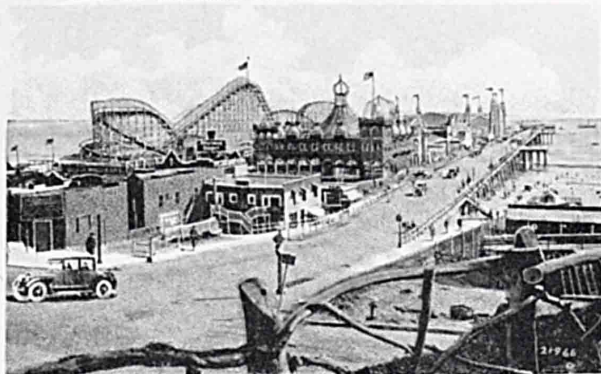




"Where the Mountains Meet the Sea"



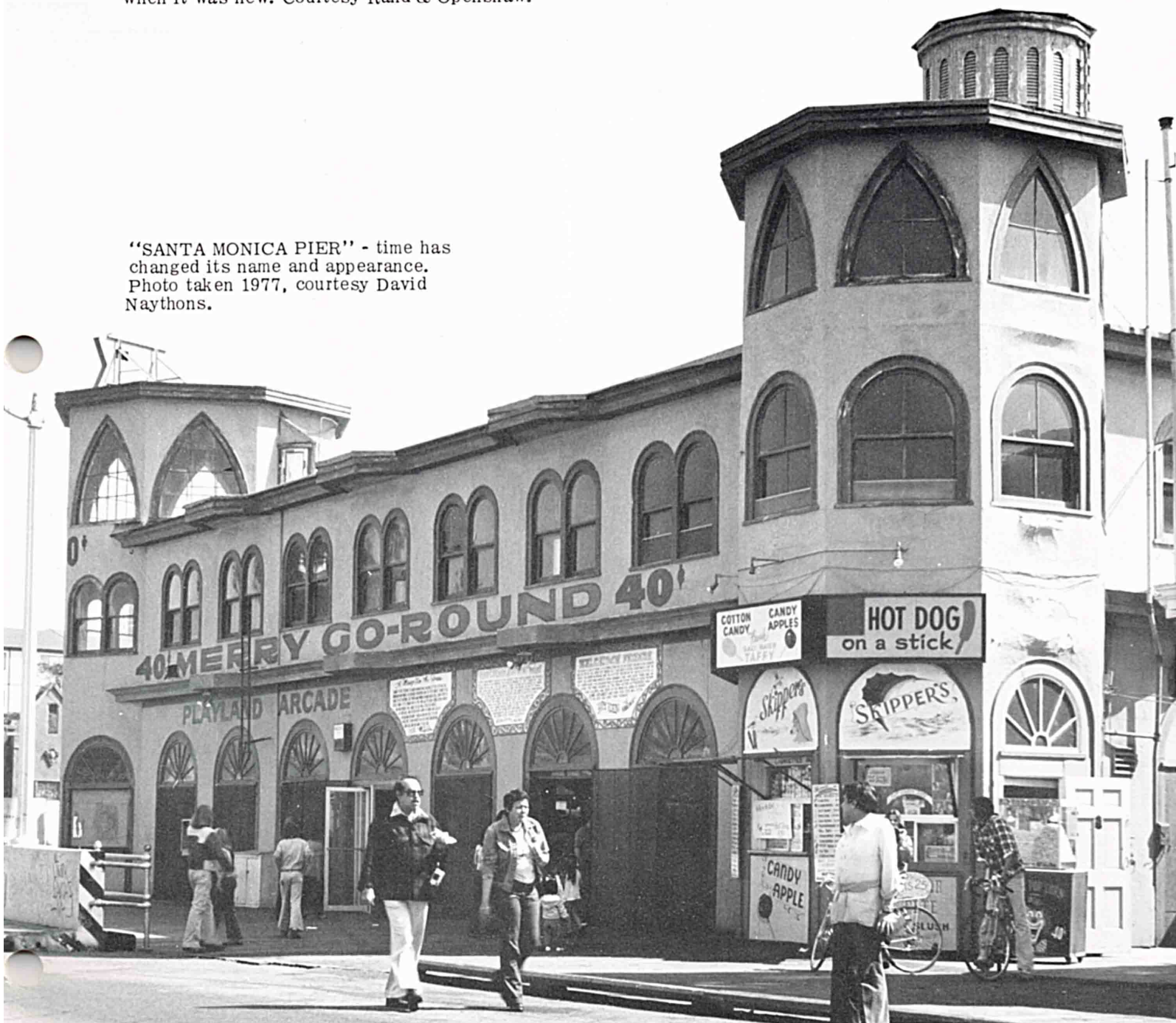
Amusement Pier, Santa Monica, Calif.

Old art work of the "LOOFF PIER" as it looked when it was new. Courtesy Rand & Openshaw.

SANTA MONICA

...not without pier

"SANTA MONICA PIER" - time has changed its name and appearance. Photo taken 1977, courtesy David Naythons.



Altho this building currently houses a PTC MGR (as seen on pages 31 & 32 of Volume 4) - It was built by Loeff, for a Loeff MGR. That original MGR is now in San Diego and is featured on pages 22 & 23 of this quarterly.



compiled from the George F. Reid collection of historic newspaper articles belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Hal Chauncy.

In the early 1900's Charles I.D. Loeff was unsuccessful in concluding negotiations with the City of Long Beach in the matter of erecting an amusement pier. So, as an alternative, he chose Santa Monica, the end of the line for the Santa Monica Air Line of the Pacific Electric Railroad from Los Angeles.

In 1916, Mr. Loeff purchased land in the North Beach area from Mr. E.P. Benjamin, owner of most of the land in the Santa Monica beachfront area who acted as President of the Santa Monica Beach Co.

Because Santa Monica was very concerned about the integrity of all residents and business establishments, letters of character recommendation were sought and one such letter to Mr. E.P. Benjamin from Mr. B.F. Tucker, President of City National Bank of Long Beach relates, "He (Mr. Loeff), is an unassuming man and has a pleasant personality and is one of the most valued citizens of this city, and there is not a keener, cleaner man in the amusement business in the United States than Mr. Loeff".

Loeff, an established businessman and well known builder of amusement locations and attractions had previously owned the carousel on Ocean Front Walk by the Dragon Gorge at Ocean Park before the fire of September 12, 1912. Colonel Tom Prior, owner and operator of the "Race Through the Clouds" at Venice and builder of the Racing Derby at Ocean Park, said of Mr. Loeff in a letter to S.L. Berkley, Mayor of Santa Monica, "...I am delighted to know that Mr. Loeff is interesting himself in the pier as I believe it will be an excellent thing for Santa Monica inasmuch as Mr. Loeff has the very best standing among amusement men of the country and is fully able financially to carry out his plans and moneyed pier builders are scarcer than the traditional - 'hen's teeth'".

In March, 1916, construction began and to honor the event, a huge sign was erected at Ocean and Colorado Avenues announcing the development of a "refined amusement center". Mr. Loeff announced that his amusement pier would have refined and artistic architecture and that the concessions would be in keeping with a resort of an unusually high standard. The area immediately south of the Ocean Front Promenade was to be designated as a bandstand with a capacity for a 50 piece band and 1,500 people. A ballroom, 300 feet long and 130 feet wide would be lighted at night to be seen by miles of shoreline. Eight alleys of bowling games, 8 billiard tables and a shooting gallery would be housed in a building 75 feet by 100 feet. Another attraction, the Circular Swing would fly its passengers through the air at 45 miles per hour at a 45° angle. A racing coaster, originally at San Diego for Exposition year was to be renamed the Blue Streak and installed on the new pier. Disassembled it filled 48 train carloads and it would be 500 feet in length and 100 feet wide. The one mile long track included 6 loops and 24 dips. See the upper left hand photo on page 13.

But the grandest attraction was the Hippodrome, built to house the carousel, and the first building constructed on the pier. A 100 foot tower on the North East corner of the building was to be 20 feet in diameter. The other three towers were to be slightly smaller at 15 feet in diameter and there were to be 9 smaller domes each 9 feet in diameter. Strap iron and great timbers were used to brace the largest tower against wind and storms. The center of the roof was to be 64 feet high in order to accommodate the centerpole of the carousel. The roof was made of sheet iron and asbestos. Eight individual offices

Santa Monica California

by BARBARA WILLIAMS

would be constructed on the second level for use by persons in management of the operation of the pier.

The lumber to build the pier was purchased through the Hammond Lumber Company of Santa Monica. The cedar pilings had been especially treated with creosote for use on the Hammond Lumber Company's commercial pier in San Pedro. In order to avoid delays they were turned over to Mr. Loeff. The flatboard lumber was shipped on the ship "Saginaw" from British Columbia. By April of 1916, four rows of pilings were installed and reached the water's edge. A record was kept of each pile, its length, depth, diameter, and the load it would carry. This was for future reference in case of the need for replacement.

Charles I.D. Loeff brought his son, Arthur, a civil engineer, to act as Superintendent of construction. With Arthur came his wife and two children. They became permanent residents, Arthur as the business manager of the pier. Son William Loeff and a son-in-law also came to Santa Monica to assist. Arthur Loeff designed what may have been the first electrical pile driver. The 20 horse power motor of the new electrical device meant greater speed and less noise, assets over the old steam powered ones.

Charles Loeff purchased the beach frontage on North Beach from Mr. E.P. Benjamin for \$5,000.00, \$250.00 a front foot. The reinforced concrete decked pier was to be 700 feet long, 247.7 feet wide adjoining the Municipal Pier built four years earlier in 1912. The main deck of the Loeff pier would begin 80 feet from the edge of the Ocean Promenade at a 10° grade. The Municipal pier was 1,600 feet long, 40 feet wide. The combined footage was to be 1,055 feet by 307 feet. Mr. Benjamin estimated that, to the best of his knowledge, the North Beach Pier would be the largest in square footage on either the Pacific or Atlantic coasts. Loeff had hopes of enlarging the pier at a later time and extending it to 900 feet in length. The opening date was set for Decoration Day, May 31, 1916.

Construction went smoothly through March and April despite the fact that several issues developed. Santa Monica's new City Planning Commission held its first meeting on March 20, 1916, to decide if the Loeff Pier should actually be joined to the Municipal Pier. Fears of damage occurring to the City Pier in storms versus the fact that the 20 foot proposed gap between the two piers would appear unsightly caused much ado. It was finally decided to connect the two piers. Another problem, instigated by a Mr. Carl F. Schrader, owner of ocean front property in the area, dealt with legalities and moralities. It was decided by the City Commission that a franchise would be required to operate the pier's attractions and concessions. Mr. Schrader wanted the franchise and made life miserable for Loeff accusing him of not having legal ownership of the property and of being an immoral person. This he did by challenging Loeff's position on the use of liquor and gambling on the pier. Schrader demanded that the 20 year



franchise prohibit such. Mr. Looft, (not a "drinking man") did not ever contest the issue but Mr. Schrader continued to involve the local clergymen, women's groups, the Mayor and the police chief, each of them making profound statements on the subject.

As these issues were laid to rest, a dock strike threatened the construction work. The lumber schooner was loaded with pilings in Santa Monica but because of the conditions of the strike, the workman could not unload them. So they were dumped overboard and a launch towed them to shore where they were hauled on to the beach with teams of horses. 170 pilings were landed.

On May 29, 1916, Charles I.D. Looft was granted the franchise for his pier for a fee of \$200.00. It was a 20 year contract that stipulated that 5% of the gross receipts be paid to the city after the first five years of existence. All concessions were to be approved by the Public Safety Department. All buildings were to have cement flooring and steel lath and plaster construction for storm resistance and fire prevention.

The grand opening of the new Looft Pier was on schedule but there was little in the way of entertainment for the many who thronged to the area. The carousel building's sun parlors were filled to capacity but the building was empty as the carousel was only partly erected. The animals arrived June 7th and the Merry-Go-Round was officially operating on June 13th. Construction of the other buildings and attractions had not yet begun.

Thus began the Charles I.D. Looft Amusement Pier in Santa Monica, California.

Armored LOOFF with winged breast plate.
Collection of The Wooden Horse, Inc.
Photo - Andrea Austin

Barbara Williams shares this newsclipping which appeared on Friday, June 27, 1947 in the EVENING OUTLOOK, Santa Monica, California

The tunes may be the same that merry-go-rounds have ground out since time immemorial, but the wooden horses are more beautiful, and the customers, both young and old, will have a choice of stationary and jumping horses on the carousel which Walter D. Newcomb, Jr., has just installed on the Santa Monica Pleasure Pier.

Built by the Philadelphia Toboggan Co., the merry-go-round with its two automatic organs represents an investment of about \$25,000.00, Newcomb reported, and is the third machine which has provided entertainment for Santa Monica beach visitors over a period of more than three decades.

Newcomb said the new machine moved here from the now defunct Venice Pier, is 50 feet in diameter, has 55 hand-carved horses, and 2 chariots capable of accommodating 16 persons. It is decorated with more than 1100 electric lights and was installed under the direction of Rudy Illions during two months that the building was closed to the public.

Newcomb said the first merry-go-round located on the pier was designed and built by Arthur Looft, who for many years operated the Looft Pier as the Santa Monica Pier was originally known. This machine was operated later by Ernest Pickering, who sold it in 1939, when it was moved to Mission Beach near San Diego. Harry Hargrave then bought the merry-go-round formerly located in the Fun House at Ocean Park, now the Casino Gardens Dance Hall, and with Hargrave's recent sale of this machine, Newcomb's carousel was installed to take its place. Robert A. Newcomb, brother of the Santa Monica Pier manager, will operate the concession, it was announced.

