

Historical Ramblings

Aloha Beach – Lompoc’s Resort Community

Imagine sitting on the porch of your summer cottage, just steps away from expansive beaches on the Pacific Ocean. We’re not referring to Malibu, but to Aloha Beach, a resort community located at Surf, which was planned but never built.

In 1927, Los Angeles developer John Livingston Wyers subdivided 107 acres of ocean front property at Surf. The subdivision included 3.65 acres of beach frontage west of the railroad tracks, divided into 5 re-subdivisional blocks and 56 small small lots, featuring a promenade running in front of the beachfront lots. The property east of the tracks consisted of 24 subdivision blocks and 436 small lots. This portion was laid out in residential blocks, complete with streets and alleys, containing parcels ranging in size from small building lots priced at \$350 to acre estates demanding a whopping \$1,000. Five, ten and twenty acre tracts were also offered at farmland prices with improvements, streets and water.

The Surf railroad depot, surrounded by the development, was an asset to the proposed community, since it was a busy terminal for passenger and freight trains traveling the California Coast. “The Southern Pacific R.R. Coast line traverses this property on which is located the Station and Post Office at Surf California. This is a junction point connecting a branch line running up the Lompoc Valley to Lompoc,” according to the sales brochure published by Wyers. The brochure described the area in very favorable terms, enticing Southern Californians to purchase residential properties at farm land prices: “Ocean front communities of Southern California along the Pacific Ocean are destined to become world-famous as all-year residential sections, surpassing in natural beauty and attributes the choice localities commanding marine views in other parts of America, and as there is only a limited amount of Class A ocean front property, it is bound to increase in value and will command fabulous prices in the near future. It is the desire and purpose of the developers of Aloha Beach to build here an ideal home community where the business and professional man may have his summer home or cottage by the sea away from the turmoil of the city and, with his family, can enjoy the real beauties of nature with ideal and congenial surroundings and where they can go boating, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, play golf and have the advantages of a fine club, etc., at very low prices.”

While local residents were skeptical of the ambitious project, some stepped forward to purchase lots. H.P. Morinini, who had operated a general store at Surf for many years, purchased lot one in block one, preserving the location of his store to serve residents of Aloha Beach.

Since mineral rights were included in the deeds, one can assume that much of the property was bought on speculation. An exploratory oil well was drilled on the property to stimulate interest in sales. The July 30, 1929 edition of the *Lompoc Review* stated, “Public response to sales of property in the Aloha Beach subdivision so far has been excellent, according to Maurice Balaam, local real estate agent for the property. B.C. Morrison, one of the directors of Gaviota Oil Co. is personally supervising the

construction of a derrick and making other preparations to drill a well within the next two weeks.”

There is little information in Historical Society files regarding Aloha Beach after 1929. One could only surmise that the stock market crash and ensuing depression stopped the project in its tracks.

In 1942, the Aloha Beach property was condemned by the United States Government for Camp Cooke. The 74 page legal document outlining the condemnation, named each investor in Aloha Beach and described each of the 253 lots that were sold. The government paid nominal prices to those investors for their land. The condemnation excluded mineral rights and easements for roads, utilities and the railroad.

Some local residents still hold original Aloha Beach deeds as reminders of a local beachfront community that never materialized. They also hope that the mineral rights included in those deeds will someday pay off!