers...what, if anything, was the trouble? They answered that that was private property and the Colored people should follow the line of least resistance."⁸² Opting not to leave, Dr. Hudson, John McCaskill, a Manhattan Beach resident, J.H. Conley, and Romalious Johnson⁸³ were all arrested for resisting an officer and required to pay \$10 bail.⁸⁴

On Tuesday, August 2, 1927, the four men were put on trial in Manhattan Beach City Hall for the offense of bathing in the ocean. Bessonette was represented by the Manhattan Beach City Attorney and the four defendants were represented by Attorney Hugh Macbeth⁸⁵. Macbeth graduated from Harvard Law School in 1908 and founded the *Baltimore Times* before moving to Los Angeles in 1913.⁸⁶ In 1914, he was appointed special counsel to the Los Angeles District Attorney's office.

Macbeth questioned Bessonette about the "No Trespassing" sign:

⁸⁰ Brigham, p. 86.

⁸¹ NAACP Los Angeles. <https://www.naacp-losangeles.org/>

⁸² "Negro Bathers Outraged At Manhattan Beach". *California Eagle*. Friday, August 5, 1927

⁸³ California State Library; Sacramento, California; *Great Register of Voters, 1900-1968*

⁸⁴ "Negro Bathers Outraged At Manhattan Beach". *California Eagle*. Friday, August 5, 1927

⁸⁵ United States, Selective Service System. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

⁸⁶ *Black Past*. "Hugh Macbeth Sr". Greg Robinson. 2007.

Macbeth: Did you have a sign posted?

Bessonette: Yes, "No Trespassing".

Macbeth: Did this sign mean no trespassing by Colored people?

Bessonette: It meant no trespassing by undesirables.

Macbeth: On July 17, when these four defendants seated here were arrested and lodged in jail were there any other people sitting in the same spot?

Bessonette: Yes.

Macbeth: Were they arrested?

Bessonette: No.

Macbeth: Then your sign was posted for colored peoples only?

Bessonette: For undesirables.

Macbeth: You consider colored people undesirables?

Bessonette: Yes.⁸⁷

Later, Officer Haddock testified that he had been given specific orders by Bessonette to keep Black people off the beach. Despite Haddock and Bessonette's admissions to racial discrimination, the local court found in favor of the City, and Hudson, McCaskill, Conley, and Johnson were ordered to pay \$200 cash or \$500 property bond.⁸⁸



Officer Alexander Haddock

At their meeting on August 4, 1927, the City Council⁸⁹ of Manhattan Beach revised the minutes of the May 19th to include all of Block 9, Tract No. 8867, and Lot 1 of Block 11 in the lease to Bessonette⁹⁰. Block 9 was the entire beach area between 25th and 27th Streets -- or directly in front of where the Bruces' resort stood and the neighboring Black vacation homes -- and Brigham wrote that "this was another subterfuge on the part of

⁸⁷ "Negro Bathers Outraged At Manhattan Beach". *California Eagle*. Friday, August 5, 1927

⁸⁸ "Negro Bathers Outraged At Manhattan Beach". *California Eagle*. Friday, August 5, 1927

⁸⁹ As of August 1, 1927, the titles of offices and officers of cities of the Sixth Class in the State of California changed. The "Board of Trustees" would now be called "City Council". "By their New Titles Ye Shall Designate Them", *Manhattan Beach News*, August 5, 1927. P. 1

⁹⁰ Minutes of the Meeting of the City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach, August 4, 1927.

the City whereby an attempt was made to pervert the legal process to the end that the Negroes would leave Manhattan Beach.”⁹¹

The *Eagle* reported that the defendants appealed to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County on August 12,⁹² and Brigham wrote that on that same day, Macbeth moved for “an arrest of judgement in the Manhattan court”, which was granted by Justice of the Peace (and Manhattan’s City Clerk) Llewellyn Price. The next day, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that a mile of beach frontage would be “forever restricted against private use” in a perpetual lease deal involving Bessonette and “the George H. Peck interests”.

The City Council, however, cancelled the lease between Bessonette and the city on August 18, 1927 -- their very next meeting.⁹³ The next day, *The California Eagle* proudly declared: “NAACP Wins Beach Victory.”⁹⁴



Attorney, Hugh Macbeth Sr.

Hugh Macbeth had a long legal career fighting against racism and segregation. Twenty years after the Manhattan Beach case, Macbeth would argue *Oyama v. California*, against California's Alien Land Act, in front of the United States Supreme Court. The Court's ruling for *Oyama* in January 1948 ended the Alien Land Act and set a legal precedent for later rulings against segregation.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Brigham, p. 85.

⁹² *California Eagle*. "Manhattan Beach Case Appealed". Friday, August 12, 1927

⁹³ City Council Minutes. Manhattan Beach. August 18, 1927.

⁹⁴ *California Eagle*. "NAACP Wins Beach Victory". Friday, August 19, 1927

⁹⁵ *Black Past*. "Hugh Macbeth Sr". Greg Robinson. 2007.



**Ku Klux Klan Still Work-
ing at Manhattan
Beach**

California Eagle, October 28, 1927

Two months after the trial and appeal, on October 18, 1927, “hooded” individuals approached the Slaughter house during the night and covered the gas meter under the house with oil-soaked waste, accelerant, cotton and lit a match to it. The Slaughters were awoken by the smoke, but were able to extinguish the fire before the fire department arrived. The *California Eagle* reported that “there are individuals who are determined that justice and decency shall not prevail and are endeavoring to terrorize and instill fear into the hearts of Colored residents of Manhattan Beach.” The following night, October 19, 1927, the *Eagle* stated that “the fiery cross of the K.K.K.” was burned across the street from the Slaughter home. Despite these attempts at intimidation, the article noted, the Slaughters were “not of the running kind”.⁹⁶

By February, 1928, the multiple racially-motivated incidents had sparked an investigation by the 1928 Los Angeles County Grand Jury.

- Superior Judge Superior Judge Carlos H. Hardy impaneled the 1928 Los Angeles County grand jury at noon on February 15, 1928. One of the first investigations was the alleged “anti-race arson plot at Manhattan Beach, where it is charged houses of Negro residents have been dynamited and set on fire by white citizens objecting to the presence of Negroes.” District Attorney Asa Keyes intimated that “some big names” are involved in the arson play.⁹⁷
- On February 15, 1928, the *Venice Vanguard* reported that the grand jury would hear the case that followed a six-week investigation led by George Contreras, chief of the district attorney’s detective staff. It said: “Dynamite, bullets and the secret torch are all alleged to have been employed by residents in order to induce the negroes to travel. Certain citizens objected to a colored settlement.” It also noted: “It was learned that seven Manhattan Beach citizens have been questioned by operatives in regard to the race trouble. One of these seven, it is said, has been

⁹⁶ "Ku Klux Klan Still At Work in Manhattan Beach". *California Eagle*. October 28, 1927.

⁹⁷ “Anti-Race Plot Will Be Among Initial Probes” *Los Angeles Evening Express* (Los Angeles, California) · Wed, Feb 15, 1928 · Page 3

Jack Garvin, Manhattan's chief of police. The other six are business men of the community.”⁹⁸

- According to the February 15, 1928, *Los Angeles Record*: “Burning and dynamiting of the homes of negro residents at Manhattan Beach, which has grown to the proportion of a race war is to be investigated by the 1928 grand jury as soon as it is impaneled.” It is also reported here that seven white Manhattan Beach residents were expected to be subpoenaed by the grand jury.⁹⁹
- *The Pasadena Evening Post* reported on the investigation into the alleged arson and dynamiting in Manhattan Beach, saying that it “was declared to appear to be the concerted effort of some group of residents of the community to terrorize the negroes now there into a fight.”¹⁰⁰
- On February 16, 1928, the *Record* provided more details about the incidents, stating that the home of James Slaughter at 120 26th Street was fired upon and the home of Isaac and Pearl Mose¹⁰¹ at the corner of 6th and Peck was completely destroyed by a fire. It is also reported that, “A fiery cross blazed upon a hillside shortly before one of the fires and written warnings were placed upon the houses marked for arson.” Police Chief Jack Garvin stated that no official report of dynamiting or shooting had been brought to his attention. The *Record* noted, however, that “this information is common talk in the community.”¹⁰²
- The *Times* reported that Contreras had uncovered clues “indicating that certain citizens set fire to negro dwellings, fired shots into the walls of others, burned falling crosses on the hills, and in one instance, attempted [sic] to destroy a house with dynamite. Threatening notes written to the victims and pinned to the doors will be used in tracing those responsible for the acts of violence.”¹⁰³
- Following an announcement of the Contreras investigation, it was reported that there was a “secret meeting in the sand hills near the ocean” among members of the Manhattan Beach community . The *Times* stated:

⁹⁸ “Nearby Town Now Center of Race War”, *Venice Evening Vanguard* (Venice, California) · Wed, Feb 15, 1928 · Pp 1 and 8.

⁹⁹ “Homes At L.A. Beach Set Afire”, *The Record* (Los Angeles, California) · Wed, Feb 15, 1928 · Page 1

¹⁰⁰ “Grand Jury Will Probe Dynamiting”, *Pasadena Evening Post* (Pasadena, California) · Wed, Feb 15, 1928 · Page 12

¹⁰¹ Manhattan Beach City Directory, 1921, p.162.

¹⁰² “May Oust Officials in Beach Race War”*The Record* (Los Angeles, California) · Thu, Feb 16, 1928 · Page 2

¹⁰³ “Oustings in Terrorizing Plot Loom,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1928, Part II, p. 14

“The mysterious meeting, according to officers was called by leaders in the movement to oust the negro population from the beach city immediately after the announcement was made that evidence concerning asserted acts of violence had been obtained and will be placed before the 1928 grand jury.”¹⁰⁴

- Also reporting on the “mystery conclave”, the *Venice Vanguard* stated, “While the forces of the law were moving to end the race strife in that community, a band of 100 men are said to have met in the middle of the night...” They also reported on the investigation itself, saying that while some officials cooperated with Contreras’s investigation, others “appeared to be throwing obstacles in the way of the official probe. It was against these men that the ‘ouster’ action will be asked of the grand jury.”¹⁰⁵
- On February 25, 1928, *The Indianapolis Reporter* carried a story by the Associated Press about the incidents in Manhattan Beach. “Several homes have been bombed, fired into, and burned, but the largest losers are reported to be the white insurance companies as the Negro citizens have insured their homes against these hazards.” Furthermore, it stated that District Attorney Asa Keyes had been doing a secret investigation of the “white hoodlums” responsible these actions for six weeks and “expects to bring several prominent business men before the law to explain their connection with the gangsters who are believed to be perpetrating the crimes and endangering the lives of citizens of Manhattan Beach.”¹⁰⁶

On February 27 and February 28, 1928, the *Times* reported that no witnesses would be called in the “asserted arson cases in Manhattan Beach.”¹⁰⁷ It only stated that:

Reports that the investigation of arson charges against several Manhattan Beach residents also would be taken up today were denied by [Deputy District Attorney Ellis] Eagan. It will be necessary to obtain more evidence before placing the investigation before the grand jury, Eagan intimated.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ “SECURITY IN TERRORISM PLAN LIFTED: Contreras Goes to Beach City as Negro Baiters Meet in Sand Dunes.” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Feb 17, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A3

¹⁰⁵ “Probe Mystery Conclave Held in Race Strife” *Venice Vanguard*, Friday, February 17, 1928, p. 1

¹⁰⁶ “Open Clash of Races is Anticipated: White stir up Wrath of Negroes By Attacks on Their Homes” *The Indianapolis Recorder*, February 25, 1928, page 1.

¹⁰⁷ “Forecast Upset by Grand Jury”, *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Feb 28, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A2

¹⁰⁸ “MILES CASE CHARGES TO GRAND JURY: Little Credence Placed by District Attorney in Affidavits Offered” , *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Feb 27, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A5

(**NOTE:** We have submitted a request for the 1928 Grand Jury's Final Report to the Los Angeles Archives and Records facility and will report those findings as soon as we obtain them.)

MOVE FINAL SETTLEMENT STUFF HERE AND WHAT BECAME OF THE BRUCES, ETC?

After 1929

In 1930, the *Manhattan Beach News* praised the efforts of councilman John F. Jones who had “made it his particular aim” to force the Black residents out of Blocks 5 and 12 because their “settlement” had “depreciated property values to a considerable extent and many sales were lost on this account.” The article continued: “Mr. Jones worked long and earnestly on this problem with the result that the negroes finally withdrew their occupancy of the Manhattan Beach property and the city is now free from that menace.”¹⁰⁹

Daugherty, one of the three original subdividers in Manhattan Beach (in addition to George Peck and John Merrill), was interviewed for a four-part essay titled “A History of Manhattan.” In one excerpt published in the *Manhattan Beach News* on February 19, 1943 and reprinted on July 20, 1945 in the *Redondo Reflex*, Daugherty discussed the racist motivations behind the condemnation of the Bruces’ and other families’ land. “We tried to buy them out but they would not sell. There were several families in the blocks between 26th and 27th streets....We had to acquire these two blocks to solve the problem, so we voted to condemn them, and build a city park there. We had to protect ourselves. Our attorneys advised the members of the council never to admit the real purpose in establishing the park, especially during the city council meeting.”¹¹⁰

The History of the Park

After the city condemned the land for a new park in place of the former resort, historic folklore says that the land sat empty for 30 years. Manhattan Beach resident, Robert Brigham, remembered looking at the empty lots during the 1940s and 1950s. They were covered with weeds and empty soda bottles.

¹⁰⁹ *Manhattan Beach News*. “Jones’ Efforts Increase Values,” April 11, 1930. P. 1.

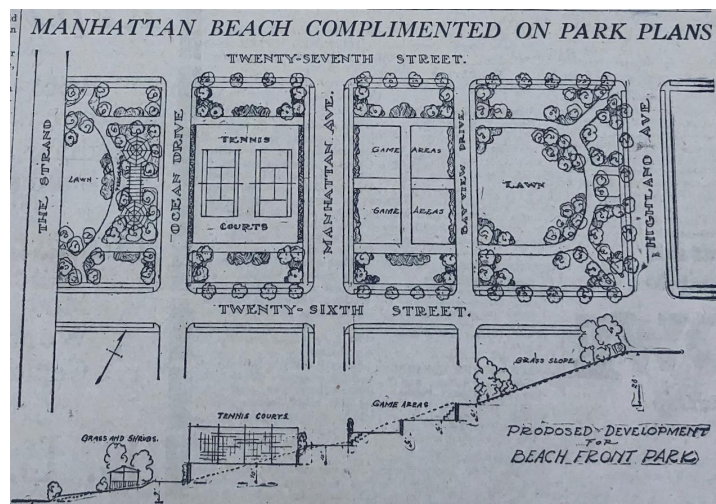
¹¹⁰ *Manhattan Beach News*. “Negroes and Pier Building Were Manhattan Problems,” February 19, 1943, pp. 1 and 6.



Photo Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society

Beginning in 1932, however, Manhattan Beach City Council had petitioned the county for assistance in funding both the City Park between the Strand and Highland, and Live Oak Park off what was then called Railroad Drive. They hoped to use labor supplied by the County Welfare and Stabilization Program.¹¹¹

In February, 1933, the City of Manhattan Beach filed plans to utilize funds from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to build a beachfront park. The resolutions asked the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for 2580 “man days” for the improvement of the City Park, “being the block between Manhattan Avenue and Ocean Drive, 26th and 27th.” For the block between The Strand and Ocean, 1300 “man days” were requested, and between Manhattan Avenue and Bay View, 2400. The block between Bay View and Highland needed 2267 “man days”.¹¹²



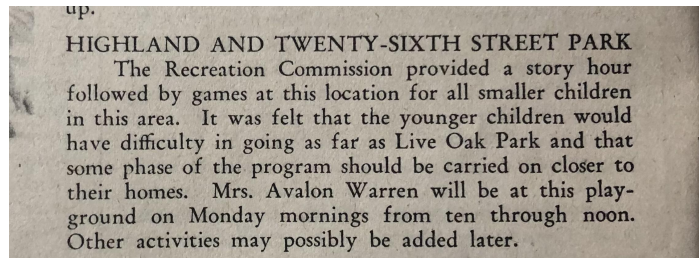
From the *Manhattan Beach News*, March 17, 1933.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. July 21, 1932.

¹¹² Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. February 2, 1933.

By August 11, 1933, the *Manhattan Beach News* reported that “Beach Front Park... has been graded and its terraced surface planted to moss, pending further development that will include extensive landscaping, game areas, and tennis courts.”¹¹³

An 1945 issue of *Community Life* magazine, describes a children's story hour located at the playground at Highland and 26th st Park.¹¹⁴



**INSERT TRANSFER OF LAND TO STATE; USE OF PARK FOR CONSTRUCTION;
IMAGE FROM PARK**

A *South Bay Breeze* newspaper article published November 9, 1954 reported on a joint session between the City Council and the Recreation Commission discussing the development of park plans. By 1956, the area was landscaped into a terraced park that absorbed a portion of Bayview Drive.



1959 Manhattan City Park, 27th & Highland, South Bay History Collection, CSUDH

¹¹³ *Manhattan Beach News*, “Progress is Evident in Park Work”, August 11, 1933, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ *Community Life*, 1945

The site was referred to as City Park and Beach Front Park until 1962, when the Kiwanis Club and the Manhattan Beach City Council sponsored a naming contest. The chosen name was Bayview Terrace Park.¹¹⁵

After a failed effort to change the name of 15th street to Calle Culiacan at the February 5, 1974 City Council meeting, during the February 19, 1974 meeting, the Manhattan Beach Sister City Committee requested the city rename the park “Culiacan Terrace Park or its Spanish equivalent”. This was done “in view of the impending visit of Culiacan representatives for the change of officers on the city council and to make them feel more a part of the cultural exchange.” Parque Culiacan was designated on March 16, 1974.¹¹⁶

In 1988, the mayor of Culiacan, Mexico no longer supported the Sister Cities Program, and dropped Manhattan Beach as their sister city. In 1989, a new sister city was established with Santa Rosalia of Baja California, Mexico.¹¹⁷

On February 15, 2003, a group from Leadership Manhattan Beach, a community leadership program, proposed a class project called “Facts on Plaques”, a series of historical facts placed on plaques near points of interest. Class member Mark Davis also proposed a communitywide contest to rename Parque Culiacan with a name more relevant to the community. The council approved the project with the directive that the park not be named after an individual.¹¹⁸

On April 15, 2003, the Leadership class returned to the City Council with the recommendation of renaming Parque Culiacan to Friendship Park. During the meeting, the Sister City Organization representatives protested the recommendation and stated that it was inappropriate to drop the original Sister City’s name Culiacan from the park. The City Council unanimously denied the recommendation of Friendship Park.¹¹⁹

The council accepted a donation of \$3,600 from The Leadership Manhattan Class of 2003 and instructed staff to work with Leadership to develop a sign including all the history of Parque Culiacan.¹²⁰

At the City Council Meeting on May 6, 2003, Sandra Seville-Jones, co-manager of Leadership Manhattan Beach, presented wording based on the extensive research completed by Leadership. Councilmember Ward suggested deleting the word “tragic”

¹¹⁵ South Bay Breeze, November 9, 1954

¹¹⁶ MB City Council Minutes, February 19, 1974

¹¹⁷ Parks & Recreation Minutes February 27, 2006

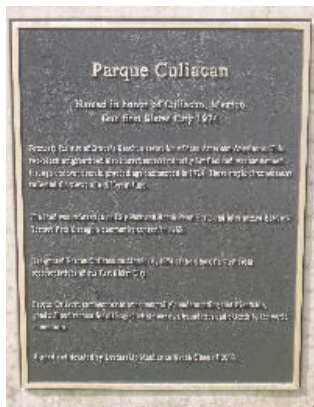
¹¹⁸ MB City Council Minutes, February 18, 2003, Agenda Item 13

¹¹⁹ MB City Council Minutes, April 15, 2003, Agenda Item 15, pg 6

¹²⁰ MB City Council Minutes, April 15, 2003, Agenda Item 15, pg 7

from the plaque wording. However, Ms. Seville-Jones felt that the documentation supported the use of the word and it was an important factor in the emotional impact of the statement.¹²¹ The final text read:

Parque Culiacan Named in honor of Culiacan, Mexico Our first Sister City 1974 Formerly the site of Bruce's Beach, a resort for African American Angelinos. This two block neighborhood also housed several minority families and was condemned through eminent domain proceedings commenced in 1924. Those tragic circumstances reflected the views of a different time. Signed and donated by Leadership Manhattan Beach Class of 2003.



Two years later, in December 2005, renaming the park was brought up again during MB City Council audience participation. Rosa Parks had died in October, 2005 prompting Manhattan Beach resident and activist, Patrick McBride, to request that the park be named after her as symbolic of the civil rights issues related to the park's history. Mr. McBride stated that Bob Brigham was also in support of remaining the park in honor of Rosa Parks. In response to Mr. McBride's comment, Mayor Fahey felt strongly that a name that addresses the history of the area would have more meaning than Parque Culiacan. Mayor Fahey asked the council if there was support for discussing changing the name of Parque Culiacan; Mayor ProTem Ward said he "didn't have any problem with discussing it" and City Manager Dolan suggested it be referred to Parks and Recreation for consideration and discussion before city council agendaize it.¹²²

Parks and Recreation met on February 27, 2006. Community member Patrick McBride spoke during audience participation on the history of Bruce's Beach and Rosa Parks. Parks Commissioner Lear agreed with other Commissioners and would be open-minded about considering a new park name that has a much more localized connection to the Manhattan Beach community, i.e. Bruce's Beach. The meeting minutes note that, "The

¹²¹ MB City Council Minutes, May 6, 2003, Agenda Item 6.19, pg. 5

¹²² Manhattan Beach City Council Meeting recording, December 6, 2005

Commission has an interest in sending the message that Manhattan Beach stands for, amongst other things, diversity and recognizing that the greatest blemish in our history is the events of the 1920s at Bruce's Beach". Commissioner Lear commended Mr. McBride's noble effort to communicate to the world that the City of Manhattan Beach stands for diversity and good will. The Commission voted against changing the name to Rosa Parks Park.¹²³

At the conclusion of the Manhattan Beach City Council meeting on April 18, 2006, during other council business, Mayor Mitch Ward, supported by Mayor ProTem Nick Tell and Councilmember Joyce Fahey, directed the Parks and Rec Department to look into renaming Parque Culiacan, with specific direction to look at the historical aspects of the area.¹²⁴

The Parks and Recreation committee met on May 22, 2006. During audience participation, community members suggested keeping the name Parque Culiacan as well as the names Forgiving Park, Ocean View Park, Surf View Park and Bayview Terrace. Community member Patrick McBride suggested that the park's history had a huge civil rights significance, thus renaming the park Bruce's Beach would signify the historical relevance. Mr. McBride suggested that a lot of people think we should honor the Bruce Family and he suggested the city should honor the symbol that they stood for and the historical struggle that took place. Commissioner Paralusz agreed that the City Council's direction was to consider renaming the park to reflect historical events. Commissioner Paralusz was in favor of renaming the park Bruce's Beach to recognize our City's history. She suggested that we can't go back and change what happened, but could certainly address what had happened. Commissioner Paralusz then made a motion to recommend to the City Council in favor of changing the name Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Beach. The Committee voted 4-2 (Ayes: Cohen, Paralusz, Gill, Lamb; Nays: Harris, Lear)¹²⁵

At the City Council meeting on July 6, 2006, Parks and Recreation brought their recommendation of renaming Parque Culiacan to Bruce's Park or Bruce's Beach Park before council. Mayor Mitch Ward suggested that the discussion should be about the history of the land rather than the Bruce family, and referred to the role of the Bruce family as the "movement the Bruce family created as a result of George Peck". He shared an article from The Observer that invoked a portrayal of George H. Peck, as a generous businessman who helped his black neighbors in "bucking the practice of racial

¹²³ MB Parks and Recreation Meeting Minutes, February 27, 2006

¹²⁴ Manhattan Beach City Council Meeting recording, April 18, 2006

¹²⁵ MB Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes, May 22, 2006

exclusion, opened up 2 blocks of land on the beach for African Americans to purchase.”¹²⁶

A *Los Angeles Times* article written in 2002, 90 years after the Bruces’ purchased their land, suggested that Peck took a proactive role in reserving and facilitating the sale of Manhattan Beach property to African Americans. According to the article, Peck “flouted tradition and set aside a two-block area fronting the ocean between 26th and 27th streets and Highland Avenue for minority residents.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, the wording of the current Bruce’s Beach park plaque states that Peck “made it possible” for the beachfront property to be open to “all people”. Attempts to contact the author for this report have been unsuccessful so far.

We also spoke with the author of *The Observer* article, who did not recall the origins of this story. Peck’s great-grandson, Clarke Mallery, said he hadn’t heard this story until the park re-naming was discussed in 2006.

Robert Brigham did not mention it in his thesis either. He reported that George H. Lindsey, a white realtor and Manhattan Beach Resident, claimed that there had been a series of telegrams between Peck and his business associate/son-in-law Herb Culler regarding the Bruces and their guests. Lindsey told Brigham that the use of a long rope as a fence was the “direct result of telegrams between Culler and Peck”, who at the time was back east for business and allegedly told Culler to “do what he thought best.”¹²⁸

It’s not possible to verify Lindsey’s accusation or Peck’s exact involvement, however, because we do not have access to those telegrams or any other record of such an exchange.

Following extensive review of government documents, newspaper articles, obituaries, interviews, and historian research from 1912 through 2021, there is no verifiable evidence from primary or other sources that Peck actually set aside land for this purpose or that he publicly objected to the harassment towards the Bruces and their guests following the development of their property.

Residents gave emotional speeches during audience participation. Many of the name change supporters wore large paper hearts with “BB” written on them. Resident Oliver Coker read a letter on behalf of his wife, Lillian Light, saying this was “a chance to right a wrong and honor the Bruce Family... This name would make a statement that ‘we

¹²⁶ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, July 5, 2006

¹²⁷ Rasmussen, Cecilia. “Resort Was An Oasis for Blacks Until Racism Drove Them Out”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2002. B.4.

¹²⁸ Brigham, p. 39.

citizens of Manhattan Beach strongly oppose such acts of racial discrimination and will never again allow such acts to occur here.’” Resident Gail Runk said “history must never die because if history dies, the future dies with it. We have an opportunity to honor the past here...for the history the Bruce family enriched our city with.” Resident Patrick McBride, who started the name change discussion 6 months prior, and spoke on its behalf at every meeting, noted the name change also highlighted the significance of the non-violent protest by Elizabeth Catley, the NAACP, and the movement it inspired.¹²⁹

Mayor Ward said he supported the name change because he wanted to “honor the founder of this city, George Peck, for the vision that he had.” He felt it was a grave error to not recognize the true importance of the land. Mayor Pro Tem Tell indicated he would support changing the name of the park to Bruce’s Beach. Mayor Mitch Ward made a motion, and Mayor Pro Tem Nick Tell seconded the motion. Councilmembers Jim Aldinger and Richard Montgomery voted against the name change. With the deciding vote, Councilmember Joyce Fahey voted in favor of changing the name to Bruce’s Beach.¹³⁰

On November 8, 2006, city staff presented a report to the Manhattan Beach City Council suggesting text for the new plaque at Bruce’s Beach park and asking for \$8,000 to be allocated from the City Council contingency fund. Manhattan Beach resident, Patrick McBride, asked for the item to be pulled from the consent calendar for discussion. During the discussion, McBride expressed concerns about where the plaque wording came from and why experts such as Robert Brigham and Alison Rose Jefferson had not been consulted about the plaque wording. He was also concerned that significant history was not represented. Councilmember Ward stated that a complete history was unnecessary. Council Member Joyce Fahey and Mayor Nick Tell pushed for the inclusion of George Peck in the opening sentence of the plaque wording. Staff was directed to modify the wording to include historical information about George Peck and Bruce’s Beach being the only beach open to African Americans at that time.¹³¹

At the December 5, 2006 meeting, community member Patrick McBride, spoke and once again expressed concern regarding the accuracy of the history reflected in the plaque wording and the need for more time and consideration. He had shared the plaque wording with the Center for Law in the Public Interest, a Los Angeles Civil Rights Firm. They were in disagreement with the plaque wording and felt that the driving out of the families was important to include. The council felt strongly that the focus should remain on the positive. Mr. McBride shared that several months ago the Center had offered to help the city to raise money for an art piece and to help draw attention to the

¹²⁹ MB City Council Recording, July 5, 2006

¹³⁰ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, July 5, 2006

¹³¹ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, November 8, 2006

area and its historical significance. Councilmember Ward and Councilmember Aldinger served on the subcommittee to review the text.¹³²

Despite the concerns raised by Mr. McBride, the final wording was unanimously approved by council on December 5, 2006:

Bruce's Beach

In 1912, Mr. George Peck, one of our community's co-founders, made it possible for the beach area below this site to be developed as Bruce's Beach, the only beach resort in Los Angeles County for all people. Charles and Willa Bruce were the African American entrepreneurs who settled here, thus the name Bruce's Beach. This two-block neighborhood was home to several minority families and was condemned through eminent domain proceedings commenced in 1924. Those tragic circumstances reflected the views of a different time. The land was referred to as City Park and Beach Front Park and later named Bayview Terrace Park through a community contest in 1962. The park was designated Parque Culiacan on March 16, 1974, at the time of a visit from representatives of our first Sister City. The Manhattan Beach City Council renamed the park as Bruce's Beach in July 2006, commemorating our community's understanding that friendship, goodwill and respect for all begins within our own boundaries and extends to the world community. All are welcome. A project of Leadership Manhattan Beach Class of 2003.

¹³² MB City Council Recording, December 5, 2006

FAMILY HISTORIES

Consider moving to An Appendix?

Generations of the Bruce Family



*Thomas Tillman & Caroline Burgess
Step Father & Mother of Willam Ann Walker*

William Ann Walker and Charles Aarron Bruce had one son, Harvey. Harvey was born about 1888 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He moved with his mother and father to Los Angeles. In 1910, Harvey worked as a chauffeur. By 1917 he was also working as a cook on the Salt Lake City Railroad before enlisting in the military on May 29, 1917.

REGISTRATION CARD Form 1, 374 No. 2

1 Name in full: Harvey Bruce Age in yrs. 38

2 Home address: 2608 Grand Manhattan Beach, Calif

3 Date of birth: July 12, 1888

4 Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? U.S. natural born

5 Where were you born? At San Francisco, San Francisco, U.S.A.

6 If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? Citizen

7 What is your present trade, occupation, or office? Book

8 By whom employed? Redonda Beach, N. B.

9 Where employed? Los Angeles, California

10 Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 18, or a sister or brother under 18, mainly dependent on you for support (specify which)? n.o.

11 Married or single (which)? Single Race (specify which)?

12 What military service have you had? Rank n.o. branch n.o. years n.o. Nation or State n.o.

12 Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? n.o.

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

Harvey Bruce
(Signature or mark)

REGISTRAR'S REPORT 4-4-22, A

1 Tell, medium or short (specify which)? Medium Slender, medium, or stout (which)? Slender

2 Color of eyes? Brown Color of hair? Black Build? n.o.

3 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? n.o.

I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

To P. Lyons Registrar of Voters for Los Angeles, Calif. California

By Bertha Hoop, Deputy
(Signature of Registrar)

Precinct Manhattan Beach 1

City or County Los Angeles

State California May 22, 1917
(Date of registration)

Harvey Bruce May 1917 WWI draft card

On June 16, 1921, Harvey married Meda W Simmons (b. December 16, 1898 d. May 12, 1988).

Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Bruce of Manhattan Beach announce the marriage of their son Harvey Bruce to Meda M. Simmons of Topeka, Kansas, June 16th, which was quietly solemnized at high noon at Redonda Beach.

California Eagle, June 21, 1921

On January 2, 1926 Harvey and Meda welcomed a son, Harvey Anthony Bruce Jr, born in Manhattan Beach.

Charles Aaron Bruce passed away September 20, 1931. Three years later, on September 4, 1934, Willa Ann Bruce passed away in Los Angeles at the age of 71. A month later, October 29, 1934, her second grandson was born, Bernard Bruce. Harvey Sr. passed away February 21, 1954.



Bernard Bruce

In the fall of 1955, Bernard transferred to Oregon State University to play halfback on the football team. On November 4, 1955, Bernard married Theresa Procello in Corvallis, Oregon. The following year, Bernard quit football and on September 18, 1957, Theresa gave birth to a son, Derrick V. Bruce. Bernard passed away January 4, 2021 in Pasadena, California, survived by his wife Theresa. Derrick is a resident of Las Vegas.



Derrick Bruce, age 16

Meda Bruce passed away May 12, 1988. Her son, Harvey Bruce Jr , never married and passed away November 15, 1993.

Anthony Alexander Bruce, was born in San Bernardino on February 6, 1983 to Derrick Bruce and mother Belinda Render. He currently lives in Tampa, Florida

Michael Vincent Bruce, brother of Anthony Bruce, was born Oct 20, 1980. He is married to Clifford John Nokes and lives in Palm Harbor, Florida.

During the period between 1919-1926, at least six other black families purchased property in close proximity to Bruces' resort, four of them between 26th and 27th streets (blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach tract)¹³³.

Prioleau



Source Anthony Powell Collection

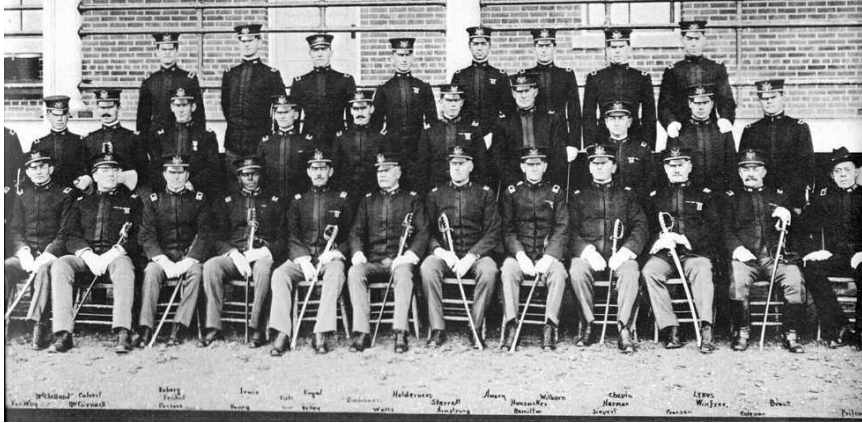


George Prioleau, Public Domain Image



*Family photo taken about 1920 -1924, before the last girl was born.
Ana Gonzales, Prioleau Granddaughter*

¹³³ Jefferson, p. 37.



Major George Washington Prioleau, first row, right

In 1919, Major George and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau purchased the southern half of lot 4, block 12.

Major George Washington Prioleau was born on May 15, 1856 to slave parents in Charleston, South Carolina. Prioleau earned his theology degree from Wilberforce University in Ohio and served as an A. M. E. pastor and denominational leader for Ohio congregations, and in 1889 he became professor of theology and homiletics at Wilberforce. Six years later, President Grover Cleveland appointed him to replace Henry Plummer as chaplain of the 9th Cavalry, U. S. Army, with a rank of captain.

In 1898 upon the outbreak of the Spanish-American war, the 9th Cavalry left the western United States for the first time in its history and was deployed to bases in Georgia and Florida for military activities in Cuba and the Caribbean. Chaplain Prioleau was eager for an opportunity for African American soldiers to prove themselves on the field of battle, but he became ill with malaria and was unable to travel to Cuba with the rest of the 9th. Upon recovering from his illness, he served as a recruitment officer in the segregated South. While there, Prioleau was shocked by the racism the 9th faced on a daily basis.

Through public letters and editorials, Prioleau challenged racial segregation and attacked the hypocrisy of fighting a war for liberation in Cuba while the United States remained locked in a mindset of racism. When the 9th returned from the Spanish-American war, they were cheered and treated as war heroes in New York City, but in Missouri the 9th Cavalry was “unkindly and sneeringly received,” as recorded by Prioleau. They also found that they were unable to sit at numerous restaurants, while white soldiers were warmly greeted and allowed to eat free of charge.

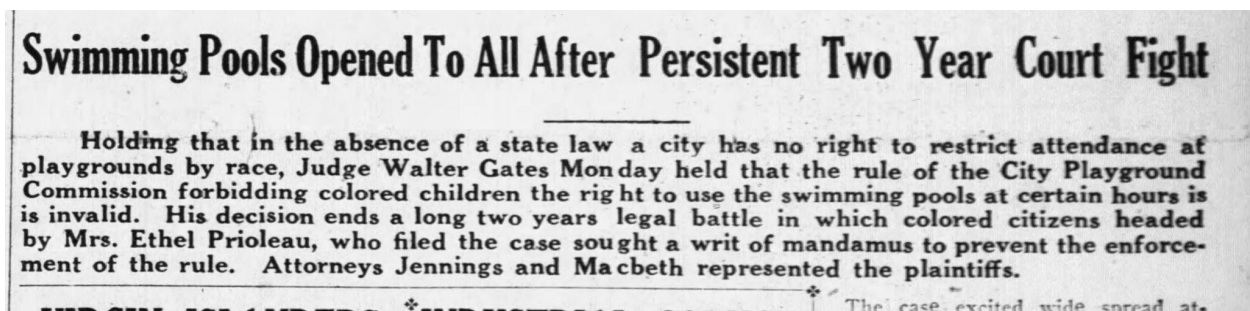
Chaplain Prioleau vocally advocated that service in the United States Army provided a rare opportunity for young black men. However, in the end he concluded that patriotic

duty and military service would not erase the color line in the minds of many whites. He served in the 9th Cavalry for 20 years before being transferred to the 10th Cavalry and later the 25th Cavalry with a promotion to major, retiring in 1920 and moving with his family to Manhattan Beach.¹³⁴

In 1921 he helped found the Bethel A. M. E. Church in Los Angeles where he often preached without pay. He died in 1927, a year and 5 months after falling from a ladder while painting the church and suffering serious injuries. He was survived by his wife, Ethel Stafford (b. 22 Oct 1882, Kansas City, Kansas).

Ethel was an accomplished woman in her own right. She graduated from Normal Teacher Training College in Kansas. While her husband was stationed on various military assignments, Ethel began teaching classes for Army Officer's wives. This included gymnastics classes, which were unheard of at the time. Ethel helped her husband start the AME church and for 20 years ran a progressive Sunday School program. She was the President of the Southern California Branch of the Women's Missionary Society from 1933-1942.

She was also a social activist. Ethel was President of the Theodore Roosevelt Unit of the Women's Political Study Club. She worked with Betty Hill to help change the policies that didn't allow black nurses to eat in the dining room, sleep overnight during their shifts at County Hospital, or allowed to be ambulance drivers. Ethel helped end segregation at public pools in summer 1931 when she sued the city, complaining that she was not allowed to use the swimming pool in nearby Exposition Park but had to travel 3.6 miles to the "negro swimming pool" at 1357 East 22nd street.



California Eagle 1931

Additionally, Ethel assisted Dr. Ruth Temple in organizing sex education classes for women and girls of appropriate age. This was a highly controversial issue at the time.

¹³⁴ US Veteran's Affairs Memorial. Added: 3 Mar 2000. Find a Grave Memorial [3744434](#)

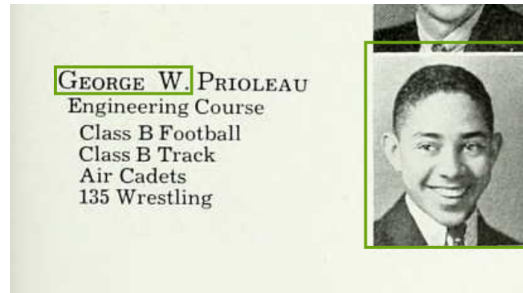
Ethel was also a business woman. She obtained her realtor's licence. Her reputation for sound judgement and honesty was so good that she would purchase homes, sight unseen, for soldiers retiring and moving to Los Angeles.¹³⁵

This was all accomplished while raising 4 children, the youngest of whom was 2 1/2 when she was widowed. She also cared for her husband George for 17 months after his injury until his passing.

The Prioleau children: daughter Mary Prioleau King, (b. 30 November 1910 d. 7 October 1996) was a teacher, daughter Ethel Suzanne Prioleau Bowan (b.24 June 1914 d. 15 Aug 1995) was an assistant Superintendent , son George W Prioleau (b. 1917- d. 1983) was a US Army Lieutenant, daughter Lois E Prioleau Patton (b. 18 Jun 1924 d.23 Jun 2014) administrator in the Little Rock California school district.



Ethel 1932, Polytechnic High School



George W. Prioleau, 1934, Polytechnic High School



Lois Prioleau, 1942, Polytechnic High School

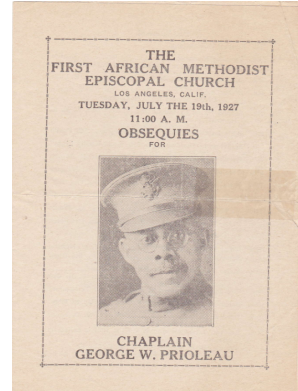


Mary Prioleau, 1927, Polytechnic High School

¹³⁵ Profile of Mrs. Ethel G. Prioleau



Buried Los Angeles National Cemetery, Plot 52, A-17



Program from Memorial Service

Ms. Elizabeth (Emma) M. Patterson

The other half of the Prioleau lot was purchased by Ms. Elizabeth M. Patterson in 1922 and together they they built a duplex. Ms. Patterson was born in Tennessee about 1877. Before purchasing her lot in 1922, Elizabeth lived with her brother William T. Patterson and his three adult sons on Alvarado Street. ¹³⁶ Elizabeth was a longtime friend of the Prioleau family from when they lived in Kansas. ¹³⁷



Ms. Elizabeth (Emma) Patterson



Evergreen Cemetery, Los Angeles

¹³⁶ 1920 U.S. Census

¹³⁷ Brigham p. 24

Mrs. Mary Ramsey Sanders (Washington)

On September 15, 1923, Mrs. Mary Sanders bought lot 6, Block 12. She purchased an already constructed beach cottage from white owner, Frank Heron.¹³⁸ Mary Sanders (married name Mary Washington) owned a home valued at \$6,000 at 1146 S. Kingsley.¹³⁹ Mrs. Sanders maintained her residence at S. Kinsey Ave. and likely used the cottage as a weekend beach getaway.¹⁴⁰

Mrs. Sanders was born 1872 in Canada and immigrated to the United States in 1887. Her mother and father were from Pennsylvania. Mrs. Sanders worked as a caterer for private families. According to Brigham's thesis, she was "one of the better cateresses in Los Angeles" and "a woman of considerable success and prestige."¹⁴¹

She was twice widowed and lived with her sister, Fanny Robinson (b. 1872), also a caterer and widowed. She had three daughters, Ethel Washington (b. Sept. 1888), Ira Washington (b. Nov. 1891), a school teacher, and Francis "Fannie" Washington (b. May 1893 d.1919 of tuberculosis).

Ethel married Edward C Atkinson and had son John Edward Atkinson (b. Jan 21, 1912, Denver, Colorado- d. December 26, 1988, Los Angeles). John married Antoinette Gamble and had one son.

L B 214		SERIAL NUMBER	1. NAME (Print)	ORDER NUMBER
1486	JOHN EDWARD ATKINSON	1161		
2. ADDRESS (Print)				
3719 Griffith Los Angeles Calif				
3. TELEPHONE				
13889				
4. AGE IN YEARS				
24				
5. PLACE OF BIRTH				
Denver Colorado				
6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP				
U.S.A.				
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS				
Mrs. Thekla Antoinette Atkinson Wife				
8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON				
Wife				
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON				
3719 Griffith Los Angeles Calif				
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME				
U.S. Post Office Clerk				
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS				
Los Angeles California				
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.				
REGISTRATION CARD				
D. S. FORM 1				
156 16-17105				
John Edward Atkinson				

John Atkinson's WW2 draft card

¹³⁸ Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), IIMVIHCXjCXVII, p. 275.

¹³⁹ 1930 Census

¹⁴⁰ 1920 & 1930 Census

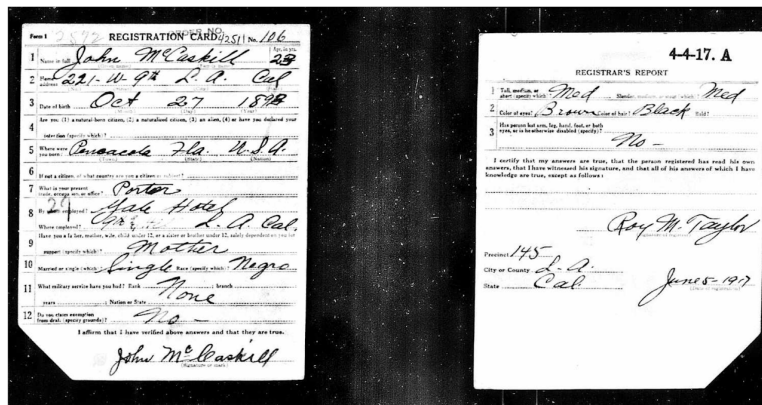
¹⁴¹ Brigham p. 32

Mr. and Mrs. Milton B. and Anna Johnson

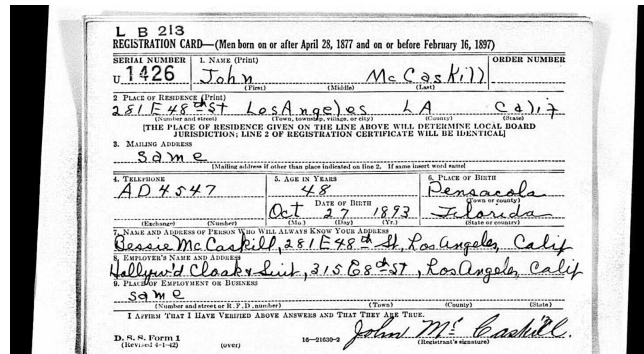
Mr. and Mrs. Milton B. and Anna Johnson had lot 1, Block 12.¹⁴² Milton B. Johnson was born in Canada and came to the United States in 1874. He married Anna E Davis October 27, 1914. Milton worked as a porter for Steam Railroad.¹⁴³

John & Bessie McCaskill, Elzia & Carrie Irvin

John McCaskill (1893-1983) purchased property on the south side of 26th st. He was born October 27, 1893 in Florida. Mr. McCaskill was a veteran who served in World War 1. Then again at the age of 48 he enlisted to serve in World War 2.



John McCaskill's WWI Registration Card



John McCaskill's WW2 Registration Card

Before the war he was a porter at the Mak Hotel. By 1930, he worked as a presser at Hollywood Cloak and Suit. In 1920, he married Bessie Johnson (b. 1892). Bessie had twins Eleanor & Ellis Johnson from a previous relationship. They later welcomed daughter Esther Viola McCaskill.

¹⁴² This information was obtained from Brigham's thesis, p. 22. We have requested the deeds from the Assessor's Office, but are still waiting to receive them.

¹⁴³ 1920 US Census

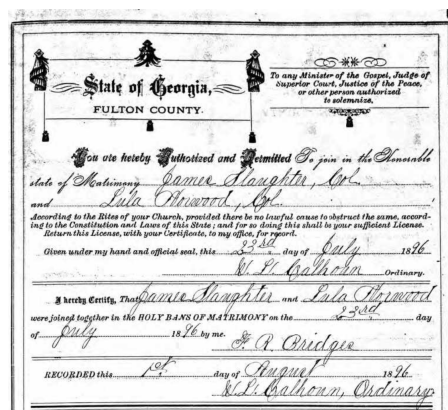
McCASKILL, BESSIE, Housewife, born in Los Angeles, California, the daughter of Frank and Mary (White) McVea, both now deceased.
She was educated in the public school system of Los Angeles.
Married John McCaskill, October 21, 1920. There are three children--Esther, Eleanor and Ellis.
Mrs. McCaskill is a member of the YWCA, Modern Pricilla's (Art and Charity) Club, 8th and Towne Utility Club and the "Native Californian's Club."
Her hobby: Fabric Painting.

California State Library; *Negro Who's Who in California*; Page Number: 116

Elzia L. Irvin (b. 1887, Texas) and his wife Carrie also lived with the McCaskills . Carrie and Bessie Johnson were sisters. Elzia worked first as a shoemaker and then as a barber.¹⁴⁴

Mr. & Mrs. James & Lula Slaughter

Mr. and Mrs. James Slaughter purchased property on the south side of 26th Street, across from the Bruces'. James Slaughter was born September 22, 1876 in Georgia. He married Lula Norwood (b.1876) on July 23, 1896 in Fulton, Georgia.



Marriage Certificate of James and Lula Slaughter

In 1901, their daughter Ruby Slaughter was born in Georgia. They moved to Los Angeles before 1903 and the birth of their son, James Marvin Slaughter (1903–1958). This followed with the births of son Richard Slaughter (b. 1907–), daughter William "Willie"

¹⁴⁴ 1920 US census

Slaughter (b. 1909–), son Robert M. Slaughter (b.1910–1992), daughter Estella Slaughter (1914–1984), and daughter Virginia Slaughter (b. 1919–).

The Slaughter's opened a 10 room boarding house at 120 26th st. Manhattan Beach in 1927.

BEAUTIFUL BEACH RESORT: 120 26th St., Manhattan Beach. Comfortable modern rooms for rent by week or month at moderate prices. Delicious meals served in homey atmosphere. Make arrangements by phone or mail. Mrs. Flaughter, 120 - 26th St., Manhattan Beach. Phone, 11523, Redondo.

**GRAND OPENING of
Flaughter Apartments**
MONDAY, MAY 30th
Come, bring your family and spend the day at
MANHATTAN BEACH
Formerly Bruce's Beach
Lunches and soft drinks served all day at reasonable prices
Mr. & Mrs. James Flaughter
Proprietors 5-20-2

Slaughter ads from California Eagle



*James Slaughter
Miriam Matthews Collection UCLA*



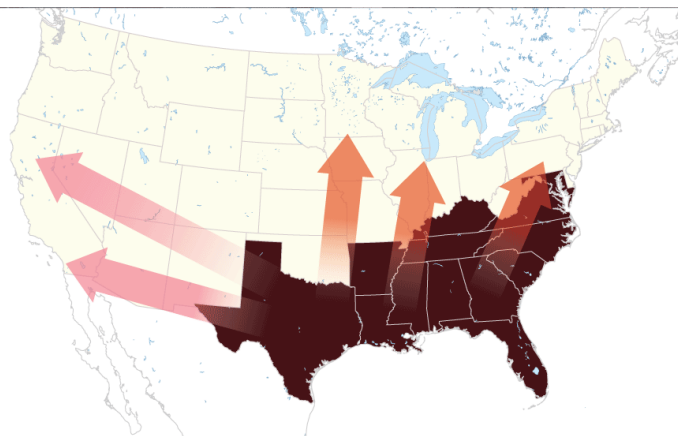
1927, 13 year old Estella Slaughter and her class at Center Street School in Manhattan Beach

Undeveloped Lots

The remaining parcels of land in that area were owned by white property owners, and had not been developed by 1924.

Contextual History of the Time

During the post-Reconstruction period, black citizens were seeking asylum in their own country from the lynchings and racism of the Jim Crow south. According to historian Isabel Wilkerson, "an African American was being lynched every four days somewhere in the American South."¹⁴⁵ Six million black southerners relocated to the north and to the west. The majority of black citizens relocating to California came from Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma in search of freedom and new opportunities.¹⁴⁶ James and Lula Slaughter relocated to California from Georgia. Elizabeth Patterson was born in Tennessee. Black migrants quickly laid claim to Central Avenue between 8th and 20th Streets in Downtown Los Angeles, and the area became known as "Brick Block" - with clubs, churches black-owned businesses and newspapers like the *California Eagle* supplying community needs.¹⁴⁷



Between 1916 and 1918 alone, 400,000 African Americans migrated north

In his book, "Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America", Douglas Flamming stated that for black Angelenos "the most important aspects of the city's origins were the racial characteristics of its founders. Virtually all of the first settlers were "colored" in the European sense of the word."¹⁴⁸ They were of mixed heritages of African, Native America, and Spanish descent. Most of the white Angelenos moved from slave states when California became a free state in 1850.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Great Migration. Four Hundred Souls*. 2021

¹⁴⁶ Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Great Migration. Four Hundred Souls*. 2021

¹⁴⁷ Simpson, Kelly. "The Great Migration: Creating a New Black Identity in Los Angeles". 2012

¹⁴⁸ Flamming, Douglas. *Bound for Freedom*. 2005. p20.

¹⁴⁹ Flamming, Douglas. *Bound for Freedom*. 2005. p21.

For blacks, California was the dream and the promise of the equality they were never given in the east. These opportunities also extended to home ownership. The large amounts of open land meant greater opportunity for home ownership. In 1910, the population was 319,198 and 36% of Los Angeles' black families owned their homes.¹⁵⁰ This was compared to only 2.4 percent in NYC, 29.5 percent in Oakland, 11 percent in New Orleans and 16.5 percent in Birmingham. "Los Angeles is wonderful," gushed W.E.B. Dubois. "Nowhere in the United States is the Negro so well and beautifully housed ... Out here in this matchless Southern California there would seem to be no limit to your opportunities or your possibilities."¹⁵¹ Attorney Hugh McBeth had just graduated from Harvard Law School in 1913 when he first visited Los Angeles. He wrote to his wife back on the east coast, "Come and dwell in God's Country."¹⁵²

In the late 1910s and 1920s, racially restrictive housing covenants were widespread, and led to the "concentration and segregation" of Blacks in Los Angeles.¹⁵³ agreements that had been around as early as the 1890s. These covenants between white residents and organizations such as the California Real Estate Association excluded, in writing and in practice, "alien races" and "non Caucasians". By 1920, three-fourths of black Los Angeles lived in three of the city's dozen assembly districts. Even the U.S. Supreme Court held, in 1926, in *Corrigan vs. Buckley*, that it was legal to enforce racially restrictive housing covenants.¹⁵⁴

The Railroad Boom

In 1881 the Southern Pacific Railroad linked Los Angeles directly with the eastern United States for the first time. In 1885, the Santa Fe Railroad opens a second line linking Los Angeles with the rest of the nation. In an article for the California Historical Society, Alison Rose Jefferson wrote "The post-Civil War years into the early decades of the twentieth century, black men gained employment on the transcontinental railroad, most often as Pullman Company's Palace Car porters and waiters, helping to define American travel and becoming a symbol of upward mobility for black males during the nation's railroad transportation era."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Flamming, Douglas. *Bound for Freedom*. 2005. p51

¹⁵¹ Reft, Ryan. *How Prop 14 Shaped California's Racial Covenants*. 2017.

¹⁵² Flamming, Douglas. *Bound for Freedom*. 2005. p50

¹⁵³ Reft, Ryan. *How Prop 14 Shaped California's Racial Covenants*. 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Allen, James, P. and Turner, Eugene (1997). *The Ethnic quilt: Population diversity in Southern California*. Northridge, CA: The Center for Geographical Studies.

¹⁵⁵ Jefferson, Allison Rose. *The Transcontinental Railroad, African Americans and the American Dream*. 2019

Birth of a Nation & the KKK

In 1915, DW Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, set during the Reconstruction period, premiered. The film romanticized the Confederacy, glorified violence toward blacks, and revived the Klu Klux Klan.¹⁵⁶ The film was based on Thomas Dixon's novel, *The Clansman*. About his novel, Dixon said:

"My object is to teach the North, the young North, what it has never known—the awful suffering of the white man during the dreadful Reconstruction period. I believe that Almighty God anointed the white men of the South by their suffering during that time . . . to demonstrate to the world that the white man must and shall be supreme."¹⁵⁷



Still image from *Birth of a Nation*

Griffith's racist propaganda was taken as history and bolstered the idea that the Klan was there to save America from "black savages". Throughout its 3 hour run time, blacks are portrayed as dangerous, lazy and morally corrupt. The Klan rises up to save the south and is portrayed as the heroes of the film.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Great Migration. Four Hundred Souls*. 2020

¹⁵⁷ "‘Art [and History] by Lightning Flash’: *The Birth of a Nation* and Black Protest," Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media.

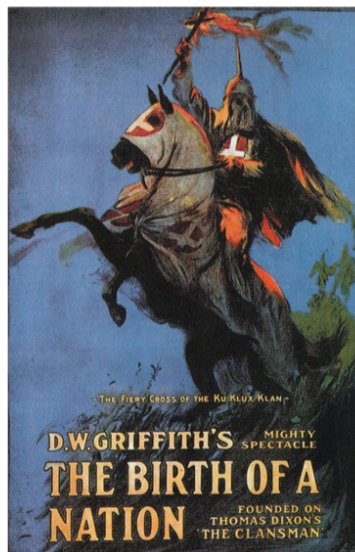
¹⁵⁸ History.com Editors. *The Birth of A Nation” opens, glorifying the KKK*. April 13 2021.



Members of the N.A.A.C.P. picket under the marquee of the Republic Movie Theatre in Flushing, New York, against race discrimination featured in the movie, 'The Birth of a Nation,' being played at the theater in 1947. (Credit: Library of Congress/Corbis/Getty Images)

The most technically ambitious film ever made at the time, *The Birth of a Nation* was a popular success. President Woodrow Wilson even screened it at the White House. African American writer James Weldon Johnson wrote in 1915 that *The Birth of a Nation* did “incalculable harm” to black Americans by creating a justification for prejudice, racism, and discrimination for decades to follow.¹⁵⁹ That same year, the Ku Klux Klan, inactive since the trials of 1872, reemerged across the country to terrorize black Americans.

The following poster was used to advertise the movie 'The Birth of a Nation' in 1915.



Film poster via Wikimedia Commons

Film poster for *Birth of a Nation*

¹⁵⁹ James Weldon Johnson, March 1915, quoted in introduction to “*Birth of a Nation*, the NAACP, and the Balancing of Rights,” EDSITEment! website, National Endowment for the Humanities project.

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- February 18, 2003
- April 15, 2003
- May 6, 2003
- December 6, 2005
- July 5, 2006
- April 18, 2006
- November 8, 2006
- December 5, 2006

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