



CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH CITY HALL

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TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Bruce Moe, City Manager

MEETING: City Council Study Session- Bruce's Beach Park Plaque Language, March 10, 2022

SUBJECT: Agenda Item No. 1 - Consideration of the Language for and Placement of Plaques at Bruce's Beach.

DATE: March 10, 2022

SUPPLEMENTAL ATTACHMENT

- Proposed Language - Councilmember Franklin

JOE FRANKLIN PLAQUE LANGUAGE- SUBMITTED MAR 10 2022

(342 WORDS):

This County Lifeguard station sits on land previously owned by Willa and Charles Bruce who, in 1912, after being turned away from other coastal cities, purchased property along the Strand in Manhattan Beach to create a beach resort for the area's Black community.

Willa and her husband purchased two adjacent lots in 1912 and 1920 for a total of \$1,235.

By 1916, the resort known as "Bruce's Lodge" was a thriving fixture for visiting Blacks, with a restaurant, dancehall, changing rooms and showers.

Soon after, several other Black families purchased property and built homes where the adjacent park is now, including Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson, John McCaskill and Elisa L. Irvin, and James and Lulu Slaughter. Twenty-five other properties were owned by White families.

Beginning in 1912, both the Black homeowners and visitors to this neighborhood reportedly suffered intimidation, harassment, and discrimination on the basis of their race by some Manhattan Beach government officials, and some White residents.

The ostensible purpose of these actions was to make Manhattan Beach inhospitable to Black residents and visitors.

In 1924 the City condemned the properties of Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton, Anna Johnson and all twenty-five properties owned by White families.

At that time, several sources reported the city's action was racially motivated.

All landowners were compensated for the seizure. The Bruces received \$14,500, the largest portion of the settlement.

A burgeoning Black neighborhood was forced to relocate to other areas of Manhattan Beach. This included four of the five Black families and all of the White

families. The Bruce Family decided to leave the area in 1927, moving to Los Angeles, where they purchased three properties.

The area formerly known as Bruce's Lodge, and the surrounding parcels, was developed into a city park after the Great Depression and World War II.

The park was renamed Bruce's Beach Park in 2007 as a remembrance and tribute to the Bruce family.