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2025 Topic Suggestions – Attachment A

The “Fourth Estate” – The important newspaper history of Huntington Beach. Newspapers and newspapermen have played a consistently critical role in our city’s development since well before our incorporation. Several editors were considered preeminent leaders in Huntington Beach, much admired, respected, and honored even to the point of parks naming. Far beyond “getting the word out,” and providing debate opportunities and incredibly valuable political endorsements, they offered literal windows through which our citizens could share their stories. Oddities like two-headed amphibians, mammoth tomatoes and even an egg with the enemy flag of Imperial Japan emblazoned on it provoked much comment as the “talk of the town” and were featured in the newspaper’s window.

Before Surfing: “Boosting” Our Beach – Years before we became known for our surf breaks, our beach was touted as a lure to tourists, new-comers, and investors. Even after the beach was lined with oil derricks in the 1920s, pictures of people frolicking in the sandy sunshine with the oil rigs behind them were featured in ads. Our beach offered a playground, a bandstand, the famous Pav-a-lon Ballroom, and the Saltwater Plunge. It was also home to popular bathing beauty contests. A burgeoning surf-side mobile home park sheltered many folks including our first female city clerk and wife of the grandson of our first mayor, Alicia Wentworth, whose tape-recorded oral history interview survives to tell her story. The early Huntington Beach Co. was not always pleased with the “immoral” appearance of the site, and took action to remedy their concerns including beach-front “raids” overturning tents and other makeshift structures that might be concealing unseemly behavior.

A History of Honoring Military Service- Early posters and a billboard noted the names of service members, but were cheap, temporary, and quickly lost to time. In 1931, the city opened Memorial Hall, dedicated to the “heroes of all wars”. At the time, said wars extended only through WWI as no other international wars had yet been fought. In 1949, following WWII, a concrete memorial plinth was produced, placed behind Memorial Hall on an altar-like dais. The focus of ceremonies for some years afterward, a plaque was added in 1964 naming the fallen as known at the time. When the new City Hall Complex was opened in 1974 and the old Memorial Hall was demolished, the plinth was moved to the site. Discuss creation of the new black granite memorial championed by Vietnam veterans. Discuss time capsule found in the base of the old plinth and new time capsule purposely placed in the new memorial. Names and notations on new memorial - POW/MIA designations have now all been solved! Subsequent research, refacing and needed additions. Three more names need to be added!!!!

Our City at War – Huntington Beach was home to a critical resource, oil, during WWII. In what ways did this affect the daily lives of our citizens? Site take-overs by the military, responses through service by various civic groups, blackouts, listening stations and more. The High School airplane model club was called to service. Even our Christmas Pageant felt the effects. A second article must focus on the way our

long-standing Japanese American population was treated, specifically the Wintersburg community whose history has been well-documented by Mary Adams Urashima.

Automobiles – From Family Fords to Race Cars! - the early and increasingly wonderful role of autos in our “oil city” Huntington Beach as we transitioned from horses to motor cars. Amazing stories of early car dealerships with enduring legacies, gas stations whose few owners including a popular mayor were referred to as “oilmen,” and more including auto thefts (a police car was famously stolen) and the shared rides offered by the American Legion during WWII as well as the city’s “Race Track” where famed driver Parnelli Jones made his debut. There is also a great story about a “blind” driver – a showman who dazzlingly plied his skills while blindfolded throughout the Southland including Huntington Beach, all the while showcasing whatever car he was hired to advertise! And of course, our city’s Bookmobile!

The Story of our Schools –

Discuss the founding of our schools from the first elementary to the high schools and their respective districts. The tiny elementary classroom’s early years on Main Street, the creation of first and successive high schools and the educators whose skills and leadership engendered excellence. What and how were various amazing events celebrated by our schools, from “Rube Day” to Lincoln’s Birthday? Who were the schools named for and why? In what ways did they contribute to broader city events and needs?

Our Parks and Playgrounds –

Huntington Beach is home to a truly remarkable park system with origins dating back to our earliest years. From the early and now obscured Circle Park to Quimby Era parks on land set aside by developers often incorporating neighborhood demands, to our enormous famed Central Park, we have exceptional stories to tell. Who designed them? Why did they contain the equipment they did – including structures featured at a World’s Fair and others created by famous designers - and who were the parks named for? We could feature a representative few.

Our Famous Architects –

Structures throughout Huntington Beach have been designed by famous architects, some of whom were noted in their day and others who continue to be regarded for excellence years after their contributions to Huntington Beach were made. Richard and Dion Neutra created our renowned Central Library. Kurt Meyer designed our Civic Center Complex. Internationally prominent architect Victor Gruen contributed to many sites including the McDonnell Douglas Campus (later Boeing) here and at least one projected beach front development. There were many others whose work is represented in public and residential design. Prominent landscape architects also designed important projects here. Extremely prominent landscape architect Ralph Dalton Cornell contributed to the Bluff Top Park development in our city. Internationally renowned EDAW (Harvard educated Eckbo, Dean, Austin, and Williams) created Central Park. Richard Bigler, our first park landscaper, also achieved national fame. He designed Lake Park and went on to design Eader Park, incorporating celebrated cutting-edge ecological and preservation ideas. There are many others.

Horses, Cows and Dogs, oh my!: Animals in our History – Traditional farm animals - the horses which pulled our wagons and plows, the cows our pioneer families relied on for milk and butter as well as some early chicken farms - were the basic energy for and products of our original agricultural economy. As time passed, however, and our economy transitioned, animals enjoyed a new role as news stories. From “Cyclops,” a one-eyed tomcat who terrorized early Main Street to a well-known local wagon horse whose death was lamented by an advertisement, “Maude is Dead and a Ford in her Stead,” animals have been a fun and very telling hallmark of HB history. From the early appointment of our first dog catcher, to Bill and Ben Seal in their “pond” on the pier, to the oddball rooster who persistently entered the then new Central Library where he perched in the Shakespeare section, and on to the “great cat licensing fiasco of the mid-1970s”, our history is rife with these endearing and always approachable stories of animals in our historic midst. Most importantly, we should honor our “sworn” animals – horses and dogs (one of which was killed in the line of duty) and one pet pig named “Fuzz”– who have seen service with our HBPD. There are more! A very engaging and family friendly topic! People LOVE this topic!

Time Capsules! We have created and opened a number of time capsules in Huntington Beach. These are an idea with a fascinating history in American popular culture. We have had military time capsules, pier time capsules, school time capsules and library time capsules in our city – many decades old. The story of their creation, contents and discovery is remarkable. When I first offered a talk on this for our library during COVID (my first zoom talk ever!) our attendance jumped from previous talks at least four fold. People are extremely interested in this. I know even more about it now and have lots to share.

1933 Earthquake Widely considered a Long Beach event, Huntington Beach was hit very hard by this earthquake. A local scientist captured the thing on his seismograph. Our Carnegie Library was severely damaged, requiring costly and innovative repairs. The Huntington Beach High School was so badly impacted, our American Legion Post was called into action to patrol and protect this and other sites. The Palm Street school complex was levelled while the City Pool and Gymnasium there surprisingly survived intact. We have documentation for all this including the local seismograph recording, damage reports, repair correspondence and some remarkable photos.

Industry! Beyond oil, Huntington Beach has been home to important industries that shaped our city and its future. The famed Holly Sugar Factory operated for years in the early decades of our city, coupled with agricultural sites like the “Beet Dump.” While working in our famed celery fields, work horses wore special wooden shoes to protect them from sinking, disastrously, into deep mud. We had a successful tile factory and another which made brooms that put us on the map at the time! Our enduring tourism industry began before we were a city! The Lusk Industrial Park was widely celebrated. And, of course, we became a key participant in the “Space Race” as Douglas Aircraft opened their plant here, luring so many employees we arguably became the fastest growing city in the country!

Additional Suggestions:

Our Sworn Personnel: A History of Service. For the Huntington Beach Police Department, we have rich resources to support this topic including a published work written some years ago, and subsequent historical materials which are being transferred to the City Archives. We could also offer material on our Lifeguards courtesy of the excellent work of retired Lifeguard Kai Weisser who has already written one book on the subject, recently published a widely well-received article, and is writing a more expansive book at present. However, we don't have a great resource for the Fire Department history and this could be a ton of work. But it clearly could (and at some point, should) be done!

Our City's Growth! From the tiny area surrounding Main Street which was mapped in 1903, Huntington Beach has grown at least tenfold! At one point, we were the fastest growing city in the nation! Great stories about repainting "population" on our welcome signs. What areas were annexed and when? How did some of our early subdivisions come to be and how were these "modern" homes marketed? How did our "assets" from Meadowlark Golf Course to the Douglas plant lure newcomers? Also share the story of Huntington Harbour annexed, designed, and developed as an amazing residential space.

Public Art This was an alternate suggestion for 2023-2024 and it is a good one. From the "Nude Dude" to the Seacliff tiles and beyond, this is a celebrated feature of Huntington Beach! We have great film footage about public art pieces. I have some programming ideas about the bird tiles.

Prehistoric Huntington Beach Early news articles and some early city reports describe prehistoric fossils found along the coast and just off of it. Great stories here. Everybody loves a good dino/early mammal story! Educational and family friendly. Plus, it ties into the story of oil!

The Mail Must Go Through! As in many similar areas, household delivery of the mail did not exist in Huntington Beach until about the 1930s. How did this affect mail delivery, voter registration, real estate transactions? How did the mail "get through"? Who was our first Postmaster? Tell the story of our first Post Office.