

Bruce's Beach Report from the History Subcommittee

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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 facts to support the motivation of many of the key figures of the time, the reported events, as well as evidence of racial injustice during the Jim Crow era. As part of the research process, the subcommittee conducted extensive research using primary sources and interviews.

Timeline of Events:



Between 1900 and 1904¹, an African American family, Willa Bruce (b. 1862, Missouri), and her husband, Charles Aaron Bruce (b. 1860, Washington D.C.), and son, Harvey (b.

¹ Year: 1900; Census Place: Albuquerque, Bernalillo, New Mexico; Page: 6; Enumeration District: 0009; FHL microfilm: 1240999, https://rescarta.lapl.org/ResCarta-Web/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=040428be-8b21-4de1-9b1e-3421068cof1c/clo00000/20170519/00000001&pg_seq=204&search_doc=&query1_modifier=AND&query1=bruce&query1_field=CONTENT

1888), moved to California from Albuquerque, New Mexico. They lived at 1024 Santa Fe in Downtown Los Angeles.²

In 1912 when the city of Manhattan Beach was incorporated, there were approximately 600 residents.³ Manhattan Beach was one of the last coastal areas in the South Bay to be developed due to the prominence of sand dunes and relatively limited investment in infrastructure at the time. Many of the sparsely dispersed structures (cottages and sheds) were used for weekend getaways or vacations.

In February, 1912, Willa Bruce paid \$1,225 for the first of two lots purchased along the Strand, west of Highland Avenue, between 26th and 27th streets. She procured this property from Henry Willard, a real estate agent representing lots along the track owned by the subdivider, George H. Peck. According to the LA Times, this was a high price for the two 32 x 100 lots compared to others nearby⁴. (comparative purchase prices ranged from \$200 - \$450/lot). *Citation Forthcoming

Although in the midst of the Jim Crow era, there were no covenants in the deeds that restricted selling property to African Americans in Manhattan Beach in 1912. The 1910 census lists the Bruces' race as "mulatto"⁵, but in his thesis "Land Ownership and Occupancy by Negroes in Manhattan Beach, California", Robert L. Brigham suggests that the Bruces were likely not trying to "pass" as white when purchasing property in Manhattan Beach.⁶ Additionally, the 1912 Times described Mrs. Bruce as "a stout negress".⁷

On June 17, 1912,⁸ the Bruces opened Manhattan Beach's first beach resort, and it was the only one in the South Bay that welcomed African Americans. While her husband Charles worked as a dining-car chef on the train running between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, Willa ran the business and interacted with guests.⁹ It started as "a small

² 1904 LA City Directory, Los Angeles City Directory Co, Inc. Los Angeles, CA. Pg. 211

³ Minutes of the Office of the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County, California, Monday, December 2, 1912.,

⁴ Los Angeles Times (1886-1922); Jun 27, 1912; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 115

⁵ Year: 1910; Census Place: Los Angeles Assembly District 71, Los Angeles, California; Roll: T624_81; Page: 9A; Enumeration District: 0130; FHL microfilm: 1374094

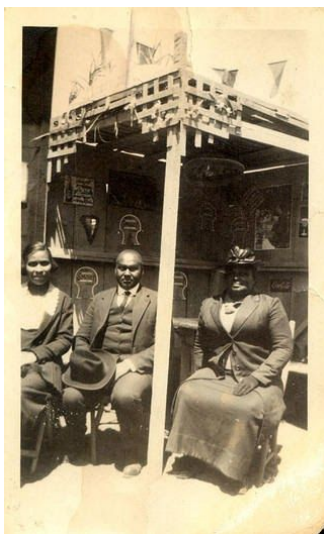
⁶ Brigham, p. 17.

⁷ "Colored People's Resort Meets With Opposition", Los Angeles Times (1886-1922); Jun 27, 1912; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. 115

⁸ "Bruce Beach Front", The Liberator, May 31, 1912, p. 5.

⁹ Jefferson, Alison Rose. "Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era." UNiversity of Nebraska Press. 2020. P. 35.

portable cottage with a stand that sold soda pop and lunches,” which rented bathing suits and provided access to bathing showers and dressing tents.¹⁰



Within a week of opening, white landowners of “adjoining property” expressed agitation and began harassing guests¹¹. According to an article in the Los Angeles Times, African Americans visiting the Bruces’ resort were blocked from easy access to the beach when “No Trespassing” signs were placed around the strip of ocean frontage spanning Peck’s pier (at 34th Street¹²) to 24th street - property owned by George H. Peck, Jr. - forcing them to walk a half mile in each direction to get to the water.¹³ Robert Brigham wrote that Mrs. Melvin Bowden recalled a rope around the prohibited area, but of those Brigham interviewed, she was the only one to recall the use of a rope. White realtor George H. Lindsey told Brigham 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 said that the use of a long rope was the “direct result of telegrams between Culler and Peck”, who at the time were doing business back east and allegedly told Culler to “do what he thought best.”¹⁴ 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.

Despite the “No Trespassing” signs and the presence of two constables patrolling the area, African American bathers remained undeterred, as well as the Bruces. “Wherever

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

¹¹ Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”

¹² Peck’s Manhattan Beach Tract Map, Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

¹³ “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, Los Angeles Times (1886-1922); Jun 27, 1912; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. I15

¹⁴ Brigham, p. 39.

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.”¹⁵

From the wording of the Bruce’s Beach park plaque dedicated in 2007, it is indicated that Peck “made it possible” for the beachfront property to be open to “all people.” A Los Angeles Times article written 90 years later 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 2-block area fronting the ocean between 28th and 27th streets and Highland Avenue for minority residents.”¹⁶

Following extensive review of government documents, newspaper articles, interviews, and historian documentation from 1912 through the 1950s, 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.

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 at a cost was to resemble the Sadler building at the Strand and Marine and was slated to cost \$6,000.¹⁷ In 1920, Mrs. Bruce purchased the lot immediately to the south of their existing lot (Lot 9) in 1923, where they built as well¹⁸. The Bruce’s Beach investment provided Black families accommodations to enjoy a weekend on the coast and quickly became a popular destination.

¹⁵ “Colored People’s Resort Meets With Opposition”, Los Angeles Times (1886-1922); Jun 27, 1912; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. I15

¹⁶ Rasmussen, Cecila. “Resort Was An Oasis for Blacks Until Racism Drove Them Out”, Los Angeles Times, July 21, 2002.

¹⁷ “Apartment House At Peck Pavilion”, Manhattan Beach News, December 25, 1915.

¹⁸ Brigham, p. 43.



Photo Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society

Miriam Matthews, Los Angeles' 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. 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."¹⁹

On June 6, 1916, per City Council minutes, Willa was appointed Deputy Marshal of North Manhattan by the City Council.²⁰

Purportedly, there was a sign posted at the resort that read "Bruce's Beach: All are Welcome." A replica was observed in the California African American Museum by scholar, curator, and secretary of the Smithsonian Dr. Lonnie Bunch, who expressed a desire to acquire it for the Smithsonian.²¹ However, no other evidence could be found to support Dr. Bunch's recollection. The words from this sign "All are Welcome" are inscribed on the park plaque currently in place at Bruce's Beach. ***Pending Further Research**

During the period between 1919-1926, at least six other African Americans purchased property in close proximity to Bruce's Lodge, four of them between 26th and 27th

¹⁹ *Erasing a Line Drawn in the Sand*, Los Angeles Times, March 19, 2007

²⁰ Minutes of Meeting of The Board of Trustees of the City of Manhattan Beach, June 6, 1916.

²¹ C-Span Interview with Lonnie Bunch, June 18, 2006.

streets (blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's tract)²². The homeowners included the Reverend and educator, George and Ethel Prioleau, who co-owned a lot with Elizabeth Patterson, the Milton B./Anne Johnson family, and Mary Sanders Washington.²³

Per Robert Brigham and Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson, white neighbors resented the resort's growing popularity and prosperity of its African American owners by the early 1920s and were "concerned" about a "Negro 'invasion'" and the impact it could have on property values.

George Lindsey²⁴, a real estate agent in the North End of Manhattan Beach who arrived in 1920, played a major role initiating the series of events leading to the condemnation and seizure of property from Black families residing near Bruce's lodge. Brigham later interviewed Mr. Lindsey, who indicated that white landowners feared an "invasion" by members of the African American community.²⁵ (*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.*)

Regarding Black residents in Manhattan Beach, 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'". Lindsey approached the Board of Trustees (now known as 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."²⁶ The Public Playground Act of 1909 presented a legal option. It is unclear where the idea of condemning the land to build a public park originated; however, Lindsey circulated a petition for support of this action and presented it to the Board on November 15, 1923.²⁷

It is also significant to note that the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) held influence in the area at that time. The California Eagle, a prominent African-American newspaper from 1879-1964, reported on the front page that the KKK was operating unrestricted along the waterfront in June 1924. Cited in the article was an incident in Redondo Beach where KKK pamphlets were handed out to Black fisherman. The Redondo Breeze

²² Jefferson, p. 37.

²³ Brigham, p. 22.

²⁴ *U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

²⁵ Brigham, p. 44.

²⁶ Brigham, p. 44

²⁷ Brigham, p. 45.

newspaper, published January 12, 1924, invited readers to a free lecture on “The Principles of the KKK and Ideals of Pure Americanism.”²⁸ KKK membership rolls included many civic leaders and policemen, including the mayors of LA and Redondo (see links Inglewood raid and others).

While there was no evidence positively linking acts of harassment to the KKK, many of Brigham’s interviewees reported racially-motivated incidents that were believed to be related to the Klan. In one instance, Hugh MacBeth, lawyer for Mrs. Sanders and the Johnsons, said air was let out of tires in cars parked near the Bruces’ resort while owners were at the beach.²⁹ 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.”³⁰ Mrs. Titus Alexander 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.³¹ Mrs. Ethel Atkinson reported fake “10 Minutes Only” parking signs that were posted to deter out-of-town Blacks from visiting the resort, and also said that a cross was burned in the hill above a Black-owned home.³²

Despite this harassment, Black residents and guests did not flee. On January 3, 1924, the Manhattan Beach City Council passed ordinance 263, claiming eminent domain for a public park even though they just built Live Oak Park nearby. On June 19, 1924, Manhattan Beach enacted new laws with fines and penalties for violating ordinances (273-275) that prohibited new or additional development of bath houses and commercialized amusements near the strand without Board of Trustee approval, and banning dressing/undressing in cars, tents, and temporary structures. Although these ordinances did not impact the Bruces’ existing resort, they were clearly designed to prevent any further development in Manhattan Beach by the Bruces or other African-Americans. On the same day, ordinance 276 passed unanimously; identical to ordinance 263, it indicated the intent for condemnation. Protests against the condemnation were deemed insufficient and dismissed.³³

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, which covered 30 lots. Five of these were owned

²⁸ Brigham, p. 41.

²⁹ Brigham, p. 40.

³⁰ Brigham, p. 41.

³¹ Brigham, p. 77.

³² Brigham, p. 82.

³³ “Important Business at Council: All Park Protests Denied.” Manhattan Beach News. September 19, 1924. P. 1

by African American families, including their cottages and the Bruce's Lodge. The remaining 25 lots had no structures and were owned by white landowners. The Bruces, along with three other African American families sued the City of Manhattan Beach for racial discrimination in 1924.³⁴ (This statement warrants further research because the source is unclear if this was a separate lawsuit from the complaint of condemnation proceedings.)

On February 4, 1927, the Manhattan Beach News published a front page article about a petition submitted by the Taxpayers Protective League to recall the Board of Trustees for a number of legislative actions related to development along the Strand, as well as the park and playground proceedings. A letter signed by C.A. Bruce, Willa Bruce and Harvey Bruce was presented in an adjacent article. In this letter, the Bruces express 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.³⁵

In exchange for water service to North Manhattan, George Peck donated 2 beach lots to the city in 1927. These lots were then “leased” to Oscar Bessonette; it was later revealed that no rent was ever collected.³⁶

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.”³⁷

Black families were still coming to Bruce's Beach even though police were now arresting them as “trespassers.” Police patrolling the area selectively arrested Black “trespassers” while white beachgoers were undisturbed. On July 4, 1927, a 19-year-old Black UCLA student, Elizabeth Cately, was arrested for swimming and “trespassing” on the “private beach.” Manhattan Beach police refused to allow her to change into dry clothes and kept her in jail for five hours. In response, the newly formed Los Angeles chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held their first peaceful protest on July 17, 1927, which was dubbed a “swim in.”³⁸ The lawyer for the NAACP, Hugh Macbeth, was able to obtain admissions from police officers, Bessonette, and Trustees that the signs were meant only to deter Blacks, prompting the force of

³⁴ Rassmussen.

³⁵ *The Beach Reporter*, April 16, 1987

³⁶ Brigham, p. 85.

³⁷ Letter to the City of Manhattan Beach from Willie A. Bruce and Charles A. Bruce, May 16, 1927. Manhattan Beach Historical Society.

³⁸ Brigham, p. 86.

signs' removal. The next day, the California Eagle's banner headline crowed: "NAACP Wins Beach Victory."³⁹

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."⁴⁰ Ultimately, they were granted \$14,500. They did not stay in Manhattan Beach.

Even though the city condemned the land for a new park in place of the former resort, 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. In the 1950s, City Treasurer Lee Younggren estimated the vacancy cost the city approximately \$80,000 in compensation fees and tax and assessment losses.⁴¹



Photo Courtesy of the Manhattan Beach Historical Society

Frank 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 entitled "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 Bruce's 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

³⁹ Brigham, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Brigham, p. 65.

⁴¹ "Resort was an Oasis for Blacks Until Racism Drove them Out", LA Times, July 21, 2002

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.”⁴²

In the 1950s, after decades had passed with no movement on the park, the LA Times reported that the Manhattan Beach Recreation Commission became concerned that heirs of the former property owners might sue to regain their land unless it was used for the purpose for which it had been taken.⁴³ In 1956, a terraced park was constructed and was officially named Bayview Terrace Park in 1962. In 2003, the park’s name was changed to Parque Culiacan. In 2007, it was renamed Bruce’s Beach.

History of the 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. 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.⁴⁴

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 before the “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, 1974.⁴⁵

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.⁴⁶

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

⁴² “Negroes and Pier Building Were Manhattan Problems,” Manhattan Beach News, February 19, 1943, pp. 1 and 6.

⁴³ “Manhattan Beach Was Once Home To Black Beachgoers But The City Ran Them Out”, LA Times, August 2, 2020

⁴⁴ South Bay Breeze, November 9, 1954

⁴⁵ MB City Council Minutes, February 19, 1974

⁴⁶ Parks & Recreation Minutes February 27, 2006

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.⁴⁷

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.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹

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" 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.⁵⁰ 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.

⁴⁷ MB City Council Minutes, February 18, 2003, Agenda Item 13

⁴⁸ MB City Council Minutes, April 15, 2003, Agenda Item 15, pg 6

⁴⁹ MB City Council Minutes, April 15, 2003, Agenda Item 15, pg 7

⁵⁰ MB City Council Minutes, May 6, 2003, Agenda Item 6.19, pg. 5



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 Culican. Mayor Fahey asked the council if there was support for discussing changing the name of Parque Culican; 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.⁵¹

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 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.⁵²

⁵¹ Manhattan Beach City Council Meeting recording, December 6, 2005

⁵² MB Parks and Recreation Meeting Minutes, February 27, 2006

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 Culican, with specific direction to look at the historical aspects of the area.⁵³

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 Culican to Bruce's Beach. The Committee voted 4-2 (Ayes: Cohen, Paralusz, Gill, Lamb; Nays: Harris, Lear)⁵⁴

At the City Council meeting on July 6, 2006, Parks and Recreation brought their recommendation of renaming Parque Culican 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 exclusion, opened up 2 blocks of land on the beach for African Americans to purchase."⁵⁵

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 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

⁵³ Manhattan Beach City Council Meeting recording, April 18, 2006

⁵⁴ MB Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes, May 22, 2006

⁵⁵ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, July 5, 2006

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 Cately, the NAACP, and the movement it inspired.⁵⁶

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 ProTem 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.⁵⁷

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. 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 Jefferson had not been consulted about the plaque wording. He was also concerned that significant history was not represented. Mayor 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.⁵⁸

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 remains 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 area and its historical significance. Mayor Ward and Councilmember Aldinger served on the subcommittee to review the text.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ MB City Council Recording, July 5, 2006

⁵⁷ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, July 5, 2006

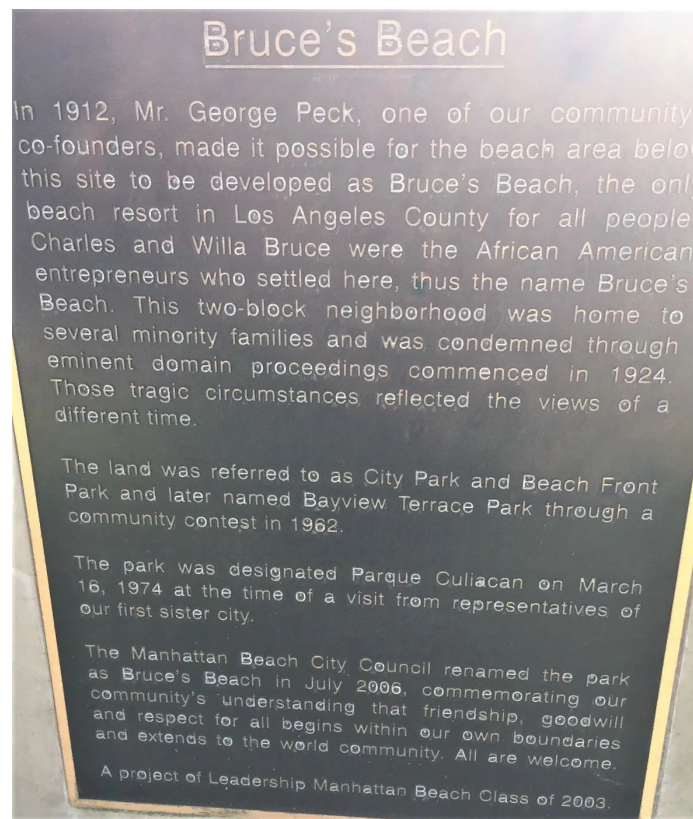
⁵⁸ MB City Council Minutes & Recording, November 8, 2006

⁵⁹ MB City Council Recording, December 5, 2006

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.



Racism in Manhattan Beach since the renaming of Bruce's Beach

In the minutes of Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting to discuss the renaming of Parque Culiacan held on May 22, 2006, Commissioner Lamb reported that his 92-year-old uncle, whose father was the third police officer hired by the city, witnessed a burning house with robed KKK members out front while walking home from a boy scout meeting.

In the July 5, 2006 City Council meeting, Manhattan Beach long-time resident Gail Runk, who helped create the Manhattan Hermosa Fair Housing Council, in the 1960s after discovering landlords would tell minority apartment seekers none were available, but later lease to white renters, recalled a cross burning on the lawn of African American residents in the 1970s.

One of the most recent incidents of overt racism in Manhattan Beach occurred on February 4, 2015, when a home owned by the Clinton family, African American residents of Manhattan Beach, was firebombed. A tire doused in gasoline was rolled through their yard, burning their front door causing \$200,000 in damages. The Clintons stated in the documentary *Not in Our Town: Manhattan Beach* that smaller instances of house defacement had occurred, including trash and drug paraphernalia being left in front.⁶⁰

The community of Manhattan Beach came together in the immediate aftermath of this event to offer its support to the Clinton family.⁶¹ A solidarity candlelight vigil was attended by over 700 hundred people in the Metlox shopping center.⁶² Soon after, the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and the Southern California Terrorism task Force joined the investigation and determined that what happened to the Clintons was in fact a hate crime.⁶³ The perpetrator remains unknown. In 2015, the family donated \$35,000 in reward money raised to establish the Manhattan Beach Education Foundation (MBEF) Social Inclusion Grants.⁶⁴

In 2020, following the racially motivated killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black people, shockwaves were felt throughout the country, and each community in America was forced to reopen their conversations about racial inequality. A peaceful protest was held at the pier on June 2, 2020, with hundreds gathering to advocate for justice.⁶⁵ It was broken up in the late afternoon by police who

⁶⁰ "An Act of Hate Toward African American Family", LA Magazine, June 28, 2017

⁶¹ "Why I Stayed After My House Was Firebombed"

⁶² "Not in Our Town"

⁶³ "FBI, Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms agents join the Manhattan Beach Firebomb Investigation"

⁶⁴ MBEF website, Social Inclusion Grants

⁶⁵ "Vigil at Manhattan Beach Pier honors Breona Taylor", Daily Breeze, October 4, 2020

were enforcing a temporary county curfew in the face of protests.⁶⁶ It was followed by 2 more peaceful protests in Manhattan Beach.

Manhattan Beach City Council hosted a Community Forum on Policing and Partnerships on July 9, 2020. This gave residents the opportunity to listen to voices in their community as they share instances of bias and racism experienced in Manhattan Beach. During the panel, former Mira Costa Students Jemal Williams and Dalia Feliciano, shared their experiences of racism in Manhattan Beach such as being called a “porch monkey” in middle school and feeling unwelcome when visiting the beach. Jemal shared the story of his father being pulled over picking him up from school and asked to show proof his son attended the school . Malissa Clinton described her fears when her sons leave the house. Due to the low number of Black residents, it is assumed they don’t actually live here.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Citation Needed.

⁶⁷ MB Council Recording, Forum on Policing, July 9, 2020

Appendix

Summary of Misconceptions

| Generalizations | Facts |
|---|--|
| 1) Bruce's Beach was a joyful escape for Black SoCal residents | 1) Beach-goers enjoyed their time, but faced prejudice and physical blocks while visiting |
| 2) Willa was completely ostracized from social life in Manhattan Beach | 2) Willa was made a Deputy Marshal of North Manhattan |
| 3) Bruce's Beach Resort stood on the area where the park is now. | 3) It stood where the lifeguard station is, between the Strand and the ocean |
| 4) The Bruces were the only Black family who were impacted | 4) Many other families - Black and white - had land taken in the condemnation |
| 5) Peck broke social norms of the Jim Crow era by selling land to Black families that he "set aside" for this purpose | 5) There is no evidence to support the claim that Peck specifically wanted to sell the land to African-Americans |
| 6) "It's [Bruce's Beach] a monument to progress, tolerance, and determination." - californiabeaches.com | 6) The wording in the plaque, as well as articles like this one, white-wash history. |
| 7) The pressure to leave was only from a few white residents and the KKK | 7) The City's Board of Trustees unanimously approved ordinances and police harassment |
| 8) The beach was open to all after the Bruce resort closed | 8) Following the condemnation, the Board of Trustees acquired beach property from George Peck in 1927 and "leased" it to Oscar Bessonnette, who then placed "no trespassing" signs with patrolling police officers that arrested Black beachgoers. |
| 9) The Bruces leaving had no impact on the diversity in Manhattan Beach | 9) Racial covenants were added to property titles and there was targeted legislation towards Black residents. |

| | |
|---|--|
| 10) All of the Black families that were evicted left Manhattan Beach. | 10) Several other Black families relocated to other parts of the town. |
|---|--|

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Manhattan Beach.

PEOPLE'S RESORT MEETS WITH OPPOSITION.

REDONDO BEACH, June 24.—The establishment of a small summer resort for negroes at North Man-

hattan has created great agitation among the white property owners of adjoining land.

The new summer resort which at present consists of a small portable cottage with a stand in front where soda pop and lunches are sold, and two dressing tents with shower baths and a supply of fifty bathing suits, was opened last Monday by the dusky proprietor and patronized by many colored people from Los Angeles.

Yesterday when a good-sized Sunday crowd of pleasure seekers had gathered and donned their bathing suits to disport in the ocean, they 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.

For a distance of over half a mile from Peck's pier to Twenty-fourth street, a strip of ocean frontage is owned by George H. Peck, who also owns several hundred acres of land in the Manhattan addition where Mrs. Bruce's property is situated. This strip has been staked off and "no trespassing" signs put up and consequently the bathers yesterday could not get to the beach without walking beyond Peck's strip of ocean frontage.

This small inconvenience, however, did not deter the bathers, on pleasure bent, from walking the half mile around Peck's land and spending the day swimming and jumping the breakers. All along the beach in front of the prohibited strip which was patrolled by the constables, the light-hearted "cullud" people frolicked in the breakers or lay on the warm sand enjoying the sea breezes.

Mrs. Bruce, a stout negress whose home is at No. 1024 Santa Fe avenue, says most emphatically that she is there to stay, and that she will con-



Mrs. W. A. Bruce,

Colored woman, who has created a storm at Manhattan Beach by establishing a seaside resort for the members of her race.

avers negroes cannot have bathing privileges at any of the bath-houses along the coast, and all they desire is a little resort of their own to which

kept lawns and attractive landscaping!

FRIDAY,

FRIDAY, JULY 20, 1945

No. 1

Wounded Man



CHIEF PETERSEN CELEBRATES 27 YEARS ON FORCE

Today Harry Petersen, chief of police of Redondo Beach, celebrates his twenty-seventh year with the Redondo Beach police department.

From horse and buggy days through the first World War and the first half of the second; through the era of the world's best beach picnic spot, through the gambling era, the W. P. A.; and through personal sickness and health, the genial Chief of Police of Redondo Beach, is still on the job.

For most of that time he has been chief of the local police department.

He suffered a severe illness this spring; but returned to his post last month, after a sick leave of absence granted him by the City Council.

Chief Petersen has an outstanding record in handling child delinquent cases. He has probably restored more youths to the paths of good citizens than almost any other police officer in the state of California.

He never likes to arrest a youth, preferring to detain the miscreant in his office for a good talking. Usually the result is to place the youth into channels of good citizenship. Quite often Chief Petersen is greeted by some man or woman, whom he helped over a tough spot in their

A HISTORY OF MANHATTAN

By Frank Daugherty
Oldest Active Business Man in Manhattan Beach

Public Library

CHAPTER IV

Negro Problem

At one time we thought the Negro problem was going to stop our progress. They erected a large building at the end of 27th St., using the first floor for dressing room for bathing and the entire second floor for a dining room and kitchen. Peck's pavilion was across the P.E. car tracks and they used this as well as their own.

They came here in truck loads with banners flying—BOUND FOR MANHATTAN BEACH. We tried to buy them out but they would not sell. There were several families in the blocks between 26th and 27th streets and between Strand and Highland. We had to acquire these two blocks to solve the problem, so we voted to condemn them, and make a city park there. We had to protect ourselves. Our attorney advised the members of the council never to admit the real purpose in establishing the park, especially during the council meeting.

Buy Out Negroes

We instructed the appraisers to

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Chief Petersen is greeted by some man or woman, whom he helped over a tough spot in their youth, whereas, he could have started the first of what might have been many arrests, had he chosen this method. That it has proven the best method is indicated by the splendid results he has achieved throughout the many years he has been on the force.

Chief Petersen has spoken to many civic clubs and organizations on the delinquent child problem.

It is a simple matter to get such matters straightened out, when the cooperation of the parents can be secured, says Chief Petersen. Children always respond to his method of approach. He blames parents, who are not so easy to work with as the youths, he says. "Every youth prefers to do the right thing, when he knows it is expected of him," he says.

**REFLEX FOUNDER
VISITS REDONDO**

P. E. McClellan, who founded the Redondo Reflex forty years ago, was a pleasant caller at the Reflex-Messenger office Wednesday.

Mr. McClellan issued the first Reflex on July 20, 1905. L. B. Lindsley was his local editor. A stock company was formed, to equip and start the paper, with new equipment. New equipment was installed; and the firm immediately engaged in the printing of high school annuals, in addition to the splendid job printing business they had established during their first nine months in business.

From the first week, a substantial subscription list was built up, and the paper got off to a good start.

After a few years, he sold out; and engaged in the newspaper brokerage business in Los Ange-

meeting.

Buy Out Negroes

We instructed the appraisers to be very liberal with those who had built homes on this property. The Bruces, who had the bath and dining room building and two lots on the Strand, were paid \$18,000. This action was opposed by the Negroes and they fought it out in court. They employed two very bright Negro lawyers, but the city won the case. It cost us about \$75,000 to settle this problem. But the city still owns the lots.

At this time, Strand lots were very cheap. Mr. Johnson, owner of the Manhattan News, traded two \$100 Liberty bonds for two lots near the Bruce's on the Strand. After the park was established, he sold them for \$11,000.

Those Negroes were Americans and had as much right to be here as we did. I always felt that it was a mean trick to make them leave their homes, but it was the only way out.

Being a member of the Board, I had to participate, or give up Manhattan Beach. I always thought that was the meanest thing I ever did, but I suppose I had to, and all of us thought the same way about it.

**Consolidate Manhattan-
Redondo?**

While I was Mayor, I attended a meeting in Redondo to talk about establishing industries there. If they succeeded, the three towns were to be consolidated. They invited me on the platform to tell them what our city thought about it. I said I could only speak for myself, not Manhattan, but I warned them that if the towns were consolidated, Manhattan would become as Nob Hill in Pasadena. They thought I was trying to be funny, but I was serious and right, too, as time has proved.

45 Years Ago

In 1900, 45 years ago, six business men of Los Angeles, of



It seems that the Ku Klux Klan is operating unrestrictedly along the water front. At first it was understood that at least the ocean was free for all; but recently part of Texas has been transplanted, along the water front of California, and it has decided that Colored Americans have no rights, civil or otherwise that it should respect.

A few weeks ago three Colcred men were fishing on the pier at Redondo when they were approached by a white man who handed one of them a little booklet entitled "The Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan", written on the margin of which was "Colored Folks Beach three miles North."

The Colored men who received this un-American cheap document immediately packed up their fishing tackle and moved on, not even taking time enough to head what the Ku Klux Bulletin contained, which we may state here and now, is interesting reading. It starts off with the caption, "This is a white man,s organization", etc, etc, which time and space will not permit us to publish at this time.

The colored folk of California must fight this sort of propaganda, which is working its way into the courts of this state, a vivid example of which is the Bruce Beach Case.

The Bruces have been at Manhattan for thirteen years, and were among the first settlers of that end of the beach. They, after securing their property site, set about to prepare a place where members of the race might spend their spare time enjoying the ocean breeze under their own vine and fig tree. But it is understood that some Ku Klux who recently moved in the vacinity objects 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 over the city council) and this august body has condemned Bruce Beach as a pleasure resort for Colored people.

Now this is not Mr. and Mrs. Bruce's fight, but the fight of the people. The N.A.A.C.P. and all organizations should look into this matter, and see that Mr. Bruce is given a fair chance.

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MEET ME THERE!—WHERE?

Bruce's Beach

THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1922

GRAND EXCURSION AND SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC

Given by the St. Paul Baptist Church

A grand outing and day of pleasure. Various contests are open and prizes worth your while will be awarded the winners at 3:00 P. M.

—Note The Contests—

Most Popular Minister on Grounds; Most Popular Young Lady on the Grounds; Most Popular Married Lady on the Grounds; Most Popular Marriageable Young Man on the Grounds; Largest Family on the Grounds.

—Fare—

Adults—Round Trip, 75c; Children (6 to 12 years)—Round Trip, 40c.

Trains leave 4th and Hill Sts., at 9:30 a. m. and 1:00 p. m.—Return 5:30 p. m. and 6:00 p. m.

REV. R. N. HOLT, Pastor

Phone: South 4913.

C. L. COLES, Chairman General Committee

Phone: 271684.

Tickets on Sale at: California Eagle Office, 824 Central Ave.; Mattox & Sons Grocery, 5122 Long Beach Ave.; May's Sweet Shop, 20th at Hooper; Johnson's Pharmacy, Cor. Normandie and Jefferson.

'KU KLUX KLAN RIDES AGAIN'

Circulars Passed Out in Redondo Region After Lighting of Flares and Placing of Sabers

REDONDO BEACH, Feb. 23.—Believed to be the first bubbling of the political pot here and elsewhere in the South Bay district, the Ku Klux Klan, long active in politics, today began the systematic distribution of circulars, calling for the release of the asserted "stranglehold" which racketeers have on politicians.

Distribution of the papers began in Hawthorne, Lennox and El Segundo last night and was accompanied by the burning of crosses on neighboring hills. In Hawthorne, a fire alarm was sounded, and firemen and citizens responding were handed the circulars. In the El Segundo district the burning crosses were untended, but were surrounded by an array of cavalry sabers stuck point downward into the ground, police

NEW RACKET REVEALED IN CULL FRUIT

Covina Oranges Obtained Free by Poverty Plea Sold to Los Angeles Stores

Until Racism Drove Them Out

By CECILIA RASMUSSEN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

A small green park on the Strand in Manhattan Beach is dedicated to international brotherhood these days, but it began as a beach resort for black Angelenos that was destroyed by racism in the 1920s.

In its heyday during the 1910s and '20s, the resort was called Bruces' Beach. It offered ocean breezes, bathhouses, outdoor sports, dining and dancing to hundreds of African Americans who craved a taste of Southern California's good life.

Now the oasis is called Parque Culiacán. Since the 1970s, its name has signified the friendship between the California beach community and its sister city in Mexico's Sinaloa state.

No sign in the *parque* recalls the history of Bruces' Beach. No monument memorializes one of Manhattan Beach's founders, developer-benefactor George Peck, or the beach resort's black founders, Charles and Willa Bruce. When the Bruces built it, there were no resorts on Los Angeles' coast that welcomed blacks.

Today, the resort endures only in books, in the memories of a few elderly townsfolk and in faded snapshots of happy summers and weekends. But yellowed clippings in scrapbooks and a 1956 thesis by a local resident, Robert L. Brigham, tell its story.

When Manhattan Beach was incorporated in 1912, with 600 residents, Peck flouted tradition and set aside a two-block area fronting the ocean between 26th and 27th streets and Highland Avenue for minority residents.

The Bruces, born during the Civil War in Union parts of the United States, were the first black Americans to buy lots. On their adjoining oceanfront lots they built the resort that bore their name. By 1919, four other black families owned cottages alongside white-owned lots.

Little is known about the Bruces. Census records of 1920 show that Charles Aaron Bruce had been born in Washington, D.C., and worked as a cook most of his life. Willa, who was sometimes known as Willie, had been born in Missouri. Their son, Harvey, was born in New Mexico about 1888 and had worked as a cook for the railroads.

In the 1920s, most Los Angeles real estate was bought and sold under racially restrictive covenants that had been enacted to keep neighborhoods white. Hotels, restaurants, beaches and parks barred blacks.

But Peck, who sold real estate out of a tent, helped the Bruces and their black neighbors build a fishing pier, all the while tossing out fistfuls of coins for black and white children along the boardwalk.

As coastal land became more valuable and Los Angeles' black population increased—bringing more African Americans to Bruces' Beach—so did whites' hostility and racism.

The California Eagle, an influential black newspaper in Los An-



African American Museum

A photocopy of Bruces' Beach in Manhattan Beach, which was a resort for African Americans in its heyday—the 1910s and '20s.

geles, reported on July 4, 1924, that three blacks had been fishing off the Redondo Beach Pier when several members of the Ku Klux Klan handed them a pamphlet titled "Principles of KKK and Ideals of PURE AMERICANISM."

In the margin of one of the pages someone had scrawled: "Colored Folks Beach three miles north"—in other words, telling them to move along to Bruces'.

Soon the Klan's bigoted tentacles spread to Manhattan Beach.

Klansmen organized a 24-hour phone committee to intimidate and terrorize the Bruces anonymously. Blacks who ventured off the Bruces' roped-off beach were harassed and insulted by hooded white men who slashed or let the air out of their tires. They also torched a house, set fire to a mattress under the Bruces' deck, and posted "10 minutes only" parking signs. They burned a cross nearby.

When harassment failed to drive the Bruces and other blacks out of town, city officials condemned the neighborhood in 1924, ostensibly to build a park, although Live Oak Park was already nearby. Four percent of the city's population petitioned against the condemnation, to no avail.

City officials tried pressuring the black property owners to sell at prices below fair market value. Four of the five families refused, including the Bruces, so the city attempted to seize the land under eminent domain.

Manhattan Beach officials insisted that the common good should take precedence over the interests of a few families who could easily and "equitably" be moved.

The Bruces and three other families sued, alleging racial prejudice. The Bruces demanded \$120,000 in compensation—\$70,000 for their two lots and \$50,000 in damages—but specified that they really wanted the land, not the money. Another plaintiff asked for \$6,500. They failed to stop the condemnation proceedings, but the judge put a crimp in the city's complaint. He insisted that the ejected property owners had the right to purchase property elsewhere in the city, just not on the Strand. He said he would "throw the case right out

of court" if the black families' rights were not guaranteed. Although the resort was closed, black Angelenos continued to flock to Bruces' Beach. Nearby, a City Council cronie put up a "no trespassing" sign on city property, making it illegal to enter Bruces'.

In 1927, a black UCLA student, Elizabeth Catley, 19, was arrested for swimming and "trespassing" on the "private beach." Manhattan Beach police refused to allow her even to change into dry clothes and kept her in jail for five hours.

Others, too, were soon arrested, and that's when the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People stepped in. The lawyer for the NAACP got the City Council cronie to admit the sign had been meant only to deter blacks, and the sign was removed.

The next day, the California Eagle's banner headline crowed: "NAACP Wins Beach Victory."

But the victory was short-lived. That same year, Bruces' Beach Resort was razed, along with other cottages in the two-block area.

Pending a final legal resolution, the owners' group held out for another two years before the city finally settled on payment. The Bruces received \$14,500 and left the city. Other plaintiffs received between \$2,000 and \$4,000—as did their white neighbors.

All but the Bruces took the judge up on his order and purchased property elsewhere in town. But the only black beach resort in Los Angeles was history.

Black Angelenos began spreading their blankets on a blacks-only section of Santa Monica beach near Pico Boulevard called the Inkwell. It had been established in 1924.

Manhattan Beach didn't rush to build its park; for almost three decades, the property remained vacant. In the 1950s, City Treasurer Lee Younggren estimated that the vacancy had cost the town about \$80,000 in compensation fees and tax and assessment losses.

Finally, in the 1950s, the Manhattan Beach Recreation Commission began to worry that heirs of the former property owners might sue to regain their land unless it was used for the purpose for which it had been originally taken. The park was born.

MANHATTAN BEACH NEWS

OFFICIAL PAPER OF MANHATTAN BEACH.

FRIDAY, FEB. 4, 1927.

MANHATTAN BEACH, CALIFORNIA

SMITH WELL EAST OF MANHATTAN PRODUCES 300 BARRELS OF OIL

Opening Up of Field Appears Certain as Wild Cat Shows Presence of Petroleum.

The Smith Petroleum Company well on Reservoirs avenue, near Inglewood-Redondo boulevard, has produced approximately 300 barrels of oil, during the production tests of the past three weeks, was learned yesterday.

Tests have not been completed by members of the company to make any statement regarding the well. No statement will be forthcoming, they say, until they have determined whether the well will be a commercial producer or a failure.

Of the twenty wells drilled in the vicinity about three miles of Hermosa Beach and Manhattan Beach and extending as far north as Palisades Del Rey, the Smith Petroleum well is the one to actually produce oil. The well is not yet on production, though repeated efforts have been made to make it under its own gas pressure by aid of the pump. About six months ago the well flowed oil a few minutes but quit. Quite a quantity of oil has been pumped and sent out of the well, but there has been no regular production.

A quantity of oil taken from the Smith well, however, indicates there is, through the district just east of the beach, an oil structure. More than three years ago the Winwell Oil well had a blow out in its which is three-quarters of a mile south and east of the Smith well. During the blow out a quantity of oil was pushed to the hole in the mud and the strength of that oil and the favorable conditions from the well at a great distance have been working steadily on the well since.

Several buckets of oil flowed from the old Manhattan-Pacific well. It was taken over by the

Insane Giant Collegian Is Arrested Here

John Slade, a giant of a man six feet three inches tall, and straight as an arrow, with muscles like steel bands walked into Manhattan Beach Tuesday, accompanied by his dog. He was bare headed and wore a lumber-jack sweater. His shoes were neatly polished. He carried a small pack in which were his personal belongings.

He was on a walking tour in which the stakes were \$10,000, he told local merchants. As part of the stipulation of the wager he must earn his own way and he went, he said. When he arrived in Manhattan he was hungry, but he worked for the food he got. He worked first and took his reward afterward.

He called himself "Stoney" and said he was a graduate engineer of a prominent eastern college, and was 25 years old. His English was faultless and his memory for names exceptional. Twenty-four hours after he had been in Manhattan he could call every person he met by name. One night he slept in the city jail after he had done some work about the city hall to earn his night's lodging.

City Marshal Jack Garvin saw "Stoney" a number of times, and chatted with him whenever possible. In the clear blue eyes of his former college man was that distant look of one whose mind has started to wonder.

Wednesday, Garvin received a call from the sheriff's office asking if a man answering the description of "Stoney" had been seen in Manhattan. He was insane, the officer in Los Angeles said. Garvin told him to send some deputies to Manhattan at once and he would get "Stoney" in custody for them.

On the pretense that he wanted him to clean out the city hall, Garvin induced "Stoney" to leave the beach where he found him cooking over a fire and come up to the jail.

Garvin realized that it would be impossible to put him in a cell and had "Stoney" show him some of his personal effects to

TRUSTEES' SIGNED STATEMENT HERE'S TRUTH ABOUT RECALL

Origin of Present Recall Election. The present recall election is sponsored and managed by an "Executive Committee" of the so-called "Taxpayers Protective League", who actively engaged in circulating petitions and propaganda.

Although informed by attorneys that the recall petition is defective as a matter of law, the Board of Trustees determined to ignore the defects and place the matter squarely before the voters of Manhattan Beach, confident that these voters would now, as in the past, decisively rebuke this obvious abuse of the provisions of the recall law, and once again, in no uncertain manner properly squelch certain political aspirations, looking toward "bossism" or otherwise, which, seemingly, cannot await the time of regular elections, but seek to needlessly plunge our City into the disturbing conditions of a recall election in the hopeless attempt to gain political preferment and to satisfy personal animosity. And we believe there is another and deeper motive.

"Executive Committee" and Taxes.

It might be interesting to note just how concerned the "Executive Committee" is in the matter of payment of taxes. For your information, the amount of taxes for the current year assessed to the Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer of the "Committee", the leaders of the recall movement, is as follows:

Chairman—Real estate—nothing. Personal property (automobile)—\$4.65, nothing more.

Secretary—Treasurer—\$3.84.

The Real Issues—Protect the Beach.

The present Board of Trustees is maintaining a suit in the Superior Court of this County, on behalf of Manhattan Beach to protect and enforce the rights of our City in the water front known as the Strand, against the encroachment of private corporate interests. This suit is set for trial June 7, 1927, and our attorneys inform us that the chances of a decision in favor of the City are most favorable.

It will again be interesting to note that the agitation for recall was commenced after a member of the present Board had been approached four different times with the idea of effecting a compromise of the City's rights and a suggestion made that a double commission could be realized on a sale which might be made in connection therewith. This, of course, was at once vigorously and indignantly rejected. Then we hear about a recall. It is said a smoke screen is more or less useful for purposes of concealment. Perhaps this will in a measure explain the wild and unfounded statements now being circulated regarding our City, with the evident purpose of concealing the real issues.

Every member of the present Board has gone on record as in favor of protecting the City's interests in the Beach through the highest Court in the land, if necessary, against private exploitation. We leave you to imagine what might result if the present Board should be replaced by a Board not so vigorous in the defense of the City's rights.

Park and Playground.

The present Board of Trustees is in favor of the park and playground proceedings, firmly believing its successful consummation to be advantageous and even necessary for the preservation and advancement of the health and beauty, and the protection of the best interests of our entire City, present and future.

Financial Condition of City.

The City of Manhattan Beach is in splendid financial condition, in spite of mysterious and misleading reports to the contrary. The assessed valuation of property is \$7,298,030.00. Against this there are unpaid bonds amounting only to \$241,600.00, including water bonds of

APPARENTLY BRUCE IS PLAYING POLITICS WITH TAX LEAGUE

Herewith we print a letter purported to have been written by C. A. Bruce and family and is being circulated extensively by the Taxpayers Protective League among the residents of the south end of Manhattan Beach and east of the Santa Fe railroad. Mr. Bruce for reasons of his own appears to be playing politics with the tax league.

Dear Sir:—

I am writing you this word in order that you as one of the citizens and taxpayers of Manhattan Beach will know positively the position and attitude of myself and of my friends in regard to the proposed city park.

We have tried to maintain a fair attitude with charity for all persons in regard to this whole controversy.

So far as the Bruce family is concerned, we have been on this location for about 15 years, and have tried in every way we know how, to conduct ourselves and our business as up-right and law-abiding citizens.

Unfortunately three of four others of our friends all of whom belong to our racial group purchased property immediately behind us within the limits of 25th and 27th streets, east of the Strand.

We have always felt and we hope 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.

We feel as taxpayers that it is a hardship imposed upon us, and as citizens, and that the plan is unwise and not consistent with economy in expenditure of the public money and that it is not filling any needed or called-for public purposes.

Everyone one knows that people in beach communities want to play on the ocean, and no ocean land is involved in this condemnation.

Lands condemned for school purposes which adjoin school property already owned, but which

BOARD DESIGNATES PAPER WEEK TO AID HIGH SCHOOL FUND

Smoothing Out of Center St. To Santa Fe Tracks To Be Authorized.

March 2, 3 and 4 last night was designated as "Paper Week" by the board of trustees at the request of the student body of the Redondo Union High School. The students are endeavoring to raise money to install a printing press in the school, and hope through the collection of old papers to add materially to the sum. "Paper Week" in Redondo recently netted the students considerable money.

E. C. Patmore offered his services to waterproof the portion of the pier over the bathhouse if the city would provide the paint. His offer was accepted.

The trustees authorized the smoothing out of the pavement on Center street between High View and the Santa Fe railroad. The successful smoothing out of the two-block stretch between the school and High View caused the trustees to extend the work.

A letter was received from Ronald L. Campbell offering his services as a life guard during the coming summer. He worked last year.

Mrs. Hattie Tucker asked that a light be placed at Poinsettia avenue, near Second street. The request was referred to the California Edison company.

The 150th anniversary had advised the board by letter that it was open to engagements at all times. The letter was filed.

The board authorized the city clerk to advertise for bids for a new gasoline and oil contract.

NEPTUNIAN CARD PARTY SATURDAY

A Five Hundred and Bridge party will be given at the Neptunian clubhouse at 8 o'clock Saturday evening, February 5.