

# Walk in the History of San Pedro

## Stop #1

100 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Liberty Hill

- Under the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of California, you are guaranteed freedom of speech. But if you ever decide to exercise that right, you better be prepared for a lot of litigation. In 1923 author Upton Sinclair made such an attempt right on this spot during a strike of IWW Longshoremen. He read from the U.S. Constitution. During that reading he was arrested under the criminal syndicalism law and held for 4 days without bail, unable to even telephone his wife. The law was challenged in the courts and finally declared unconstitutional in 1968, forty five (45) years later.

## Stop #2

Corner 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Harbor Blvd

- San Pedro is the second oldest city in California. It was a supply depot back in the days when men hunted whales to obtain the whale oil needed for lighting. That ended for Americans with the discovery of oil in 1859, saving the whale.
- In 1908, San Pedro was still an independent city with its own city hall. When Los Angeles asked San Pedro to join Los Angeles, they first refused to consider it. But after awhile they realized that the harbor had to be widened and deepened before it could be a good shipping harbor, and they did not have the money to do it. So, reluctantly, in 1909 they annexed to Los Angeles.

(1)

(13)

(14)

(15)

## Stop #3

John S. Gibson Jr., Park

- From 1940 until 1964, travel across the channel was by ferry boat. That ended with the building of the cable suspension bridge 6,062 feet long and 185 feet above the channel. To prevent suiciders from jumping off, a 20 foot high mesh fence was installed. This bridge was designed to withstand 90 mile per hour winds and was modified to withstand earthquakes in 1992.
- The bridge is named after Vincent Thomas. He originally was elected Assemblyman in 1940 on the slogan "I hate Los Angeles". He was elected and re-elected for 19 terms on this same slogan, setting an all-time record. Finally, after 38 years, the public tired of hearing the same old speech and voted him out of office.

#### Stop #4

John F. Gibson Jr. Park

- Between here and the Vincent Thomas Bridge was the World War II Todd Shipyards.
- Because of the war shortage of men, women were hired and trained to be welders, riveters and painters. <sup>(2)</sup> This shipyard was closed in 1989 but some women continued to work in industry, breaking the sex barrier. As a result today women can enter any trade or any profession.

#### Stop #5

Harbor Blvd & 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
The Fishing Industry Memorial

- In 1935 the fishing industry was the largest in San Pedro, employing 6,000 people. But in the 50's the supply of fish was being exhausted. The number of boat used declined from 100 to only 1.

#### Stop #6

Harbor Blvd & 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
The Merchant Marine Memorial

- During World War II many men enlisted in the merchant marine thinking they would be safer there than in the Army.
- Actually, 650 ships were sank, 8,651 men killed and 11,000 wounded. So the casualty rate was higher than in any other service.

#### Stop #7

The foot of 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
The Maritime Museum

- This building was part of the ferry service to Terminal Island from 1940-1963. When the ferry was replaced by the Vincent Thomas bridge, it became a museum. <sup>(3)</sup>
- The Maritime Museum shows the growth of boats from the first Indian canoes to the great super tankers. There are no docents on Sunday so it is suggested you return during the week when docent tours are available.

### Stop #8

Immediately south of the museum along the fence

- Originally, the harbor water was so polluted even barnacles could not grow here. But with the closing of the canneries, closing of the shipyards and closing of the Navy shipyards, the harbor has recovered. Now there are an estimated 44,000 fish including mackerel, lobster, crabs and starfish below the surface. But you are advised not to eat any of them. They may be contaminated with DDT and PCB.

### Stop #9

Looking across the channel

- Note all the oblong containers lining the opposite shore on Terminal Island.
- Years ago ships were loaded by longshoremen carrying each item on their back, walking up the plank and setting the load down inside the ship. Since the modernization and mechanization agreement, the cargo is loaded into the back of a truck at the shipper's loading dock. When the truck arrives at the pier, the whole back of the truck is lifted by crane and set inside the ship. Whereas it formerly took a whole week to load a ship, with containerization it is completely loaded in only one day.

#### To load 10,000 tons of raw sugar

By sack (5)	6,650 man hours
By bulk container (6) (7)	1,000 man hours

### Stop #10

Between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Coverly on Beacon Street  
The Beacon Street Fountain

- The saloons in the old days would never serve water. So members of the Temperance League donated this fountain so no workman would have to go to the saloon to quench his thirst.

### Stop #11

Beacon Street near 6<sup>th</sup>  
The Bloody Thursday Commemorative Plaque

- Before 1934, those who wanted to work might have to stand all day, even in pouring rain in a vacant lot until the company decided how many men they needed that day. Meanwhile the

favorites that were hired could work 30 hours with no rest or sleep. In those days, those who worked averaged only \$10.45 per week.

- During the strike of May 1934, police attempted to allow loading of a ship with scab labor. In the fight that developed, trucks were overturned, windows smashed, and rocks thrown. Two longshoremen were killed, 5 injured, and dozens arrested. In the end the company had to recognize the union and accept a union hiring hall. (10)
- From 1934-1960 there were many strikes and work stoppages. In 1961 both sides agreed to a Modernization and Mechanization Agreement. Shippers were allowed to introduce any labor saving device as long as the workers shared in the money saved. (9) (11)
- In 2002 the earnings of longshoremen compared to other workmen are listed below:

Crane Operators	\$150,000/yr
Lawyers	\$102,000/yr
Longshoreman	\$ 80,000/yr
Legal Aids	\$ 41,960/yr
Electricians	\$ 41,780/yr
Carpenters	\$ 40,280/yr
School Teachers	\$ 40,000/yr
Construction Workers	\$ 30,900/yr

- Note that a longshoremen with only a grammar school education can work up to a crane operator making \$150,000 per year, which is higher than the lawyer achieves after 8 years of college and years as an apprentice.

### Stop #12

Beacon Street near 6<sup>th</sup>  
Quarter Century Time Capsule

- The machines stored in the underground time capsule at Amarillo, Texas soon become obsolete whereas everything stored in this time capsule is brought up to date every 25 years by the students of San Pedro High School.

### Stop #13A

6<sup>th</sup> Street west of "Bloody Thursday"  
The Green Onion Restaurant

- Before 1950, usually fathers worked while mothers stayed home taking care of the kids.
- By 1970, usually both husband and wife worked so it was more common to eat all the meals in a restaurant.

- By 1990, 40% of the family budget was now spent in restaurants.

### **Stop #13B**

Corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Palos Verdes

- Many of the ships entering the Los Angeles Harbor are now mega sized. Any one of these megaships can emit as much smog as a million automobiles. Since only the federal government can regulate foreign trade, the city of Los Angeles cannot compel the foreign ships to do anything. So Mayor James Hahn visited the Asian countries and sold the foreign shippers on voluntarily cooperating. He sold them on the idea of saving fuel while in the Los Angeles Harbor. Voluntarily they were convinced to turn off their engines when entering Los Angeles Harbor and be towed to the desired dock by tug boats of the Department of Water and Power.
- These mega ships are often wider than the Panama Canal, as long as 3 ½ football fields, and as high as a 15-story building.
- Los Angeles is one of the three largest West Coast ports wide and deep enough to handle them.

### **Stop #14**

324 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
The Lindholm House

- This house was built in 1888 when San Pedro was still an independent city. This house was built in the horse and buggy era, 30 years before automobiles would become common. This house was built before the discovery of the electric lights in 1879, when gas lighting was common.
- When this house was built, perishables were still stored in an ice box. The refrigerator did not arrive until 1913 and the two compartment storage until 1939.
- Clothes were still being washed on a scrub board and hung on a clothes line to dry. The washing machines did not appear until 1900.
- The carpets were still cleaned with the carpet sweeper. The vacuum cleaner did not arrive until 1907
- At the time this building was built, people were entertained with the photograph. Motion pictures were not around until 1895 and radio until 1901. They still cooked on the wood stove. The microwave did not arrive until 1967.

### Stop #15

1135 S. Pacific Avenue  
Pacific Hardware

The individual store tried every possible way to fight the advent of the chain store. They tried to impose special taxes on chain stores. They tried to outlaw them. Nothing worked. Finally they got the idea of banding together in a federation and buying collectively. So far, that method applied under the name "True Value" has worked for the individually owned hardware store.

### Stop #16

951 S. Pacific Avenue  
Banking Center

- In the old days, one had to travel downtown to do any banking. In 1904, A.P. Gianini conceived the idea of putting a branch bank in every neighborhood so the customer could walk to the bank. The idea was successful. In 1930, the name was changed from Bank of Italy to Bank of America. When Gianini died in 1949, there were 525 branches. In 1969, the bank was able to erect a 53-story skyscraper in San Francisco. By 2002, there were 4,500 branches.
- At the end of World War II, Japan was forced to agree to never again have a large army or navy. With the reduced taxes Japanese could save much more of what they earned than in the U.S. So now the biggest banks of the world are all in Japan. Bank of America is bigger than ever but on a world scale it is now only No. 45.

### Stop #17

938 S. Gaffey  
The 99¢ Store

- For over 100 years, every major city had a F.W. Woolworth 5-10-25¢ store. But in the 1990's it became more and more difficult to offer quality at these prices. Finally, it became impossible. So in 1997, F.W. Woolworth closed operation all over the world. At the same time Kresge also closed and shifted their investment to K-Mart.
- In 2004 shoppers were left with only the 99¢ Store. They are now the fastest growing retail segment. If inflation continues, how much longer can they continue?

### Stop #18

931 S. Gaffey  
San Pedro Regional Library

- Andrew Carnegie made a fortune in the steel industry. By 1900 Carnegie Steel was producing more steel than the entire British Steel industry. In 1901, after selling out to J.P. Morgan, Carnegie had a personal income of \$250,000,000 per year. Even if he went on a wild spending spree, he could not possibly spend all that money in his remaining life. So he started giving it away. To each city that had no library, he gave that city a complete library. San Pedro was one of the lucky cities to receive such a gift. Many of the books now in the San Pedro library are part of the Carnegie gift. (12)

### **Stop #19**

478 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
The Warner Grand Theater

- When this theater opened in 1931, customers were impressed with the opulent lobby with decorated ceiling, etched glass chandeliers and colorful tiled fountains. Even the restrooms were lavishly furnished. The theater had a full stage, orchestra pit and basement dressing room. But since the advent of television, theaters all over the U.S. have been closing. This one is closed most of the time but opens on special occasions.

### **Stop #20**

429 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
The Arcade Building

- Note the Italian tiled floor and center fountain of carved stone. The staircase is solid oak with wrought iron railings.

### **Stop #21**

400 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Plaque embedded in the sidewalk  
San Pedro Sportswalk

- Each plaque represents an athlete of San Pedro who achieved national or international fame.

### **Stop #22**

350 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Marine Clerks Association

- Filne was a successful merchant who wanted to free his employees from the loan sharks. They declined to use his free credit, thinking it was just another employer trick. So he allowed them to select the fellow workers to represent them in a credit union. The success of this first credit union led other employers to follow. Soon there were many credit unions. Soon a number of trade unions also offered them.

- During the Great Depression, many banks failed but no credit unions. The same is true today.

### **Stop #23**

562 S. Palos Verde Street  
The Neptune Society

- Any death in the family usually catches the survivors totally unprepared. The undertakers and cemeteries take full advantage to sell them expensive caskets and expensive burials. In 2002, the average cost of undertaker, cemetery and burial services was \$8,900.
- The Neptune Society, in 2002, offered cremation at only \$1,699.

### **Stop #24**

Corner Palos Verdes and 6<sup>th</sup> Street

- In 2002 it cost \$6 to ship one ton of cement to Pittsburg, 311 miles from Los Angeles. The same \$6 could ship the same ton of cement to Belgium, 7,721 miles from Los Angeles.
- It is this large differential that makes shipping by water so attractive. Mechanization has reduced the hours of labor to where shipping by water is now 1/25 of that by rail.
- Unionization definitely pays in the shipping industry. Longshoremen now earn 147 times what they made in 1933.
- But in other industries, membership in trade unions has declined in the U.S. from a high in 1945 of 35.5% to 16.1% in 1991. Most of the decline has resulted from the outsourcing to low wage foreign countries.

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