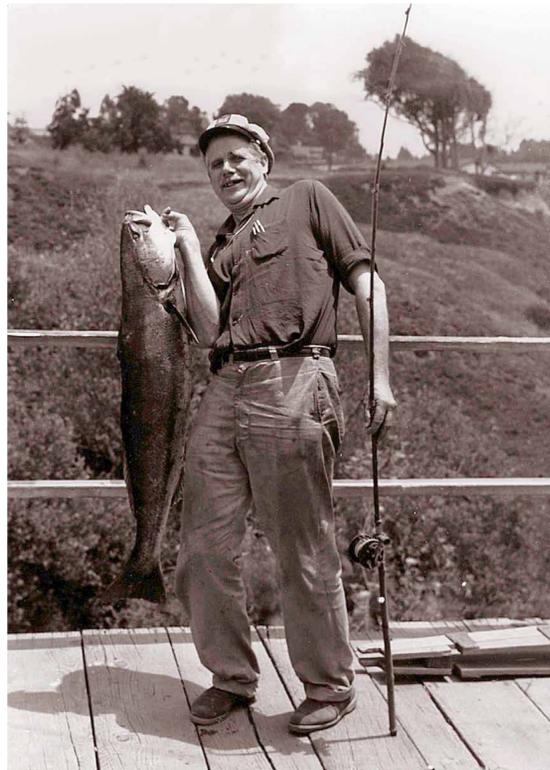




Boat anchored near the pier with a catch of albacore tuna circa 1950.



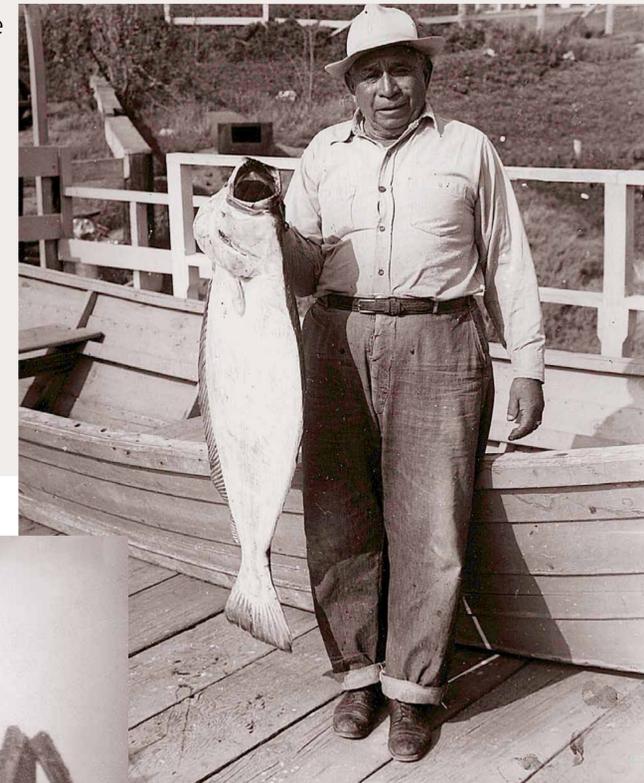
A nice catch of croaker.



Jack "Red" Mauer with mackerel circa 1955.

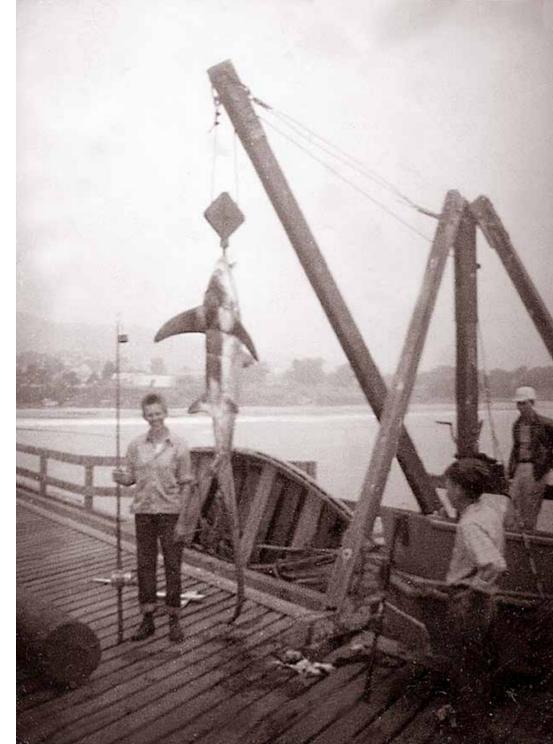
FAVORITE OF FISHERMEN

Since its construction in 1872, the Ventura Pier has been a favored spot for local fishermen, especially as an ideal location to catch Pacific thresher shark. An occasional thresher can still be seen and caught from the pier today. In years past local fishermen climbed precarious rope ladders down to their rowboats to fish the shallows around the Ventura Pier. Fishermen could be found angling for species such as Pacific mackerel, calico bass, yellowtail, croaker, white sea bass, barred perch, Pacific halibut, shark, corbina, smelt and barracuda. Many of these species still swim the waters around the pier. Poles and hand lines are used by novice and professional alike. Mussels, shrimp, squid and anchovies are the bait of choice. The lure of inshore fishing continues to welcome fishermen of all ages to the Ventura Pier.



A beautiful local Pacific halibut.

Photo from the Ben Henke Collection



Junior Heberle with his 125-pound thresher shark circa 1942.

VENTURA'S FISHER KING

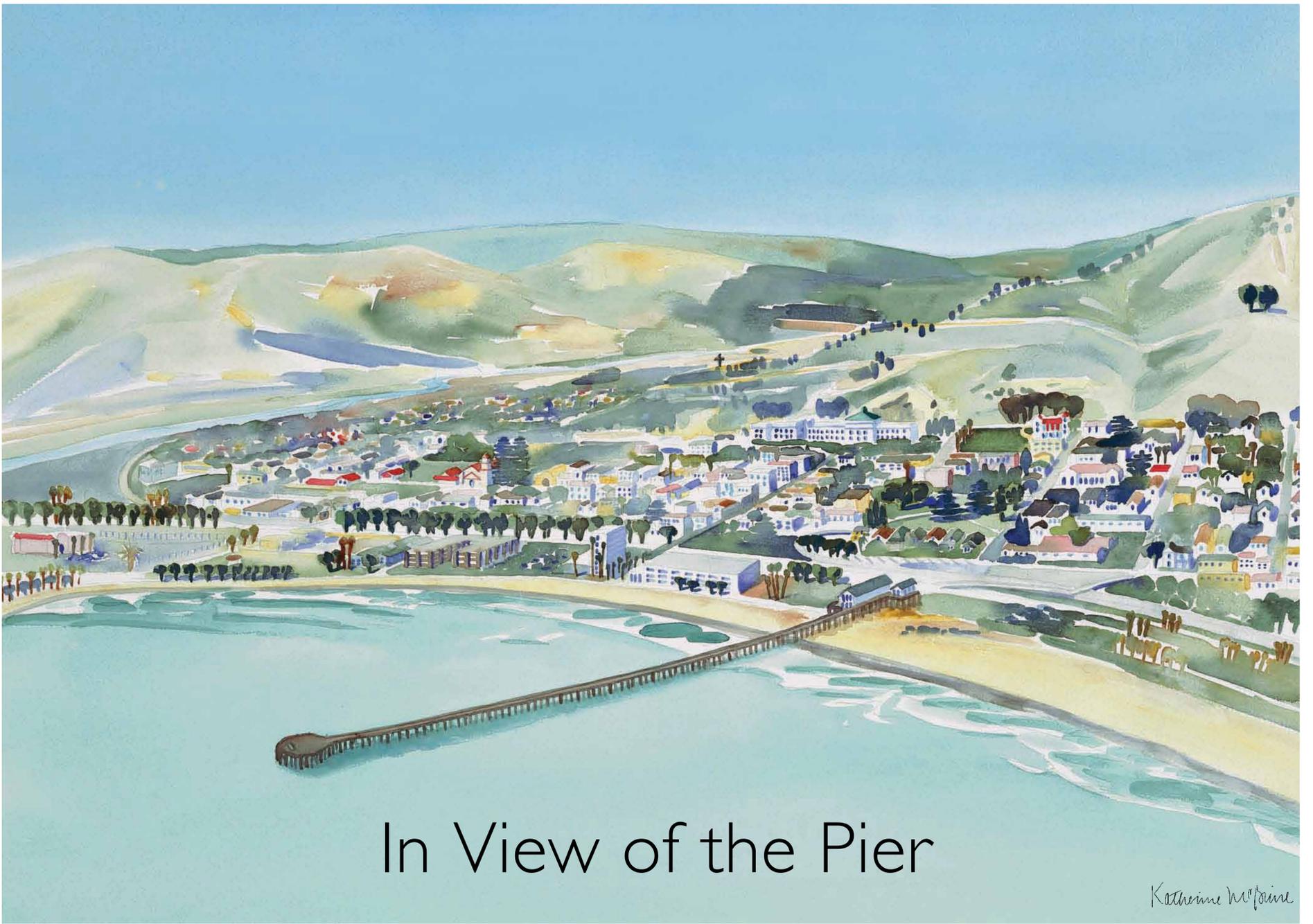
Merrill C. Allyn (1904-1967), pictured above with a trophy-sized white sea bass, launched a boat building business after World War II that served as a local gathering place for seafaring men. Perhaps more than anyone, Allyn was responsible for nurturing the dream that culminated in the construction of a small boat harbor in Ventura. He served many terms as a commissioner of the Ventura Port District, and enjoyed sailing, fishing, and photography. Many of his photos are featured on this and other interpretive panels on the Ventura Pier.

FISHING COURTESY

- Protect benches, railings, and panel covers by using only designated areas for preparing bait.
- Proper disposal of snagged fishing line will ensure that fish, birds and seals do not become tangled in discarded lines.



Merrill C. Allyn photos courtesy of the Don & Edna Mills Collection.



In View of the Pier

Katherine McQuire

Ventura River Wetlands
Two trails through Seaside Wilderness Park and Emma Wood State Beach lead to rare cobble tidepools and a birdwatchers' paradise.

Ventura County Museum of History & Art
Modern galleries feature displays of Native American and early settler artifacts as well as the George Stuart Collection of Historic Figures.

Grant Park
The landmark cross in this overlook park is a replica of one set up by Father Junipero Serra in 1782.

San Buenaventura City Hall
Noted Los Angeles architect Albert C. Martin designed this marble-and-terra-cotta Beaux Arts building, once the Ventura County Courthouse, in 1912.

Two Trees
The blue gum eucalyptus trees on the hillside provide a visual landmark for land dwellers and mariners alike.

Ortega Adobe & Fire Station
Patagonia's 1998 replica of a 1906 Arts & Crafts fire station faces downtown's oldest residence, the 1857 Ortega Adobe.

Simpson Tract
One of Ventura's oldest neighborhoods is a designated historic district of bungalow homes and the Casa de Anza Library.

San Buenaventura Mission & Norfolk Pines
Father Junipero Serra founded his final mission in Ventura in 1782. The adjacent century-old towering twin pines were designated by Congress as California's "Millennium Trees" in 2000.

First National Bank
Novelist Erle Stanley Gardner created "Perry Mason" at law offices in this 1926 terra-cotta building.

Bard Hospital
Between City Hall and the 1902 Moorish Revival Elizabeth Bard Hospital is a stately row of Queen Anne style homes.

Seaside Park
California's only beachfront fairgrounds is home to the annual Ventura County Fair.

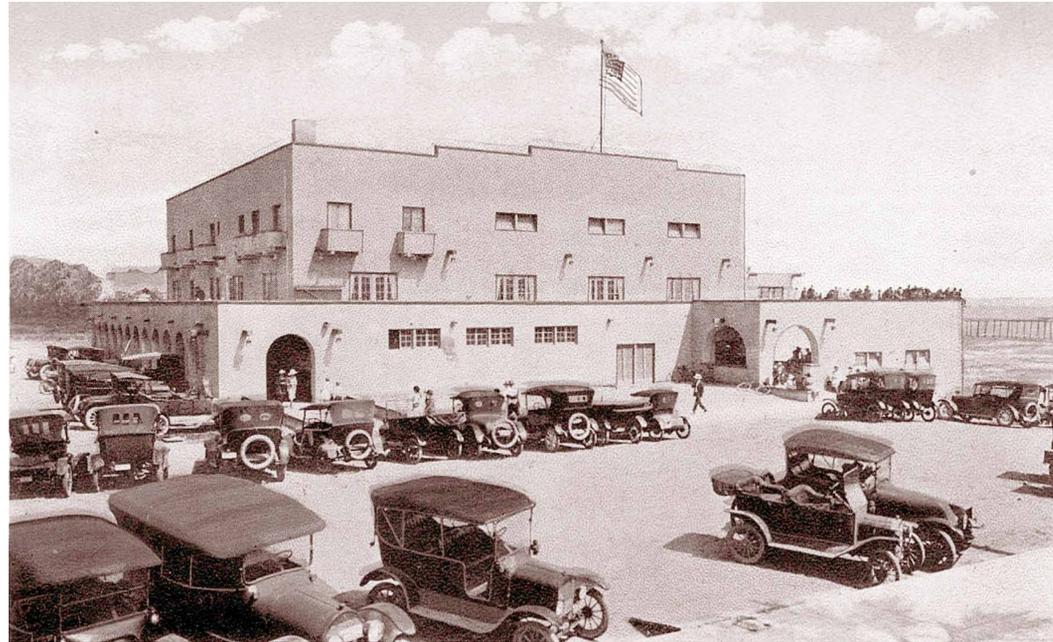
Surfers' Point
Long board surfing began here in the 1930s at this break that remains one of Southern California's best surfing spots.

Ventura Promenade
This oceanfront walkway and bike path connects the pier to Surfers' Point and the Ventura River Trail towards Ojai.

Mitchell Block & Plaza Park
Ventura's best-preserved row of Victorian and Craftsman homes faces Plaza Park and a giant Moreton Bay fig tree planted in 1874.

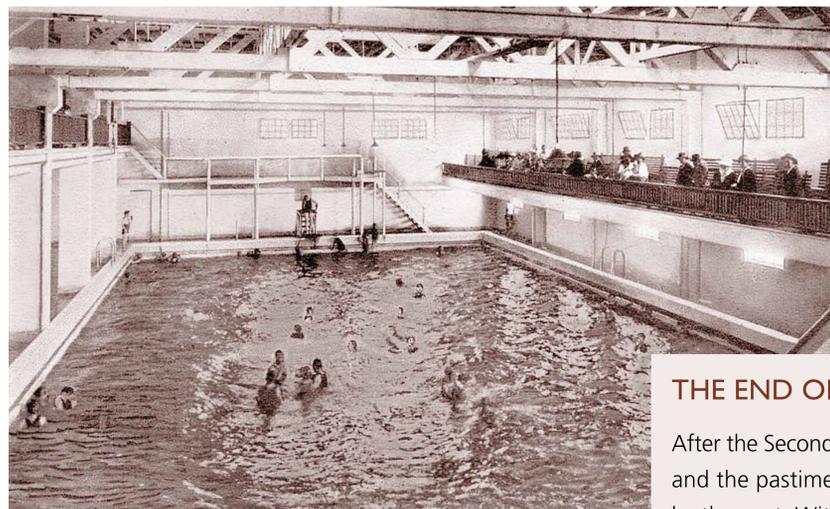
Robert Sudden House
This 1886 Victorian was built for an early president of the Buena Ventura Wharf Company, a.k.a. the Ventura Pier.

From coast to hillside, the pier provides a panoramic view of Ventura's landmarks of history, architecture and natural beauty.



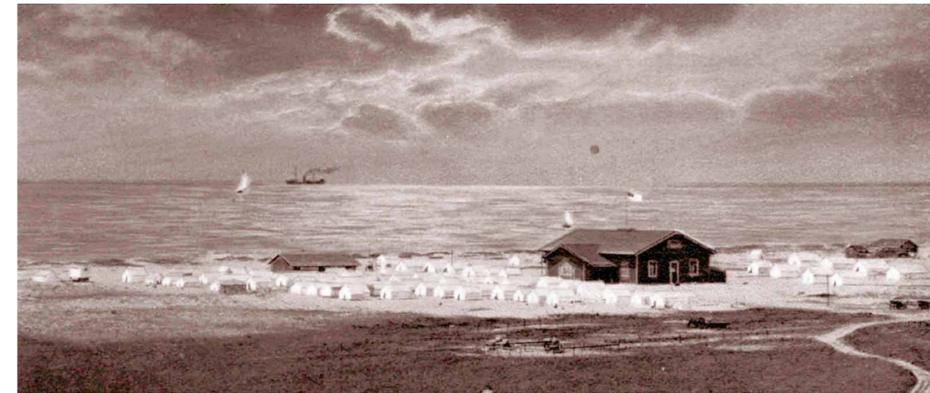
VENTURA'S PIERSIDE BATHHOUSE

The Ventura Bathhouse opened for business around 1917. The two-story recreational center at the foot of California Street near the beach contained a bathhouse with an indoor, salt-water, "plunge" swimming pool on the first floor, and an auditorium for lectures, exhibits and dancing on the second. In the winter months the unheated pool was covered with a special wooden floor for roller-skating.



The "plunge" pool inside the Bath House circa 1900.

Photos Courtesy of the Ventura County Museum of History & Art



Ventura Chautauqua Grounds at Pierpont Beach circa 1913.

CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT BY THE SEA

The first Ventura chautauqua was assembled in a large tent on the sand near San Jon Barranca in 1909. Chautauquas were events that flourished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, bringing nationally famous speakers, talented performers and current topics to rural Ventura. Attendees rented small tents on the sand or brought their own. By 1913, ten thousand people attended the ten day event. A permanent pavillion near Pierpont Beach was constructed and people from all parts of the county arrived by train, automobile and buggy. This was also a time to enjoy a change of pace, the sounds of the surf, and nightly clambakes on the beach. By 1920, the popularity of radio and moving pictures diverted interest, and the chautauqua became an event of the past.

FROM CHARLESTON TO JITTERBUG

Touring swing bands played in the auditorium to packed crowds on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, including matinee idol and "crooner" Rudy Vallie who sang through his signature megaphone. Couples enjoyed ocean air and romance off the dance floor's small balconies.



THE END OF SWING & PLUNGE

After the Second World War many changes came to Ventura. Styles changed and the pastimes valued by one generation were seen as "old fashioned" by the next. With fewer and fewer people coming to the bathhouse, it was at last abandoned and demolished in the early 1950s.



Dimensions

Pier length in 2001: 1,600

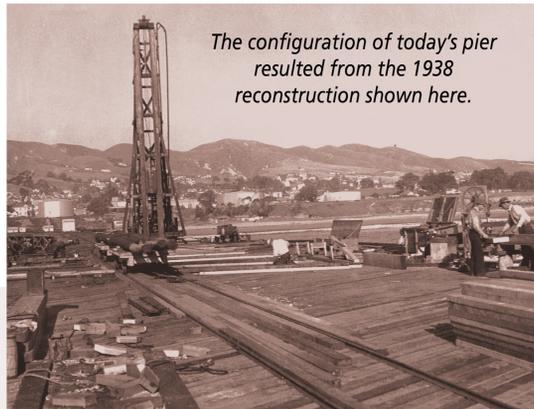
Original pier length in 1872: 1,200

Longest pier length in 1938: 1,958

Pier width:
25' 6" - 67' 8"

Water depth at pier end:
23 feet at 0 tide

Number of ocean piers in California: over 100
from Crescent City to Imperial Beach



The configuration of today's pier resulted from the 1938 reconstruction shown here.

Pilings

Timber pilings now used: Douglas Fir

Timber pilings first used: Eucalyptus

First pile driver: 1800-lb. steam operated pile driver

Most recent pile driver: hydraulic ram with 18,000 foot-pounds of energy, deck mounted on a 45-ton crane

How deep timber and steel pilings are driven into ocean floor: 12-20' and 30' respectively

Statistics for pier timber pilings: 439 of varying length and weight, but average 75' long piling weighs 2,600 pounds, with 10-16" diameter

Statistics for pier steel pilings: 90, each 72-80' long, weighing 6,400-6,600 pounds, with 16" diameter

Total number of pier pilings: 529

Pier Fun Facts

Robert Sudden's warehouse circa 1900 with Union Oil tank tramway in foreground. Oil was gravity fed from Santa Paula to the pier for shipment to San Francisco and Los Angeles.



Pier's Many Uses

Heyday as commercial wharf:
1872 to 1914

Chief products shipped from pier:
wheat, citrus, lima beans, seaweed, cattle, pigs, crude oil

Chief products off-loaded onto pier:
lumber, bricks, cement

Last time cargo unloaded: lumber in 1940

Past and present restaurants on pier:
Seaview Caf , Pier Fish House, Eric Ericsson's Fish Co.

Formerly on pier:
Ventura County Boat Club, Sea Scouts, Coast Guard Auxiliary, Civil Air Patrol

Biggest celebrations at pier:
thousands attended Navy Day in 1936, pier reopening in 1993

Challenges to Pier Preservation

Pier's greatest enemies: fire, ships, storm waves, beach erosion

Pier's smallest enemies: shipworms (boring clams) and gribbles (tiny crustaceans) that eat wood pilings

Water zone repellants used against borers:
creosote preservatives and polyethylene wrappings

Above water surface repellants:
ACZA preservative for piling caps, stringers and deck

Tons of steel bracing for storm waves: 13.6

Ship collisions with pier: SS Coos Bay in 1914

Ships burnt at pier:
SS W.L. Hardison, world's first oil tanker, in 1889

Years pier (wholly/partly) destroyed by storms or fire:
1877, 1926, 1935 (fire), 1937, 1949, 1969, 1983, 1997

How often pier reconstructed:
6 times in 1878, 1928, 1936, 1938, 1993, 2000

Cost and duration of original construction:
\$45,000 and 5 months, March 2 to October 5, 1872

Cost and duration of 2000 reconstruction: \$2.2 million and 9 months from August 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000

First dedicated by: Arcadia Camarillo on May 18, 1872
broke bottle of California wine over first piling

End of pier dedicated to:
Don & Edna Mills (Mills' End) on April 1, 2000

Deck

Number and size of spikes per 16' deck board:
18 spikes, each 8" long with 3/8" diameter

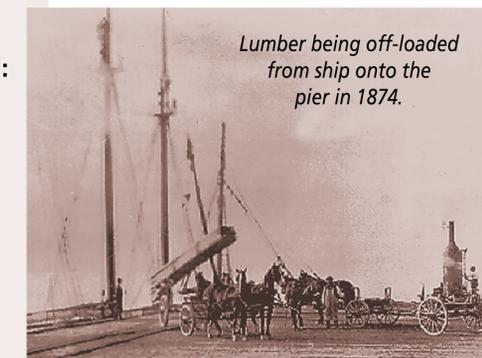
Wood deck constructed of: Douglas Fir

Number of timber planks on deck: 4,285

Deck slope: gradually rises 4' at end of pier

Deck elevation above water at 0 tide:
starts 25.2'; ends 29.2'

1938 reconstruction of the wharf by the Ventura Wharf & Warehouse Company.



Lumber being off-loaded from ship onto the pier in 1874.



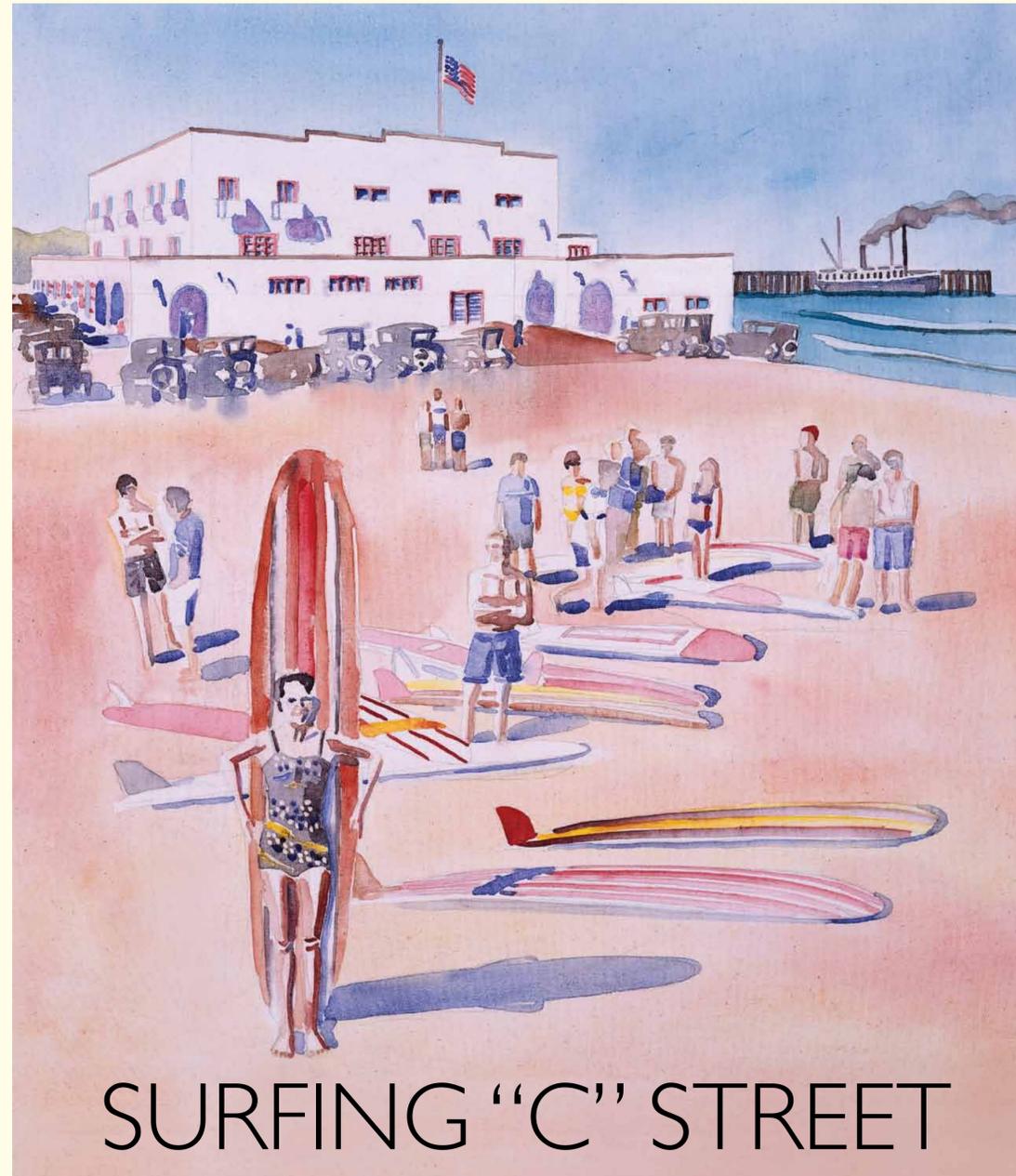
SURFING ODYSSEY

Born in Polynesia's tropical waters 2000 years ago, surfing became Hawaii's sport of kings, on 22-24' boards, before it almost disappeared with the arrival of missionaries in the 1800s. Revived at Waikiki around 1900, surfing was introduced to southern California by George Freeth in 1907. By the 1930s, small knots of surfers were riding up to 150-pound redwood planks in such places as San Onofre, Palos Verdes and Point Dume. After WWII, surfing spread to Malibu, the Rincon (just north of Ventura) and Santa Cruz.

By all accounts, Bill Flores was Ventura's first local surfer in the 1930s. In 1959 Tom Hale opened Ventura's first surf shop, followed in the sixties by surfboard makers Tom Morey and Karl Pope. Their successors, Stan Fuji and Bill "Blinky" Hubina, have operated the Ventura Surf Shop for many decades until the present day.

SURFERS' POINT

Ventura's California ("C") Street break or "Surfers' Point" stayed relatively unknown until the 1950s, when a small population of locals – skillfully maneuvering on light-weight foam boards – were the first to "hang ten" and get "in the tube." On Independence Day, 1965, the first "invitation only" professional surfing contest at C-Street attracted 25 of the biggest names in surfing. In 1986, a group of veteran Ventura surfers organized the first California Street Longboard Championships that have become an annual event, hosting over 200 men and women surfers of all ages.



SURFING "C" STREET

Mary "Mondo" Monks, above, was one of the few women who were part of the Ventura surfing scene in the 1950s and 1960s. Before wetsuits became popular, she wore her bathing suit and a lamb's wool sweater to keep warm. Pictured in the background is the Ventura Bathhouse, which served as a recreation center for the community until it was torn down in the fifties.

C-STREET BREAKS

C-Street is really a series of "point breaks" that angle out from the coastline and refract an incoming swell around its point, producing a long and gradual wave. Although summer swells are rarely over 6 feet, in the winter swells from the west and northwest sometimes reach 15 feet in height. Four C-Street breaks are named for their unique locations. Furthest from the pier, "The Pipe" recalls drainage pipes once found near the shore. "Stables" are just offshore the fairgrounds' original horse stables. "The Point," now known as Surfers' Point, is just off the parking lot at Figueroa Street, and "The Cove" breaks right in front of the condos near the Holiday Inn. There are also good left and right breaks at the pier. Shortboarders tend to choose the fast breaking waves of "The Pipe," while longboarders favor Surfers' Point and "The Cove" with their more gradually breaking waves.

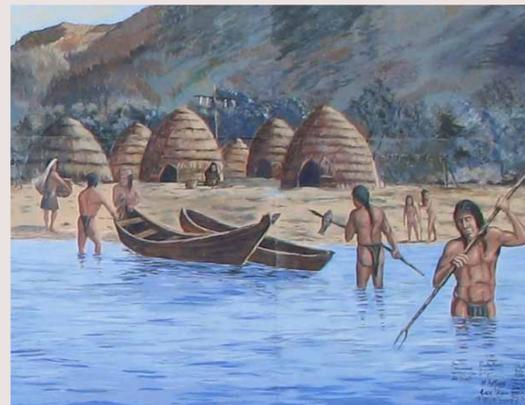


PIER THROUGH THE AGES



Historically, the coastline just west of the pier was a popular launching and landing site for the native Chumash Indians' plank canoes called "tomols". It was at the nearby village of Shisholop, meaning "in the mud", that Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo first encountered California Native Americans living in a community of thatched huts at the edge of the Pacific Ocean in 1542.

Shisholop was settled about 1,000 CE and reached its peak development nearly 500 years later. Long before there was ever a wharf, the Chumash paddled their canoes from Shisholop as they conducted a busy daily trade of fish, shell bead "money", acorns and other goods with other villages along the coast and on the Channel Islands.



"Chumash Indians" by Master Artist Robert Thomas with participating artists (1992 Mural in a Day) image courtesy of Lompoc Mural Society



Robert Sudden's warehouse circa 1900 with Union Oil tank tramway in foreground. Oil was gravity fed from Santa Paula for shipment to San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Much of the commercial success of the wharf can be attributed to the efforts of Scottish-born Captain Robert Sudden who purchased the structure in 1874 and built the first warehouse at Ventura's wharf so farmers could store their goods there before shipping them out on coastal steamers. The warehouse was so large it was used for exhibits during Ventura's first county fair.

In the 1860s, the dirt roads going to and from the city of San Buenaventura through the mountains were covered with throat-choking dust during the dry season and with mud-filled, axle-breaking potholes during the winter months. Since the Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers, to the north and south of the city, were impassible when they became filled with raging torrents of water during the winter rains, and the arrival of the railroad was still 20 years away, passengers and freight had to come to the area predominantly aboard ships.

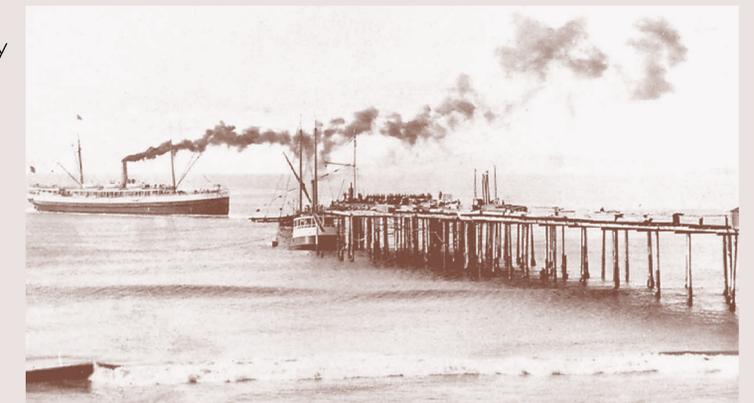


Without a wharf or pier vessels had to anchor offshore where they precariously loaded and unloaded visitors and cargo aboard small barges called "lighters" which frequently could not operate when winds and swells made conditions unsafe.

In 1872, the citizenry enthusiastically approved a proposal to build a privately owned wharf near California Street to benefit the city's residents with a \$45,000 contract.

After arrangements were made to bring a massive, 1,900-pound iron pile driver from Santa Barbara by the ship Kalorama, construction officially began on May 18, 1872 and was completed five months later for a wharf 1,200 feet long (later lengthened to 1,958 feet) and four fathoms (or 24 feet) in depth at its deepest point to provide for adequate anchorage for even the largest trading ships that visited the area.

All materials that couldn't be made locally were brought into the wharf. The import most often seen being hauled from the schooners by horse-drawn wagons was lumber from Northern California and the Pacific Northwest which made possible the construction and development of Ventura. Local farmers, ranchers and oilmen quickly took advantage of the new wharf to export a variety of products, including cattle, sheep, hogs, lima beans, oranges and lemons that were in demand from markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.



Pacific coast steamship S.S. Pomona docking at wharf while lumber schooner unloads cargo (note lumber stacked on wharf) circa 1890.

DISASTERS AT THE PIER

Although nature and man have destroyed the wharf on a variety of different occasions, it was always eventually rebuilt – often stronger and longer than in its previous state – to continue serving in a useful capacity.

In 1857, Ventura became the birthplace of commercial petroleum refining in California. Oilmen began exporting barrels of crude oil from the Ventura River area in 1875. To make exporting of oil more efficient, in 1886, a 40-mile pipeline was constructed to bring oil down the Santa Clara River valley directly to storage tanks built next to the wharf where it could be transported by ship at a fraction of the cost of the railroad's expense. By the 1890s, oil had become Ventura's dominant export.

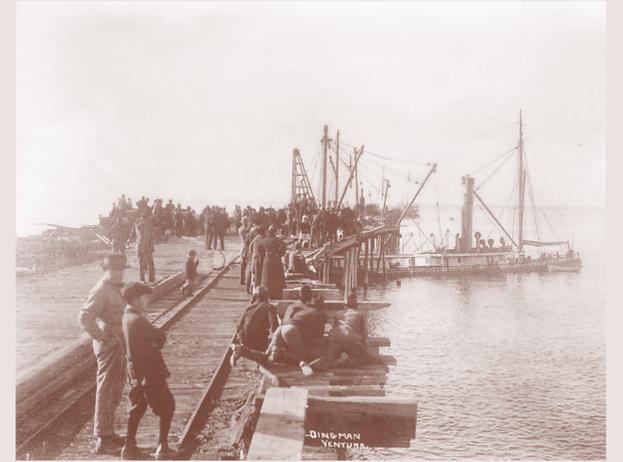
The Sespe Oil Company commissioned the world's first oil tanker, the *W.L. Hardison*, designed to carry 3,800 barrels of the valuable product. Unfortunately, after only a year in service, in 1889, the 160-foot tanker caught fire at the wharf causing a series of explosions that rattled windows and lit up the city.



*The burning of the **W.L. Hardison** on June 25, 1889*

Ships Run Aground at or Near the Pier

In 1874, the schooner *Lucy Ann* went aground in swells near the wharf while the two steamships *Kalorama* and *Crimea* were driven ashore during a spring storm in 1876 (three of Ventura's present-day streets are named in memory of the vessels). During large storm swells in 1914, the wharf was severed in half by the *S.S. Coos Bay*, which was finally forced onto the beach and pounded to pieces by the surf.



*The **S.S. Coos Bay** rips through the wharf in 1914.*

Storm Threats at the Pier

When an oil barge cast off the last line from the wharf in 1936, an era of 64 years of the structure's service to the community came to an end and it took on a new role as a recreational pier. Since then, five storms have either wholly or partially destroyed the pier with the last one, on December 13, 1995, ripping away its final 420 feet with 18-foot surf. California's longest wooden pier had just been reconstructed in 1993 for \$4 million but now a 40-foot section had collapsed and at least 22 horizontal support beams and 150 pilings had washed ashore, along with an \$80,000 copper public art sculpture called "Wavespout." The disaster provided the opportunity to bring efforts to preserve the pier and to assure its future into a new era.



Eighteen-foot storm surf ripped away the Pier's final 420 feet in 1995.

PIER INTO THE FUTURE



TYLER YOUNG

Since its original construction in 1872, the Ventura Pier has stood as a symbol of our city's rich history and natural resources. Once the cornerstone of Ventura County's agricultural, construction and oil trade, today the Ventura

Pier is a favorite attraction for fishing, picnics, sunset strolls and beautiful views of Ventura County's coastline and the Channel Islands.

In 1993 a dedicated group of community leaders created Pier into the Future, a non-profit organization, in partnership with the City of Ventura, to establish a \$1 million endowment fund to preserve and maintain the Ventura Pier for future generations to enjoy. This committed group is continually seeking volunteers to help Pier into the Future reach its ongoing goals through community outreach efforts at events such as the Ventura County Fair, City of Ventura Street Fairs and the ever-popular food and wine tasting event Pier under the Stars.



In 2000 the Ventura Pier underwent a \$2.2 million dollar renovation, including reconstructing the end of the Pier with steel piles and adding a new 80-foot-long, octagon shaped extension. Amenities include new benches, lights and interpretive panels – all added to improve the appearance of this treasured landmark. The Pier Grand Re-opening was celebrated April 1, 2000.



Pier into the Future board member Bill Danforth enjoys the improvements made to the pier.

Pier into the Future reached its million dollar goal in March 2005 but continues to raise money for pier preservation, primarily through its annual food and wine event, Pier under the Stars, held in October, as celebration for pier lovers to gather and rededicate their commitment to help the Ventura Pier survive and thrive into the 21st century. This past year, Pier into the Future provided \$178,000 to the city to fund repairs that were a result of the January 2010 storms.



The organization invites the public to join the ongoing pier campaign that provides the funds needed to support the ongoing preservation of the pier so that visitors can continue to enjoy its beauty, history and recreational value for years to come. Visit www.pierintothefuture.org to purchase merchandise, donate amenities and purchase tickets for its annual celebration, Pier under the Stars.



Have your Name Engraved in Granite. Call 805.797.7544 for more information.



Pier Bench Program. Call 805.797.7544 for more information.



Pier into the Future merchandise available at Pier under the Stars or the Ventura Visitors & Convention Bureau.