



# The Peninsula Boardwalk: A History

By Sharon Kemmer

"We can't find your house ...", the delivery service calls up.

"Don't worry, if you tell me where you are I'll come out and meet you. I live on the Boardwalk..."

The boardwalk is a type of walk street; many communities have them, particularly older ones. Walk streets create addresses and residences not easily accessible by car. Walk street homes have carriage houses or garages open to lanes, side streets or alleys. The Peninsula has two walk streets: Bay Shore Walk and Seaside Walk. Yet, while most of the City has replaced its dirt, gravel, or wooden walkways with concrete and pavement, Seaside Walk remains a boardwalk.

In the 1980s, Long Beach wanted to replace the boardwalk with a concrete sidewalk. The original Peninsula boardwalk/seawall had been built in 1925 to protect the area from winter tides. The first chil-

dren in my 1927 home, the Off grandchildren remember 60th Place without a beach south of the seawall, except at low tide. When the tide was out, they would place a long ladder against the face of the seawall and climb down to the wondrous ocean floor below. At high tide the spray from the waves would sometimes mist their front windows and spray might go over the roof.

The seawall gained its undulating curves from wave action prior to the creation of the current off-shore breakwater in the 1940s and the sand beach in the 50s. The seawall, set in the sand at an average depth of 20 feet, is anchored by rocks at several points at its base. The sand beach, built from dredging the channel to Alamitos Bay, used to ebb and flow with the currents,

until these were interrupted by the building of Pier J and the Queen Mary. The sand that used to rebuild in the summer now comes back by truck.

In the 1980s, the 60-year-old boardwalk was badly weathered and in need of extensive repairs. The city proposed to replace it with a resident-financed sidewalk, either by establishing an assessment district, by payment from owners of lots abutting the boardwalk, or through voluntary contributions. In the end, a combination of resources came together to preserve what many residents consider to be an historic treasure. Using a \$20,000 state grant, labor provided through the

City's Summer Youth Employment Program and supervised by Long Beach City College instructors, a newly refurbished boardwalk was completed in September of 1986. The state grant was supplemented with \$30,000, raised among Peninsula residents by Alamitos Bay Beach Preservation Inc.

The City last refurbished the Peninsula Boardwalk in 2003, replacing damaged boards with new, treated wood. Softer underfoot for walkers and joggers, better than card-and-clothespins-on-the-spokes for creating a racket with a bike or trike, the Peninsula Boardwalk is preserved as a unique feature of a unique neighborhood.

The Off family home, between 60th and 61st Place, on Seaside Walk. Construction began in 1927, and the family occupied it until its sale in 1938. A triplex inhabiting the grandparents in the lower unit and their children and grandchildren living at the residence, off and on, in the two upstairs apartments. With an outdoor shower behind the staircase, the home was on the boardwalk, a part of which is visible in the foreground.

