Overlooked People and Places in the Heritage of Southern California

Speaker:

Alison Rose Jefferson, M.H.C., Ph.D.
Historian and Heritage Conservation Consultant

Mrs. Bruce with umbrella on the beach in front of her resort establishment, Manhattan Beach, CA, circa 1920. From Bernard Bruce, on loan to the California African American Museum.
Pacific Electric Railway (Street Car) Map, 1912
Bruce’s Beach is in the limelight. On last Sunday a good day was reported and quite a few enjoyed a day at this pleasure place.

-- California Eagle
July 18, 1914
Colored People's Resort meets with opposition.

The caption accompanying this image of Mrs. W.A. Bruce in the Los Angeles Times article read,

“Colored woman, who has created a storm at Manhattan Beach by establishing a seaside resort for the members of her race.”
An anonymous telephone intimidation campaign and other harassment actions may have been organized by the Klu Klux Klan, or at least their sympathizers, to terrorize the Bruces and other African Americans who visited the South Bay region.

KKK Meeting advertisement.
*Manhattan Beach News*, June 6, 1924. “Public Meeting – All Welcome,” ironically reads the last text line of the ad. Manhattan Beach Historical Society Archives
Bruce’s Beach
Manhattan Beach, California

A Day at Bruce’s Beach
Manhattan Beach, CA,
July 10, 1927. Sweethearts
Margie Johnson and John
Pettigrew strike a pose at the
shoreline. Note the numerous
people in the background.
LaVera White/Arthur &
Elizabeth Lewis Collection
Bruce’s Beach area, 1900s/1920s and 1956, South Bay Daily Breeze. The newspaper is distributed widely in the South Santa Monica Bay region of Los Angeles County where Manhattan Beach is located.

Note the property improvements and increased community density from circa 1920 (upper) to 1956 (lower) photographs.
Little Anne with her father Cornelius N. Bradford, August 1939, visiting Manhattan Beach, near Bruce’s Beach and their family’s property.

Purchased in 1916, this African American family continues to own this property in 2018. Notice the new construction in the background. Anne Bradford Luke Collection

Mrs. Bruce (left) with daughter-in-law Meda (center) and sister, Manhattan Beach, CA, 1920s. From Bernard Bruce, on loan to the California African American Museum

Los Angeles area community member Eric Moore (left) and others standing in front of the new Bruce’s Beach sign at the renaming of the park event, March 31, 2017. Photograph by and courtesy of Karen Moore
Ocean Park beach scene looking south to the Ocean Park Pier, 1920, photography by H.F. Rile. Santa Monica Public Library Image Archives

Miss Diden, a resident of Ocean Park on the beach with the Ocean Park Pier in the background. Cristyne Lawson Collection
City of Santa Monica
Designated Landmarks, Historic Districts,
and Structures of Merit

- African American Local History Sites
- Historic Landmark
- Structure of Merit
- Historic District

- Phillips Chapel CME, 1908 - 2001—4th St. (Designated a Santa Monica Landmark, October 2005)
- Calvary Baptist Church, 1950s—1502—20th St.
- First African Methodist Church, 1920s—1823 Michigan Ave.
- The Philomathean Club, 1950s—1810 Broadway
- Crescent Bay Lodge No. 19, 1920s—1720 Broadway
- Dew Drop Inn & Cafe, 1920s—207 Utah Street
  (post-1924 Utah = Broadway)
- Thurman’s Rest-A-While, 1920s—1538—5th Street
- LaBonita Apts. & Cafe, 1910s
- Caldwell’s Recreation Hall & Garden, 1920s
- The Arkansas Traveler, 1920s
- Around Belmar Terrace & 3rd St., near Pico Blvd.
The photo caption from Rev. Othal Hawthorne Lakey’s book, *The History of the CME Church* reads: First building for the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church on the West Coast—the Phillips Chapel Church in Santa Monica, California. The building was purchased from the School Board of Santa Monica by Bishop Charles H. Phillips (center right foreground) in 1908. Shown in the front of the building are Bishop Phillips and the Sunday School Convention of the Los Angeles District in 1909. [The church’s first pastor, Rev. James A. Stout is also in this photo (left foreground).]

Phillips Chapel CME

Yesterday...1909

Today...The Church was remodeled in the 1940s.
Ad from the African American-owned, Los Angeles New Age newspaper, August 28, 1914.

La Bonita, a African American-owned bathhouse and lodge serviced African American clients from ca. 1914 thru the 1950s on Belmar Place (a street that ran north and south, and does not exist today) between Pico Boulevard and Main Street where the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium is today.

Here out-of-towners could rent a bathing suit as well as a guest room, have a meal and change clothes before proceeding by foot or other transportation conveyances to the designated place at the beach.
The Color Line at Santa Monica

Blacks Again Feel Iron Fist of Race Prejudice.

Los Angeles Times
June 9, 1922

CAUCASIANS ORGANIZE PROTECTIVE LEAGUE

SEPARATION OF RACES AT BEACHES OBJECT OF SANTA MONICA BODY

Los Angeles Times
July 27, 1922

Fight Against Beach Dance Halls Success

By a "Times" Staff Correspondent

SANTA MONICA, July 26.—An ordinance prohibiting dancing at any public hall in the residential districts of Santa Monica and Ocean Park was adopted by the City Commissioners today.

The ordinance was aimed at Caldwell's negro dance hall on Third street, which has caused many complaints from near-by residents during the past year.

Los Angeles Times
July 30, 1922

SETTLEMENT OF NEGROES IS OPPOSED

Santa Monica and Ocean Park. Block. Plans for Colony of Colored Folk

Though action recently taken by the Santa Monica Bay Protective League, composed of property owners of Santa Monica and Ocean Park, the recently announced plan for the establishment of a negro amusement center and settlement near the beach communities has
City of Santa Monica, Los Angeles County Master Shoreline Plan map 1947, Division of Beaches and Parks, Dept. of Natural Resources / Dept. of Engineering, State of California. Note the identification of the ‘Colored Use’ beach section on this map regarding beach erosion. University of Southern California Library Special Collections
Nick Gabaldón (1927–1951) tandem surfing with Agnes Quigg in Malibu, California, ca. 1950. Gabaldón died at age 24 in a surfing accident. He grew up in Santa Monica, CA and is considered to be the first documented surfer of African-American and Mexican-American descent in the Santa Monica Bay. *Courtesy of Vicki Williams/Photo by Joe Quigg*


Many surfers consider Gabaldón a role model, especially surfers of color.
Coastal Cleanup Day

Good for the Community, Great for the Soul

Saturday, Sept 20th 2014 9am - 12pm

Join the World's Biggest One-Day Volunteer Event!

Please register at healthebay.org/ccd

Bay Street / Inkwell Monument site
Santa Monica Beach

Coastal Cleanup Day gives us an amazing opportunity for action and education and remembrance of our collective history. Here we celebrate our collective love of the ocean, our layered community history, and move forward together as stewards of this precious environment.

"The Ink Well"
A Place of Celebration and Pain

The beach near the site between Bay and Rockefeller Streets, known by some as "The Ink Well," was an important gathering place for African Americans long after racial restrictions on public beaches were abandoned in 1937.

African-American groups from Santa Monica, Venice and Los Angeles, as early as the 1920s to the end of the Jim Crow era in the 1950s, preferred to enjoy the sun and surf here because they encountered less racial harassment than at other southern beaches.

In the 1940s, Nick Gabaldon, a Santa Monica High School student and the first documented black surfer, taught himself how to surf here.

Parking available at lot 4 South, entrance off Bicknell.

in partnership with:

Nick Gabaldon Day
HONORING THE LEGACY OF LOS ANGELES’ FIRST SURFER OF COLOR
SOUTH OF THE SANTA MONICA PIER AT HISTORIC BAY STREET “INKWELL” BEACH
SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2013

FOR SCHEDULE OF EVENTS: HEALTHEBAY.ORG/NICKGABALDON

1927-1951
Youngsters empowering themselves to empower their communities with knowledge for progress and equality...

California Coastal Commissioner Effie Turnbull-Sanders talks with youth from Martin Luther King, Jr. Rec Center LA on a field trip who participated in learning about cleaning up our environment, history and community service at Santa Monica’s Bay St. Inkwell monument site, Intl Coastal Cleanup Day, September 16, 2017.

South Los Angeles park youth on a field trip and others are participating in the marine shoreline exploration activities on Nick Gabaldón Day June 3, 2017 with Heal the Bay’s Matthew King, communications director and other staff. The youngsters found many Sand Crabs with a few being identified as pregnant due to their distinctive form. Photography by Surfrider Foundation volunteer.
Nick Gabaldón Day 2018


Right, the whole MLK, Jr. Rec Center LA crew (youngsters and staff – Elizabeth Espinoza, Alaysia West and Raquel Jamerson) pose for a photo. Note the Casa Del Mar Hotel in the background. Photography courtesy of passerby at Bicknell Street, Santa Monica, CA, June 2, 2018.
Looking down the hill towards the beach at Santa Monica’s Bay Street on Int'l Coastal Cleanup Day 2013 at some of the cultural exhibits, volunteers’ registration area, and “Inkwell” monument site just before the almost 700 people show up for a day of education and community action. Photograph courtesy of Heal the Bay, September 21, 2013.
SANTA MONICA BAY

TODAY...Marcus Chatman, 2012, El Porto Beach, City of Manhattan Beach.

YESTERDAY...Ralph Bunche (and friends) before he became a diplomat, ca. 1923, Bay Street Beach, Santa Monica. Los Angeles Public Library Collection

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www.alisonrosejefferson.com

THANK YOU!