

Archived: Monday, June 28, 2021 11:53:33 AM

From: Kristin Long

Sent: Sun, 27 Jun 2021 18:54:02

To: CSLC CommissionMeetings

Subject: SUBJECT: 6/29/2021: Item 51

Sensitivity: Normal

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**Attention:** This email originated from outside of SLC and should be treated with extra caution.

Honorable Commissioners:

As a member of the Bruce's Beach History Advisory Board for the City of Manhattan Beach, I would like to correct some of the misinformation that has been compiled in the staff report for Item 51 on the June 29, 2021 agenda

The first paragraph on page 2 of the report states: "From the beginning, the Bruce family and Black visitors faced harassment, threats, and violence from white residents and white supremacist groups, including the Klu Klux Klan (Sic)."

*According to the Los Angeles Times ("Colored People's Resort Meets With Opposition," Los Angeles Times; Jun 27, 1912; page 115.), the first week Bruce's Beach opened, Black patrons were "confronted by two deputy constables who warned them against crossing the strip of land in front of Mrs. Bruce's property to reach the ocean." It was "staked off" and "No Trespassing" signs were placed, forcing the Bruces' guests to walk a half mile in either direction to get to the water. It is unclear whether these signs were placed by Peck or even with his knowledge.*

*There is NO evidence in the public record, however, that indicates that the Bruces faced direct harassment from the Ku Klux Klan. Racial discrimination and harassment, yes, but not at the hands of the KKK. When Robert Brigham who wrote his Master's Thesis on Bruce's Beach in 1956 mentions the Klan, he talks about the burning mattress at the Bruces, and says it was "someone (supposedly a Klansman)" who started it. (p. 41). "Someone" and "supposedly..." are not factual words and indicate that there's a possibility such events did not occur.*

*Brigham also says, "Not only is there this report of prompt action [by the Manhattan Beach police] 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 (sic) that there was never any vandalism directed at her property." (p 83).*

*We discuss the burning cross incident in our report, pages 35, 38-39, which did not happen until October of 1927, after the Bruces had closed their business and moved back to L.A. The cross burning was to have taken place up the street from the Slaughter family, who opened a 10-room boarding house to take the place of the Bruces' in May 1927.*

*In her book "Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era" (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2020), Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson states: "We can only speculate whether the KKK's activities may have influenced the Manhattan Beach trustees in the condemnation proceedings of the Bruce's Beach establishment and surrounding African American resort community. What is clearly supported by evidence, however, is that the rhetoric of southern exceptionalism did not match the situation unfolding at California's oceanfront and other places in the 1920s. White agitation at the opening of the Bruce resort in 1912 appeared not to have reemerged, at least not in the public discourse, until the 1920s eviction and condemnation actions." (p. 42)*

In the next sentence of the staff report: Fake "10 minutes only" parking signs were posted to deter visitors. Many Black beachgoers would return from the Beach to find the air had been let out of their tires..."

- *These two instances are uncorroborated, single-source stories that have not been substantiated by newspapers, other official documentation from that time, or any other witnesses. The "10 Minutes Only" story was relayed to Robert Brigham by Mrs. Ethel Atkinson 30 years after it was alleged to have happened, and even then she stated the "10 Minutes Only" signs were by her mother's cottage (Mary Sanders Washington)(noted in Brigham, page 82), which was up the street from the Bruces' resort, at the corner of Manhattan Avenue and 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Most visitors to the Bruces' – and Manhattan Beach in general – took the Pacific Electric Train because freeways had not been built by this time, and car travel was inefficient.*

In the second complete paragraph on page 2 it says, "The Bruces and three other Black families sued, citing racial prejudice."

- *The Bruces and other Black families did NOT sue. They answered the Complaint of Condemnation just as some of the White property*

owners did.

The Bruces sought \$120,000 in compensation--\$70,000 for their two lots and \$50,000 in damages. Another couple asked for \$36,000. After years of litigation, the Bruces received \$14,500.

- *For clarification, this judgment was awarded by three real estate Referees appointed by the court and their report was not contested by any of the defendants. The California Eagle, a prominent African-American newspaper from 1879-1964, printed a letter from E. Burton Ceruti, Attorney for the L.A. Branch, N.A.A.C.P. on July 11, 1924, wherein he stated that Mrs. Bruce was “willing to sell her property and, even if a suit be instituted, would sell at a fair price at any time, and would abandon the suit at such time.” (“Matter of Bruce’s Beach,” July 11, 1924, pp. 1 and 10.)*
- *In February 1927, citizens of Manhattan Beach issued a recall of the Board of Trustees following the condemnation proceedings. The Los Angeles Times reported that the recall stemmed from citizens’ dissatisfaction with the condemnation and the purchase of the land under the Park and Playground Act of 1909. The Times reported legal proceedings began when “(t)he amount which the city officials agreed to give for the land was said to be greatly in excess of its value.”<sup>[1]</sup> Two years later, the Venice Evening Vanguard would report that offering an amount in excess of the value was a strategy: “... the anti-[N]egro forces have tried to keep the town [W]hite even buying out colored holdings at more than their true value, but in vain. Failing in peaceful means, harsher measures apparently have been resorted to in order to gain their ends.”<sup>[2]</sup>*

Same paragraph on page 2: “The Bruce's plots are estimated to be worth tens of millions of dollars today.”

- *Although this is not mentioned in our report, research shows that the Bruces’ two lots are not worth “tens of millions of dollars” today. The Bruces’ lots measure 33 1/3’x105’ each, for a total of 66 2/3’x 105’ or roughly 6,930 sq feet. A double lot of about the same size at 2722 The Strand (a block north of the Bruces’) – with a home built on it – sold \$17,750,000 in November 2020, per the City of Manhattan Beach’s GIS website here: ([https://permitmaps.citymb.info/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=mbca&\\_ga=2.48243557.2100542605.1624387549-734599176.1622482594](https://permitmaps.citymb.info/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=mbca&_ga=2.48243557.2100542605.1624387549-734599176.1622482594))*

Same paragraph on page 2: “Despite the stated purpose of acquiring the properties to create a public park, the City did nothing with the property. It sat empty for decades.”

- *Research indicates that this is not true. Beginning in 1932, Manhattan Beach City Council had petitioned the county for assistance in funding both the City Park between the Strand and Highland, and Live Oak Park off what was then called Railroad Drive. They hoped to use labor supplied by and paid through the County Welfare and Stabilization Program.<sup>[3]</sup>*
- *In February 1933, the City of Manhattan Beach filed plans to utilize funds from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to build a beachfront park. The resolutions asked the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for 2580 “man days” for the improvement of the City Park, “being the block between Manhattan Avenue and Ocean Drive, 26th and 27th.” For the block between The Strand and Ocean, 1300 “man days” were requested, and between Manhattan Avenue and Bay View, 2400. The block between Bay View and Highland needed 2267 “man days.”<sup>[4]</sup> The Los Angeles Times said the Beach Front Park and Live Oak Park projects were “striking examples of how well planned public projects best may utilize Reconstruction Finance Corporation funds available for unemployment relief.”<sup>[5]</sup>*
- *By August 11, 1933, the Manhattan Beach News reported that “Beach Front Park... has been graded and its terraced surface planted to moss, pending further development that will include extensive landscaping, game areas, and tennis courts.”<sup>[6]</sup>*
- *Though it’s unclear exactly how much of this plan came to fruition, the development of some sort of park was ongoing. In 1938, a local resident approached Council to request a volleyball court at the City Park between 26th and 27th. Permission for this was granted.<sup>[7]</sup> In 1940, there were numerous discussions of creating tennis courts there, where one resident argued that the courts weren’t level and “not fit even to play volleyball on.”<sup>[8]</sup> Community events also took place there, as noted in a 1945 issue of “Community Life” magazine, which describes a children’s story hour located at the playground at Highland and 26th Street Park.<sup>[9]</sup>*

*In 1948, the State took over the ownership of the property condemned by the City in 1929 under the condition “that the land be accepted for use as a public beach or park only.”<sup>[10]</sup> Between 1948-1949, the South Bay Cities Sanitation District installed new sewer lines and the pumping station, they requested use of the City Park between 26th and 27th Streets. The City granted them permission, provided the property be left in “clean and proper conditioning so far as reasonably possible” and that any “sand retaining growths or foliage removed” be restored in the same condition as it was.<sup>[11]</sup>*

*A South Bay Breeze newspaper article published November 9, 1954 reported on a joint session between the City Council and the Recreation*

**Commission discussing the development of park plans. By 1956, the area was landscaped into a terraced park that absorbed a portion of Bayview Drive.**

“After the City seized their property, the Bruce family left Manhattan Beach.”

**- Although the Bruces opted to leave, the other four Black families purchased elsewhere in Manhattan Beach. Charles and Willa Bruce were both in their late to mid-60s in 1927 respectively and purchased a house outright on E 20<sup>th</sup> Street near downtown L.A. Charles would die in 1931 and Willa in 1934; there is every indication that they retired and no longer worked. Around 1932, Willa and Harvey allegedly purchased two commercial properties: One at 724 East 33rd Street in Los Angeles, and the other at 1339 E. 18th Street. It is unclear exactly how much they paid for this land or what they used it for, but in 1942, a notice appeared in the Eagle advising that both properties would be for sale pursuant to Division 1, Part 6, Chapter 7 of the Revenue and Taxation Code (sale of tax-defaulted property).<sup>[12]</sup>**

In paragraph 3, it is stated: “In 2007, the City renamed the park Bruce’s Beach. After George Floyd was murdered in May 2020, the Manhattan Beach City Council directed staff to research and present the history of Bruce’s Beach for discussion at a City Council meeting. In September 2020, the City Council formed the Bruce’s Beach Task Force to research Bruce’s Beach and acknowledge the City’s racially motivated eminent domain action to acquire the land. The task force was disbanded earlier this year.”

**The History Advisory Board of the Bruce’s Beach Task Force (a diverse team of four Manhattan Beach residents) did not disband and continued working on a 75-page historical document that details the entire history of the Bruces in Manhattan Beach. It can be accessed here: <https://www.citymb.info/home/showpublisheddocument/47081/637590392738470000>.**

**Independent and accredited scholars were consulted about the report. Their attestations can be read here: <http://manhattanbeach.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=1cfac517-cb0b-4c6c-8232-de34a97ef305.pdf>.**

**On June 15, 2021, Manhattan Beach City Council adopted the history report with the understanding that it may be updated as more resources become available by 4-1.**

**With regard to information about SB796:**

According to Senator Bradford, “Charles and Willa Bruce were a young Black couple who created the West Coast’s first beach resort owned by and meant for Black Americans.”

**Charles and Willa were 50 and 49 years old respectively when Willa purchased the land in Manhattan Beach. This was not considered “young” then, nor is it considered “young” now.**

“The resort was wildly successful among the Black community, but Manhattan Beach’s white (sic) (residents were not as receptive. The Bruces and other Black families in the area were met with hostility, harassment, and violence from both the City and the Ku Klux Klan.”

**Please see above comments regarding the Klan’s activity.**

“In 1924, the Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees seized the land, condemning the property to build a public park. Yet, once Charles and Willa Bruce were forced off their land, the City instead kept the land vacant for decades.”

**Please see above regarding the evolution of the park on Blocks 5 and 12.**

“The Bruce Family were robbed of their land, their business, and their legacy.”

**Their legacy continues and perseveres thanks to people who choose to respect their legacy and keep it alive.**

“They were forced to move and live the rest of their lives working for someone else ...”

**While there is evidence that states Charles may have continued working as a cook on the railroad, it’s unlikely. Please see above regarding their residences.**

Forcing the Bruces off their land contributed to the racial segregation in the City and deprived the Bruce Family of their legacy and generational wealth.

**“Generational Wealth” is a subjective term that cannot be accurately or fairly measured. What we do know, however, is that the Slaughter Apartments – a 10-room boarding house that opened the weekend the Bruces’ closed and advertised itself as “formerly Bruce’s Beach” closed in 1930 because they defaulted on their payments. Records show that the Mortgage Insurance Corporation took over the property in 1930.<sup>[13]</sup>**

By returning this land to the descendants of the Bruce Family, we set precedent for how to deliver the reparations owed to Black Americans including, but not limited to, the descendants of enslaved persons."

***Neither Charles nor Willa were "enslaved persons". They were astute businesspeople who worked hard, made a name for themselves and a good deal of money for their family. They were subjected to blatant racism, which they fought for 12 years and, when they were in their 60s, they opted to accept money instead of continuing their fight.***

***Thank you for your time.***

Sincerely, Kristin Long Drew

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[1] "Recall Favors City Trustees at Manhattan," *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1927, p. A 10.

[2] "Nearby Town Now Center of Race War". *Venice Vanguard*. February 15, 1928.

[3] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. July 21, 1932.

[4] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. February 2, 1933.

[5] Manhattan Beach Park Projects Being Pushed: Two Recreation Places Under Construction May Provide Work for Many Citizens," *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1933, p. 10

[6] "Progress is Evident in Park Work", *Manhattan Beach News*, August 11, 1933, p. 1.

[7] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. August 28, 1938.

[8] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. May 2, 1940.

[9] *Community Life, Summer Issue*, Recreational Life, 1945.

[10] City of Manhattan Beach Memorandum, Carl K. Newton, City Attorney, March 22, 1987.

[11] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. October 19, 1948.

[12] "Legal Notices", *California Eagle*, April 9, 1942. P. 12.; *California Revenue and Taxation Code*, CHAPTER 7. Sale to Private Parties After Deed to State [3691 - 3731.1] ( *Chapter 7 enacted by Stats. 1939, Ch. 154.* ).

[13] Brigham, 78.

Archived: Monday, June 28, 2021 11:55:06 AM

From: Kristin Long

Sent: Mon, 28 Jun 2021 17:21:41

To: CSLC CommissionMeetings assemblymember.muratsuchi assembly.ca.gov senator.allen sen.ca.gov FourthDistrict bos.lacounty.gov senator.bradford sen.ca.gov assemblymember.burke assembly.ca.gov assemblymember.kamlager-dove assembly.ca.gov senator.stern sen.ca.gov assemblymember.bloom assembly.ca.gov assemblymember.jones-sawyer assembly.ca.gov assemblymember.rivas assembly.ca.gov Senator.Laird senate.ca.gov Assemblymember.Gonzalez assembly.ca.gov

Subject: 6/29/2021: Item 51 / SB796

Sensitivity: Normal

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**Attention:** This email originated from outside of SLC and should be treated with extra caution.

Honorable State and County Elected Officials:

I am a member of the Bruce's Beach History Advisory Board that wrote a comprehensive History Report about Bruce's Beach for the City of Manhattan Beach.

There are a few factual errors in the staff report for item 51 of tomorrow's State Lands Commission agenda, and also in Section 1 of Senate Bill 796.

Because we are all concerned with righting wrongs, I wanted to correct some of these inaccuracies. Our full report that was adopted by the city, can be read here: <https://www.citymb.info/home/showpublisheddocument/47081/637590392738470000>

ited orrections to S T S

(g) In 1924, the Manhattan Beach City Council voted to condemn Bruce's Beach and the surrounding land through the power of eminent domain under the ostensible purpose of building a park. After the land was ultimately taken in 1929, the Bruce family moved out of the City of Manhattan Beach, and the city immediately demolished the Bruce's Beach resort. The city did not move to build a park and, instead, the land sat empty for decades.

*Evidence indicates that the land did not sit "empty for decades". Beginning in 1932 Manhattan Beach City Council had petitioned the county for assistance in funding both the City Park between the Strand and Highland, and Live Oak Park off what was then called Railroad Drive. They hoped to use labor supplied by and paid through the County Welfare and Stabilization Program.*<sup>[1]</sup>

*In February 1933, the City of Manhattan Beach filed plans to utilize funds from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to build a beachfront park. The resolutions asked the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for 2580 "man days" for the improvement of the City Park, "being the block between Manhattan Avenue and Ocean Drive, 26th and 27th." For the block between The Strand and Ocean, 1300 "man days" were requested, and between Manhattan Avenue and Bay View, 2400. The block between Bay View and Highland needed 2267 "man days".<sup>[2]</sup> The Los Angeles Times said the Beach Front Park and Live Oak Park projects were "striking examples of how well planned (sic) public projects best may utilize Reconstruction Finance Corporation funds available for unemployment relief."<sup>[3]</sup>*

*By August 11, 1933, the Manhattan Beach News reported that "Beach Front Park... has been graded and its terraced surface planted to moss, pending further development that will include extensive landscaping, game areas, and tennis courts."<sup>[4]</sup>*

*Though it's unclear exactly how much of this plan came to fruition, the development of some sort of park was ongoing. In 1938, a local resident approached Council to request a volleyball court at the City Park between 26th and 27th. Permission for this was granted.<sup>[5]</sup> In 1940, there were numerous discussions of creating tennis courts there, where one resident argued that the courts weren't level and "not fit even to play volleyball on."<sup>[6]</sup> Community events also took place there, as noted in a 1945 issue of "Community Life" magazine, which describes a children's story hour located at the playground at Highland and 26th Street Park.<sup>[7]</sup>*

*In 1948, the State took over the ownership of the property condemned by the City in 1929 under the condition "that the land be accepted for use as a public beach or park only."<sup>[8]</sup>*

*Since its inception, Manhattan Beach had been consistently plagued by raw sewage leaking into the Santa Monica Bay through the Hyperion Outfall. In the 1940s, it was not uncommon for the beaches in Manhattan to be closed due to a quarantine because of the risks to the public's health.<sup>[9]</sup> Manhattan Beach was complicit in the pollution, using the Hyperion Outfall, just like its neighbors. But by 1948, the population of the town had increased from 859 in 1920 to 6,398 by 1940,<sup>[10]</sup> and the lack of sufficient water treatment facilities led the State to take action against all cities – including Manhattan Beach – to “abate the nuisance immediately.”*

*The solution to the problem would be costly, and as an alternative, the City and its neighbors created the South Bay Sanitation District. By building a pumping plant beneath the Strand at 27th, the City's sewage would be re-routed through tunnels under the sand hills to Aviation Boulevard, where it would join the eastern Sanitation District. This was more economical and, more importantly, environmental because the South Bay cities would no longer be contributing to the direct sewage pollution of its beaches.<sup>[11]</sup>*

*When the South Bay Cities Sanitation District was installing the new sewer lines and the pumping station, they requested use of the City Park between 26th and 27th Streets. The City granted them permission, provided the property be left in “clean and proper conditioning so far as reasonably possible” and that any “sand retaining growths or foliage removed” be restored in the same condition as it was.<sup>[12]</sup>*

*A South Bay Breeze newspaper article published November 9, 1954 reported on a joint session between the City Council and the Recreation Commission discussing the development of park plans. By 1956, the area was landscaped into a terraced park that absorbed a portion of Bayview Drive*

(h) Willa and Charles Bruce were deprived of their rightful property, as well as their right to derive the benefits of that property, including the freedom and fortune of operating their own business on their land.

*Although the Bruces were forced to sell their property, there were no restrictions against them purchasing elsewhere in Manhattan Beach. Four of the other five Black families involved in the condemnation proceedings purchased elsewhere in Manhattan Beach, and the Bruces were the only Black family who did not.*

*Though they did not purchase again in Manhattan Beach, evidence shows that they purchased at least three other properties (four including the home owned by their son Harvey and his wife) within Los Angeles County. They purchased a home at 1042/1044 E. 20th in Los Angeles<sup>[13]</sup>, and reported to the 1930 U.S. Census that it cost \$7,500. According to that Census, Charles continued to work as a chef on the railroad.<sup>[14]</sup> Harvey, Meda, and four-year-old Harvey, Jr. moved to the house they owned at 940 E. 37th St., Los Angeles.<sup>[15]</sup> Around 1932, Willa and Harvey allegedly purchased two commercial properties: One at 724 East 33rd Street in Los Angeles, and the other at 1339 E. 18th Street. It is unclear exactly how much they paid for this land or what they used it for, but in 1942, a notice appeared in the Eagle advising that both properties would be for sale pursuant to Division 1, Part 6, Chapter 7 of the Revenue and Taxation Code (sale of tax-defaulted property).<sup>[16]</sup>*

*One family who purchased out the condemned area opened a 10-room boarding house on the south side of 26<sup>th</sup> street, opposite the Bruces' in May 1927. The Slaughters advertised that a grand opening on Monday, May 30, 1927, Memorial Day (a week after the Bruces' resort closed), utilizing the name and brand established by the Bruces. The advertisement said: “Come, bring your family and spend the day at Manhattan Beach, formerly Bruce's Beach.”<sup>[17]</sup> Records show that the Mortgage Insurance Corporation took over the property in 1930.<sup>[18]</sup>*

*There is no business in Manhattan Beach that has been continuously owned by the same family since 1912 or even 1927. The oldest existing business with relatively the same name is Ercole's, but it has not been in the Ercole family since October 1957.<sup>[19]</sup>*

(i) The fraudulent appropriation of land from private persons in general, and especially on the basis of race, is against the public interest and denies individuals and communities the right to enjoyment, the right to own property alone, as well as in association with others, the right to inherit, and the right to control one's property.

*The complaint of condemnation was adjudicated in the Superior Court in and for the County of Los Angeles, State of California, No. 157,573: City of Manhattan Beach v. B.H. Dyer, et al, 1924. The report of the referees was not challenged by any family or entity involved in the legal proceedings and the payments awarded were accepted by all parties involved. Although City government officials involved admitted their actions were racially motivated, The California Eagle, a prominent African-American newspaper from 1879-1964, printed a letter from E. Burton Ceruti, Attorney for the L.A. Branch, N.A.A.C.P. on July 11, 1924, wherein he stated that Mrs. Bruce was “willing to sell her property and, even if a suit be instituted, would sell at a fair price at any time, and would abandon the suit at such time.”<sup>[20]</sup>*

- (j) Government has a responsibility to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all forms and to ensure that all persons are entitled to security against forced removal, harassment, and intimidation by entities who seek to deprive individuals of their rights to self-determination and dignity on the basis of their race.
- (k) Government must act in the public's interest to ensure that communities can fairly access justice and an effective remedy, including, when appropriate, the potential return, restitution, resettlement, rehabilitation, or compensation, for unlawful and race-based displacements.
- (l) The land in the City of Manhattan Beach, which was wrongfully taken from Willa and Charles Bruce, should be returned to their living descendants, and it is in the public interest of the State of California, the County of Los Angeles, the City of Manhattan Beach, and the People of the State of California to do so.

***Once again, the complaint of condemnation was adjudicated in the Superior Court in and for the County of Los Angeles, State of California, No. 157,573: City of Manhattan Beach v. B.H. Dyer, et al, 1924. The report of the referees was not challenged by any family or entity involved in the legal proceedings and the payments awarded were accepted by all parties involved. The rest of this statement insofar as being in the "pubic interest" is a subjective statement and should be reviewed by elected representatives for its veracity and accuracy.***

m) The sale, transfer, or encumbrance of Bruce's Beach as authorized by this act constitutes a change in ownership of the property, which requires the reassessment of the property at its full cash value in accordance with Article III u8201 A of the California Constitution. The racially motivated taking of the land from Willa and Charles Bruce under false, unlawful pretenses as described in this section has negatively impacted the duration of their ownership of the property and value of the property in comparison with other parcels. Therefore, in determining the full cash value for taxation purposes, the full cash value of Bruce's Beach as of the 1975 lien date, as adjusted for inflation, accurately represents the true fair market value of the property, and it is appropriate to establish that this amount is the full cash value of the property upon its sale, transfer, or encumbrance as authorized by this act.

***Although this is not mentioned in History Advisory's report, research shows that the Bruces' two lots are not worth "tens of millions of dollars" today. The Bruces' lots measure 33 1/3'x105' each, for a total of 66 2/3'x 105' or roughly 6,930 sq feet. A double lot of about the same size at 2722 The Strand (a block north of the Bruces') – with a home built on it – sold for \$17,750,000 in November 2020, per the City of Manhattan Beach's GIS website here: ([https://permitmaps.citymb.info/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=mbca&\\_ga=2.48243557.2100542605.1624387549-734599176.1622482594](https://permitmaps.citymb.info/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=mbca&_ga=2.48243557.2100542605.1624387549-734599176.1622482594))***

***It is not currently possible for the public to independently review assessor's records in Los Angeles County for 1975, but records found at the Manhattan Beach Historical Society indicate that home values on-and-off the Strand were nowhere near the prices they are today, and this \$17,750,000 property value is grossly inflated for then.***

#### Senate Bill 796 Citations

- [1] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. July 21, 1932.
- [2] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. February 2, 1933.
- [3] Manhattan Beach Park Projects Being Pushed: Two Recreation Places Under Construction May Provide Work for Many Citizens," *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1933, p. 10
- [4] "Progress is Evident in Park Work", *Manhattan Beach News*, August 11, 1933, p. 1.
- [5] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. August 28, 1938.
- [6] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. May 2, 1940.
- [7] *Community Life, Summer Issue*, Recreational Life, 1945.
- [8] City of Manhattan Beach Memorandum, Carl K. Newton, City Attorney, March 22, 1987.
- [9] "South Bay Beaches Face Quarantine", *Manhattan Beach News*, August 22, 1941 "Prepare Signs for Beach Quarantine," *Manhattan Beach News*, April 9, 1943. "Swimming in So. Bay Banned By State At Season's Peak of Heat", *Manhattan Beach News*, September 4, 1947.
- [10] <https://www.citymb.info/residents/about-us/census-data>
- [11] "City Divorces Hyperion in New Sewer Set-up", *Manhattan Beach Messenger, Special Supplement The Manhattan Beach Story A Report to our Citizens*, April 13, 1950,
- [12] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. October 19, 1948.
- [13] 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932 LA City Directories.
- [14] 1930 Census, Year: 1930 Census Place: Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California Page: 6A Enumeration District: 0291 FHL microfilm: 2339879
- [15] 1930 Census, Year: Census Place: Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California Page: A Enumeration District: FHL microfilm:
- [16] "Legal Notices", *California Eagle*, April 9, 1942. P. 12.; *California Revenue and Taxation Code*, CHAPTER 7. Sale to Private Parties After Deed to State [3691 - 3731.1] (Chapter 7 enacted by Stats. 1939, Ch. 154. ).
- [17] Advertise e t, *California Eagle*, a 2 , 1927.
- [18] Robert L. Riggs, "Landership Ad cc pa c Negroes a atta eac , CA" aster st esis, res o State College, 19 6 ; 7 .
- [19] Transfer of Alcoholic Beverage License, i tes of eeti g, Nov, , 19 7, Cit Co cil of t e Cit of a atta eac
- [20] Ceruti, E. Burton. "Matter of Bruce's Beach", *California Eagle*, July 11, 1924, pp. 1 and 10.

**For the State and Commission Report:**

The first paragraph on page 2 of the report states: "From the beginning, the Bruce family and Black visitors faced harassment, threats, and violence from white residents and white supremacist groups, including the Klu Klux Klan (Sic)."

*According to the Los Angeles Times ("Colored People's Resort Meets With Opposition," Los Angeles Times; Jun 27, 1912; page 115.), the first week Bruce's Beach opened, Black patrons were "confronted by two deputy constables who warned them against crossing the strip of land in front of Mrs. Bruce's property to reach the ocean." It was "staked off" and "No Trespassing" signs were placed, forcing the Bruces' guests to walk a half mile in either direction to get to the water. It is unclear whether these signs were placed by Peck or even with his knowledge.*

*There is NO evidence in the public record, however, that indicates that the Bruces faced direct harassment from the Ku Klux Klan. Racial discrimination and harassment, yes, but not at the hands of the KKK. When Robert Brigham who wrote his Master's Thesis on Bruce's Beach in 1956 mentions the Klan, he talks about the burning mattress at the Bruces, and says it was "someone (supposedly a Klansman)" who started it. (p. 41). "Someone" and "supposedly..." are not factual words and indicate that there's a possibility such events did not occur.*

*Brigham also says, "Not only is there this report of prompt action [by the Manhattan Beach police] 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 (sic) that there was never any vandalism directed at her property." (p 83).*

*We discuss the burning cross incident in our report, pages 35, 38-39, which did not happen until October of 1927, after the Bruces had closed their business and moved back to L.A. The cross burning was to have taken place up the street from the Slaughter family, who opened a 10-room boarding house to take the place of the Bruces' in May 1927.*

*In her book "Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era" (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2020), Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson states: "We can only speculate whether the KKK's activities may have influenced the Manhattan Beach trustees in the condemnation proceedings of the Bruce's Beach establishment and surrounding African American resort community. What is clearly supported by evidence, however, is that the rhetoric of southern exceptionalism did not match the situation unfolding at California's oceanfront and other places in the 1920s. White agitation at the opening of the Bruce resort in 1912 appeared not to have reemerged, at least not in the public discourse, until the 1920s eviction and condemnation actions." (p. 42)*

In the next sentence of the staff report: Fake "10 minutes only" parking signs were posted to deter visitors. Many Black beachgoers would return from the Beach to find the air had been let out of their tires..."

- *These two instances are uncorroborated, single-source stories that have not been substantiated by newspapers, other official documentation from that time, or any other witnesses. The "10 Minutes Only" story was relayed to Robert Brigham by Mrs. Ethel Atkinson 30 years after it was alleged to have happened, and even then she stated the "10 Minutes Only" signs were by her mother's cottage (Mary Sanders Washington)(noted in Brigham, page 82), which was up the street from the Bruces' resort, at the corner of Manhattan Avenue and 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Most visitors to the Bruces' – and Manhattan Beach in general – took the Pacific Electric Train because freeways had not been built by this time, and car travel was inefficient.*

In the second complete paragraph on page 2 it says, "The Bruces and three other Black families sued, citing racial prejudice."

- *The Bruces and other Black families did NOT sue. They answered the Complaint of Condemnation just as some of the White property owners did.*

The Bruces sought \$120,000 in compensation--\$70,000 for their two lots and \$50,000 in damages. Another couple asked for \$36,000. After years of litigation, the Bruces received \$14,500.

- *For clarification, this judgment was awarded by three real estate Referees appointed by the court and their report was not contested by any of the defendants. The California Eagle, a prominent African-American newspaper from 1879-1964, printed a letter from E. Burton Ceruti, Attorney for the L.A. Branch, N.A.A.C.P. on July 11, 1924, wherein he stated that Mrs. Bruce was "willing to sell her property and, even if a suit be instituted, would sell at a fair price at any time, and would abandon the suit at such time." ("Matter of Bruce's Beach," July 11, 1924, pp. 1 and 10.)*
- *In February 1927, citizens of Manhattan Beach issued a recall of the Board of Trustees following the condemnation proceedings. The Los Angeles Times reported that the recall stemmed from citizens' dissatisfaction with the condemnation and the purchase of the land under the Park and Playground Act of 1909. The Times reported legal proceedings began when "(t)he amount which the city officials agreed to give for the land was said to be greatly in excess of its value." [1] Two years later, the Venice Evening Vanguard would report that offering an amount in excess of the value was a strategy: "... the anti-[N]egro forces have tried to keep the town [W]hite even buying out colored holdings at more*



*than their true value, but in vain. Failing in peaceful means, harsher measures apparently have been resorted to in order to gain their ends.”<sup>[2]</sup>*

Same paragraph on page 2: “The Bruce's plots are estimated to be worth tens of millions of dollars today.”

*- Although this is not mentioned in our report, research shows that the Bruces' two lots are not worth “tens of millions of dollars” today. The Bruces' lots measure 33 1/3'x105' each, for a total of 66 2/3'x 105' or roughly 6,930 sq feet. A double lot of about the same size at 2722 The Strand (a block north of the Bruces) – with a home built on it – sold \$17,750,000 in November 2020, per the City of Manhattan Beach's GIS website here: ([https://permitmaps.citymb.info/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=mbca&\\_ga=2.48243557.2100542605.1624387549-734599176.1622482594](https://permitmaps.citymb.info/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=mbca&_ga=2.48243557.2100542605.1624387549-734599176.1622482594))*

Same paragraph on page 2: “Despite the stated purpose of acquiring the properties to create a public park, the City did nothing with the property. It sat empty for decades.”

*- Research indicates that this is not true. Beginning in 1932, Manhattan Beach City Council had petitioned the county for assistance in funding both the City Park between the Strand and Highland, and Live Oak Park off what was then called Railroad Drive. They hoped to use labor supplied by and paid through the County Welfare and Stabilization Program.<sup>[3]</sup>*

*- In February 1933, the City of Manhattan Beach filed plans to utilize funds from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to build a beachfront park. The resolutions asked the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for 2580 “man days” for the improvement of the City Park, “being the block between Manhattan Avenue and Ocean Drive, 26th and 27th.” For the block between The Strand and Ocean, 1300 “man days” were requested, and between Manhattan Avenue and Bay View, 2400. The block between Bay View and Highland needed 2267 “man days”.<sup>[4]</sup> The Los Angeles Times said the Beach Front Park and Live Oak Park projects were “striking examples of how well planned public projects best may utilize Reconstruction Finance Corporation funds available for unemployment relief.”<sup>[5]</sup>*

*- By August 11, 1933, the Manhattan Beach News reported that “Beach Front Park... has been graded and its terraced surface planted to moss, pending further development that will include extensive landscaping, game areas, and tennis courts.”<sup>[6]</sup>*

*- Though it's unclear exactly how much of this plan came to fruition, the development of some sort of park was ongoing. In 1938, a local resident approached Council to request a volleyball court at the City Park between 26th and 27th. Permission for this was granted.<sup>[7]</sup> In 1940, there were numerous discussions of creating tennis courts there, where one resident argued that the courts weren't level and “not fit even to play volleyball on.”<sup>[8]</sup> Community events also took place there, as noted in a 1945 issue of “Community Life” magazine, which describes a children's story hour located at the playground at Highland and 26th Street Park.<sup>[9]</sup>*

*In 1948, the State took over the ownership of the property condemned by the City in 1929 under the condition “that the land be accepted for use as a public beach or park only.”<sup>[10]</sup> Between 1948-1949, the South Bay Cities Sanitation District installed new sewer lines and the pumping station, they requested use of the City Park between 26th and 27th Streets. The City granted them permission, provided the property be left in “clean and proper conditioning so far as reasonably possible” and that any “sand retaining growths or foliage removed” be restored in the same condition as it was.<sup>[11]</sup>*

*A South Bay Breeze newspaper article published November 9, 1954 reported on a joint session between the City Council and the Recreation Commission discussing the development of park plans. By 1956, the area was landscaped into a terraced park that absorbed a portion of Bayview Drive.*

“After the City seized their property, the Bruce family left Manhattan Beach.”

*- Although the Bruces opted to leave, the other four Black families purchased elsewhere in Manhattan Beach. Charles and Willa Bruce were both in their late to mid-60s in 1927 respectively and purchased a house outright on E 20<sup>th</sup> Street near downtown L.A. Charles would die in 1931 and Willa in 1934; there is every indication that they retired and no longer worked. Around 1932, Willa and Harvey allegedly purchased two commercial properties: One at 724 East 33rd Street in Los Angeles, and the other at 1339 E. 18th Street. It is unclear exactly how much they paid for this land or what they used it for, but in 1942, a notice appeared in the Eagle advising that both properties would be for sale pursuant to Division 1, Part 6, Chapter 7 of the Revenue and Taxation Code (sale of tax-defaulted property).<sup>[12]</sup>*

In paragraph 3, it is stated: “In 2007, the City renamed the park Bruce's Beach. After George Floyd was murdered in May 2020, the Manhattan Beach City Council directed staff to research and present the history of Bruce's Beach for discussion at a City Council meeting. In September 2020, the City Council formed

the Bruce's Beach Task Force to research Bruce's Beach and acknowledge the City's racially motivated eminent domain action to acquire the land. The task force was disbanded earlier this year.”

***The History Advisory Board of the Bruce's Beach Task Force (a diverse team of four Manhattan Beach residents) did not disband and continued working on a 75-page historical document that details the entire history of the Bruces in Manhattan Beach. It can be accessed here: <https://www.citymb.info/home/showpublisheddocument/47081/637590392738470000>.***

***Independent and accredited scholars were consulted about the report. Their attestations can be read here: <http://manhattanbeach.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=1cfac517-cb0b-4c6c-8232-de34a97ef305.pdf>.***

***On June 15, 2021, Manhattan Beach City Council adopted the history report with the understanding that it may be updated as more resources become available by 4-1.***

**With regard to information about SB796:**

According to Senator Bradford, “Charles and Willa Bruce were a young Black couple who created the West Coast's first beach resort owned by and meant for Black Americans.”

***Charles and Willa were 50 and 49 years old respectively when Willa purchased the land in Manhattan Beach. This was not considered “young” then, nor is it considered “young” now.***

“The resort was wildly successful among the Black community, but Manhattan Beach's white (sic) (residents were not as receptive. The Bruces and other Black families in the area were met with hostility, harassment, and violence from both the City and the Ku Klux Klan.”

***Please see above comments regarding the Klan's activity.***

“In 1924, the Manhattan Beach Board of Trustees seized the land, condemning the property to build a public park. Yet, once Charles and Willa Bruce were forced off their land, the City instead kept the land vacant for decades.”

***Please see above regarding the evolution of the park on Blocks 5 and 12.***

“The Bruce Family were robbed of their land, their business, and their legacy.”

***Their legacy continues and perseveres thanks to people who choose to respect their legacy and keep it alive.***

“They were forced to move and live the rest of their lives working for someone else ...”

***While there is evidence that states Charles may have continued working as a cook on the railroad, it's unlikely. Please see above regarding their residences.***

Forcing the Bruces off their land contributed to the racial segregation in the City and deprived the Bruce Family of their legacy and generational wealth.

***“Generational Wealth” is a subjective term that cannot be accurately or fairly measured. What we do know, however, is that the Slaughter Apartments – a 10-room boarding house that opened the weekend the Bruces' closed and advertised itself as “formerly Bruce's Beach” closed in 1930 because they defaulted on their payments. Records show that the Mortgage Insurance Corporation took over the property in 1930.<sup>[13]</sup>***

By returning this land to the descendants of the Bruce Family, we set precedent for how to deliver the reparations owed to Black Americans including, but not limited to, the descendants of enslaved persons.”

***Neither Charles nor Willa were “enslaved persons”. They were astute businesspeople who worked hard, made a name for themselves and a good deal of money for their family. They were subjected to blatant racism, which they fought for 12 years and, when they were in their 60s, they opted to accept money instead of continuing their fight.***

Thank you for your time and for making the public aware of the injustices done to our fellow citizens. I'm eager to see us move forward as a community and work together to acknowledge our past and create a better future. I implore you to cite accurate facts because as government leaders, the public relies on you to be honest and truthful when it comes to our history.

Sincerely, Kristin Long Drew

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<sup>[1]</sup> “Recall Favors City Trustees at Manhattan,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1927, p. A10.

[2] “Nearby Town Now Center of Race War”. *Venice Vanguard*. February 15, 1928.

[3] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. July 21, 1932.

[4] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. February 2, 1933.

[5] Manhattan Beach Park Projects Being Pushed: Two Recreation Places Under Construction May Provide Work for Many Citizens,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1933, p. 10

[6] “Progress is Evident in Park Work”, *Manhattan Beach News*, August 11, 1933, p. 1.

[7] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. August 28, 1938.

[8] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. May 2, 1940.

[9] *Community Life, Summer Issue*, Recreational Life, 1945.

[10] City of Manhattan Beach Memorandum, Carl K. Newton, City Attorney, March 22, 1987.

[11] Minutes of the City Council Meeting of the City of Manhattan Beach. October 19, 1948.

[12] **“Legal Notices”, *California Eagle*, April 9, 1942. P. 12.; *California Revenue and Taxation Code*, CHAPTER 7. Sale to Private Parties After Deed to State [3691 - 3731.1] ( *Chapter 7 enacted by Stats. 1939, Ch. 154.* ).**

[13] Brigham, 78.

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