City's Origin, Growth Described by Founder

(Ed. Note:—The following article was written in August, 1916, by the late Jared Sidney Torrance, founder of the city, who herewith sets forth his reasons for founding the community).

By JARED SIDNEY TORRANCE

The rapid rise in the value of Los Angeles real estate between 1900 and 1910 was the direct cause of the inception of the undertaking to build a new industrial center near the harbor of San Pedro to which subsequently the name of Torrance was given. The Union Tool Company, one of the subsidiary corporations controlled by the Union Oil Co., needed additional area for expansion. The plant in Los Angeles had grown from a small beginning until it covered several acres.

To obtain additional adjoining area the enormous price of $2.05 per square foot, or over $100,000 per acre, was asked!

This was prohibitive. The idea was suggested that the company seek a new location, and build an entirely new plant, introducing every labor-having evice possible and the most efficient machinery and equipment obtainable.

The then-existing plant was obsolete, 'nconvenient and inefficient, having been built up piece-meal upon opposite sides of San Mateo St.

Land Purchased

I opened negotiations with the attorney for the Dominguez family, which owned a large, tract of land between Los Angeles and San Pedro. This resulted in the purchase of about 2800 acres of land for the sum of $980,000; and shortly afterwards of an additional 730 acres from one of the Dominguez heirs for about $550,000.

The Dominguez Land company was incorporated with a capital of $500,000, and I was made its president. Later the Dominguez Land corporation was organized and I was made its president, also. The latter corporation had a capital stock of $2,000,000 and it issued bonds for $1,500,000, the proceeds of the sale of which practically paid for the land. This latter corporation became the operating company.

The Union Tool company took an interest in the enterprise, purchased 25 acres of land, and constructed its present magnificient plant at a cost of over $800,000.

The entire tract was supplied with water by the Dominguez Water company, formed to supply domestic and irrigation water for nearly 20,000 acres of land. Its 33-inch wide main crosses our lands to a large, substantial reservoir near our northwestern corner.

Noted Planner

We employed the noted landscape architect. Frederick Law Olmstead of Boston, Mass., to lay out the townsite. The company employed H. M. Sinclair, formerly engineer of the Edison company, as its general manager.

After protracted negotiations, the deal was closed with the Pacific Electric Railway to build its railroad through the townsite and to serve the industrial interests which might locate there.

The contract with them also provided that within three years, before July, 1915, they would remove their general construction and repair shops from Los Angeles and locate the same on 125 acres of our land to be given without further consideration. Their plant was to have been completed and in operation by July, 1915.

Iron Works

Next in order of importance, a contract was made with the Llewellyn Iron Works of Los Angeles, which provided that they were to acquire a 15 per cent interest in the stock of our company, purchase 25 acres of the company's land and, within 18 months, to construct a new plant thereon and remove their plant there.

In the meantime, the Hendrie Rubber company, the Pacific Metal Products company, the Torrance Pearl Manufacturing company, the California Shoe Manufacturing company, and the Hurrie Window Glass company have built plants at Torrance. The shoe company failed, but all the rest are in operation.

Town Starts

Coincident with commencement of construction work by the Union Tool company, the work of laying out the town of Torrance was begun. Architect Olmstead had completed plans and contracts were let by General Manager Sinclair for a vast amount of street work, a water distribution plant, a sewer system, street lightning, etc., and for construction of a hundred or more houses, six brick blocks, a passenger depot and various other improvements—all first class.

Rigorous restrictions were adopted, looking toward the creation of a model industrial city. Indeed, some of them, in reference to racial matters, tread pretty had on the toes of the Constitution of the United States.

In order to provide funds for construction, the company created a serial six per cent coupon note issue of $750,00, due in from one to five years, and the stockholders paid in par for their 5000 shares of stock. The notes were taken largely by the stockholders.

Panic of 1913

As soon as the project was well under way and construction had proceeded to a certain stage, a sales campaign was started to sell business and residential lots and acreage. Sales were progressing very satisfactorily and closely approached the $1,000,000 mark when the panic of 1913 intervened and the campaign ended.

The Llewellyn Iron Works was nearly ready to begin actual construction on the ground but stringent financial conditions made it impossible for them to proceed. As the skies begin to clear in the summer of 1914, the awful European war burst forth and business stagnation ensued.

The Union Tool company was employing about 50 men in July, 1914, had completed an extension to their plant and equipment, and was arranging to add an additional 300 employees. Within 90 days the company practically shut down the plant, reducing the working force to less than 50 men. The result was lamentable.

The Pacific Electric also prayed for an extension of time in which to erect their plant which, of course, was granted. The Llewellyn Iron Works was unable to finance their construction and carry our their contract and they, too, were given an extension of time.

Times Improve

At this writing, August, 1916, the Union Tool company has resumed work, now employing nearly 400 men; the Llewellyn Iron Works is erecting its plant and the Pacific Electric is to start construction at once. There is absolute stagnation, however, in the real estate business and sales are nil.

We are erecting an additional hundred bungalows to meet a prospective early demand but they will, for the greater part have to be rented.

The enterprise has few stockholders. For the greater part they are men of means. It was the expressed wish of these latter gentlemen that the first consideration should be to do things right.

Plans were carefully considered and all construction work was of the most thorough character. Material results were to be the first consideration.

Plans

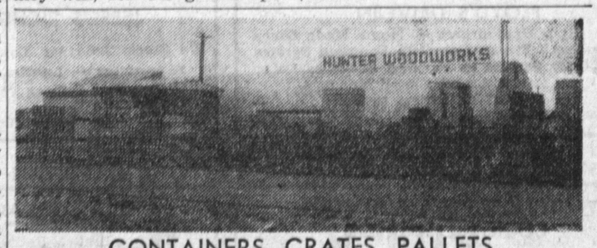
Sewers, paved streets and all public utilities were constructed in advance; alleys which contained all pole lines and water and gas mains were provided throughout the townsite; ample reservations were made for public parks, an athletic park and for playgrounds; a civic center was designed; upwards of 300,000 trees were planted in streets and windbreaks; and several acres were reserved for public schools to be donated to the public, upon certain conditions as to the character and completeness of the improvements to be erected thereon.

Very particular attention was given to the proper housing of the future employees of the factories locating here.

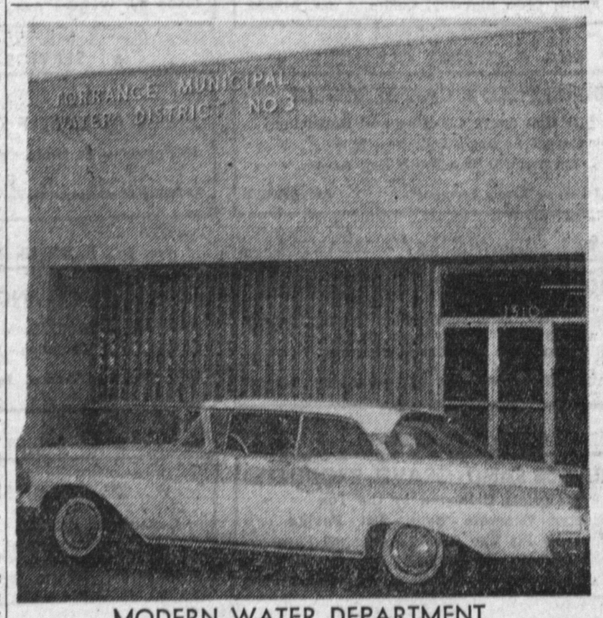
It was expected that incidentally the enterprise would prove profitable as well as utilitarian. It is difficult, however, at this time to forecast the outcome. It must eventually prove a material success.

Prophetic Vision

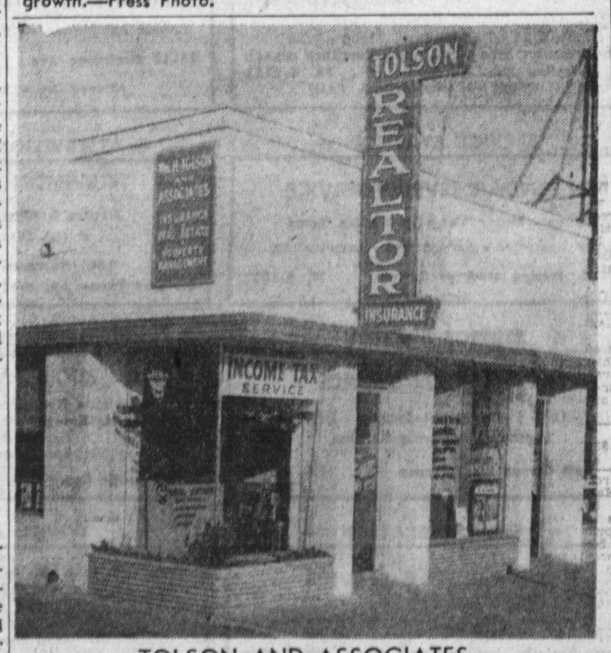
The residents of Torrance will enjoy an environment which will make for good health, good morals and industrial welfare and prosperity, and if conditions return to normal within a reasonable time and the wheels of western progress are again put in motion the public-spirited men behind the enterprise should reap a substantial reward.



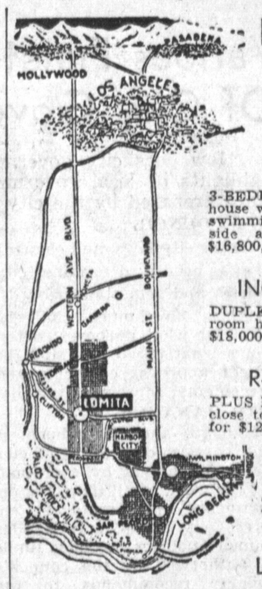
CONTAINERS, CRATES, PALLETS
Hunter Woodworks manufactures wooden shipping products for Southern California industries.—Press Photo.



MODERN WATER DEPARTMENT
Torrance Municipal Water department, located at 1510 Cravens, recently modernized its offices to keep up with the community's growth.—Press Photo.



TOLSON AND ASSOCIATES
Tolson and Associates, real estate firm, opened here in 1946. —Press Photo.



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