

LAND OWNERSHIP AND OCCUPANCY
BY NEGROES
IN MANHATTAN BEACH, CALIFORNIA

by
Leslie
Robert L. Brigham

A thesis
submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Department of Social Science
Fresno State College

May, 1956

FRESNO STATE COLLEGE
LIBRARY

PREFACE

As one goes north along Highland Avenue from the downtown section of Manhattan Beach, California, one passes the City Hall. A modestly handsome building which has recently undergone a "face-lifting", it nevertheless seems to be typical of Manhattan's inability to keep abreast of a population that has increased seven-fold since the start of World War II. It is too small, and under its veneer of modernity lie successive layers of paint covering creaking floors and time-scarred walls.

Further along Highland, one passes the two-story stucco apartments on either side, each seeming to crane its neck for a view of the ocean 250 yards west. Soon Marine Avenue is crossed. Now one is in the so called "North End", stretching from Marine to Rosecrans, a distance of about a mile. The North End was the last of the beach front areas of Manhattan to be developed.

Before one gets to Rosecrans his eye is caught by what seems to be a vast expanse of vacant land between Highland Avenue and the Pacific Ocean. It is actually only two square blocks. (Four blocks, if one considers as streets the alleys that bisect each.) Perhaps the vastness is an illusion created by the compactness of the residential area that surrounds the vacant land. Unlike the City Hall, these two blocks have

remained unchanged for thirty years. Houses seem to have popped up out of the sand all around, but the sand between 26th and 27th Streets, from Highland down to The Strand, is sterile.

I came to Manhattan Beach seventeen years ago while still in grade school. I have been by this empty slope hundreds of times. Always there has been a curiosity, a wondering why this land, seemingly no different from that around it, should be void of houses. My casual questions were met with a shrug of the shoulders, or a furrowed brow, or sometimes a sly smile; and the curiosity grew until it gave birth to a formal study. The fruits of that study follow these prefatory remarks.

In seeking answers to my questions the trail led into many homes where I was received with attitudes ranging from hostility, to apathy, to cooperativeness. I had occasion to explore the faded pages of official records and old newspapers, microfilmed documents and the writings of noted historians and sociologists.

The trail frequently led down figurative blind alleys. If the facts given herein are correct, they are undoubtedly not complete. Perhaps this record, fragmentary as it may be, even in error (though every effort has been made to insure its authenticity), will call forth more liberal discussion of an episode that has too long been shrouded in tight-lipped mystery. It is the hope of this writer that such discussion,

if provoked, will be rational and conducive, rather than detrimental, to a factual and broader knowledge of the events involved.

Despite accusations to the contrary, it has not been my intent to "stir up trouble" but rather perhaps to play a small part in lessening a trouble that transcends the boundaries of Manhattan Beach. I look upon those who have made such accusations the same as I view those who helped create the problem of which I write: they are, for the most part, sincere, conscientious persons who believe in the integrity of their actions, who believe they are and were "doing what's best for all concerned". If this work can tell the truth of a story largely untold and can point the way to the solution of an enigma that plagues our entire culture then its author will be well-rewarded.

During the preparation of this work a difficult task has been made easier by the assistance (under unique hardships) of Dr. Francis A. Wiley. Throughout the author's graduate program Dr. Wiley has helped bridge a gap of over 200 miles with frequent correspondence and occasional conferences, all of which has been essential to whatever success this work will enjoy. The research, itself, and the assembling of data into manuscript form would have been little short of impossible without the help and inspiration of my wife, Mary Ann.

Robert L. Brigham

Manhattan Beach, California

May, 1956

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. THE STAGE.	1
II. PIONEERS, O PIONEERS!	15
III. UNDER THEIR OWN FIG TREE.	19
IV. A PLACE IN THE SUN	30
V. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER	35
VI. THE PEOPLE SPEAK	43
VII. DUE PROCESS	51
VIII. TROUBLED SUNSET	73
IX. BEHIND EVERY CLOUD	96
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY	117

LIST OF MAPS, TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

MANHATTAN BEACH CITY HALL.	8
TABLE I	
MANHATTAN BEACH POPULATION GROWTH.	12
TABLE II	
MANHATTAN BEACH ASSESSED EVALUATION GROWTH	13
LOOKING NORTH FROM MARINE AND MANHATTAN AVENUES	
CIRCA 1915-1920	22
LOOKING NORTH FROM MARINE AND MANHATTAN AVENUES	
IN 1956.	23
MAP	
BLOCKS FIVE AND TWELVE OF PECK'S MANHATTAN	
BEACH TRACT	54
TABLE III	
AMOUNTS GRANTED IN FINAL JUDGEMENT	68-69
TABLE IV	
ESTIMATED COST OF CONDEMNATION	71
APARTMENT BUILDING FORMERLY OWNED BY	
MRS. ATKINSON	74
BEACH HOME OF JOHN McCASKILL	76
DUPLEX FORMERLY OWNED BY MAJOR AND	
MRS. PRICLEAU AND LESLIE KING	79
MAP	
MANHATTAN BEACH	80
BEACH AT FOOT OF 26th STREET LOOKING EAST	87

CHAPTER I

THE STAGE

The city of Manhattan Beach is not unlike countless other Southern California communities that have experienced mushroom-like growth throughout the present century. Indeed, Manhattan Beach is exclusively a twentieth century phenomenon, for it was not until shortly after the turn of the century that Manhattan's three principal subdividers, George Peck, Stuart Merrill, and Frank S. Daugherty came to the area.¹

As the nineteenth century drew to a close the land which is now Manhattan Beach was still a part of the old Rancho Sausal Redondo, originally granted to Antonio Avila by Mexico in 1822.² However, this 22,500 acre tract had long since passed from the Avila family and was by 1885 held by a Canadian, Daniel Freeman, the last person to own intact the entire original grant.³

Prior to the coming of the Avilas the portion of the so-called South Bay now known as Manhattan Beach served as a

¹Sarah Abbot Kerr, "History of Manhattan Beach," [typescript] Manhattan Beach Public Library, (1949), p. 9.

²W. W. Robinson, Inglewood; A Calendar of Events in the Making of a City, (Los Angeles: Title Insurance and Trust Company, 1947), p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 16.

burial ground for a tribe of California Indians living three miles to the south.⁴ Today this suburban community which bears a rich history has grown to a city of nearly 30,000 people.⁵ Located approximately twenty miles southwest of Los Angeles, it is about two miles square and enjoys an ocean frontage of some two and a quarter miles. These dimensions may be considered static as the city is surrounded by incorporated territory with the exception of El Porto, a settlement immediately to the north.⁶ To the south is Hermosa Beach and beyond that Redondo Beach, both of which are older settlements than Manhattan.⁷

The topography of this beach city is punctuated by a ridge of sand which starts at the northern boundary about 2,000 feet from the shore and continues nearly parallel to it, being only slightly further east of the beach at the southern boundary. The highest point in Manhattan Beach, some 245 feet above sea level, is located on this ridge just southeast of its intersection with Highway 101. This ridge serves as a dividing line for the two sections of the city known as the "sand section" and the "soil section", the

⁴Kerr, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵"Special Census of Manhattan Beach, Calif., Aug. 30, 1955," Current Population Reports, Special Censuses, Oct. 7, 1955; Series P-28, No. 841 (Washington, D.C.).

⁶Kerr, op. cit., p. 5.

⁷Ibid., p. 9.

latter being east of the ridge.⁸

The climate of Manhattan is typical of the coastal regions of Southern California in that it is somewhat warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer than inland areas. It has an average annual rainfall of fifteen inches, occurring mostly between November and April.⁹

It was to this pleasant environment that the white American inevitably, albeit lately, came to settle, led by the aforementioned subdividers, Peck, Merrill, and Daugherty.

The origin of the town's name seems to be open to question. One source has it that a Mrs. Gaylord, who had resided in Manhattan, New York, wished to name her new home after her former one. This same source relates that she was further prompted by the title of a book in her possession, Manhadoes of the Hills, Manhadoes being an Indian term for "those who live in the rolling hills".¹⁰ If this version is correct, we can understand how the rolling sand dunes of the area must have made the name Manhattan seem like a natural to Mrs. Gaylord. Elsewhere one reads that Stuart Merrill himself gave Manhattan its name. Mr. Merrill, too, was originally from the New York Manhattan, and supposedly had a sentimental

⁸Kerr, op. cit., pp. 5-6. See chapter 7 for another interpretation of the dividing line between the "sand section" and the "soil section".

⁹Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁰South Bay Daily Breeze, Aug. 19, 1955, p. 1.

attachment for the name.¹¹ In either case we must attribute to the early Dutch settlement the inspiration for the name of its counterpart on the Pacific shore.

It might have borne another name had George Peck had his way. The Santa Fe Railroad had a junction stop on its line from Los Angeles to Redondo just south of the present Manhattan Beach Boulevard to which it gave the name "Shore Acres". Peck liked this name and wished to retain it as the name of the city he was helping to found. It is said that he and Merrill, in order to settle the dispute, met one day in 1902 and flipped a half dollar. Merrill won and thus the name Manhattan.¹² This story tends to corroborate the other attributing to Merrill the naming of the town.

"Beach" was added sometime after the original naming when Virgil Wahlberg, Postmaster in the early days, petitioned the postal authorities to have the name changed in order to avoid confusion with fourteen other towns in the United States named Manhattan.¹³

In 1904 an important link with Los Angeles was made when two men by the names of Sherman and Clark, part owners of the Hermosa Beach Land and Water Company, built an electric railroad along the sand joining Redondo, Hermosa and Manhattan

¹¹Kerr, op. cit., p. 7.

¹²Hermosa Beach Review, Feb. 5, 1943, p. 4.

¹³Kerr, op. cit., p. 7.

with Playa del Rey which was already connected with Los Angeles. Ownership of the railroad later went to the Pacific Electric Railroad Company which continued the rail service until it gave way to bus transportation in the early 1940's.¹⁴

A land boom occurred in the young city in 1905. It was caused by a fever of speculation in Redondo. The boom lasted only five days and left new owners with land whose actual value was far less than the price paid.¹⁵ Aside from this and other brief fluctuations, the value of property in Manhattan has ascended steadily and continues to climb today due to the ever increasing scarcity of available land.

The shifting sands caused much inconvenience to early settlers. The Neptunian Club, Manhattan's first women's organization, chose as one of their early civic projects the planting of *Misambreanthum* on the rolling dunes. This, plus the gradual disappearance of many of the vacant lots in the town, helped to minimize the problem.¹⁶

For several years the children of Manhattan went to neighboring Hermosa or to Wisburn School four miles east for their education. By 1911 they were able to get instruction locally when a school was set up in the F. S. Daugherty Building on Marine Avenue. Two years later in response to a

¹⁴Kerr, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 18.

petition circulated by Captain C. E. Jenkins, who was soon to become Manhattan's first City Clerk, and James G. Courtelyou, a \$23,000 bond issue was floated in order to erect a school building to accommodate the city's forty-three school-age children.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the city fathers were taking a most significant step. In 1912 Manhattan Beach incorporated.¹⁸ With a city government to answer municipal problems with action the small shoreline community was to mature if not grow much more rapidly than it had since its birth a dozen years earlier. For example, the year 1913 saw the paving of a part of Highland Avenue and Center Street (now Manhattan Beach Boulevard), the first surfaced streets in town.¹⁹ Another "first" can be traced to this same year. The Los Angeles Times reported on February 10 that "F. H. Johnston has purchased the Manhattan Beach News and has published the first issue of the first newspaper printed in Manhattan Beach."²⁰

As a municipality Manhattan found it necessary to provide its own judicial body. The first court was organized in 1913. On February 17, Judge Jenkins, who doubled as City Clerk and Recorder, tried the first case, a disturbance of

¹⁷Kerr, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 16.

²⁰Manhattan Beach News, Feb. 15, 1924, p. 2.

the peace. Altogether three cases were tried that year.²¹

During the next two years the city acquired a water works at a cost of \$111,000 to replace the few and not always reliable wells which had provided the townspeople with their water up to that time.²²

A City Hall was built in 1916 on the corner of 15th and Highland where it stands today. George Peck sold the land to Manhattan Beach for "a very low figure", and F. S. Daugherty served as the contractor.²³ This probably explains what must have been a reasonable total cost even in those days: \$20,000.²⁴ Between 1912 and 1916 the city offices had been located at 109 Center Street in a building which is said to have been the first in what is now the business district of the town.²⁵

In the years following World War I a spirit of accelerated growth pervaded the community. Newspapers referred liberally to such things as a "booster club", and a Chamber of Commerce Membership Drive. More tangible evidences of maturity were presented in 1923 with the completion of the present pier (for some reason an essential feature of every successful

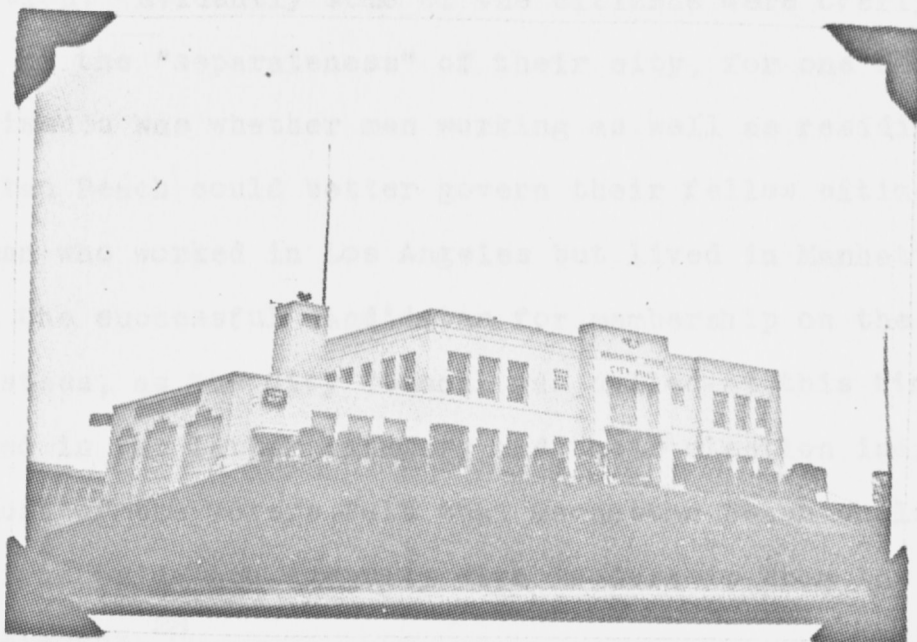
²¹The Manhattan Beach Story, ([Manhattan Beach:] Manhattan Beach Messenger, 1950), p. 2.

²²Loc. cit.

²³Kerr, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁴The Manhattan Beach Story, p. 2.

²⁵Kerr, op. cit., p. 22.



MANHATTAN BEACH CITY HALL AS IT APPEARS TODAY.

²⁴ New York Times, p. 12.

²⁵ The Manhattan Beach News, p. 7.

²⁶ Manhattan Beach News, March 31, 1924, p. 1.

beach community)²⁶ and the organization of Manhattan's first Fire Department.²⁷

In 1924 elections were held in Manhattan as well as in the nation. Evidently some of the citizens were overly conscious of the "separateness" of their city, for one of the major issues was whether men working as well as residing in Manhattan Beach could better govern their fellow citizens than men who worked in Los Angeles but lived in Manhattan. All of the successful candidates for membership on the Board of Trustees, as the City Council was called at this time, belonged in the latter category and their election indicated that most of the voters felt that Manhattan Beach could retain civic pride and identity with leadership from the commuter element.²⁸

Another principal issue of the 1924 election was the formation of a "South Bay Cities Sanitation District". In as much as proponents of such a district were victorious, Manhattan Beach soon joined with Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, and Palos Verdes for the purpose of installing laterals that would empty into the Los Angeles sewer which collected all waste at the newly built Hyperion plant in nearby El Segundo. Raw sewage from Los Angeles had long been a problem with

²⁶Kerr, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁷The Manhattan Beach Story, p. 7.

²⁸Manhattan Beach News, March 21, 1924, p. 1.

Manhattan and its neighbors when prevailing ocean currents caused it to wash upon the beaches, and the new processing plant was looked upon as not only an improvement over the former method of simply dumping untreated sewage into the ocean, but also a means of disposing of local sewage which had, up to this point, been collected in cesspools. Unfortunately, Los Angeles and environs continued to grow so fast that it soon became evident that the planners of the new Hyperion facility had been too conservative. Therefore, the occurrence of raw sewage on the beaches persisted and the members of the South Bay Cities Sanitation District had the added discomfort of knowing that they were now contributing to the nuisance.²⁹

Each passing year continued to bring some new evidence of community development. In 1925 Manhattan had its first real police department, depending prior to that time on a town marshal. The "department" consisted of two men: a combination desk sergeant-jailer and judge (who was also the City Clerk) and a police officer.³⁰

The following year the voters of Manhattan Beach decided to lend prestige to the city and to the office of trustee by voting the members of the Board a salary of five dollars for

²⁹The Manhattan Beach Story, p. 15.

³⁰Ibid., p. 6.

each of the bi-monthly meetings actually attended.³¹

The later 1920's brought such evidences of growth as the building of a Catholic Church at 10th Street and Highland Avenue (1926) a block north of the Community Church (inter-denominational) which had been serving the Protestant population for many years.³² Also, in the year 1926, a Lions Club was organized.³³ And in 1929 a bona fide member of the bar was appointed as Judge to relieve the City Clerk of this responsibility.³⁴

The aforementioned accomplishments notwithstanding, perhaps none of them tells as convincingly of Manhattan's development as the population increase. By 1930 there were nearly five times as many people living in the city as there were when it was incorporated eighteen years earlier, and in another decade that figure was to more than double.³⁵ And now, by the latest available figures, the city boasts some 30,586 people.³⁶

³¹Minutes of the Board of Trustees, (Manhattan Beach) III, p. 282.

³²The Manhattan Beach Story, p. 19.

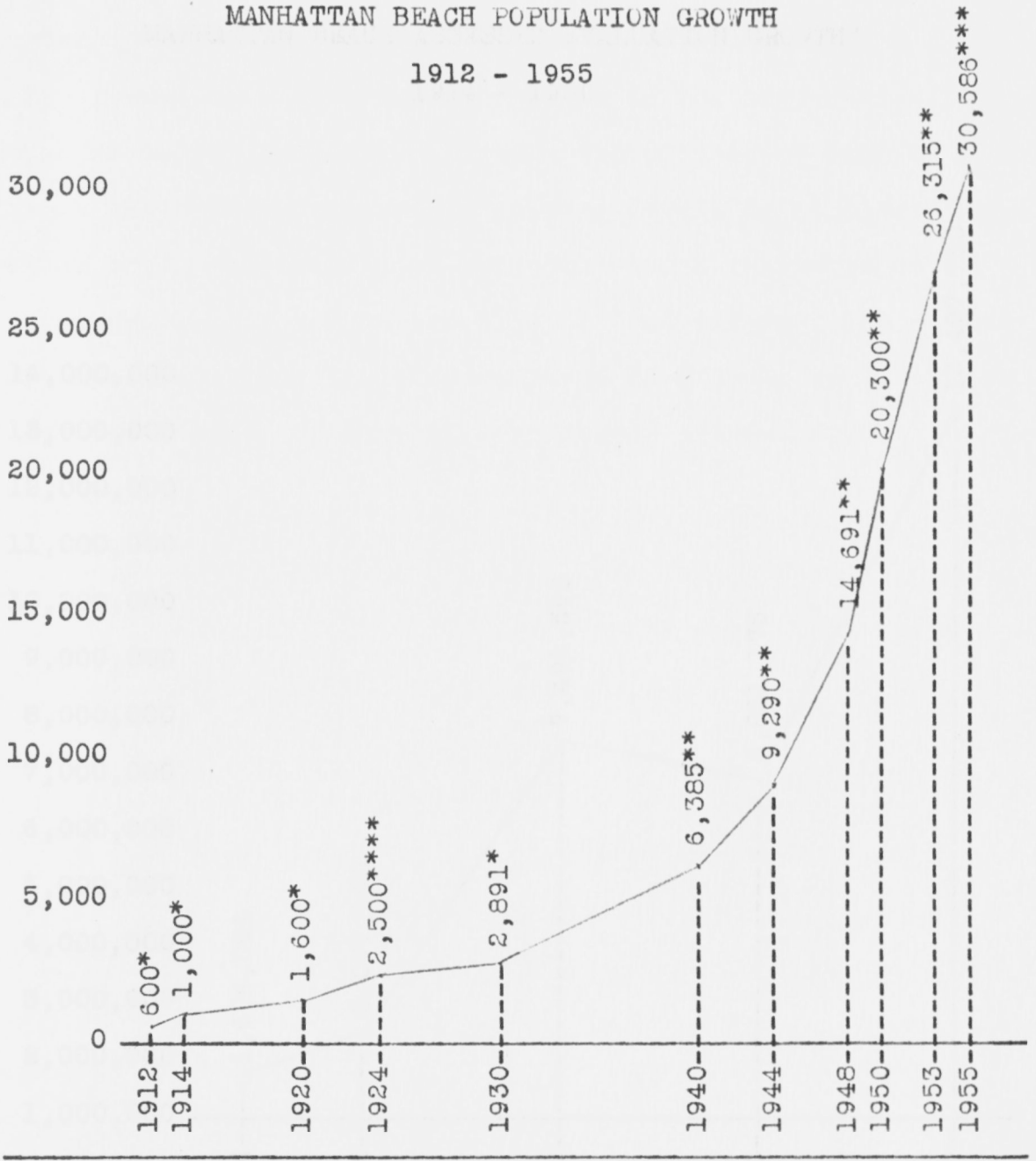
³³Loc. cit.

³⁴Ibid., p. 4.

³⁵Ibid., p. 2. There are no official census figures available for Manhattan Beach prior to 1940.

³⁶"Special Census of Manhattan Beach, Calif., Aug. 30, 1955," Current Population Reports, Special Censuses, Oct. 7, 1955; Series P-28, No. 841 (Washington, D.C.).

TABLE I
MANHATTAN BEACH POPULATION GROWTH
1912 - 1955



*The Manhattan Beach Story, April 15, 1950, p. 2.

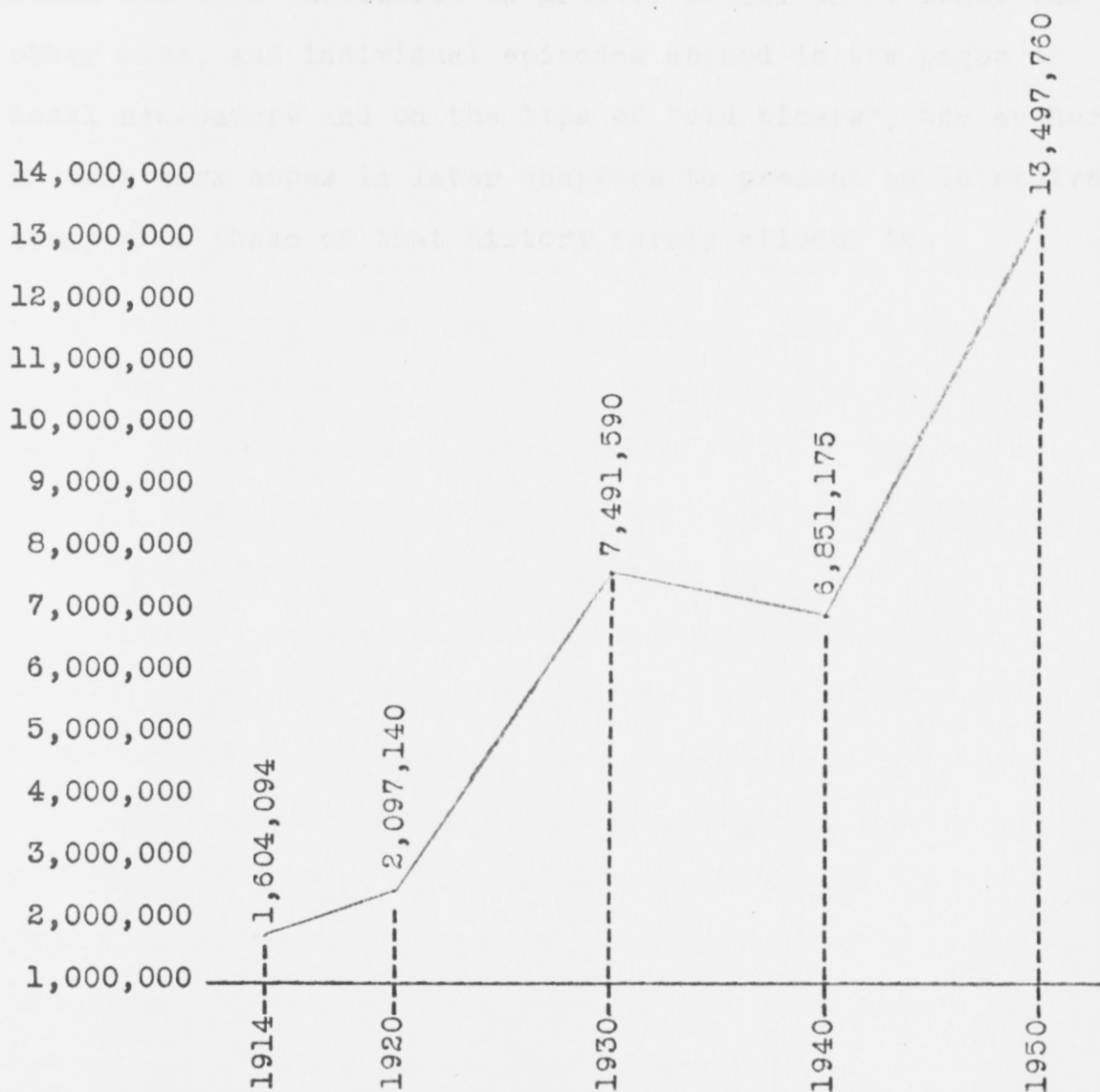
**Official U.S. Census figures as recorded in the office of The City Clerk of Manhattan Beach, California.

***"Special Census of Manhattan Beach, Calif., Aug. 30, 1955," Current Population Reports, Special Censuses, Oct. 7, 1955; Series P-28, No. 841 (Washington, D.C.).

****The Manhattan Beach News, Jan. 25, 1924, p. 1.

TABLE II
MANHATTAN BEACH ASSESSED EVALUATION GROWTH*

1914 - 1950



*The Manhattan Beach Story, April 15, 1950, p. 2.

This brief history has been presented chronologically in order to emphasize the development of a community from a shoreline resort to a suburban metropolis in the comparatively brief span of half a century. Although the history of Manhattan Beach has been chronicled in greater detail in at least one other work, and individual episodes abound in the pages of local newspapers and on the lips of "old timers", the author of this work hopes in later chapters to present an intensive study of a phase of that history rarely alluded to.

On page 115 the reader will find the following statement:

Because of the confidential, controversial or embarrassing nature of much of the testimony given in support of the conclusions presented herein, the author has seen fit to preserve the anonymity of all informants who might possibly suffer embarrassment or be offended by the revelation of their identity.

This was accomplished by citing informants by number rather than by name as they were referenced in footnotes throughout the text.

Over the years since this work was written I have come to view this decision as a mistake. Some of the informants did desire anonymity; most, I am sure, would not have minded being identified. Scholarship and the credibility of this study would have been better served had all informants been made known to the reader by name.

Now, 25 years after its publication and more than 50 years after the events upon which it was based, most of those who shared with me their recollections of land ownership by blacks in Manhattan Beach during the second and third decades of this century are no longer living. Even if they were, I think any possible harm that might come from identifying them would be more than offset by making this a more useful historical study.

The reader will find a listing of the informants by name and number attached to the back of page 121.

CHAPTER II

PIONEERS, O PIONEERS!

Into the sleepy atmosphere of Manhattan Beach in 1912 came the beginning of an enterprise that was to have momentous consequences to this small, half-resort, half-residential community. In this year Mrs. Willie A. Bruce of Los Angeles purchased from Henry Willard for \$1,225 the first of two adjacent lots along The Strand between 26th and 27th Streets.¹ Mrs. Bruce was a member of the Negro race and purchased the property for the eventual purpose of providing a lodge and bathhouse for other Negroes.

Evidence to support the conclusion that Mrs. Bruce and her husband, Charles A. Bruce, were the first Negroes in Manhattan is not altogether conclusive. According to a story related by one long-time Manhattan resident, the first colored person to live in the town was the wife of a white minister who maintained a week-end cottage at the beach. When he died sometime in the early 1900's his widow inherited the property, and her ownership encouraged subsequent Negro ownership in the neighborhood.² In numerous other interviews among Negroes and whites the author was unable to find support

¹Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), MMMMCCCCCCCCXC, p. 180.

²Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 15, 1955.

for this version of Negro "invasion" of Manhattan Beach.

There also seems to be a misconception that the Bruces purchased an already existent bathhouse operated by George Peck.³ However, this could not be true in as much as Peck's Bathhouse is elsewhere recorded as having been on the north-east corner of 27th Street and The Strand, several lots north of the eventual site of the Bruce establishment.⁴

The more valid evidence, then, seems to support the conclusion that Mr. and Mrs. Bruce purchased Lot 8 of Block 5 on February 15, 1912, from Mr. Willard.⁵ The lot was evidently unimproved at the time, for no assessment for improvement appears until 1913 when the Bruces built what was probably the first portion of "Bruce's Lodge".⁶

The misinformation the author encountered in seeking data on the Bruces and other individuals and incidents related to his subject is significant as it indicates the ease with which fallacy can become "fact" in a situation of this type.

³Informant 2, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 26, 1953.

⁴Correspondence from Emily Sinsabaugh Hack, Manhattan Beach, California, to the Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce, July 22, 1955.

⁵Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), MMMMCCCCCCCCXC, p. 180.

⁶County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), CLXIV, p. 67. Because of the nature of the source it is impossible to ascertain the exact date of improvement. The writer was only able to bracket such an event between the annual posting of the assessment.

On August 13, 1920, Mrs. Bruce purchased Lot 9, the property immediately to the south of her original acquisition. The sellers were Charles and Anna Krause and Jessie Carson Drake, all of whom were living in New York at the time of the sale.⁷ Because Mr. Bruce is not recorded as joint owner in either instance, the author considered the possibility of Mrs. Bruce being of a light enough complexion to "pass" as a white person for the purpose of making a purchase that otherwise might not have been possible. Those who knew the Bruces, however, report that both had dark skin and negroid features,⁸ and that therefore, Mrs. Bruce would not have had any advantage over her husband had the person negotiating the sale wished not to do business with non-whites.

In 1923 the Bruces built on this second piece of property.⁹ There were already two buildings on the originally acquired lot,¹⁰ one of which was a two-story affair with accommodations for dancing upstairs and a cafe downstairs.¹¹

The Bruce establishment became a congregating place for

⁷Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), MMMCCCLI, p. 254.

⁸Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

⁹County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), CLXIV, p. 67.

¹⁰Map of Property Included in Proposed Condemnation Proceedings for Public Park Purposes as described in Ordinance No. 276. From the files of The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al. as recorded on microfilm in the Los Angeles County Hall of Records.

¹¹Answer of W. A. and Charles Bruce to Complaint, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

Los Angeles Negroes on week ends and in the summer. Because Negro access to other beach areas was limited, "Bruce's Beach", as this facility came to be called, was very popular and was a source of considerable income for its owner.¹²

¹²Informant 4, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

The first six Negro families were from Los Angeles. Four of these families located on property between 23rd and 24th Streets and The Grand and Chapman Avenues. This area is more properly described as Blocks 5 and 12 of Jack's Manhattan Beach Tract. Since the other two families bought property fronting on 23rd Street and facing Block 5,² it can be seen that the Negro "invasion" of Manhattan was confined to a relatively small area.³

The author has checked reports to the contrary and believes that these six Negro families plus the Whites are the only ones ever to have lived in Manhattan Beach. However, the evidence to support this belief is not conclusive. One

Map of Property Included in Proposed Condemnation Proceedings for Public Park Purposes as described in Ordinance No. 376. From the files of The City of Manhattan Beach, V. S. E. Box, 22 1/2, as recorded on microfilm in the Los Angeles County Hall of Records.

²Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 11, 1955.

³After the condemnation of Blocks 5 and 12 of the 23rd Street area, the four families located elsewhere in Manhattan, but it can be seen that the area property was within a few blocks of the condemned property.

CHAPTER III

UNDER THEIR OWN FIG TREE

With the Bruces apparently well established at Manhattan, other Negroes were encouraged to locate there beginning in 1919. The first six Negro families were from Los Angeles. Four of these families located on property between 26th and 27th Streets and The Strand and Highland Avenue. This area is more properly described as Blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract.¹ Since the other two families bought property fronting on 26th Street and facing Block 5,² it can be seen that the Negro "invasion" of Manhattan was confined to a relatively small area.³

The author has checked reports to the contrary and believes that these six Negro families plus the Bruces are the only ones ever to have lived in Manhattan Beach. However, the evidence to support this belief is not conclusive. One

¹Map of Property Included in Proposed Condemnation Proceedings for Public Park Purposes as described in Ordinance No. 276. From the files of The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al. as recorded on microfilm in the Los Angeles County Hall of Records.

²Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

³After the condemnation of Blocks 5 and 12 three of the four families located elsewhere in Manhattan, but in each case the new property was within a few blocks of the condemned property.

long-time Manhattan resident recalls "ten or twelve" Negro families as having lived in town,⁴ while two Negro informants have mentioned specific other families believed by them to have once been residents.⁵ Of the three families so named, the author was unable to find any other evidence to indicate their alleged ownership or residence, and in fact, heard testimony to the contrary in regard to all three.⁶

If other Negro families did at any time inhabit Manhattan, it would not be without significance, for it would indicate that Negroes could unobtrusively enter this community and not disrupt it. Of course, none of the Negro residents, alleged or actual, ever attempted to establish a permanent home in Manhattan and all seem, in fact, to have avoided contact with other Manhattan residents unless they were made to feel that such contact would be amicable.

There are three possible reasons for the concentration of ownership in this relatively small area. The Bruces, "pioneers" among the Negroes in Manhattan, undoubtedly attracted subsequent settlers to their immediate vicinity. Because of the nature of their business, many casual Negro

⁴Informant 2, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 26, 1953.

⁵Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955, and Informant 6, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

⁶Informant 6, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955, and Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

visitors to the beach spent the day at the Bruces, frequently even staying over night, utilizing the Bruce's lodging facilities.⁷ Undoubtedly those who purchased nearby property had friends among those who frequented "Bruce's Beach"; they themselves, may have enjoyed the facilities provided by the Bruces before deciding to buy their own property here. Hence, the Negro "colony" polarized around "Bruce's Beach".

Secondly, these colored people had no desire to "invade" the "domain" of the white man. They sought only to enjoy an occasional respite from city living. That their presence might be offensive to white people they were aware and therefore they purchased land in the most remote shore line section of Manhattan Beach.⁸

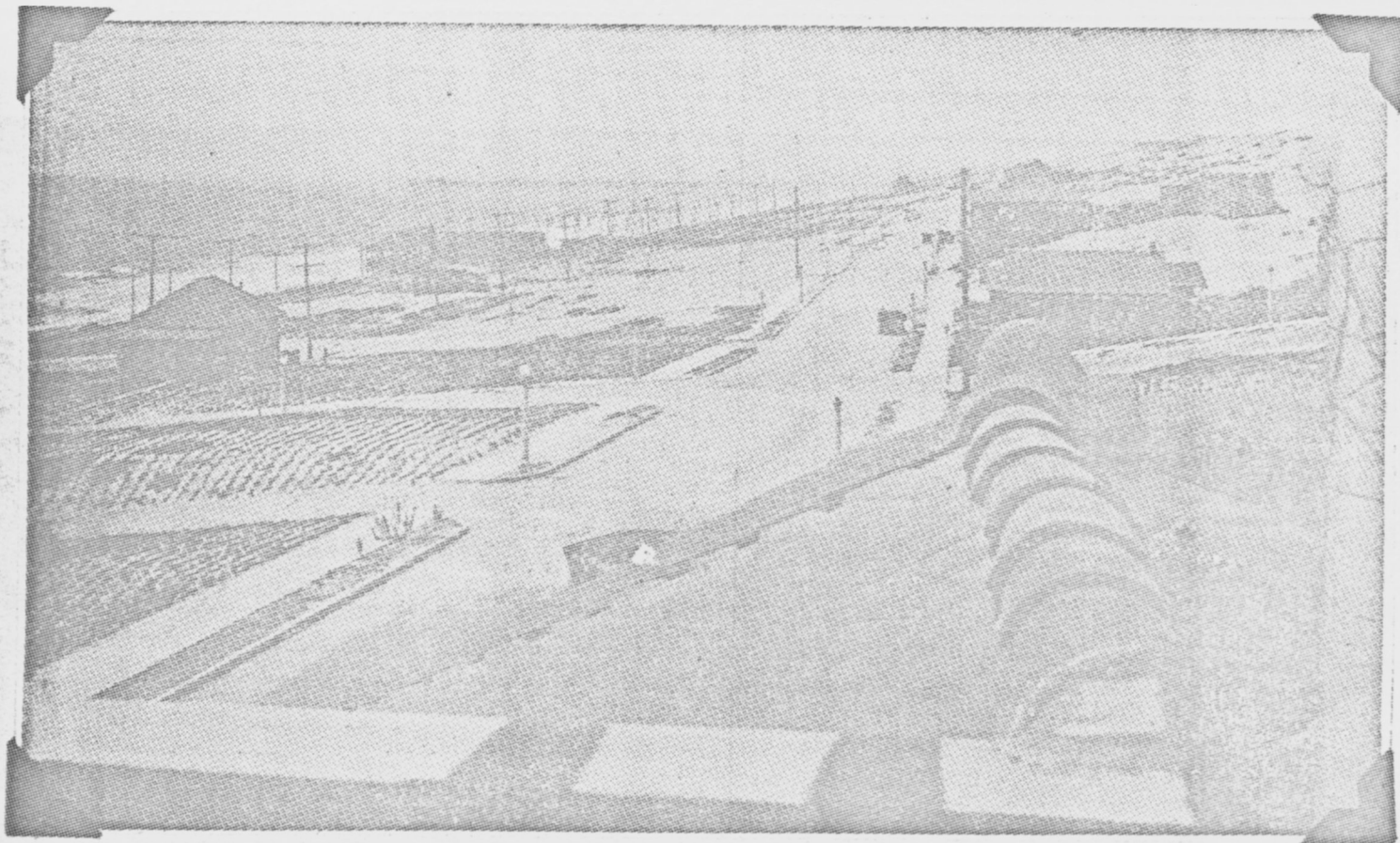
Still a third possible reason for the confinement of Negro settlement in Manhattan to a small area could be the refusal of realtors to sell in what was at that time the more established part of town, the area south of Marine Avenue.⁹

As to the possibility of racial restrictive covenants

⁷Answer of W. A. and Charles Bruce to Complaint, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

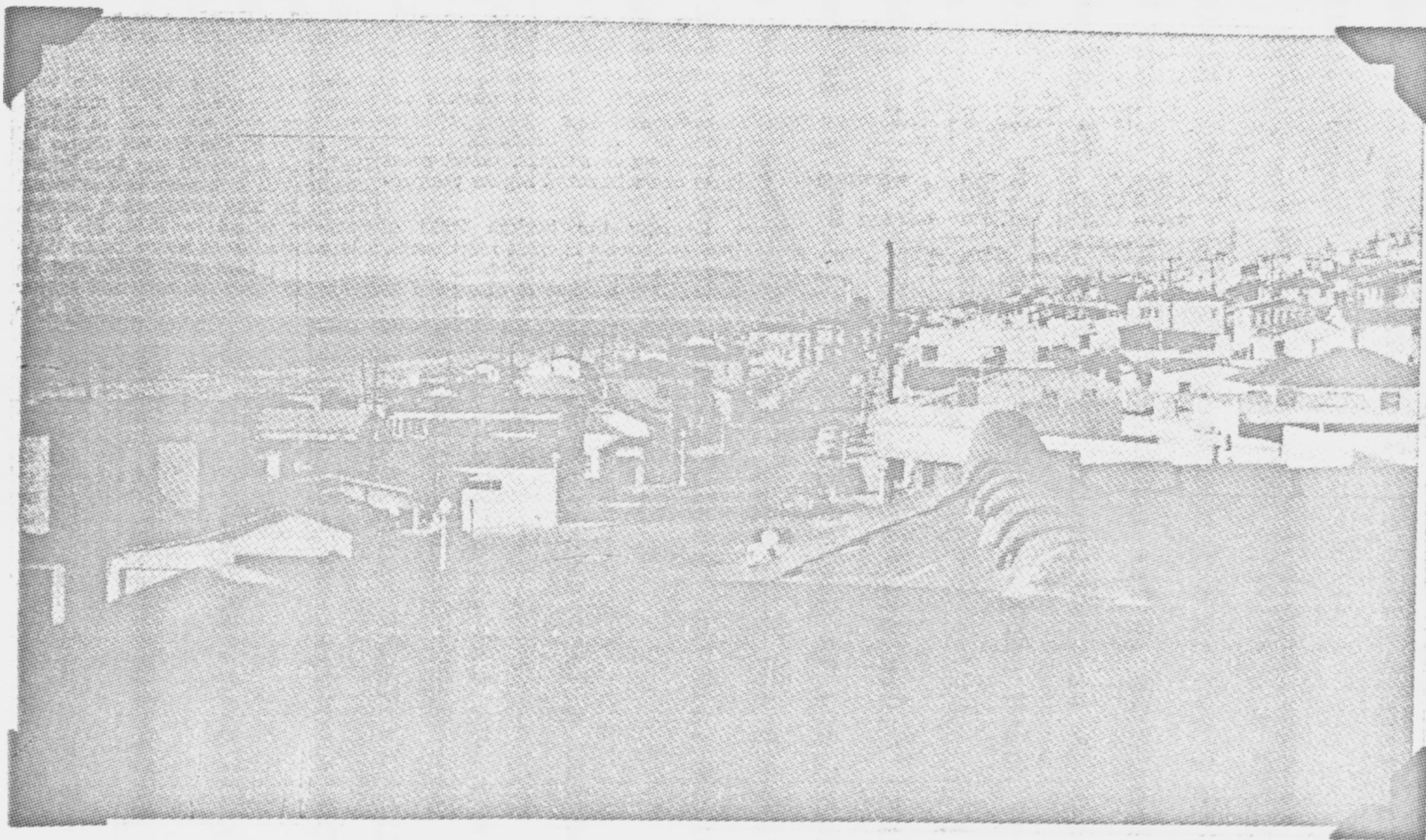
⁸Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

⁹The identity of the realtor or realtors who negotiated the purchases is unknown to the author and, therefore, it is impossible to do more than guess the part they played. The surviving members of the Negro families who had lived in Manhattan could not recall the person or persons who had acted in this capacity, nor could numerous Manhattan "old timers" recall who they were, and the most qualified white informant refused to divulge the information.



LOOKING NORTH FROM MARINE AND MANHATTAN AVENUES
CIRCA 1915-1920.* LARGE STRUCTURE ON SHORE LINE
IS BELIEVED TO BE BRUCE'S BATHHOUSE.

*South Bay Daily Breeze, Jan. 11, 1956, p. 25.



LOOKING NORTH FROM MARINE AND MANHATTAN AVENUES
IN 1956.*

*South Bay Daily Breeze, Jan. 11, 1956, p. 25.

affecting the occupancy of other Manhattan land, evidence is lacking. Such covenants did come into use in Manhattan later, however, no doubt because of the Negro "invasion" just described.¹⁰

In any event, Major George Prioleau, a retired Army chaplain, purchased the southern 1/2 of Lot 4 of Block 12 in 1919 from B. H. Dyer, R. L. Rice and H. M. Eichelberger,¹¹ three men who had purchased extensively in Blocks 5 and 12 in 1909,¹² two years after Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract had first been opened.¹³ At the time of the condemnation in 1924 they owned fourteen of the thirty lots involved.¹⁴ In 1922 Elizabeth Patterson, long-time friend of the Prioleau family when they lived in Kansas,¹⁵ purchased the northern 1/2 of the lot, and together the Prioleaus and Mrs. Patterson built a duplex on it.¹⁶

This part of Manhattan was practically uninhabited at

¹⁰Informant 7, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

¹¹County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), CLXIV, p. 67.

¹²County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), LXXXIX 1/2, p. 46.

¹³Map Book, Office of the County Recorder (Los Angeles), I, pp. 49-50.

¹⁴City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹⁵Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

¹⁶County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), CCCLXXXIV, p. 67.

the time. One of the Prioleaus' three children tells of remembering nothing but sand dunes north of the house in the direction of neighboring El Segundo.¹⁷

In 1922 another beach cottage was built in Block 12,¹⁸ by a white owner, Frank Heron. Mr. Heron, one of the owners of the Hollywood Cemetery,¹⁹ had purchased the property two years earlier.²⁰ Mrs. Heron, referring to the cottage, says "We built a little house for our own use on week ends, not much of a house."²¹

Heron sold this property on September 15 of the following year to Mary R. Sanders,²² a colored woman. Mrs. Sanders, apparently one of the better cateresses in Los Angeles, was known by her friends and clientele as Mary Washington since Washington had been the name of her first husband who had died around the turn of the century. At the time she purchased in Manhattan she was again a widow, and a business woman of considerable success and prestige. Mrs. Sanders,

¹⁷King, Mrs. Ralph, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

¹⁸County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), CCCLXXXIV, p. 67.

¹⁹Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

²⁰County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), CCCLXXXIV, p. 67.

²¹Heron, Mrs. Gertrude, Personal letter, Los Angeles, Sept. 21, 1955.

²²Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), IIMVIIICXXXVII, p. 275.

like the Herons before her, used the house only on week ends and in the summer as a beach retreat for her family and friends.²³

The question that immediately comes to mind is "Did the Herons sell because of the presence of Negroes?" While this question may well deserve an affirmative answer, there is some evidence to indicate that this had nothing to do with their decision. In the first place, if the Negroes who made use of the Bruce's facilities were as numerous and obvious as many observers relate today, some thirty to thirty-five years later, it seems doubtful that Mr. Heron would have purchased in the first place if he had any apprehensions about owning under such circumstances. Mr. Heron's widow states that "We did not [underscore by Mrs. Heron] sell it because we tho't negras were buying property there."²⁴ Mr. Heron, were he alive, might possibly remember his intentions to be otherwise.

In the same year that Mrs. Sanders purchased her beach property, still another Negro family, Milton and Anna Johnson, acquired Lot 1 of Block 12 on the southwest corner of Highland

²³Atkinson, Mrs. Ethel (daughter of Mrs. Sanders), Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

²⁴Heron, Mrs. Gertrude, Personal letter, Los Angeles, Sept. 21, 1955.

Avenue and 27th Street from Chester A. Bell,²⁵ a white land speculator of the type sometimes referred to as a "tax hound" because of the characteristic of buying up property which has been placed on auction for delinquent taxes or assessment bonds.²⁶ Manhattan Beach, being at the time a young development with a doubtful future, had many such speculators willing to take a chance on what they considered to be a good investment. Conversely, there were many landowners willing to give them the opportunity, displaying their lack of faith by forfeiting their property through a failure to pay taxes and/or

²⁵County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), CCCLXXXIV, p. 67. The assessment rolls, which the author used principally for the purpose of determining the year of purchase, do not actually show transfer of ownership. They do indicate the name of the person paying taxes on a given piece of property in a given year. This, if corroborated by other evidence, i.e., personal interview, correspondence, or newspaper account, was accepted by the author as proof of ownership. The author was unable to locate a record of a change in ownership in the Book of Deeds, the sale evidently having never gone through escrow. Therefore, if a new name appeared on the rolls in a given year, the author assumed that the property either changed hands in that year or in the year before if purchased after the taxes on the property had been paid. In the case of the Johnsons, 1924 is the first year in which they appear as taxpayers for the property in question. They probably acquired the property in 1923, however. Their ownership almost certainly had to be established prior to June 5, 1924, for it was on this date that Ordinance No. 276 was introduced before the Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees. This "declaration of intention to condemn" their property and the other lots in Blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract was the official beginning of the proceedings which were to place this area under the ownership of the city. It is unlikely that the Johnsons would have purchased the property after the proceedings had been commenced.

²⁶Informant 8, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Sept. 2, 1955.

bonds. A newspaper of the period contained 196 entries under a "Notice of sale of property delinquent for non-payment of bond" shortly after a periodic payment fell due.²⁷

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were the last Negroes to purchase on the two-block section that was to be condemned. However, there were two other Negro parties who bought property in Manhattan before the condemnation proceedings came to an end. These two families, together with those already mentioned who purchased on Blocks 5 and 12, constitute the sum total of the Negro "invasion" of Manhattan Beach, although three of the four families who were affected by the condemnation relocated elsewhere in Manhattan.

The first of the parties to buy property outside of the soon-to-be condemned area were John McCaskill and Elisa L. Irvin, two Los Angeles men²⁸ who wanted to build a cottage for the summer and week-end enjoyment of their families.²⁹ On July 15, 1923, they purchased from Katherine Harring Lot 3 Block 4 of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract.³⁰ This location was directly across 26th Street from the ill-fated Block 5. To the best of the author's knowledge, McCaskill soon bought out Irvin and is now the exclusive owner. This is believed to be

²⁷Manhattan Beach News, March 11, 1921, pp. 1-30.

²⁸Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), IIMIVCLXIX, p. 314.

²⁹Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

³⁰Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), IIMIVCLXIX, p. 314.

the only property presently owned by a Negro in Manhattan Beach. The house on the property today is the same one that Mr. McCaskill built himself in 1924. It is supposedly one of the first stucco houses in Manhattan Beach.³¹

In 1926 the Slaughter family purchased Lot 2 of Block 4, which is one lot east of the McCaskill property, from Carl R. Nuetzel.³² Here they built a lodging house, probably in 1927.³³ Perhaps by this time the Bruces had suspended operations due to the condemnation, and the Slaughters sought to replace them as host for the non-resident Negro who wanted to spend a day or so at the beach. However, neither their establishment nor their operation was as large as that of "Bruce's Lodge".³⁴

The Slaughters were unique among Manhattan Negroes in that not only did they not own land that was eventually condemned, but they came after the condemnation proceedings had commenced.

³¹Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

³²County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), IIIICLIHIV, p. 67.

³³Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

³⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

A PLACE IN THE SUN

While some of Los Angeles' 60,000 Negroes¹ were cautiously establishing vacation residences in Manhattan Beach, others were looking elsewhere for a spot where their race could enjoy the abundant recreational offerings of Southern California without fear of embarrassment, degradation or violence.

The possibility of establishing a Negro settlement at Lake Elsinore was explored and facilities at a Parkside Country Club became a reality in the 1920's.² The fate of the Lake Elsinore venture is not known to the author, but the Parkside Country Club became a favorite resort spot of Los Angeles Negroes with its fine club building, golf course, shooting range and tennis courts.³

Yet another attempt to win for the race equal recreational opportunity was the proposed lease of approximately two hundred feet of beach at Hyperion in January of 1924

¹Florence Keeney Robertson, Problems in Training Adult Negroes in Los Angeles (M.A. dissertation, U. S. C., 1929), p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 72.

³Loc. cit.

by a Titus Alexander.⁴ This effort is significant to this study because of its proximity to the Manhattan situation both as to time and locale. Hyperion is some three miles north of Manhattan Beach.

Mr. Alexander, described in the local press of the period as the "Czar of Central Avenue",⁵ was in fact a highly respected Negro leader in Los Angeles and an employee of long standing with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. His home was several miles from the Central Avenue district.⁶

There was at the time an outfall at Hyperion that accommodated the sewage of metropolitan Los Angeles and several adjacent suburban areas. Mr. Alexander, in his supervisory capacity with the Water Department, was undoubtedly aware of the fact that the outfall, in use since 1890, had for several years been inadequate and that a Fine Screening Plant and 5,000 foot Submarine Outfall was to supplement the simple outfall in use at the time.⁷ The new facilities were allegedly to free the beaches of the Santa Monica Bay of the pollutants that had been plaguing bathers since 1912 when the outfall began to cause a situation that brought forth "intense

⁴Redondo Daily Breeze, Jan. 11, 1924, p. 1.

⁵Ibid., Jan. 28, 1924, p. 1.

⁶Informant 9, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Nov. 6, 1954.

⁷Memorandum from Leland M. Swanson, City Manager, Manhattan Beach to State Water Pollution Control Board, Oct. 24, 1955.

complaints" from near-by beach cities.⁸ Alexander realized that a potentially fine bathing beach might soon exist where there had been a most undesirable condition. He therefore approached the Los Angeles City Council with the proposition of leasing the stretch of city-owned beach at Hyperion.⁹

The Finance Committee of the Council recommended the approval of a fifteen year lease to Alexander "for the purpose of operating a resort at Hyperion." The rest of the Council and the mayor appeared ready to go along with this recommendation, but at this point the Los Angeles Playground Commission sought an injunction to prevent the signing of the lease. Significantly (in so far as the action almost simultaneously taken by Manhattan Beach is concerned) the Commission proposed that the property be set aside for playground use.¹⁰

The Commission apparently had "help" in arriving at this course of action, for it was immediately endorsed by the Los Angeles Realty Board, the Municipal League, the Chamber of Commerce and the Advertising Club¹¹ in addition to numerous groups of the Santa Monica Bay area.¹²

⁸Memorandum from Leland M. Swanson, City Manager, Manhattan Beach to State Water Pollution Control Board, Oct. 24, 1955.

⁹Manhattan Beach News, Jan. 11, 1924, p. 1.

¹⁰Loc. cit.

¹¹Loc. cit.

¹²Redondo Daily Breeze, Jan. 11, 1924, p. 1.

In fairness to the groups opposing the lease it should be reported that such opposition was based not entirely on the fact that the would-be lessee was Negro. Such bodies have traditionally opposed the sale of beach frontage to any private party on the grounds that such property should be left in the hands of the public to be enjoyed by the public.¹³ For the Negro, however, who was nearly always embarrassed, if not openly abused, when he attempted to use the public beaches,¹⁴ private ownership of certain beach areas must have seemed a very logical means of preventing both embarrassment to himself and offense to the white man who objected to his presence.

At a January 25 hearing in the Superior Court affidavits, sworn to by three Hermosa Beach real estate men, were presented by the anti-Alexander interests. In the opinion of the realtors the lease price of \$6,700 agreed upon by the city was far too low in view of the impending alleviation of the sewage problem. Their appraisal of a fair price for a lease of the two hundred feet of beach over a fifteen year period was from \$140,000 to \$175,000.¹⁵

As a result of this hearing a group of taxpayers brought an action against the City of Los Angeles, the Title Guarantee and Trust Company acting as plaintiff. Trial was first set

¹³Manhattan Beach News, Jan. 18, 1924, p. 2.

¹⁴Robertson, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁵Redondo Daily Breeze, Jan. 23, 1924, p. 1.

for February 8, 1924, in the court of Judge Ira Thompson, but on this date it was deferred until February 18 so that briefs might be filed by both sides. In the meantime the order restraining the lease was extended.¹⁶

The eventual outcome of the litigation was an order denying the city's right to lease the land in question to Mr. Alexander.¹⁷

Titus Alexander was not directly involved in the Negro "problem" a few miles south in Manhattan Beach.¹⁸ His experience, having both a chronological and geographic proximity, seemed for that reason to deserve a place in this study.

Especially significant was the plea to set aside for park purposes the land sought to be leased. The Negroes of Manhattan Beach were soon to feel the effects of a similar plea.

¹⁶Manhattan Beach News, Feb. 8, 1924, p. 1.

¹⁷Informant 9, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Nov. 6, 1954.

¹⁸Loc. cit.

CHAPTER V

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

It was inevitable that conflict should arise out of the presence of Negroes in Manhattan Beach either as semi-permanent residents or visitors for the day. As Manhattan became more and more popular among Los Angeles Negroes the resentment and fear among the townspeople became increasingly evident.

As has been indicated in Chapters II and III there were two distinct types of land use by Negroes in Manhattan Beach. On the one hand there was Bruce's Lodge and later the Slaughter Hotel, business establishments designed to accommodate the non-resident Negro who desired to spend a day or so at the beach. The other type of land use was represented by beach cottages whose function it was to provide a retreat for the owners and their families and friends.

Which of these two was the more repugnant to the citizens of Manhattan the author has not been able to determine conclusively. In his numerous interviews with local residents who were living in Manhattan at the time this writer has been left with the impression that no distinction was made between the two different types of land use in the memories of the interviewees if indeed one ever existed.

However, it is the author's well-considered guess that

the patrons of Bruce's Lodge and later the Slaughter Hotel were more offensive to the local white residents than were the handful of Negroes who owned their own homes.

Manhattan Beach seemed to be resisting commercialized amusement during the period of the early 1920's. For example, the City Council, then known as the Board of Trustees, passed Ordinance 274 on June 19, 1924, stating that anyone wishing to open a "bathhouse, social club, theater, dance hall, billiard or pool room, public shooting gallery, public bowling alley or other place of public amusement" must make application in writing to the Board of Trustees. This ordinance also gave the Board the authority to "impose such rules and regulations as may be deemed proper and necessary for the maintenance of public order, and the promotion of public morals." In passing the ordinance the Board made itself the judge as to whether or not the regulations were being adhered to. Violators were to be fined \$300 or receive a ninety day sentence.¹

Since the Bruces and Slaughters represented not only commercialization but also an undesirable minority group, it seems reasonable to conclude that they were the cause of most of the ill-feeling directed at the Negroes who came to Manhattan.

As the author will attempt to point out in Chapter VIII,

¹Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach), p. 166.

the whites seemed particularly to resent the use of the beach itself by Negroes. Since most of the Negroes using the beach were not the inhabitants of the few Negro-owned cottages but rather casual visitors who used the Bruce facilities,² it becomes more evident that Bruce's Lodge probably accelerated the move on the part of Manhattan whites to oust the Negroes, including those who owned cottages.

The question was asked by the author of a few of the Negroes who had been in the families of Manhattan home-owners whether or not they thought they might have remained unmolested had Bruce's Lodge not been in the picture. One felt rather strongly that had the Bruces not located in Manhattan other Negroes who merely desired summer and week-end residence in their own homes would not have become the victims of the condemnation.³ However, another considered this reaction highly unfair, pointing out that Mr. and Mrs. Bruce were the first Negroes in Manhattan, pioneers as it were. Had they not dared to venture into the area others would probably not have followed.⁴ Another member of one of the displaced Negro families expressed the same opinion and added that many of the subsequent settlers first learned of the

²Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 15, 1955.

³Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

⁴Informant 6, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

pleasure of beach living by visiting Bruce's Lodge.⁵

These opinions on the part of the involved Negroes, divergent though they may be, seem to bear out the author's contention that the situation would have been much less critical had the Negro colony at Manhattan been free of the atmosphere of commercialism which Bruce's Lodge rendered.

During the same meeting in which the Board of Trustees enacted the aforementioned Ordinance 274, legislation of more direct significance to the Bruces was passed: Ordinance 273. This made it illegal for any bathhouse to be erected east of the Pacific Electric right of way,⁶ the railroad track which went along the beach just west of the Strand. Since Mrs. Bruce had already erected her bathhouse, the law did not affect her existing property, but in as much as her property was east of the line defined by the Board, any further expansion of her bathhouse facilities was impossible. Nor could anyone else build such a facility in the future. One of the displaced Negroes remembered this as being clearly aimed at the Negroes of Manhattan.⁷ Unsubstantiated, this reaction might appear to be the result of a hyper-sensitive attitude by a member of a persecuted minority. However, the man who

⁵Informant 7, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3 1955.

⁶Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach), p. 166.

⁷Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, April 30, 1955.

is perhaps the most authoritative source among the Manhattan whites of the period confirmed this opinion.⁸

While the Board of Trustees was attempting to "legislate" the Negroes out of Manhattan Beach (or at least discourage any new ones from establishing themselves in town), some of the local residents were employing or considering other means. One Negro recalls a fence at either end of the beach in front of Bruce's Lodge.⁹ In as much as this informant was the only one who ever mentioned such a fence, he might have been making reference to a rope which Herb Culler, the son-in-law of George Peck, once used in roping off the section of the beach used by the Negroes.¹⁰

A Negro attorney of Los Angeles recalls numerous arrests of colored people on "trumped up charges" between 1920 and

⁸Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 21, 1955.

⁹Informant 4, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

¹⁰Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 15, 1955. This use of a long length of rope was the direct result of an exchange of telegrams between Culler and Peck, who was the subdivider of most of northern Manhattan including the area in which all the Negroes had settled. Peck was in the east on business and Culler was handling his Manhattan affairs in his absence. Disturbed by what appeared to be a growing crisis among the Negroes and whites over the use of the beach, Culler wired Peck for instructions. Peck wired back to Culler that he should do what he thought best. Whereupon, Culler purchased the rope and used it to "fence" off the area between 26th and 27th Streets. Thus were the Negroes and whites segregated.

1924.¹¹ If any such arrests took place the charges must have been dismissed before the accused were brought to trial, or perhaps bail was forfeited in lieu of standing trial, for the court docket shows no trial which would seem to have resulted from such an arrest until 1927.¹²

Whether or not the law enforcement officials were over-zealous in the apprehension of Negro "law breakers" during this period, they undoubtedly were lax in the protection they afforded Negroes from malicious acts performed against them by whites. Coloreds frequently returned from the beach to find that the air had been let out of their automobile tires, according to one report.¹³ Another indicated that one house was burned and another attempted burned in the early 1920's.¹⁴

One Manhattanite who worked as an odd job man during this period related to the author an experience he had at one of the Negro homes. He was doing some minor repair work in the bedroom and saw a gun on the dresser. Asking the woman of the house the purpose of the gun, she replied that it was

¹¹Informant 10, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 22, 1955.

¹²Court Docket (Manhattan Beach), I, passim.

¹³Informant 10, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 22, 1955.

¹⁴Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 21, 1955.

kept for protection.¹⁵ This would indicate that relations between Negroes and whites were not generally amicable.

It is not surprising to find the Ku Klux Klan involved in Manhattan's race problem. The new Klan was gaining strength in many places in the United States during the 1920's and there was a local organization whose primary objective was to keep Manhattan white.¹⁶

A Manhattan resident who was a member of the Board of Trustees in 1924 tells of some of the activities of the Manhattan Klan. Possibly referring to the attempted burning mentioned previously in this chapter, he recounted a night in the early 1920's when he followed a siren to Bruce's Lodge where someone (supposedly a Klansman) had set fire to a mattress under the main building. This produced lots of smoke, but the only fire was in the eyes of Mrs. Bruce as she greet-

¹⁵Informant 11, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 28, 1955.

¹⁶Informant 2, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 26, 1953. The Klan was active in the neighboring cities of Hermosa Beach and Redondo also. The author has personally seen a certificate of membership in the Hermosa chapter. The Redondo Breeze of January 12, 1924, contains an advertizement for a free lecture on the "Principles of KKK and Ideals of PURE AMERICANISM." The California Eagle, a Negro newspaper published in Los Angeles, contains in its July 4, 1924 edition an interesting encounter between three Negroes fishing off the pier in Redondo and a person supposedly a member of the Klan. The alleged Klansman approached the three men and handed them a pamphlet entitled "The Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan." In the margin of one of the pages was penciled the note "Colored Folks Beach three miles north." Manhattan Beach is approximately three miles north of Redondo.

ed the white spectators.¹⁷

This same informant mentioned another interesting though abortive attempt to harass the Bruces. Since Prohibition was in effect at the time, one of the more imaginative anti-Negroes of Manhattan hit upon the idea of "planting" some liquor at Bruce's Lodge and then following up with an arrest. This scheme failed to get enough support, however, and was therefore dropped.¹⁸

By mid-1924 legislation had apparently failed to deter the Negroes. Violent and otherwise illegal means were somehow repugnant to most of the whites of Manhattan. Quasi-legal means had so far been of only a nuisance value. But before the year was out Manhattan was to see the beginning of the end in a phase of its history.

¹⁷Informant 12, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Sept. 16, 1955.

¹⁸Loc. cit.

CHAPTER VI

THE PEOPLE SPEAK

If any one man can be singled out as the leader in the eventually successful bid to retard Negro settlement in Manhattan, George Lindsey is that man. Mr. Lindsey brought his family to Manhattan Beach in 1920, establishing a real estate office in the so called "North End", the area beyond Marine Avenue. He was at that time one of three realtors in town and the only one in that section of the beach.¹

The author has interviewed Mr. Lindsey on two different occasions and at neither time did the interviewee give any indication of being a racist. That is to say, he appeared to have no particular malice toward Negroes. He feels that "education and co-operation will eventually solve the problem ...perhaps in five hundred years or so", and that most Negroes themselves realize this. Consequently, he looks upon those who attempted to establish residence in Manhattan and those who came for the day to enjoy the beach in front of Bruce's Lodge as being of a belligerent minority operating outside of his concept of "education and co-operation."²

The author came away from each of his interviews with

¹George H. Lindsey, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 21, 1955.

²Loc. cit.

Mr. Lindsey convinced that he sincerely believes himself to have acted in the best interests of all concerned, having effected a peaceful retardation of the Negro "invasion" and thereby having maintained land values and a way of life in Manhattan Beach.³

In 1921, Lindsey first approached the Board of Trustees, requesting that they take measures to discourage colored people from establishing homes in Manhattan. Although sympathetic, the members of that body were reluctant to take action lest they go on record as being bigots. It was not until he came forth with the idea of condemning for park purposes Blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract, the area of greatest Negro "concentration", that the Board was willing to pursue the matter.⁴

Although the author is convinced that Lindsey was the original advocate of the condemnation plan, there are two versions to the contrary that are of interest. One states that the person who had the idea of "planting" some liquor at the Bruce establishment switched to condemnation when his other scheme died for lack of support.⁵ The other theory, advanced by one of Los Angeles' three Negro newspapers of

³George H. Lindsey, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 21, 1955.

⁴Loc. cit.

⁵Informant 12, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Sept. 16, 1955. See Chapter V.

the period, laid the blame at the feet of the Ku Klux Klan. Their report of the initial phase of the condemnation stated that Bruce's Lodge, where "members of the race might spend their spare time enjoying the ocean breeze under their own vine and fig tree" was in jeopardy. The report continued, "It is understood that some Ku Klux who recently moved in the vicinity 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 have] condemned Bruce ['s] Beach as a pleasure resort for Colored people."⁶

Although the Board of Trustees had appeared sympathetic to the suggestion to condemn the area occupied by most of the Negroes Mr. Lindsey felt they were dragging their feet on the matter.⁷ Consequently he circulated a petition requesting the condemnation and presented it before the Board on November 15, 1923. The Board's immediate reaction to this petition was to take it under advisement until the next meeting.⁸

At the next meeting, held on December 6, no action was taken on the petition. Rather, another petition was received protesting that filed by Mr. Lindsey. This latter document was submitted by "property owners" of Blocks 5 and 12 of

⁶California Eagle, July 4, 1924, p. 1.

⁷George H. Lindsey, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 8, 1955.

⁸Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 121.

Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract.⁹ Although the signers of the petition were not identified further, it would seem safe to assume that they included only the Negro owners since none of the white owners later protested when the condemnation proceedings were taken into the Superior Court by the Board of Trustees.¹⁰

The first petition prevailed, for the Board of Trustees introduced Ordinance 263 on January 3, 1924. It was

an ordinance declaring the intention of the Board of Trustees of the City of Manhattan Beach to acquire for public park purposes Blocks Five (5) and Twelve (12) of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract in said city of Manhattan Beach describing the land necessary to be taken therefor and describing the exterior boundaries of the district to be benefited by the acquisition of such land and to be assessed to pay the damages and costs of such acquisition and to be known as the assessment district.¹¹

The Ordinance was adopted the following February 7.¹²

For the next several months no further action was taken by the Board. Evidently something had come up to cause them

⁹Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 123.

¹⁰Answers to Complaint, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹¹Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 134.

¹²Ibid.

the period, laid the blame at the feet of the Ku Klux Klan. Their report of the initial phase of the condemnation stated that Bruce's Lodge, where "members of the race might spend their spare time enjoying the ocean breeze under their own vine and fig tree" was in jeopardy. The report continued, "It is understood that some Ku Klux who recently moved in the vicinity 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 have] condemned Bruce ['s] Beach as a pleasure resort for Colored people."⁶

Although the Board of Trustees had appeared sympathetic to the suggestion to condemn the area occupied by most of the Negroes Mr. Lindsey felt they were dragging their feet on the matter.⁷ Consequently he circulated a petition requesting the condemnation and presented it before the Board on November 15, 1923. The Board's immediate reaction to this petition was to take it under advisement until the next meeting.⁸

At the next meeting, held on December 6, no action was taken on the petition. Rather, another petition was received protesting that filed by Mr. Lindsey. This latter document was submitted by "property owners" of Blocks 5 and 12 of

⁶California Eagle, July 4, 1924, p. 1.

⁷George H. Lindsey, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 8, 1955.

⁸Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 121.

Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract.⁹ Although the signers of the petition were not identified further, it would seem safe to assume that they included only the Negro owners since none of the white owners later protested when the condemnation proceedings were taken into the Superior Court by the Board of Trustees.¹⁰

The first petition prevailed, for the Board of Trustees introduced Ordinance 263 on January 3, 1924. It was

an ordinance declaring the intention of the Board of Trustees of the City of Manhattan Beach to acquire for public park purposes Blocks Five (5) and Twelve (12) of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract in said city of Manhattan Beach describing the land necessary to be taken therefor and describing the exterior boundaries of the district to be benefited by the acquisition of such land and to be assessed to pay the damages and costs of such acquisition and to be known as the assessment district.¹¹

The Ordinance was adopted the following February 7.¹²

For the next several months no further action was taken by the Board. Evidently something had come up to cause them

⁹Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 123.

¹⁰Answers to Complaint, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹¹Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 134.

¹²Ibid.

to hesitate in going through with the condemnation. Perhaps Ordinance 263 had just been a bluff and they were now trying to negotiate with the Negro owners in Blocks 5 and 12 to sell either to the city or to white people so that the condemnation would not be necessary. Whatever the reason for the delay, plans to condemn were resumed in June when on the 5th of that month a declaration of intention, worded the same as Ordinance 263, was introduced. This action was referred to as Ordinance 276.¹³ Perhaps it was necessary to follow this procedure because the lapse of four months since the passage of Ordinance 263 had made it void.

On June 19, 1924, Ordinance 276 was passed unanimously.¹⁴ It should be noted that the identical Ordinances 263 and 276 were mere declarations of intention and not authorization for court proceedings. The later action was not to come for nearly three more months.

In the meantime interested individuals were to have the opportunity to protest the proposed condemnation. On September 4, several such protests were opened, examined and read by the City Clerk in an open meeting of the Board. Upon motion by Trustee Crandall September 18, the next regular meeting night of the Board, was set as the hearing date for

¹³Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 163.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 167.

these protests.¹⁵

It was the custom of the Board to meet informally when necessary on the Thursday evening between regular meeting nights which fell on the first and third Thursdays of each month.¹⁶ Such a meeting took place on September 11, at which time it was decided by the Board that the protests were insufficient. They reasoned that of the approximately 8,000 lot owners who might have protested only 329 had done so and of this number, only one protest was accompanied by an affidavit as required by law.¹⁷ The City Clerk reported essentially the same conclusion on September 18, adding that only one of the 329 protests was from a person owning property sought to be condemned.¹⁸ The record continues

Whereupon, Trustee Rhind moved the adoption of the following motion: "It is hereby found that only one protest against the improvement proposed by Ordinance No. 276, to-wit; the acquisition by condemnation for public park purposes of Blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract, in the City of Manhattan Beach, complying with the requirements of Section 4 of the 'Park and Playground Act of 1909' has been filed, and that the time for filing protests thereto has expired, and that all

¹⁵Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 180.

¹⁶Informant 12, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Nov. 30, 1955.

¹⁷Manhattan Beach News, Sept. 19, 1924, p. 1.

¹⁸Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 183.

informal protests have been heard, given careful and due consideration, found to be immaterial and on insufficient grounds, and not complying with the requirements of said Section 4 of said Act and same are each and all hereby denied."¹⁹

The motion was seconded by Trustee Crandall and was carried by a unanimous vote.²⁰

Unfortunately the author was unable to determine which of the protestants, if any, objected on the ground that an injustice was being perpetrated. However, of all the persons interviewed who were in any way involved in the condemnation, the author has heard of only one white resident of Manhattan who felt that the Negro property owners were being treated unfairly without due cause.²¹

With all protests of the condemnation thus dismissed, the way was clear for the actual ordinance to condemn. This action came on October 16, 1924, when the Board of Trustees passed Ordinance 282 ordering the "acquisition by condemna-

¹⁹Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 183.

²⁰Loc. cit.

²¹Informant 13, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Nov. 15, 1955. The author has heard several Manhattan residents express the opinion that the condemnation was a subterfuge, a fact proven by the city's failure to ever put a park on the property. Others have even spoken of the displaced Negroes in complimentary terms. But none except the above informant expressed the opinion that the whole procedure was not justified by the seriousness of the "problem."

tion for public park purposes of Blocks Five (5) and Twelve (12) of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract in the manner contemplated by Ordinance No. 276."²²

Ordinance 282 also directed the City Attorney to bring an action in the name of Manhattan Beach in the Superior Court in and for the County of Los Angeles for condemnation against all "owners and claimants of said property or any part thereof."²³

Thus was the stage set for the next phase in the conflict between white and black in Manhattan Beach: the condemnation suit whereby Manhattan wrested ownership of the two blocks in which four of the five Negro families who at the time owned property in Manhattan were located.

²²Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach: III), p. 188.

²³Complaint for Condemnation, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

CHAPTER VII

DUE PROCESS

At 10:52 A. M. on November 25, 1924, Fred Perry, City Attorney for Manhattan Beach, carried out the mandate of the Board of Trustees and filed a Complaint for Condemnation in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. He did this in the name of the City of Manhattan Beach and for the purpose of acquiring for park and playground purposes Blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract.¹ The litigation that followed was to last until June 10, 1929, four and a half years after Perry filed the complaint.²

Between December 8, 1924 and January 9, 1925, A. C. Cooper, City Treasurer for Manhattan, served summonses to all persons owning property in the two-block area in question, for all had been named as co-defendants by the city.³ In addition to Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, Major and Mrs. Prioleau, Miss Patterson, and Mrs. Sanders, all of whom were Negroes, the remaining owners were also named. The only thing they had in common with the aforementioned was

¹Complaint for Condemnation, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

²Final Judgement, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

³Affadavit of Service of Summons and Complaint, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

that they owned real estate in the same two block-area. Not one of them was a Negro and none had built on his property.⁴

The defendants were obliged to answer the complaint within ten days after being served if they lived in Los Angeles County and within thirty days if they lived outside the county.⁵ Ten of the fourteen non-Negro parties owning or holding liens against involved property defaulted immediately, whereas only one of the five Negro parties failed to answer within the required time.⁶

It would be naive to think that any of the property owners were unaware of the condition that existed; that is, that the City of Manhattan Beach was striving to prevent Negro residence within the city limits through the means of ostensibly condemning for park purposes the property on which all but one of the Negro families lived. What then was the reaction of the owners when they learned of the attempted acquisition of their property?

The most extensive holdings in Blocks 5 and 12 were those held jointly by B. H. Dyer, R. L. Rice and M. H. Eickelberger. These three men owned the following lots in Block 5: Nos. 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 13, and 14. In addition to

⁴Informant 6, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

⁵Order to Enter Default, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁶Loc. cit.

these holdings they owned lots 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, and 12 in Block 12.⁷ The record shows that they had acquired this property in 1909 from the original subdivider, George Peck.⁸ Although Messrs. Dyer, Rice and Eickelberger answered the Complaint filed by Manhattan Beach through their attorneys Lawler and Degnan,⁹ there is nothing in the records of the case to indicate that they fought the condemnation.¹⁰ In fact one of the attorneys who represented the Negroes in the case reports that Mr. Dyer co-operated with Manhattan Beach in order that the condemnation might be expedited.¹¹ If this recollection is accurate, it would seem that these three gentlemen were anxious to see the condemnation go through, presumably because they thought their investment was threatened by the "encroachment" of the Negroes. Why, then, did they go to the expense of answering the Complaint? Other evidence being unavailable, the author can only assume that they wanted to be sure that their rather substantial interest in the property in question was protected throughout the proceedings.

⁷Complaint for Condemnation, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁸County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), LXXXIX 1/2, p. 46.

⁹Notice of Motion to Set for Trial, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹⁰The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al., passim.

¹¹Informant 10, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 22, 1955.

The same motive may safely apply to the only other non-Negro defendants to answer the Complaint, The Southern California Bond and Finance Company, and L. A. Driesbach.¹² The former claimed an interest in Lot 7, Block 12 by virtue of "a certain action brought in Superior Court of the State of California in and for the County of Los Angeles...to foreclose a Street Bond against said lot."¹³ Mr. Driesbach was the attorney for the Barber Asphalt Company, a concern with headquarters in Philadelphia, that had paved several streets in Manhattan including Highland Avenue. As the West Coast legal counsel for the Barber Company, Mr. Dreisbach was responsible for claiming property for his employer on which the street bond had become delinquent.¹⁴ This he had done in his own name in the case of Lot 14, Block 12. He now claimed an interest in this property by virtue of mense conveyances filed in the Los Angeles County Clerk's office July 18, 1923.¹⁵

The other non-Negro owners all declined to file answers to the Complaint. They were C. W. Stowe, George W. Yarrow,

¹²Notice of Motion to Set for Trial, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹³Complaint for Condemnation, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹⁴Informant 8, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Sept. 2, 1955.

¹⁵Answer for L. A. Dreisbach, City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

Lillie D. Dosta, Chester A. Bell, Sarah I. Ambrose, Marion R. Wyser, R. C. Ruperd, M. W. Mitchell, Clara M. Monroe, and H. H. Eccleston.¹⁶ All of these parties, except one, had purchased prior to 1915 and some as early as 1907.¹⁷ The fact that they had not improved their property all these years would seem to indicate that they did not have any great interest in it anyway. Under the circumstances it is not difficult to understand why they greeted the condemnation with resignation, apathy or perhaps even relief.

As stated previously, only one of the Negro owners failed to answer. The one who did not was Mary R. Sanders.¹⁸ One who was close to Mrs. Sanders at the time reports that she was not the type to allow herself to be "pushed out of Manhattan Beach."¹⁹ Evidence to support this recollection is provided by her repurchase in Manhattan after her original property had been condemned.²⁰ However, the attorney who represented Mrs. Sanders in the proceedings (she later pro-

¹⁶Order to Enter Default, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹⁷County Assessor's Map Book (Los Angeles), LXXXIX 1/2, p. 46, and CLXIV, p. 67.

¹⁸Order to Enter Default, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

¹⁹Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

²⁰Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), IIMIVCLXIX, p. 314.

tested the price to be paid as set by the court referees,²¹ an action she could take in spite of not having originally filed an answer)²² remembers Mrs. Sanders' as being "thoroughly terrorized," wanting only to get a fair price for the property and then to get out of town.²³

Of these two conflicting recollections the author feels that the former is more apt to be correct in as much as Mrs. Sanders did buy elsewhere in Manhattan after the condemnation. It would seem that she thought it of no importance to contest the condemnation, feeling that she could relocate if she wished to.

The remaining Negro owners, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, Major and Mrs. Prioleau and Miss Patterson, all filed answers to the Complaint for Condemnation.²⁴ Their opposition to the Condemnation was essentially based upon the same contention: The City of Manhattan Beach claimed that the land was being taken for the purpose of establishing a public park and/or playground²⁵ "in the manner which will be the

²¹Objection to Referees Report, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

²²Informant 4, Personal interview, Redondo Beach, Aug. 23, 1955.

²³Informant 10, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 22, 1955.

²⁴Order to Enter Default, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

²⁵Ordinance 276, Manhattan Beach, June 19, 1924.

most compatible for the greatest public good and the least private injury."²⁶ The Negro owners contended that the real reason behind the action was

to banish them [the Negroes] from the said City, and, more particularly, from that portion of the said City which is nearly contiguous to the Pacific Ocean, and this in order to entirely free the said City from their presence because of the fact that they are Negroes, and that these defendants allege that the said proceedings are arbitrary, oppressive and inspired by Racial Prejudice.²⁷

The Negro defendants also attempted to show how illogical it was to consider Blocks 5 and 12 as likely for a future park site. In the first place, it was pointed out, the City already owned 144,018 square feet in Tract 2541 which had been originally given for the express purpose of accommodating a park and playground. There were no buildings on this land which would have to be torn down or removed, and it was located closer to the center of town. The land sought to be condemned, on the other hand, contained six buildings besides the fact that it was not owned by the City. It was further pointed out that if the Board of Trustees was con-

²⁶ Complaint for Condemnation, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

²⁷ Answer of W. A. and Charles Bruce to Complaint, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al. Except for particulars as to the legal description of property owned, the Answer filed by Mr. and Mrs. Johnson was identical to that filed by Mr. and Mrs. Bruce. The Answer filed by Major and Mrs. Prioleau and Miss Patterson, while differing slightly as to wording, was essentially the same in meaning.

vinced that a park was needed in the particular part of town in which Blocks 5 and 12 were located, the property immediately adjacent to this land to the north and the south contained fewer buildings and could therefore be condemned with less trouble and expense.²⁸

The attempts by the Bruces and the other Negroes in the case to block the condemnation itself were unsuccessful. Mr. Perry as counsel for the plaintiff was then able to get the attorneys for the defense to waive a jury trial or a trial by the court without a jury. Then Perry moved for the appointment of "three disinterested persons, residents of said City of Manhattan Beach" as referees "to ascertain the compensation to be paid to each of the Defendants."²⁹ The three men recommended by Perry and subsequently appointed by the court were three Manhattan realtors, C. A. Daugherty, U. T. Thompson, and George H. Kern.³⁰

It would seem that once the Negroes and their attorneys realized that they could not succeed in getting the case thrown out of court on the grounds that it was a subterfuge, they too attempted to expedite the proceedings so that they might receive the best possible price for their land and be

²⁸Answer of W. A. and Charles Bruce to Complaint, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

²⁹Notice of Motion to Set for Trial, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

³⁰Order Appointing Referees, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

done with the whole situation. If this were not so, they might have moved for a jury trial and thereby prolonged the proceedings with all of the delays which usually accompany such a trial.

The only surviving member of the battery of attorneys who represented the Negroes remembers the situation at this point as being one of "strategic retreat"³¹ whereby the defendants would not further alienate the white citizens of Manhattan by causing the City any undue difficulty in accomplishing the condemnation once its right to condemn had been established.³² At least this might have been the attitude of the Johnsons and Mrs. Sanders, the last of whom had not challenged the condemnation in the first place.

As for the Bruces, they must have realized that their days in Manhattan Beach were numbered, at least as the proprietors of a bathhouse-cafe-lodge, if the condemnation were to go through. They had attracted hundreds and sometimes thousands of other Negroes who used the Bruce establishment as a "base of operations" while they enjoyed a few hours on the beach.³³ This factor undoubtedly made the Bruces the least desirable of the Negro families in Manhattan. With the

³¹The author's and not the informant's quotes.

³²Informant 10, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 22, 1955.

³³Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 15, 1955.

recently passed Ordinances 273 and 274 restricting the building of bathhouses to locations west of the Pacific Electric right of way and making the establishment of a bathhouse at any location contingent upon the approval of the Board of Trustees,³⁴ this made the relocation in Manhattan of Bruce's Lodge little short of impossible. Mr. and Mrs. Bruce and their attorney, Willis O. Tyler,³⁵ could well have thought twice before conceding victory to Manhattan Beach under these circumstances. They may have reasoned, however, that even a victory in the courts would be an ultimate defeat, a defeat possibly accompanied by violence. At any rate, there is no record of the Bruces fighting Perry's motion for trial by referees.

A discussion of the appointment of referees would not be complete without mention of a belated protest filed on September 24, 1925, by E. Burton Ceruti, counsel for the Prioleaus and Miss Patterson. Ceruti claimed that the notice of the waiver of a jury trial dated March 30, 1925, had been duly mailed to his office and had then been filed. He confessed that it had "completely escaped" his attention until after the referees had been appointed. The next thing he knew, he had received a notice of a hearing to be held before said referees. Had he been aware of the fact that the plaintiff had moved for

³⁴See Chapter V.

³⁵Answer of W. A. and Charles Bruce to Complaint, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

the appointment of referees, he would have demanded a trial by the court. Consequently, when he finally learned of the situation he petitioned the court to disregard the Referees' Report and try the case itself.³⁶

Perry, of course, opposed this petition, maintaining that in as much as Ceruti had been notified by mail, his failure to respond within the proper time was a bit of negligence for which neither the court nor the plaintiff could be responsible.³⁷ In spite of Perry's protest Judge J. Walter Hanby decided to honor Ceruti's request "in the interest of justice."³⁸

Ceruti had stated that his clients did not think the price as set by the referees was unfair. Rather, they objected to the right of Manhattan Beach to take the land in the first place.³⁹ However, his next move was a most unexpected one. He withdrew his petition to set aside the Referees' Report and agreed to accept it.⁴⁰ As a result of this change of mind Judge John York rescinded Judge Hanby's

³⁶Affadavit of E. Burton Ceruti, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

³⁷Affadavit in Opposition to Motion to Set Aside Proceedings Under Section 473 C. C. P., The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

³⁸Order to Set Aside Trial by Referees, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

³⁹Stipulation Waiving Trial by Court and Setting Aside an Order Granting Trial, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁴⁰Loc. cit.

previous order.⁴¹

Ceruti's motives for reversing his position do not appear in the record, nor can any of the survivors of the litigants or any others involved in the situation remember why he permitted the decision to revert to the hands of the referees. One may guess, however, that he too despaired of preventing the condemnation. Or perhaps he and his clients realized, as did the other Negroes, that they would accomplish nothing but the further alienation of the whites if they fought the condemnation. The wiser course was the acceptance of the condemnation, getting the matter settled as quickly and as advantageously as possible.

Subsequent events seemed to prove the wisdom of this course of moderation. Of the four families who were forced to vacate as a result of the condemnation, members of three of them relocated in Manhattan. Only the Bruces did not, and this because of reasons explained above. In a later chapter there will be a more complete discussion of the relocation of Mrs. Sanders, Major and Mrs. Prioleau, and Mrs. Emma Barnett, Mrs. Johnson's daughter and part-owner of the Johnson property that was condemned.

⁴¹Stipulation Waiving Trial by Court and Setting Aside an Order Granting Trial, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

The month of September, 1925, was an eventful one as far as the condemnation proceedings were concerned. In addition to the Ceruti episode and several other less important happenings, September saw Hugh Macbeth, counsel for Mrs. Sanders and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, file an objection to the Referees' Report in behalf of his clients. The objection was not one of principle as had been Ceruti's, but rather an objection to the price tentatively awarded for the two pieces of property involved. In a document filed on September 23, Macbeth claimed that the \$3,800 awarded Mrs. Sanders for Lot 6 of Block 12 and the house thereon was "not the fair value." Instead he asked for \$6,500 for his client.⁴²

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson estimated the value of their property "conservatively" at \$5,000 because of its location on the corner of Highland Avenue and 27th Street. The improvement alone was worth \$2,500 they felt, having cost \$2,156.52 to build.⁴³ The recommendation of the referees had specified the payment of but \$3,645.12 for the land and the improvement together.⁴⁴

The Johnsons and Mrs. Johnson's aforementioned daughter, Emma Barnett, finally received a total of \$3,795.12, an

⁴²Objection to Referees' Report, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁴³Protest Against Award of Referees, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁴⁴Interlocutory Decree, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

amount which represented an upward adjustment from that which the referees had originally recommended.⁴⁵ The court also authorized favorable revision of the price awarded Mrs. Sanders from the original \$3,800 to \$4,100 because the exceptions taken to the Report of the Referees in both cases "were well taken and should be sustained in part."⁴⁶

It should be noted here that in their original answer to the Complaint filed by Manhattan Beach, the Johnsons had asked for \$16,000 as the value of their property plus an additional \$20,000 damages due to the fact that if the property were condemned, they would be unable to purchase elsewhere in Manhattan.⁴⁷ The Bruces, when they filed their answer, claimed, in addition to the \$70,000 for their property, \$50,000 damages for the same reason as the Johnsons.⁴⁸ Both families expressed a preference for the property over the money.⁴⁹ Mrs. Sanders, not having answered the complaint, never had the opportunity to ask for additional damages.

In view of the requests made for additional damages on the grounds stated above it should be pointed out that Mrs.

⁴⁵Interlocutory Decree, *The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.*

⁴⁶Loc. cit.

⁴⁷Answer of Milton B. and Anna E. Johnson, *The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.*

⁴⁸Answer of W. A. and Charles Bruce to Complaint, *The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.*

⁴⁹Loc. cit.

Sanders' daughter claims to remember that the trial judge insisted on the right of the Negroes who were being dispossessed to repurchase elsewhere in Manhattan. He said, according to her, that if this right were not guaranteed, he would "throw the case right out of court." Mrs. Sanders' daughter remembers that the guarantee was not only made, but that there were real estate agents waiting outside the courthouse to sell the Negroes new property.⁵⁰ If this actually took place, it is of course most significant. However, the author has not been able to confirm it through any other source, Negro or white. If the question of the right to repurchase did come up in the proceedings, the plaintiff had no choice but to guarantee it. Otherwise the condemnation would have been a declared subterfuge. The fact that three of the four families involved did repurchase speaks for itself, although it may or may not have come about as a result of any promise made on the part of the plaintiff.

Aside from the objections to the Report of the Referees by Mrs. Sanders and the Johnsons, both of which were adjusted in favor of the defendants, there is no evidence that anyone thought the amounts awarded by the referees were unfair. In fact, without exception, surviving members of the Negro families involved agree that the referees were quite liberal.

⁵⁰Ethel Atkinson, Personal interview, Los Angeles, April 30, 1955.

With the fight over the validity of the condemnation out of the way, and all of the defendants satisfied as to the awards made by the referees, there was little left to do but to hold the final trial. The trial was originally set for September 10, 1925, to take place in Department 10, but after two continuances it was not finally heard until January 8, 1926.⁵¹ All "issues of law and all preliminary motions" having been disposed of, the issuance of an interlocutory judgement, declaring the City to be the new owner of Blocks 5 and 12 of Peck's Manhattan Beach Tract and fixing the compensation to be paid the former owners of the individual lots in these two blocks, was but a formality.⁵²

Although the Interlocutory Decree was handed down on February 27, 1926,⁵³ the Final Judgement was not rendered until June 10, 1929.⁵⁴ The reason for this three-and-a-half year delay is not known by the author, and is not recalled even by the surviving attorneys involved in the case. Possibly this delay was in fulfillment of some legal requirement whereby a certain amount of time had to elapse between the interlocutory and final judgements.

⁵¹Memorandum of Costs and Disbursements Claimed by Plaintiff, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁵²Interlocutory Decree, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁵³Notice of Entry of Judgement, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

⁵⁴Final Judgement, The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.

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

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

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

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

TABLE III
(continued)

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

There is evidence to indicate that the real purpose of the condemnation, that is, the evacuation of Negro owners from the property in question, was accomplished prior to the Final Judgement. On December 3, 1925, Trustee Merrit Crandall of the Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees introduced Resolution 542 authorizing the "bill of sale to property taken under the condemnation proceedings instituted by Ordinance 276."⁵⁵ Mrs. Sanders must have abandoned her property on Lot 6 of Block 12 prior to June of 1929, for she purchased her Highland Avenue property on May 7, 1927.⁵⁶

Since Manhattan Beach evidently had no intention of making the condemned property into a park,⁵⁷ it is not important when the Negroes relinquished ownership, but rather that they eventually did. In view of the fact that of the four Negro families involved, only one was actually driven out of the community, the condemnation was not a quantitative success. However, the one family that did not relocate in Manhattan was Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, the proprietors of the bathhouse-lodge on the Strand. Since this establishment was responsible for the large influx of Negroes on week ends and holidays,

⁵⁵Minutes of the Board of Trustees (Manhattan Beach:III), p. 259.

⁵⁶Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), VIMVIICKXII, p. 51.

⁵⁷An assumption on the part of the author based upon the circumstances accompanying the condemnation, the fact that a park has never been built there, and the admission by several Manhattan residents that the condemnation was a subterfuge to begin with.

TABLE IV
ESTIMATED COST OF THE CONDEMNATION
OF BLOCKS FIVE AND TWELVE TO THE
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH

Compensation paid former owners	\$66,040.63
Court costs	1,067.05
Estimated tax loss, 1925-1955*	8,100.00
Estimated assessment loss, 1925-1955**	4,050.00
<hr/>	
TOTAL***	\$79,257.68

*In attempting to arrive at a valid figure for the estimated loss of tax revenue the author consulted the City Treasurer of Manhattan Beach, Mr. Lee Younggren. Mr. Younggren despaired of determining what the sum would have been, pointing out that there are too many variable factors (rate of increase on improved property, changes in tax rate, owner exemptions) and too great a degree of actual guess work involved to hope for the arrival at even an approximate figure. Therefore, this figure is based on nothing more than a considered guess on the part of the author, using the following method: Assuming that the two block area would have become ninety per cent improved (the surrounding area is), and since the City has held title for thirty years, the author took \$15.00 as an average figure for the annual city tax bill of a home in this area, multiplied it by thirty (the number of lots in the two blocks condemned), and multiplied this figure by $\frac{2}{3}$ of thirty years. The fraction $\frac{2}{3}$ was used to adjust for what would have been a gradual increase in improved property from the five such pieces of property at the time of compensation to the present.

**This figure represents another guess on the part of the author based on the assumption that the total assessments for the same property would have been approximately fifty per cent of the total taxes.

***Not included are such secondary items as losses in school and other special district taxes which go toward the ultimate well-being of the city.

the removal of the Bruces was a considerable achievement for the city that had for several years lived in dread fear of becoming "Nigger Beach."⁵⁸

⁵⁸Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 15, 1955.

¹South Beach, *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 20, 1955, p. 7.

²Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, April 20, 1955.

³Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 15, 1955.

CHAPTER VIII

TROUBLED SUNSET

If the condemnation of Blocks 5 and 12 was designed to arrest an influx of Negroes into the community that would have caused a mass exodus of the white population, it can be considered a success, for the white race did not become extinct in Manhattan Beach as many had feared. The nearly thirty thousand permanent residents that today inhabit this popular Los Angeles suburb¹ are, in fact, an exclusively white group.

If, on the other hand, the expected outcome of the condemnation was the immediate banishment of all Negroes then it must be viewed as a failure. Manhattan Beach was not to see the last of the Negroes who had occupied homes in the condemned area until 1953, when the daughter of Mrs. Mary Sanders, Mrs. Ethel Atkinson, disposed of the handsome two-story apartment building she had inherited from her mother upon the latter's death in 1937.² This dwelling, which served both for rental and personal use since its erection in 1928,³ is literally a "stone's throw" from the property originally

¹South Bay Daily Breeze, Aug. 20, 1955, p. 1.

²Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, April 30, 1955.

³Loc. cit.



APARTMENT BUILDING (FOREGROUND) FORMERLY OWNED BY MRS. ETHEL ATKINSON AS IT APPEARS TODAY. LOCATION IS SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF HIGHLAND AVENUE AND 26th STREET.

owned by Mrs. Sanders in Block 12.

Although we might imagine some sinister coercion leading up to the Atkinsons' decision to sell their Manhattan property, Mrs. Atkinson says quite simply that her husband got tired of having to care for a place so far from their Los Angeles home.⁴

The departure of Mrs. Atkinson, the last of the "condemned"⁵ to leave Manhattan, did not completely free the community from the Negro "menace." John McCaskill, who had joined with Eliza Irvin in 1923 to purchase a lot on 26th Street facing the future "park", built a home on the property shortly thereafter⁶ and today maintains it as a vacation cottage.⁷

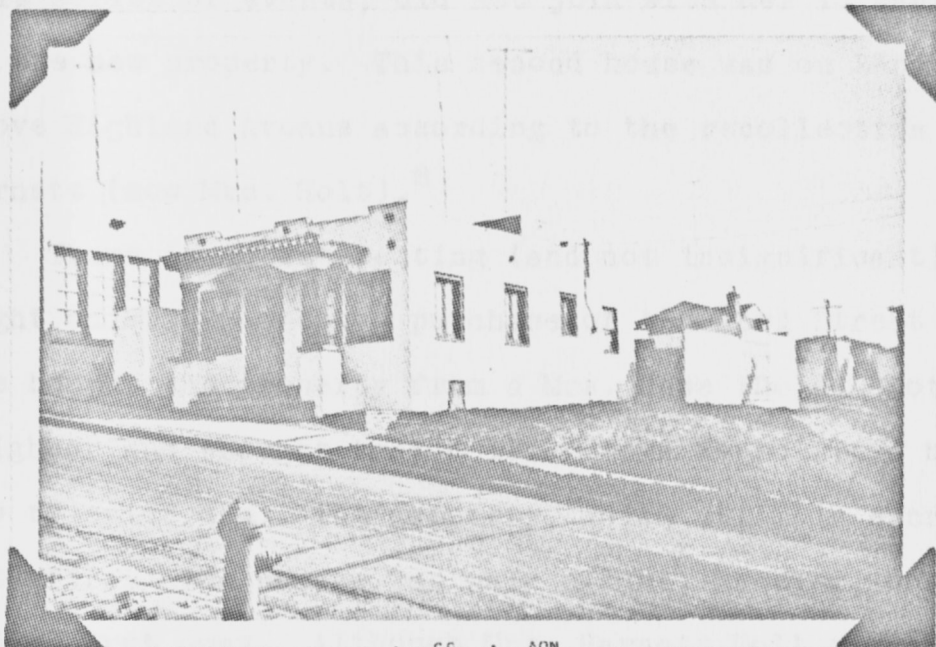
Although the McCaskills are the only remaining Negroes in Manhattan, the relocation of the other Negroes (with the exception of the Bruces) whose property had been condemned is of considerable significance. Emma Barnett, the daughter of Mrs. Johnson and step-daughter of Mr. Johnson, who had purchased an interest in her parents' Block 12 property after

⁴Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, April 30, 1955.

⁵Although Mrs. Atkinson's mother was the actual owner of the condemned property, for purposes of this study she and others of her generation who are descendants of owners, are treated as owners of condemned property.

⁶See Chapter III.

⁷Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.



THE BEACH HOME OF JOHN McCASKILL AS IT
APPEARS TODAY ON 26th STREET BETWEEN
OCEAN DRIVE AND MANHATTAN AVENUE.

⁸Intercept 6, Personal Interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1956.

⁹Id. at 112.

the condemnation proceedings had been started, bought a home a few blocks away in 1927 after the family had been forced to vacate the condemned property. Her husband, Le Roy Barnett, had died in 1925 and this was followed by her mother's death in 1927. Her step-father, who lived for several years after this series of events, did not join with her in the purchase of the new property. This second house was on 23rd Street above Highland Avenue according to the recollection of Mrs. Barnett (now Mrs. Holt).⁸

There is an interesting (and not insignificant) side-light on Mrs. Barnett's purchase of the 23rd Street property. She bought the property from a Mrs. Case who did not like her neighbor and thought that selling to a Negro would be a good way to spite him. The property, while still in escrow, was set afire. The damage was only slight, however, one corner being burnt away. Although Mrs. Barnett Holt rebuilt it as soon as she took title and rented it to a Negro family during the following summer of 1927, she sold it soon thereafter because of the attitude of the neighbor, whom she remembers as being very insulting.⁹

The remaining "condemned" family, the Prioleaus, along with Leslie King, a friend who had purchased Miss Patterson's half of the Prioleau-Patterson duplex, actually moved the

⁸Informant 6, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

⁹Loc. cit.

entire structure to a lot on the corner of 25th Street and Bayview Drive. The house, which is still standing and occupied, served as a vacation home for many summers until finally Mrs. Prioleau (Major Prioleau had passed away in July of 1927),¹⁰ learning that there was a restrictive covenant on the lot, decided to trade the property for some in Los Angeles rather than to risk the indignity of another eviction.¹¹

Mr. and Mrs. Slaughter, a Negro couple who erected an apartment building in 1927 next door to the McCaskill home, were the last of the Negroes to purchase in Manhattan.¹² Perhaps they hoped that their facilities would replace those that the Bruces had been forced to abandon. The record shows that the Mortgage Insurance Corporation took over the property in 1930.¹³ According to the report of one of the Manhattan Negroes, the Slaughters left discouraged due to the community's compounded animosity toward an establishment that was both Negro and commercial and which threatened to attract members of the race in large numbers who were non-owners.¹⁴

¹⁰California Eagle, July 22, 1927, p. 1.

¹¹Informant 7, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 3, 1955.

¹²See Chapter III.

¹³Book of Deeds (Los Angeles), MMMCXLIX, p. 37.

¹⁴Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.



DUPLEX FORMERLY OWNED BY MAJOR AND MRS.
PRICLEAU AND LESLIE KING AS IT APPEARS
TODAY AT ITS 25th STREET AND BAYVIEW
DRIVE LOCATION.

One of the major enigmas of the entire subject of Negro land ownership in Manhattan is knowing who negotiated the sale of property to the Negroes. Was it a local realtor? Perhaps it was not one but several, perhaps both local and absentee, perhaps both black and white. As related in Chapter VII, one of the Negro condemnees remembers the judge at the final trial insisting that those losing their property be given the opportunity to buy elsewhere in Manhattan. Furthermore, she recalls having been solicited by a white Manhattan realtor after the trial.¹⁵ Names of various local real estate agents of the period were suggested by the author and the informant thought she recognized one as being correct, but the author considers evidence such as this hardly substantial enough for positive identification. Furthermore, she is the only informant who remembers the situation as being just that way; that is, command by judge and enthusiastic compliance by Manhattan realtors.

It is even possible that some of the Negroes negotiated the purchases themselves, but not likely. One local source, whom the author regards as highly reliable, claims to know who it was that sold to the Negroes, but refuses to identify the person or persons.

Henry Levett, a free lance Negro journalist of Los Angeles, remembers having attempted a rather casual real

¹⁵Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

estate practice in Manhattan around 1927. His only sale was to a retired Negro farmer who did not remain in Manhattan.¹⁶

Significant though the missing information regarding the "guilty" real estate agent or agents would be, more significant is the fact that Negroes were still in Manhattan after the City acquired Blocks 5 and 12. And because they were still present, efforts to drive them out continued. As had been the case prior to the condemnation, anti-Negro activity ranged from violent direct action - houseburnings and intimidation - to quasi-legal maneuvers, such as the posting of "10 Minutes Only" parking signs in front of Mrs. Sanders' home on Highland so that it would be inconvenient for her and her friends to park their automobiles.¹⁷

The traditional warning of the KKK, a burning cross, appeared one night on the hill above the Sanders home, but the police put it out shortly.¹⁸ It is difficult to appraise the attitude of the local police toward their duty in connection with the Negroes. On the one hand they appear to be

¹⁶Henry C. Levett, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955. No one else has ever spoken of a retired farmer, and consequently, the author has not considered him as being significant to this study. Mr. Levett's recollection may possibly be inaccurate.

¹⁷Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

¹⁸Loc. cit.

conscientious in their effort to afford equal protection to all. Not only is there this report of prompt action in removing the burning cross (which may or may not have been the work of the Klan), but it has also been said by one of the Negro home owners that there was never any vandalism directed at her property.¹⁹ This is particularly noteworthy when one remembers that all of the Negro homes were vacant a good deal of the time. Of course there were the burnings mentioned earlier, but the fact that there were no broken windows or overturned garbage cans would seem to speak well for either the restraint of most of the white residents of Manhattan or the vigilance of the local police or perhaps some of both.

Local whites seemed to be offended most by the continued use of the beach by Negroes, and during the summer of 1927 a crisis was reached. On Memorial Day, Manhattan police took the names of twenty-five Negroes on the beach. Although they gave their names, they did not leave the beach.²⁰ A search of the court docket fails to show any attempt to prosecute the "law-breakers."²¹ The paper that reported the incident gave the following advice to its Negro readers:

If they solicit your names refuse and

¹⁹Informant 3, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1955.

²⁰California Eagle, June 10, 1927, p. 1.

²¹Court Docket (Manhattan Beach: I), passim.

give them a chance to make a show down,
and you will find that some of the pre-
sent obstacles will evaporate overnight.²²

Such a "show down" came on Independence Day when Elizabeth Catley, a nineteen year old Negro girl, was arrested for bathing in the ocean. Miss Catley, a University of California at Los Angeles co-ed, was a guest of the two Slaughter girls, Willine and Estella. These three girls, together with two others who were not identified, had gone to the beach, but only Elizabeth was arrested, for the others had not dared to swim. She was held in jail for five hours and not given the opportunity to change from her wet bathing suit to dry clothes. Finally the father of the Slaughter girls posted \$10.00 bail and obtained her release. Upon his advice she did not appear at her trial, thereby forfeiting the bail. Also, she did not feel that it was important to press the issue at the time. However, she is reported as saying a few days later, "The real importance...is just beginning to dawn upon me."²³

How, one might ask, could anyone question the right of the Negroes to free access to the beach and the ocean? To find the answer to this question we must go back several years

²²California Eagle, June 10, 1927, p. 1.

²³California Eagle, July 8, 1927, p. 1.

before 1927 when George Peck, the man who subdivided most of north Manhattan Beach, made his last subdivision, this time in the unincorporated area just north of Manhattan known as El Porto. Since the area would not be eligible for Manhattan water service, Peck made a deal with the City whereby he gave two lots on the beach to Manhattan in return for the extension of Manhattan water service into El Porto.²⁴

One of these two parcels, Block 9, Tract 8867 located between 25th and 27th Streets, was leased by the City to Oscar C. Bassonette, a Manhattan resident.²⁵ Everything points to the fact that this was another subterfuge on the part of the City whereby an attempt was made to pervert a legal process to the end that the Negroes would leave Manhattan Beach.

First of all, located as it was at a spot most convenient to the Negroes, it was natural that this is where they had been bathing and would continue to bathe. Secondly, Mr. Bassonette apparently had no personal reason for wanting to lease a portion of the beach. But this he did and as lessee he posted "No Trespassing" signs.²⁶

The twenty-five Negroes who were asked their names as they enjoyed the Memorial Day sun in 1927 had been "guilty",

²⁴Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Aug. 15, 1955.

²⁵California Eagle, Aug. 5, 1927, p. 1.

²⁶Loc. cit.

then, of "trespassing" on a "private" beach. Elizabeth Cately had also "committed" this "offense". At this point the Los Angeles chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People decided to test the prohibition which had been placed on Negro use of this portion of the beach.²⁷

On July 17, 1927, Dr. Henry C. Hudson, Los Angeles dentist and president of the N.A.A.C.P. chapter in that city came to Manhattan Beach to "visit" the McCaskills.²⁸ His plan called for several Negroes to be "caught" at the beach where some of them would actually be on the beach and others would be in the water.²⁹

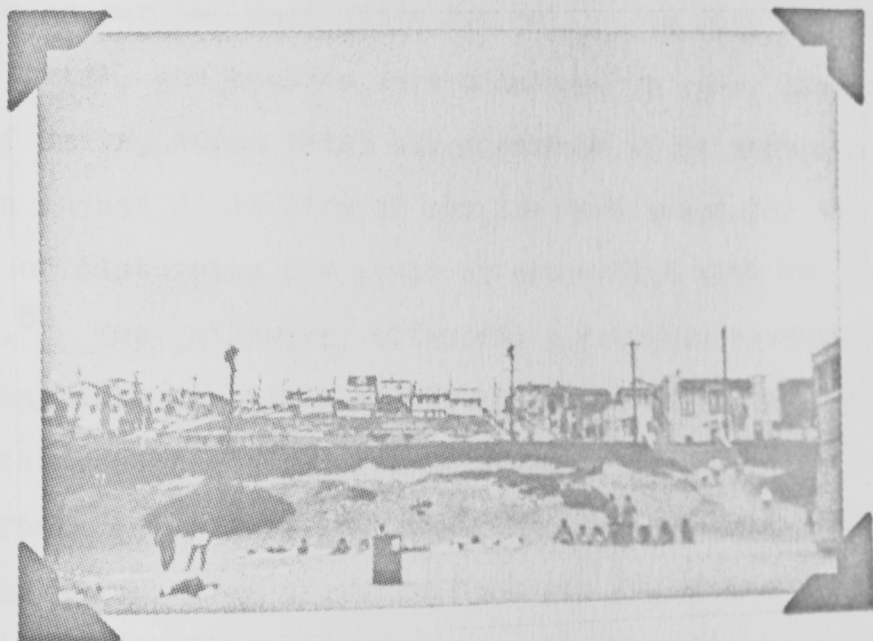
In the late afternoon of July 17 Marshall Jack Garvin appeared on the beach with Officers Alexander Haddock and B. Herrman and arrested Dr. Hudson, Romalus Johnson, John McCaskill, J. H. Conley, and Bert Smith.³⁰ All but Smith have been identified as Negroes. Two arrested Negroes who were contacted by the author have no recollection of a Bert

²⁷Informant 15, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 31, 1955.

²⁸Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

²⁹Informant 15, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 31, 1955.

³⁰Court Docket (Manhattan Beach: I), pp. 102-106.



BEACH AREA LOOKING EAST ON BLOCKS FIVE
AND TWELVE AT THE FOOT OF 26th STREET
(RIGHT). IT WAS ON THIS SECTION OF THE
BEACH THAT DR. HENRY HUDSON TESTED THE
RIGHT OF LOCAL POLICE AUTHORITIES TO BAR
NEGROES FROM THE BEACH IN 1927.

Smith whatsoever.³¹ The author has not been able to identify him through any source, and so his identity must remain a mystery.

Dr. Hudson, Johnson, McCaskill and Conley were charged with resisting an officer and Smith was charged with obstructing an officer. They each posted ten dollars bail and were told to appear two days later for trial. On July 19, the day of the trial, the charges were dismissed in every case but that of Smith, whose trial was continued until September 1.³²

On August 2 all five of the men were tried for the new charge of disturbing the peace in connection with the July 17 arrest.³³ The following, allegedly a verbatim account of the testimony that was given at the ensuing trial on August 2, gives the reader a good picture of what took place on that late afternoon of July 17. Manhattan City Attorney Frank Perry is questioning Alexander Haddock, one of the three arresting officers. Officer Haddock has just related to Perry how he told the Negroes they would have to stay off the beach.

Q. Did they leave?

A. No, we had to take them away.

³¹Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955 and Informant 15, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Aug. 31, 1955.

³²Court Docket (Manhattan Beach: I), pp. 102-106.

³³Ibid., pp. 107-111.

Q. What time was it?

A. About seven o'clock in the evening.

Q. Who was spokesman?

A. That man (pointing to Dr. Hudson), I believe his name is Hudson.

Q. Did you have orders from Mr. Bassonette?

A. Yes.

Q. What were the orders?

A. To keep people off the beach.

Q. What kind of people?

A. Colored people.

Q. When they refused to go what happened?

A. We arrested them and lodged them in jail.³⁴

Under questioning by the attorney for the N.A.A.C.P., Hugh Macbeth,³⁵ Dr. Hudson recalled that he had been driving through Manhattan Beach about 5:00 P.M. when he saw colored people and police on the beach. He went to the scene and asked what the trouble was; whereupon, "they [the police] answered that that [the beach] was private property, and the colored people should follow the line of least resistance." Then Hudson said that his reply was to the effect that Negroes had not done this during the war, but rather risked

³⁴California Eagle, Aug. 5, 1927, p. 6.

³⁵The reader will note the reunion of Messrs. Perry and Macbeth who had opposed each other in the condemnation proceedings.

their lives for their country.

But in answer to my argument these officers said that unless we moved on they would have to arrest us. I asked on what charge? "Resisting an officer" was the response. "But we are not resisting" I insisted, "and that is a rather serious charge."

At this point, Dr. Hudson reported, they were taken off to jail anyway.³⁶

Previously, Macbeth had had Bassonette on the stand and had attempted to expose the lease as a subterfuge.

Q. Did you have a sign posted?

A. Yes, no trespassing.

Q. Did this sign mean no trespassing by colored people?

A. It meant no trespassing by undesirables.

Q. On July 17, when these four [sic] defendants seated here were arrested and lodged in jail, were there any white people on the same spot?

A. Yes.

Q. Were they arrested?

A. No.

Q. Then your sign was posted for colored people only?

A. For undesirables.

Q. You consider colored people undesirable?

³⁶California Eagle, Aug. 5, 1927, p. 6.

A. Yes.³⁷

Later Macbeth called John F. Jones, the City Treasurer, to the stand and the following exchange took place:

Q. Calling your attention to Oscar C. Bassonette's lease, I wish to ask if it was authorized by the Board of Trustees of Manhattan?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any publication of said lease?

A. I don't know.. I think not.

Q. Did he ever pay one dollars [sic]?

Perry objected to this last question, and Llewellen Price, the City Clerk, who was at the moment serving in his other capacity as Justice of the Peace, sustained the objection. His decision is understandable in the light of the recollection of one of Manhattan's Board members of the period who states that Price's failure to collect at least a token payment by Bassonette eventually spoiled Manhattan's chances for making the lease stick.³⁸

Macbeth also called two members of the Board of Trustees to the stand, Harold Dale and Merritt Crandall, but the substance of their testimony was that they knew so little about the lease that they were hardly qualified to express them-

³⁷California Eagle, Aug. 5, 1927, p. 6.

³⁸Informant 12, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Sept. 16, 1955.

selves on the matter.³⁹ This frustration of Macbeth's strategy caused a Negro reporter who was covering the trial to write of Dale, "And this particular personage even though he was a city trustee was dum [sic] as an oyster concerning the city's business."⁴⁰

Macbeth, in his closing remarks, contended that the City had no right to give away the property in question. He said he was fighting against this fraud not as a Negro but as an American.

I charge this trustee board and other authorities of Manhattan with fraud, and with concocting a scheme under the guise of the law by which they discriminate against a certain class of people--- Negroes---in the community, many of whom are property owners at Manhattan.⁴¹

In spite of Macbeth's efforts the five men were found guilty and fined one hundred dollars each. The verdict was appealed a week later on August 9 to the Superior Court, but on August 12 Macbeth moved for an arrest of judgement in the Manhattan court. This last maneuver was successful as Justice of the Peace Price granted the motion.⁴²

Although the arrest of judgement did not reverse the

³⁹California Eagle, Aug. 5, 1927, p. 6.

⁴⁰Loc. cit.

⁴¹Loc. cit.

⁴²Court Docket (Manhattan Beach: I), p. 111.

verdict of guilty, it did suspend the fine and the California Eagle came forth with banner headlines proclaiming "N.A.A.C.P. WINS BEACH VICTORY."⁴³

It would appear that Manhattan Beach did surrender to the Negroes on the issue of whether or not Negroes could have unrestricted access to the beach. If Price was guilty of the oversight attributed to him, that is, a failure to collect a fee from Bassonette for the lease of the beach property, then it is understandable why Manhattan was not only reluctant to press the charges following the appeal by the defendants, but was actually anxious to be done with the whole matter.

Price's attitude throughout these proceedings was one of "embarrassment" according to the Eagle⁴⁴ and one of sympathy toward the defendants according to the recollection of Macbeth.⁴⁵ The question is, was this attitude of embarrassment and sympathy the cause or the result of the City Clerk's failure to collect the fee? There is even doubt that Price was any less determined in his dealings with the Negroes than were the other officials of Manhattan Beach. Three Manhattanites familiar with the situation and one of the involved Negroes have no memory of such an attitude on the part of the

⁴³California Eagle, Aug. 19, 1927, p. 1.

⁴⁴California Eagle, Aug. 5, 1927, p. 6.

⁴⁵Hugh E. Macbeth, Personal interview, Los Angeles, April 30, 1955.

City Clerk-Justice of the Peace,⁴⁶ although one of the former remembers that he never had subscribed to illegal or forceful methods in order to discourage the Negroes in Manhattan and that he had been glad three years earlier when George Lindsey presented the idea of condemning Blocks 5 and 12 for park purposes.⁴⁷

An item of interest in connection with the arrest of Dr. Hudson and the others is that attorney Macbeth recalls that many of the Negroes on the beach that afternoon, including Hudson's co-defendants, were members of the choir of the Wesley Chapel Methodist Church, a colored congregation in Los Angeles, who had that morning sung as guests in a Manhattan church.⁴⁸ If this is correct, it too, is significant, for it would indicate that some of the white people of Manhattan were not as adverse to Negroes as their fellow townspeople. At least they did not object to a visit of this nature. Of course it seems strange that relations could be so amicable in an atmosphere of racial conflict. Perhaps the gesture of inviting a choir from a Los Angeles Negro church was

⁴⁶Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Oct. 23, 1955. Informant 2, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Oct. 8, 1955. Informant 12, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Sept. 16, 1955. Informant 5, Personal interview, Los Angeles, Oct. 15, 1955.

⁴⁷Informant 1, Personal interview, Manhattan Beach, Oct. 23, 1955.

⁴⁸Hugh E. Macbeth, Personal interview, Los Angeles, April 30, 1955.

Manhattan's way of saying, "Most of us aren't really angry with you. We just feel that it would be best if you did not try to live or find your recreation in our town."

The attempt to exclude Negroes from use of the beach through placing it in the hands of a private lessee, like the earlier attempt to drive the Negroes out of town by condemning most of the Negro-owned property, was a failure. That is to say, Negroes continued to live in the town and Negroes continued to use the beach for a considerable time after these attempts. But in neither case were the people of Manhattan Beach totally unsuccessful. The Negroes, sensitive to the obvious fact that they were not wanted, found less pleasure in coming to Manhattan with each successive incident.⁴⁹ Of all the Negroes who ever lived in Manhattan Beach, only the Atkinsons and McCaskills did not leave due to some form of coercion.

⁴⁹Informant 14, Personal interview, Redondo Beach, Jan. 26, 1956.

CHAPTER IX

BEHIND EVERY CLOUD...

Over forty years have passed since Charles and Willie Bruce first came to Manhattan Beach to establish a resort for Negroes. Within a decade after their arrival Bruce's Lodge became somewhat of a mecca for members of their race living in nearby Los Angeles. Some Negroes even purchased vacation property of their own close to the bathhouse that Mr. and Mrs. Bruce had erected. Although there were happy times during week ends and summers of the years that followed, a growing wave of resentment and fear on the part of the white residents of the town resulted in many incidents which eventually caused the nucleus of this Negro colony to leave. Two families remained into the decade of the 1930's but only one of these still owns property in Manhattan, and this family pays only infrequent visits.

Thus, the lot of the Negro in this beach community has not been an altogether happy one. What, if anything, does the future hold for him? This concluding chapter will contain an exploration of some of the possible answers that this question may inevitably receive with the passing of time.

Manhattan Beach is today a city of nearly 35,000 persons.¹ Suburban to Los Angeles, it has been called a "bedroom community" in as much as ninety-one per cent of its working population find their employment outside of the city.² Depending upon future zoning, the maximum projected population has been estimated at from 42,432 to 46,993.³

The question pertinent to this phase of the study is: What portion of this anticipated population will be Negro? The author feels that there are three possible directions in which Manhattan's population may go, racially speaking.

First (and most probably), the city may remain all-white.⁴ There is no adjacent mass of Negro population which would threaten to "spill over" into Manhattan as has been the case in many other locales. Another factor in preventing any influx of Negroes could possibly be the influence of those who have been in town long enough to remember the experience of the 1920's and would, therefore, be especially reluctant to allow a recurrence of Negro "invasion." Believing as they do

¹Report from H. H. Divelbiss, Planning Aide-Technician to the Manhattan Beach Planning Commission on Community Profile Survey, Nov. 15, 1955, p. 1.

²Loc. cit.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴The author uses the term "all-white" in spite of the presence of one Negro family, because the spasmodic nature of this family's residence is such as to make its presence unknown to nearly all of the townspeople and of no offense to those who are aware of it.

that Negroes in any number present a threat to the integrity of an all-white population, they would perhaps be especially alert to "nip in the bud" any attempt at Negro settlement.

Secondly, the fears of the more ardent segregationists could become a reality as one Negro family would beget another and another, until the white population became progressively more hysterical with even the most liberal leaving in desperation. This would create the all-Negro community predicted by those who subscribe to the idea indicated in the preceeding paragraph, that is, any break in the barrier presented to Negro residence will lead inevitably to the mass evacuation of whites with the resulting vacuum being filled by Negroes.

Finally, Negroes could come to Manhattan to make their homes as normally as whites without causing any undue reaction on the part of the present residents of the community.

Admittedly, this last possibility is somewhat remote. But in the opinion of the author it is becoming less distant each year. In the last forty years there have occurred several outstanding milestones along the Negro's road to equal opportunity in housing. A survey of the progress made would be pertinent to an understanding of this concept.

Housing is a basic feature in segregated living patterns. Although "Jim Crow-ism" has seldom been enforced by law in the North, throughout this section of the country one may

find Negro YM and YWCA's, playgrounds, schools, churches, and other institutions. This has been the result of segregated housing. Institutions tend to reflect the neighborhood in which they are located.⁵ Segregation begets segregation. It would appear that integrated housing is essential to integration in other areas, and it is here that government, primarily through its judicial branch, has brought progress.

The first major decision affecting racial restrictions in housing came in 1917 in the case of Buchanan v. Warley. In this dispute the Supreme Court ruled that a law setting aside certain neighborhoods for white people in Louisville, Kentucky constituted an obstruction to the due process clause of the 14th Amendment. Buchanan, a white man, had sold his house to Warley, a Negro. The house was located in a neighborhood whose all-white character was being maintained by law, and when Warley discovered this fact, he attempted to go back on the contract. When Buchanan brought a suit against him, the state courts upheld Warley's right to refuse to negotiate the purchase. Thus the law was not disturbed.

Buchanan thereupon appealed the case to the Supreme Court on a writ of error, citing the 14th Amendment.⁶ The Supreme Court proceeded to reverse the decision of the lower

⁵Loren Miller, "Covenants for Exclusion," Survey Graphic, 36 (Oct., 1947), 543.

⁶Robert E. Cushman, Leading Constitutional Decisions (4th ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, [1950]), p. 175.

courts, ruling that the ordinance constituted state action to deny property without due process. In as much as the plaintiff was a white man trying to convert real property to cash, the Court was ironically obliged to reason that it was a member of the white race and not the Negro who was being discriminated against since his ability to sell was contingent upon the Negro's ability to buy.⁷

Stripped of the protection that discriminatory law might have provided, white home owners resorted to what became the outstanding device to maintain neighborhood homogeneity: the racial restrictive covenant,⁸ an agreement among property owners in a neighborhood not to permit their property to be used by members of an undesirable ethnic group.⁹ Although this weapon has been used against all "non-Caucasians", Negroes have suffered most as a result of its use.¹⁰

The first such covenant to be tested in the courts was actually directed against a Chinese in San Diego, California in 1892.¹¹ It had been employed as an attempt to circumvent

⁷Buchanan v. Warley (1917), 38 Sup. Ct. 16.

⁸"Restrictive Covenants Directed Against Purchase or Occupancy of Land by Negroes," American City, 62 (May, 1947), 103.

⁹Robert C. Weaver, "Northern Ways," Survey Graphic, 36 (Jan., 1947), 45.

¹⁰"To Practice Tolerance and Live Together in Peace," Architectural Forum, 84 (Jan., 1946), 16.

¹¹Loren Miller, "The Power of Restrictive Covenants," Survey Graphic, 36 (Jan., 1947), 46.

an earlier court ruling which had invalidated a San Francisco ordinance setting up a Chinese ghetto. In this case a federal court ruled that such a law was in violation of the 14th Amendment as well as certain treaty commitments. Although this decision anticipated Buchanan v. Warley by several years, it could not have the power of that ruling in that it never reached the Supreme Court. It did set a California precedent against segregation by statute, however, refuting the argument consistently used in support of such law, that is, that it constitutes a legitimate function of local police power to maintain public safety. This was based upon the assumption that the mixture of races produces a potentially violent situation.¹²

But the attempt in San Diego to do by covenant what San Franciscans had been unable to do by statute was also unsuccessful, for here again a federal court ruled that such a covenant was invalid as a contract in that it was an attempt to circumvent the law.¹³ It is sad to ponder the progress that might have been made had this decision served as a guide for other courts subsequently called upon to rule on the validity of racial restrictive covenants.

The decision which did come to serve as precedent in cases involving covenants was rendered in Corrigan v. Buckley

¹²Loren Miller, "Covenants for Exclusion," Survey Graphic, 36 (Oct., 1947), 542.

¹³Ibid., 541.

in 1926. Thirty white owners held twenty-five parcels of land in Washington, D.C., and had entered into an agreement whereby the land involved could neither be sold to or used by Negroes for twenty-one years. Corrigan, one of the owners, proceeded to try to sell his land to a member of the proscribed race and Buckley, another owner, invoked the covenant in an attempt to keep him from making the sale. Corrigan argued that the covenant violated the due process clause of the 5th Amendment (the 14th Amendment is inapplicable in the District of Columbia), but the court ruled that this provision applied only to powers of the federal government and was not binding upon individuals.¹⁴ When the Supreme Court declined on technical grounds to review the decision of the lower federal court,¹⁵ it inferentially concurred.¹⁶

Despite obvious weaknesses of the restrictive covenant, the courts showed a great (but usually apologetic) reluctance to rule against its enforcement. Prior to 1948, sixteen state Supreme Courts and numerous other lower courts as well as courts of the District of Columbia had upheld this technique of segregation.¹⁷

¹⁴Cushman, op. cit., p. 175.

¹⁵Loren Miller, "Covenants for Exclusion," Survey Graphic, 36 (Oct., 1947), 542.

¹⁶Cary McWilliams, "House on 92nd Street," Nation, 162 (June 8, 1946), 691.

¹⁷Loren Miller, "Covenants for Exclusion," Survey Graphic, 36 (Oct., 1947), 542.

Finally, however, the courts ruled that while such an agreement is valid as a contract between individuals, it becomes invalid as soon as an attempt is made to enforce it by court action, for bringing the court into the picture would make the state a party to segregation and this is unlawful under the 14th Amendment. Such a decision was rendered by Judge Thurmond Clark in a Los Angeles court in 1945 when several white residents of the "Sugar Hill" district of that city sought to enjoin several Negroes from occupying homes they had purchased there.¹⁸

This principle was reiterated in the case of Hurd v. Hodge, which was tried in the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in May of 1947. The Court found the covenants involved to be invalid under the due process clause of the 5th Amendment,¹⁹ just as Judge Clark had found the corresponding clause in the 14th Amendment to be violated in the "Sugar Hill" cases.

It was not until 1948, however, that the U.S. Supreme Court took the opportunity to rule on this question. In the now famous case of Shelley v. Kraemer, the highest court in the land ruled that what the government may not do for itself under the 5th and 14th Amendments it may not do for others through its courts. Chief Justice Vinson, who wrote the unan-

¹⁸"To Practice Tolerance and Live Together in Peace," Architectural Forum, 84 (Jan., 1946), 18.

¹⁹Cushman, op. cit., p. 177.

amous opinion, also took this occasion to condemn the practice of racial restriction in home occupancy as being contrary to public policy and the intent of the 14th Amendment. But he still maintained that to enter into such a contract was any man's right. It only became invalid when brought before a court.²⁰

As it developed, it was unfortunate that Mr. Vinson did not go further and declare the covenants unequivocally illegal. As soon as the decision in the Shelley case had been rendered, Mrs. Erma Leason, a Kansas City, Missouri widow, sold her home and furnishings to Reuben Street, a Negro. Although the neighbors could not restrain her under a restrictive covenant which existed on the property because of the action just taken by the Supreme Court, eight of them immediately filed a \$150,000 damage suit, claiming that her failure to comply with the covenant depreciated their property to that extent. The trial court dismissed the action, citing Shelley v. Kraemer; but the Supreme Court of Missouri called for the case on a writ of certiorari and ruled in favor of the eight neighbors, reasoning that while they could not enjoin Mrs. Leason to respect the covenant, Shelley v. Kraemer did not deny the injured party or parties the right to sue for and collect damages resulting from a violation of such an agreement. The cost of further litigation was prohibitive, so Mrs. Leason did

²⁰Cushman, op. cit., pp. 176-182.

not appeal the case to the Supreme Court of the United States as she might have. Had she done this, that court would have undoubtedly ruled in her favor and thereby settled the issue of restrictive covenants once and for all.²¹

Although Judge Alexander Holtzoff rendered a favorable decision in such a case in his District of Columbia Court in 1950, it naturally did not bear the impact that such a decision would have had coming from the highest court in the land, for state courts are not bound by federal courts of lesser rank than the Supreme Court.²²

The high court got its opportunity to render such a decision in 1953 in the case of Barrows et al. v. Jackson. In this case the plaintiffs first brought suit against Mrs. Leola Jackson in the Los Angeles County Superior Court where Judge Daniel N. Stevens, Jr. handed down a decision in favor of the defendant; whereupon the plaintiffs took the case to the California District Court of Appeals, 2nd Appellate District. Here again Mrs. Jackson won out. The case was then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court on a writ of certiorari. Justice Minton wrote a gratifying decision for the majority which upheld the lower courts and history was once again made. Ironically, Chief Justice Vinson, who had written the unanimous opinion in Shelley v. Kraemer, dissented while Reed and

²¹Joseph E. Finley, "A Right Insecured," Nation, 172 (April 28, 1951), 395.

²²Loc. cit.

Jackson abstained.²³

In public housing there have been policy changes and court decisions to parallel the encouraging progress made in private housing. Interwoven in this pattern of progress there have been failures as well as successes, but the overall effect has been gratifying.

The task of providing low-rent housing that measures up to decent standards of health and comfort has consistently fallen to federal, state and local government. This has been due to the fact that there has never been sufficient promise of return on investment to attract private capital.²⁴

As for federally sponsored programs, nowhere in the body of federal law affecting low-rent public housing is one able to find any provision as to racial restrictions or a prohibition of same. The Congress, fearing that the South would scuttle the program of low-rent housing unless permitted to enforce a policy of segregation, left this matter up to state and/or local authority.²⁵ Some states, notably New York, have vigorous laws prohibiting racial segregation in public housing projects. Others maintain racial segregation with

²³Barrows et al. v. Jackson (1953), 73 Sup. Ct. 1031.

²⁴Noel P. Gist and L. A. Halbert, Urban Society, (3rd ed., New York: Crowell, 1949), p. 483.

²⁵"Housing Rules Changed," Scholastic, 55 (Dec. 14, 1949), 13.

equal vigor. Among integrated types Charles Abrams lists five different occupancy patterns: (1) Insulated Homogeneous, in which whites and Negroes are separated by a clear dividing line such as a street into two different areas within the same project; (2) Insulated Bi-racial, which is like the insulated homogeneous except that there is no definite dividing line; (3) Mixed Token, a predominately white project with but a token representation of Negro families; (4) Mixed Equal, in which both races are to be found in an equal proportion; and (5) Mixed Minority, containing a mixture of both Negroes and whites but with the latter in the minority.²⁶

Actually, legally enforced segregation in public housing is as dead an issue as similar action in private housing. What Buchanan v. Warley did to statutory segregation in private housing, and what Shelley v. Kraemer and Barrows et al. v. Jackson did to the restrictive covenant, Banks v. The Housing Authority of the City and County of San Francisco has done to official segregation in public housing.²⁷

Prior to the Banks decision, which was rendered August 26, 1953, the San Francisco Housing Authority had followed a "neighborhood pattern policy" whereby the existing racial composition of the neighborhood in which a housing project was

²⁶Charles Abrams, "Will Interracial Housing Work?" Nation, 165 (Aug. 2, 1947), 122.

²⁷Banks v. Housing Authority (1953), 120 Cal. Appellate Reports 2d, 1.

built would be respected in populating the project. In as much as most of the San Francisco projects were placed in racially homogeneous neighborhoods, the result was that the character of the housing developments was predominantly homogeneous. In fact, few of that city's projects were mixed to any degree.²⁸

The Housing Authority's declared policy was to house whites and non-whites in a ratio of seventy to thirty since that was the ratio among the total population. The fallacy in this system should be immediately apparent; the need for low-rent housing among non-whites is greater than among whites. There is a second fallacy as far as Negroes are concerned in that most of the non-white dwellings went to Chinese although most of the eligible non-whites were Negroes.²⁹

But even this ratio, unfair as it was, was being abused. In 1953 only fifteen per cent of the total occupancy of San Francisco's low-rent housing was available to non-whites, while the other eighty-five per cent was going to whites. White non-veterans were being housed ahead of non-white veterans in defiance of a policy set forth by the federal government.³⁰

It is no wonder that the Superior Court of the County

²⁸Banks v. Housing Authority (1953), 120 Cal. Appellate Reports 2d, 1.

²⁹Loc. cit.

³⁰Loc. cit.

of San Francisco looked upon the situation as an example of an arbitrary discrimination against a race.³¹

The Housing Authority in appealing the case to the California District Court of Appeals, argued that it was maintaining separate but equal facilities for all and therefore in the light of the interpretation of the 14th Amendment, as set forth in Plessy v. Ferguson, its policy of maintaining the existing neighborhood pattern was not incompatible with the Constitution.³²

Pondering that earlier decision by the highest court in the land, Judge Fred B. Wood, who wrote the decision upholding the Superior Court in the Banks case, wondered what the ruling might have been had there been no car on the train for the Negro Plessy? Or, more appropriately, there being a Negro car, what if it had been full? Would Plessy then have been entitled to a seat on the white car? For this would have been comparable to the public housing situation in San Francisco. Mattie Banks, a Negress, was being denied housing in an all-white project at a time when there were no vacancies in any of the Negro projects.³³

But the main logic of Judge Wood's decision can be found in the following statement taken from his decision:

³¹Banks v. Housing Authority (1953), 120 Cal. Appellate Reports 2d, 1.

³²Loc. cit.

³³Loc. cit.

They [the Housing Authority] are exercising state power to preserve, perpetuate and enforce a neighborhood racial pattern wherever they decide to locate...a housing project. In some instances that pattern may have been created and maintained, until now, by the very type of restrictive covenants which the state, through its judicial branch, is prohibited from enforcing. What sort of a 14th Amendment might it be that would, at the same time, countenance active sponsorship and fostering of such restrictions by the executive branch of the state or local government?³⁴

Sympathetic housing officials will wink at this ruling when they can, just as some have done when confronted with actual state and local laws requiring non-segregation.³⁵ However, to deny that decisions and laws calling for integration are for naught would be a denial of the American legal system, and the literature of race relations contains ample testimony to the effect that integration is not only feasible but is preferred as a practical solution to the problem of race conflict. Herein lies a feature of public housing that may be of greater significance for the entire Negro race than the immediate relief that low-cost public housing might bring certain Negroes needful of it.³⁶

³⁴Banks v. Housing Authority (1953), 120 Cal. Appellate Reports 2d, 1.

³⁵Robert C. Weaver, "Northern Ways," Survey Graphic, 36 (Jan., 1947), 123.

³⁶Daniel M. Cantwell, "Riot Spirit in Chicago," Commonweal 54 (July 27, 1951), 377.

If in the field of public housing it can be proven that peoples of different color can live together amicably, might there not be encouraging implications in the realm of private housing?³⁷ Indeed, such progress should inevitably influence people of all races in their total relationship one to another.

Morton Duetsch and Mary Collins have made a revealing study on the effect of integration on prejudice among occupants of public housing units in New York City and Newark, and their findings are heartening. The New York projects employed true integration while their Newark counterparts used what is known as the segregated bi-racial pattern, in which races are segregated within a single project. In analyzing data collected in a most empirical manner Duetsch and Mrs. Collins found that a majority of tenants in the New York developments showed a marked loss of prejudice for having had as neighbors members of another race, while there was no such change among the families in the Newark projects.³⁸

Abrams stated the case for integration well when he said:

If Negroes are integrated with whites into self contained communities without segregation where they have daily contact with other tenants, are given the same privileges and share the same responsibilities, interracial tensions tend to sub-

³⁷Charles Abrams, "Our Chance for Democratic Housing," Nation, 165 (Aug. 16, 1947), 161.

³⁸Morton Deutsch and Mary Evens Collins, Interracial Housing (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, [1951]), pp. 15-20.

side, differences are reconciled and cooperation develops---in short, an environment is created in which interracial harmony will be achieved.³⁹

Considering all of the human misery that has been caused directly and indirectly by segregated housing, and realizing that the alternative, integration, is not only the desired end but is, to a large degree, a solution, the implications seem abundantly clear to this writer. As one observer has said, "If the basic problem is segregation, the basic answer is integration, starting now."⁴⁰

Perhaps Homer A. Jack reduced a complex problem to its simplest terms when he said:

...fundamentally, the causes of prejudice are the devices which keep peoples apart. And so the long run, day-by-day procedures for lessening discrimination in all areas of society and against all minorities must be continued and accelerated...⁴¹

All things being relative, the part which Manhattan Beach played in helping to build and maintain the vast and ugly structure of racial intolerance was a small one. How-

³⁹Charles Abrams, "Will Interracial Housing Work?" Nation, 165 (Aug. 2, 1947), 122.

⁴⁰Sally Leighton, "Interracial Housing Can Succeed," America, 89 (July 4, 1953), 355.

⁴¹Homer A. Jack, "Chicago Has One More Chance," Nation, 165 (Sept. 13, 1947), 252.

ever, that it did contribute to what Myrdal has termed "The American Dilemma" cannot be denied. From the foregoing discussion it would appear that since that troubled decade of the 1920's, the positive factors working in behalf of better race relations have outweighed the negative ones that tend to divide peoples. The chance for this community and others like it to accept integration as a natural episode in the history of human progress is better than ever before. The prospect is becoming increasingly bright as time goes on.

Manhattan Beach may, if it will, profit from these positive factors. Perhaps in so doing it can more than compensate for its previous contribution to negativism in the realm of race relations.

In the meantime, the empty, unused strip of sand referred to as the "park," located between 26th and 27th Streets and extending westward from Highland Avenue to the sea, stands as a monument to the fear of a generation that was not yet ready to accept the doctrine of human worth based upon personal qualification and not on the pigmentation of the skin.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

ESSAY

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

In as much as the present work is, to the author's knowledge, the only study of the problem of Negro land use in Manhattan Beach, he has found it necessary to depend heavily upon correspondence and interviews with those who were contemporary to the problem as it existed when most acute during the decade of the 1920's. These sources have been reinforced with newspaper accounts of the period, and with official records bearing upon episodes that occurred during this phase of Manhattan's history.

Obviously, the exclusive use of any one of the above classifications would be inadequate. Taken collectively, they were generally effective in creating a fabric of what the author hopes are logical conclusions. Where evidence from an interview seemed weak, it could often be confirmed or denied by consulting one or more newspapers. In instances where two different newspaper accounts were contradictory, a check of official documents set the record straight. When court proceedings, deed books or assessment rolls were incomprehensible, correspondence complemented suppositions. Frequently isolated source materials proved more valuable as clues than as actual evidence; they led to valuable information without having any intrinsic value of their own.

Information derived from individuals either through

interview or correspondence, although essential, had definite limitations. One must bear in mind that the questionee was attempting to bridge mentally a span of three decades. Undoubtedly, answers were frequently conditioned by (1) faulty memory, (2) efforts at self-justification, or (3) the suggestive power of the question. The author constantly attempted to evaluate testimony in light of these limiting factors, checking data wherever possible. Because of the confidential, controversial or embarrassing nature of much of the testimony given in support of the conclusions presented herein, the author has seen fit to preserve the anonymity of all informants who might possibly suffer embarrassment or be offended by the revelation of their identity. *A mistake! R.L.B. (author) 7/15/81*

Newspaper accounts, on the whole being something less than unimpeachable, were viewed with suspicion, and these too were checked where possible. However, the dearth of material on the more dramatic phases of the Manhattan Beach problem made cross reference among other newspapers particularly difficult. Also, the almost complete lack of material in either the local (South Bay) papers or the Los Angeles publications is significant. The local press may have felt the problem "too hot to handle." On the other hand, had this been the case the metropolitan dailies would have surely considered it "hot" enough to carry even though the conflict between the Negro and white race was occurring in what at that time was definitely a peripheral community. Only the

California Eagle, a militant Negro weekly with an unsophisticated lack of restraint, contained material on the condemnation and the Hudson Case of 1927. The lack of coverage by any other newspapers in the area is a mystery which remains unsolved to the author.

The strongest feature of the documentation of this narrative is, I believe, the liberal dependence upon official records. These factual, dispassionate sources stood like a rock amidst frequently conflicting testimony gleaned from less reliable sources, albeit a rock sometimes slippery to the non-technical touch of the author who was often mystified by the complexity of legal terms, surveyors' markings, and the like.

Of course the very dispassionate nature of documents, such as the Complaint for Condemnation and the Minutes of the Board of Trustees, was achieved at the expense of a more complete account of the proceedings. The author might have gained much more information and leads to information through, say, a verbatim record.

Readings from recent periodicals and published works were especially valuable in writing the concluding chapter of this study. Most of the material gained through these sources had previously been incorporated in another work by the author entitled "Segregated Housing and the Negro" written in 1954.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

a. Correspondence

- Bessonette, O[scar] C., Manhattan Beach, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., Jan. 12, 1956, 1 p.
- Edwards, Carl D., Lancaster, Calif., to the Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce, Manhattan Beach, Calif., [Aug.], 1955, 1 p.
- Heron, Mrs. Gertrude, Hollywood, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., Sept. 21, 1955, 2 pp.
- Holt, Mrs. Emma Barnett, Los Angeles, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., [Sept. 15, 1955], 1 p.
- Laubersheimer, Lorrane, Los Angeles, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., Aug. 23, 1955, 1 p.
- Lawler, Oscar T., Los Angeles, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., Oct. 24, 1955, 1 p.
- Lomax, Lucius, Jr., Los Angeles, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., June 6, 1955, 1 p.
- Perry, Frank L., Redondo Beach, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., [Aug. 19, 1955], 1 p.
- Robbins, C[assius] L., Manhattan Beach, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., [Aug. 19, 1955], 1 p.
- Sadler, A. H[oward], Manhattan Beach, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., Aug. 29, 1955, 1 p.
- Stowe, C. W., Los Angeles, Calif., to the author, Manhattan Beach, Calif., Aug. 19, 1955, 1 p.

b. Statutes and court reports

California

California Appellate Reports.

Court Docket. Manhattan Beach. 23 vols.

Manhattan Beach, Calif. Board of Trustees. Ordinance 276. Manhattan Beach: June 19, 1924.

The City of Manhattan Beach v. B. H. Dyer, et al.
 Superior Court in and for the County of Los Angeles,
 State of Calif., no. 157573 (1929) 246 frames.

United States

Supreme Court Reporter.
United States Code (1934 ed.).
United States Code Supp. IV (1946).
United States Code Congressional Service (1945).

c. Newspapers

California Eagle,

July 4, 1924, p. 1.
 June 8, 1927, p. 1.
 June 10, 1927, p. 1.
 July 22, 1927, p. 1.
 August 5, 1927, p. 1.
 August 5, 1927, p. 6.
 August 19, 1927, p. 1.

Hermosa Beach Review,

February 5, 1943, p. 4.

Los Angeles Evening Herald,

July 5, 1921, p. A-7.
 July 5, 1921, p. A-8.

Manhattan Beach News,

March 11, 1921, pp. 1-30.
 July 8, 1921, p. 1.
 January 11, 1924, p. 1.
 January 18, 1924, p. 2.
 February 8, 1924, p. 1.
 February 15, 1924, p. 2.
 March 21, 1924, p. 1.
 September 19, 1924, p. 1.

Redondo Daily Breeze,

January 11, 1924, p. 1.
 January 23, 1924, p. 1.

South Bay Daily Breeze,

August 19, 1955, p. 1.
 August 20, 1955, p. 1.

d. Official records

Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees. Minutes. Manhattan Beach,
 Calif. 25 vols.

Los Angeles County Assessor. County Assessor's Map Book.
Los Angeles, Calif.

Los Angeles County Recorder. Book of Deeds. Los Angeles,
Calif.

Official United States Census figures as recorded in the
Office of the City Clerk, Manhattan Beach, Calif.

e. Official reports

Divelbliss, H. H. Report from the Planning Aide-Technician
to the Manhattan Beach Planning Commission on Community
Profile Survey. Manhattan Beach, Calif.: Nov. 15, 1955.
6 pp.

"Special Census of Manhattan Beach, Calif., Aug. 30, 1955,"
Current Population Reports, Special Censuses, Oct. 7,
1955; Series P-28, No. 841 (Washington, D.C.).

Swanson, Leland M. [Memorandum from the City Manager of
Manhattan Beach to the State Water Pollution Control
Board.] Manhattan Beach, Calif.: Oct. 24, 1955. 20 pp.

f. Periodicals

Abrams, Charles. "Our Chance for Democratic Housing,"
Nation, 165 (Aug. 16, 1947), 160-2.

Abrams, Charles. "Slums, Ghettos, and the G.O.P.'s 'Remedy',"
Reporter, 10 (May 11, 1954), 27-30.

Abrams, Charles. "Will Interracial Housing Work?" Nation,
165 (Aug. 2, 1947), 122-4.

"Answer to the Gentlemen," New Republic, 118 (May 17, 1948), 5.

Black, A. D. "Negro Families in Stuyvesant Town," Survey,
86 (Nov., 1950), 502-3.

Cantwell, D. M. "Riot Spirit in Chicago," Commonweal, 541
(July 27, 1951), 375-7.

"Decent and Profitable," Time, 54 (July 25, 1949), 69-70.

"Discriminations Upheld for Stuyvesant Town," Survey, 85
(Aug., 1949), 442.

- Doebele, John. "Hope in Court; Racial Restrictive Covenants," Commonweal, 46 (Sept. 12, 1947), 523.
- Ferrell, Thomas F. "Object Lesson in Race Relations," New York Times Magazine, (Feb. 12, 1950), 16.
- Finley, Joseph E. "Right Insecured," Nation, 172 (April 28, 1951), 395-6.
- Fleming, H. C. "Housing for a New Middle Class," Survey, 87 (Sept., 1951), 384-5.
- "Government in Housing 1918-1948," Congressional Digest, 27 (June-July, 1948), 167-9.
- "Housing Projects and the Metropolitan and New York Life Insurance Companies," Nation, 164 (June 14, 1947), 701.
- "Housing Rules Changed," Scholastic, 55 (Dec. 14, 1949), 13.
- "Housing the Nonwhite Population in 1953," American City, 68 (July, 1953), 7.
- Humphrey, N. D. "Black Ghetto in Detroit," Christian Century, 64 (Jan. 15, 1947), 78-9.
- Jack, Homer A. "Chicago Has One More Chance," Nation, 165 (Sept. 13, 1947), 250-2.
- Jack, Homer A. "Homes for Chicago's D.P.'s," Nation, 167 (Sept. 11, 1948), 288-90.
- Jack, Homer A. "New Chicago Fires," Nation, 165 (Nov. 22, 1947), 551-3.
- Klansler, A. P. "When Racial Tensions Flare," Christian Century, 71 (Jan. 6, 1954), 11-14.
- Lamport, Sara. "A New Dred Scott Case," Nation, 166 (Jan. 31, 1948), 124-5.
- Leighton, Sully. "Interracial Housing Can Succeed," America, 89 (July 4, 1953), 357-9.
- "Lesson in Economics," Time, 61 (June 15, 1953), 92.
- Livermore, Charles. "Segregation is Not the Answer," American City, 62 (Sept., 1947), 115-6.
- Martin, Jan B. "The Hickman Story," Harper's Magazine, 197 (Aug., 1948), 142-8.

- Martin, Jan B. "Incident at Fernwood," Harper's Magazine, 199 (Oct., 1949), 86-98.
- Martin, Jan B. "The Strangest Place in Chicago," Harper's Magazine, 201 (Dec., 1950), 86-97.
- McWilliams, Carey. "House on 92nd Street," Nation, 162 (June 8, 1946), 690-1.
- Miller, Bryan S. "Cicero's Covenants," New Republic, 125 (Aug. 6, 1951), 11-3.
- Miller, Loren. "A Right Secured," Nation, 166 (May 29, 1948), 599-600.
- Miller, Loren. "Covenants for Exclusion," Survey Graphic, 36 (Oct., 1947), 541-3.
- Miller, Loren. "The Power of Restrictive Covenants," Survey Graphic, 36 (Jan., 1947), 46.
- O'Gara, James. "Divided City," Commonweal, 50 (May 6, 1949), 86-9.
- "Provisions of the Housing Act of 1949," Monthly Labor Review, 69 (Aug., 1949), 155-9.
- "Realty for Negroes," Business Week, (Aug. 25, 1945), 54.
- "Restrictive Covenants Directed Against Purchase or Occupancy of Land by Negroes," American City, 62 (May, 1947), 103-4.
- "Restrictive Covenants Directed Against Purchase or Occupancy of Land by Negroes," American City, 62 (Aug., 1947), 125-6.
- Slavick, W. H. "Trouble Comes to Memphis," Commonweal, 58 (July 24, 1952), 392-4.
- Sherif, Muzafer and Hadley Cantril. "The Psychology of Attitudes," The Psychological Review, 52 (1945), 295-319.
- "The House That Hate Built," New Republic, 117 (Oct. 27, 1947), 12.
- "To Practice Tolerance and Live Together in Peace," Architectural Forum, 84 (Jan., 1946), 16-20.
- Venable, C. L. "Chicago Averts a Racial Crisis," Christian Century, 64 (Sept. 10, 1947), 1088-90.

INFORMANTS

Listed below in numerical order are those individuals who were interviewed by the author in his research. Their numbers indicate the manner in which they are identified in the text, e.g., Informant 1 , cited in the second footnote at the bottom of page 15, is George H. Lindsey.

1. George H. Lindsey
2. Harriet E. Sitherwood
3. Ethel W. Atkinson
4. Mrs. Melvin R. Bowden
5. John C. McCaskill
6. Emma Barnett Holt
7. Mrs. Ralph King
8. A. Howard Sadler
9. Mrs. Titus Alexander
10. Hugh E. Macbeth
11. Park W. Osbun
12. Cassius L. Robbins
13. Milton Kaiser
14. Frank L. Perry
15. Charlotta A. Bass