

# PATH OF HISTORY COMMITTEE REPORT

*For August 17, 2022 Historical Commission Meeting*

The Path of History is a series of informational markers placed in significant locations throughout the City. Through text and treasured photos, the City's rich history is brought to life for all to learn and enjoy. Originally developed by the Leadership Redondo Class of 2002, the last marker was installed in 2009. That marker, "The Redondo Beach Plan", was installed in the Civic Center, just outside the council chambers. The Historical Commission has undertaken "rebooting", as well as expanding the program to North Redondo Beach locations. It is believed that the next two markers will be installed before the end of November.

## Update:

Markers in Fabrication: (1) Vincent Park and the Lamp of Learning; (2) The Ainsworth Staircase. See attachment to this report. Estimated date of fabrication completion:

Pre-fabrication (preliminary design completed): (3) Old City Hall, Library and Fire House

Pre-design (content written): (4) Aviation High School; (5) Golden State Fireworks; (6) Historic Redondo Beach Boulevard; (7) Veteran's Park Library (Old Main Library); (8) Pacific Light and Power original power plant; (9) Fox Theater; (10) Chautauqua Society and Hall; (11) Salvation Army on Beryl; (12) Redondo Wharves

Content in process: (13) Rancho Sausal/Rancho San Pedro boundary/Ranchos; (14) oil derricks; (15) Salt Lake and salt works; (16) Red Car (and Santa Fe Depot); (17) gambling barge

Markers installed (2002-2009): (1) The Plunge and Lightening Racer; (2) Marina/Harbor Construction; (3) The Piers of Redondo Beach; (4) Hotel Redondo; and (5) The Redondo Beach Plan

Goals before September meeting:

1. **Identify fundraising partners, create overall fundraising and initiate fundraising**, including leveraging publicity from newly installed markers. Discussed the need to identify funding partners, sign project leads, research, writing, and protocols.
2. **Finalize production and get two new markers installed.**
3. **Get pre-design markers to sign designer for pre-fabrication design.**
4. **Finish content in process.**
5. **Update Path of History content on website.**

No Commission action needed at this time.

Attachments

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## VINCENT PARK AND ...

Vincent Park was designed in **1887** and is Redondo Beach's oldest park. **William Hammond Hall** (1846-1934), the civil engineer who previously designed Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, prepared the original townsite map of Redondo Beach. Hall's subdivision plan gave Vincent Park its one-of-a-kind design that eventually shaped the surrounding streets and blocks of the City.

## ...THE LAMP OF LEARNING

Vincent Park was designed and located to generate interest in Redondo Beach by having a **Chautauqua Assembly** here. The Chautauqua movement was a popular, educational, cultural and political force in American life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both the park and the street that runs through it, were named in honor of Chautauqua movement founder John Heyl Vincent. The Chautauqua used an oil lamp design as their symbol and called it the "**Lamp of Learning.**" On July 30, 1890, the Chautauqua Assembly **held its first session in Redondo Beach.** While the Chautauqua remained in Redondo Beach for only two years, Vincent Park and the "Lamp of Learning" left its unique design on the City's geography.

In 2002, Redondo Beach designated Vincent Park as a local landmark, helping to assure preservation and protection of the park for future generations to enjoy.



*Aerial view 1938.*



*Original townsite map.*

*The original townsite map of Redondo Beach shows Vincent Park and its surrounding areas forming a "Lamp of Learning" design, a symbol of the Chautauqua movement. Vincent Park forms the center of the base of the lamp. Eventually, the left half of the upper portion of the lamp became part of Redondo Union High School, leaving only the lamp base (the park) remaining.*

*Sponsored by:* REDONDO UNION HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, PATRICIA DREIZLER, SALLY TEPHANY – CITY EMPLOYEE, PATRICK & MAGGIE HEALY, RICK ERIKSEN & LESLIE JACOBS.

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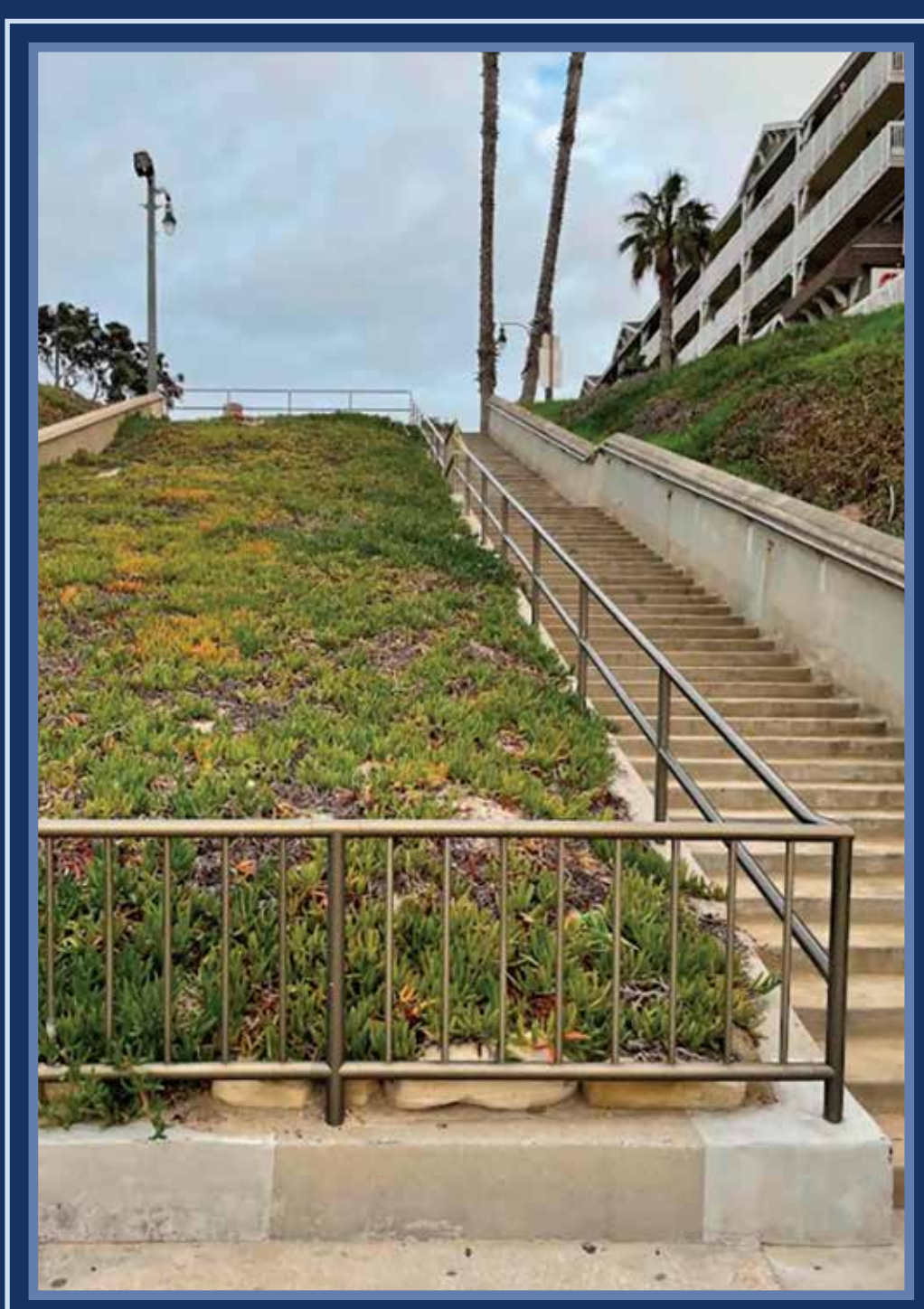
# THE AINSWORTH COURT STAIRCASE

When the **Hotel Redondo** opened for business in May of 1890, one of its most admired features was the magnificent cement staircase that descended from the south end of the elaborately landscaped hotel grounds to the beach below. The *Los Angeles Herald* thought the massive staircase, 30 feet wide and made of 70 steps, reminiscent of the Palace at Versailles, and the stairs became a place where fashionably dressed hotel guests could enjoy spectacular views of the Santa Monica Bay.



*Staircase as it appeared during the time the Hotel Redondo was open. Hotel Redondo is in the background.*

Many years after the hotel was demolished in 1925, a *Los Angeles Times* article mentioned that around 1944 the north side of the deteriorating staircase had been railed off by County workers. A narrow section on the south side



*As seen from the beach in 2022. The original stairs included the current stairs and the portion covered by the ice plant.*

had been repaired to allow for continuing pedestrian use. While ice plant now covers the railed-off north side, people still walk up and down the south side stairs every day, the last remnant of the once grand hotel.



*As seen from Veteran's Park in 2022, the concrete railing and decorative top are part of the original staircase.*

For most of its existence the staircase did not have an official name, and the current "Ainsworth Court Staircase" appears to be a 21st century invention. A newspaper article from 1908 mentions "the steps at the head of Wharf No. 2," and another from the 1950's refers to the "historic stairway." A map from around 1912 simply calls them the "Concrete Steps." Far more important than the name is the fact that the stairs, along with their spectacular views, are still with us, available to residents and visitors alike.

Supporters: MAYOR BILL BRAND; CITY COUNCIL: NILS NEHRENHEIM, TODD LOEWENSTEIN, CHRISTIAN HORVATH, ZEIN OBAJI, JR., LAURA EMDEE; HISTORICAL COMMISSION: STEVAN COLIN, DAN J. COMMIATO, ERIK E. FERNANDEZ, ILYA KLINGER, RON MAROKO, JACQUELINE S. WARSTADT, LORI ZAREMSKI; MIKE WITZANSKY, CITY MANAGER; CAMERON HARDING, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

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