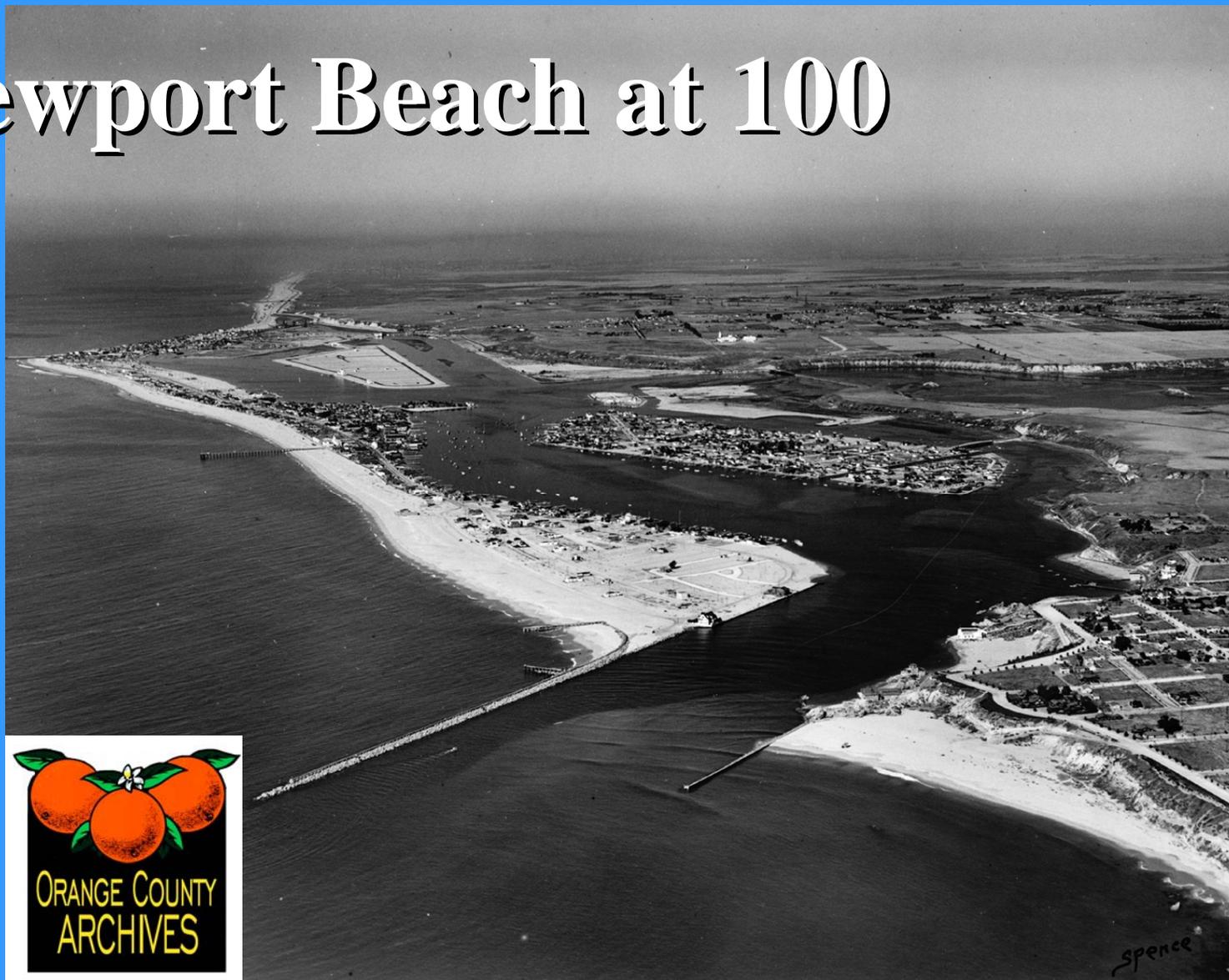


Newport Beach at 100

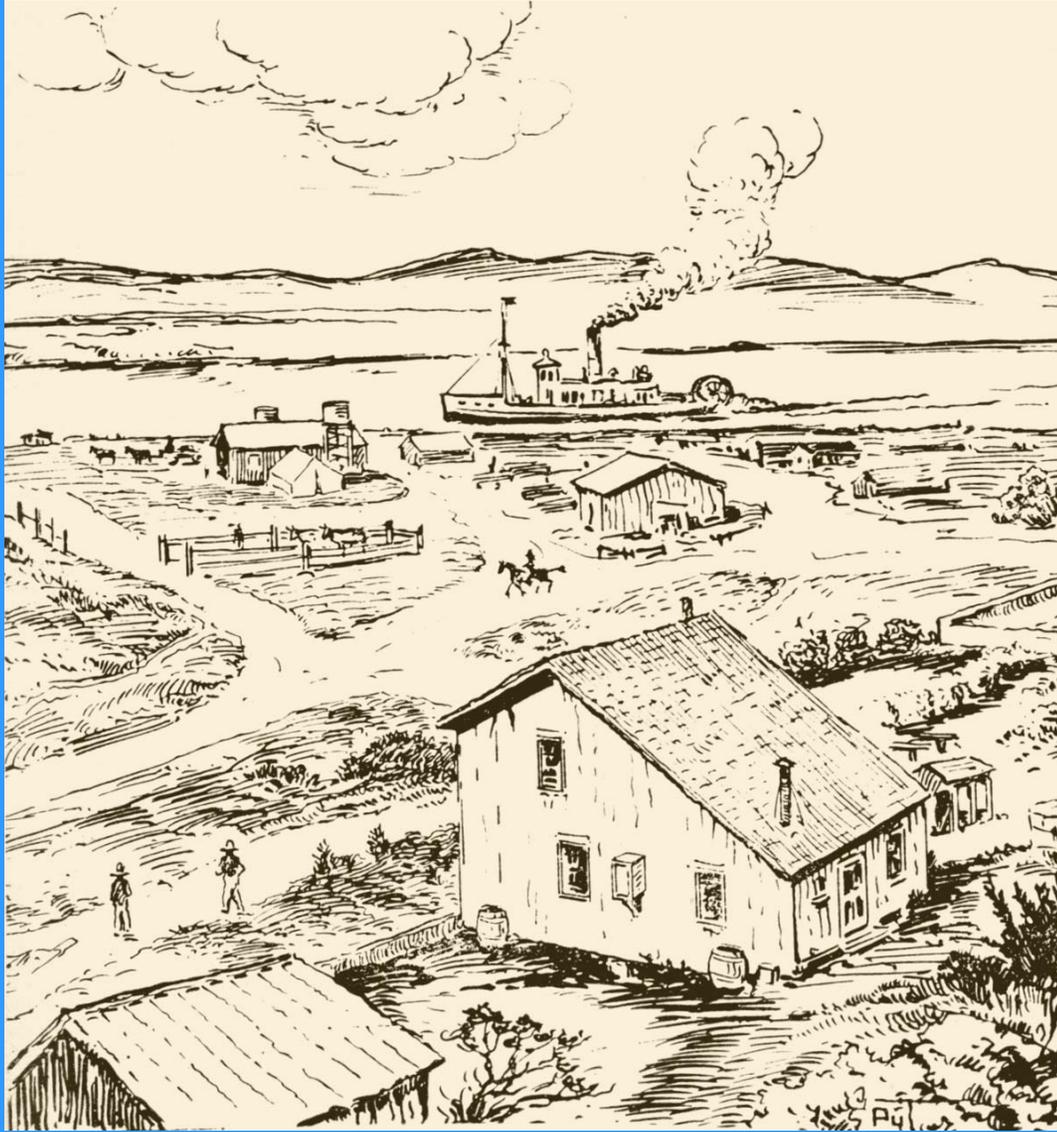


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**Presented by Archivist Phil Brigandi
to the Orange County Board of Supervisors
Aug. 22, 2006
The Orange County Archives**

- One hundred years ago yesterday, Newport Beach voted to become a city. And by the way, they were only the fifth city to incorporate in Orange County.
- The history of the community of Newport Beach goes back to 1870, when the first commercial vessel steamed into the harbor to establish a “New Port” between Los Angeles and San Diego.
- The original port was right about where the Coast Highway crosses the back bay at Dover. In the 1870s it was usually called McFadden’s Landing, after the McFadden Brothers, who ran the operation – you probably know them for McFadden Street here in Santa Ana, but James McFadden was also one of the key figures in the creation of Orange County.



McFadden's Landing

- But the inside landing created all kinds of problems – the bay was shallow, and the channel was always changing as the sandbars moved around. It could be a dangerous place to get in and out of, and people were actually killed taking soundings at the harbor mouth.
- So in 1888, the McFaddens began construction of a wharf out into the ocean, where large sailing ships and steamers could tie up. In 1891, they added their own railroad – the Santa Ana & Newport – to move cargo in and out of Orange County.
- The old landing was abandoned soon after the wharf was completed and most everybody moved over to the new wharf – some of the buildings were actually floated across the bay at high tide. And that's the start of old downtown Newport Beach as we know it today.



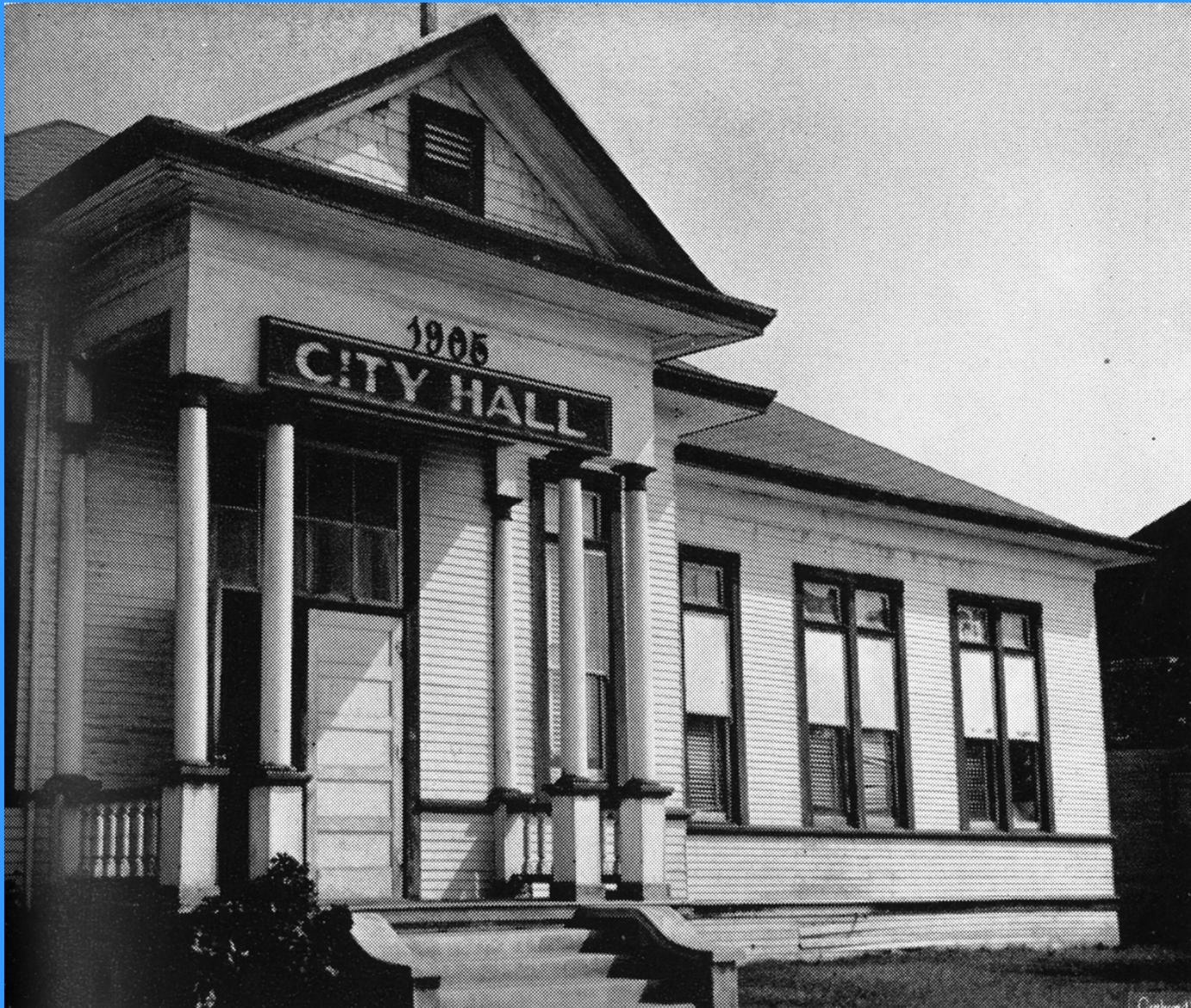
- Like a lot of our local communities, things really began to pick up with the arrival of the Pacific Electric “Surf Line” in 1905, and new subdivisions started opening up around the bay – Corona del Mar and East Newport in 1904, Balboa in 1905, and Balboa Island in 1906.
- With the exception of Bay Island, all of the islands in Newport Harbor are mostly man-made. Most of them started out as low-lying mudflats that would disappear at high tide. But local developers built them up by dredging, and started selling lots.
- The burst of civic improvement that followed the arrival of the Pacific Electric also led to the first attempt to incorporate the City of Newport Beach in 1905. But when the petition got to the Board of Supervisors that fall, they wouldn’t even give it a hearing. There’s no indication why – the minutes simply say that it was “laid on the table.”



- But the community leaders didn't give up. In 1906, they circulated a new petition, calling for a city that would take in everything on the peninsula and along the Coast Highway (which wasn't there yet) and what would become Lido Island, Balboa Island, Corona del Mar, and the other islands only came in later.
- The petition claimed there were 700 residents in the proposed city, but there were only 75 registered voters. One wonders how many of those were permanent residents? The *Los Angeles Times* reported that there were 1,000 vacationers staying in Newport Beach that summer.
- And summer is when the Board of Supervisors set the election – on August 21, 1906. The vote was 12 opposed, and 42 in favor of the incorporation of the City of Newport Beach.



- The first city council meeting was held in the railroad depot, and city hall moved from one building to another until 1912, when they bought an old school house just east of the pier as a permanent City Hall. If you look close at the next slide, you'll see that someone got the incorporation date wrong when they put up the sign.
- Because Newport Beach was part working seaport, part railroad town, and part vacation destination, one of the early issues the city had to face was what to do about alcohol. The county was "dry" in those days, but once they incorporated, the City of Newport Beach got to exercise its "local option," and the City Council voted to grant liquor licenses.
- But it turned out it wasn't that simple. The McFaddens were temperance advocates, and had put a no-alcohol clause in all the early deeds. This led to several lawsuits and the question was put on the ballot three times before city finally voted itself "dry" in 1916.



- I should say that Newport Beach was *officially* dry from 1916 until the end of National Prohibition in 1933 – but in fact, they always had their share of, ah, “blind pigs” in the old days. (That phrase dates to Prohibition days, when a saloonkeeper would charge customers to see an unusual attraction and provide a "complimentary" adult beverage, thus circumventing the law.)
- The dredging of Newport Harbor was finally completed in 1936, creating Orange County’s busiest harbor.
- The “new port” is now more than 100 years old, and Newport Harbor is still an important part of the Orange County scene. And the city that’s grown up around it has come a long way from that little cluster of houses out there on the sand.

View of Ocean Avenue, Newport Beach, Cal.





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Orange County Clerk-Recorder Dept.

Tom Daly, Clerk-Recorder

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