

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

DRAFT

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Bay Street Beach Historic District

Other names/site number: The Inkwell; The Ink Well

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: See verbal boundary description

City or town: Santa Monica State: California County: Los Angeles

Not For Publication: ☐

Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☒
Public – State ☒
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☐
District ☒
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> </u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>10</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bay Street Beach Historic District comprises approximately 53 seaside and nearshore acres in the City of Santa Monica within Los Angeles County, on public trust lands owned by the City of Santa Monica and the State of California. Included in the district are four contributing resources, three sites—a grass open space, a beach area, and a nearshore area (*i.e.*, below mean high tide)—and a pergola (structure). Ten noncontributing resources comprise a suite of visitor amenities and municipal facilities, including one building, one site, seven structures, and one object. The district served as a primary beach recreation and leisure site for African American Angelenos during the Jim Crow era. While Los Angeles beaches were not legally segregated, the area—sometimes derogatorily referred to as “the Inkwell,” noting the skin color of its patrons—was proximate to an important African American civic institution and historical local neighborhood. The beach was a primary seaside public resource where its visitors, including prominent African Americans from Santa Monica and the wider Los Angeles area, felt comparatively safe from harassment. The district is both a rare example of an African American seaside recreation and leisure site as well as a community cultural focusing point. Visitors may access the district directly from either the popular Santa Monica Pier to the north or Venice Beach areas to the south, or through a number of public parking options. The district is set along a portion of Los Angeles’ urbanized coast and within one of the county’s oldest cities. The area

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is heavily developed compared to the northernmost (Malibu) and southernmost (Palos Verdes) portions of coastal Santa Monica Bay. The property's contributing structure retains all aspects of integrity; the contributing sites retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, design, materials, and association. As the sites are coastal geologic resources, workmanship is not applicable.

Narrative Description

LOCATION AND SETTING

The City of Santa Monica is a coastal municipality within Los Angeles County, California, comprising 8.3 square miles along 3.5 miles of coastline.¹ Incorporated in 1886, Santa Monica is one of the county's oldest cities.² Santa Monica sits near the middle of the hemispherical-shaped Santa Monica Bay and its coastal areas face west or west-southwest (**Figure 2**). Within city limits, the Bay Street Beach Historic District extends 0.2 miles along the coast and incorporates landside and nearshore public trust lands owned by either the City of Santa Monica³ or the State of California. State beach areas managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR);⁴ submerged, state nearshore areas managed by the California State Lands Commission⁵ (**Figures 1, 9, 11**). Immediately northeast of the district is the Phillips Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church—originally a schoolhouse purchased by church congregants and moved to its location in 1908. Phillips Chapel CME Church is Santa Monica's oldest African American church.⁶

Wave Formation and Surfing: The Bay Street area receives surfable waves from a variety of directions: from fall and winter storms originating in the northern Pacific Ocean, and spring through fall from storms formed either in the southern Pacific basin or from equatorial hurricane (cyclonic) activity. Bay Street, as with other west-oriented beaches, is among the most consistently surfable areas in the region. Surfing is an interaction with a specific, and complex, biophysical environment. Like many forms of outdoor recreation, surfing is *site-specific*. Different surfing styles or performance standards are associated with specific surf breaks. Surfing is also *site-dependent*, requiring an explicit, and often contested, set of coastal resources. Site-specific and site-dependent surfing resources incorporate (1) beaches and nearshore areas where waves collapse—or break—in shallow water and in consistent patterns as to support surfing, (2) larger surfing areas—as a complex of proximate surf breaks, and (3) other physical and associative features that collectively make a site unique.

Surfing Quality: Coastal and nearshore physical features determine specific surfing typologies. Submarine canyons, coral reefs, and prominent points of land are features associated with specific types of surf breaks and a range of surfable wave heights. Sandbar surfing areas, including the Bay Street Beach Historic District, are a wave type constituted by a sandy beach

¹ <http://www.smgov.net>.

² Santa Monica History Museum, <http://www.santamonicahistory.org>.

³ Los Angeles County Assessor's Parcel No. 4289-025-900.

⁴ Parcel Nos. 4289-025-902; 4290-021-903; 4290-021-904; portions of Santa Monica State Beach.

⁵ Calif. Pub. Res. Code § 6001 et seq.

⁶ Parcel No. 4289-010-026; 2001 4th Street, Santa Monica, California, 90405-1115.

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bottom with temporary bars which form through a complex combination of wave energy, sand transport, beach and nearshore bottom (bathymetry) profiles, and immediate coastal features. Sandbars represent a range of surfing opportunities across a corresponding range of surfer expertise. At Bay Street, while waves break consistently through the year, thereby offering its surfers many days to surf there, it is a lower-quality wave most suitable for beginning surfers. Bay Street's lack of features—natural, such as a point of land, or engineered such as a pier, jetty, or groin—mean nearby sandbars are slow to form and quick to dissolve.⁷ Waves at Bay Street break quickly and nearly all at once, *i.e.*, waves “close out”. Where surfers can ride waves at a high-quality area such as the region's premier break, Malibu, up to 800 feet or longer, rides at Bay Street are often less than 100 feet.⁸ Bay Street's convenient access, consistent waves, relatively uncrowded lineup, and lifeguard supervision make it an attractive, and important, regional surfing area where beginners learn the sport.

BAY STREET BEACH (three contributing sites, one contributing structure)

The district includes three contributing sites: the lower grass area of Crescent Bay Park; the beach area between Vicente Terrace and Bicknell Avenue extending from the Ocean Front Walk promenade to the mean high tide line; and nearshore areas, possessing the same northern and southern boundaries, extending from the mean high tide line seaward 1,650 feet (500 meters) (**Photos 1-4, 22**). An open-top pergola is a primary feature of Crescent Bay Park.

Crescent Bay Park (one contributing site): Crescent Bay Park comprises 1.8 beachside acres of bi-level, landscaped open space between Bay Street and Bicknell Avenue (**Figures 3, 9, 11**). A 1.18-acre grass lawn and retaining wall forms the lower portion of Crescent Bay Park and is included in the district boundary. The area comprised a portion of the original South Side Park, which the City of Santa Monica took by condemnation suit in 1896 as part of lateral sewer construction project. The park was landscaped and a pergola constructed in 1911. It was then renamed Crescent Bay Park to recognize these improvements. The park offers direct views of the beach and larger Santa Monica Bay, and connects to Ocean Front Walk, then the sand and water beyond. As the topography of the park has changed through the construction of a parking lot and direct sand nourishment projects, the frequency of park use has also changed. Crescent Bay Park is an important reference point and defining resource of the district.

Within Crescent Bay Park at the far eastern portion of the district boundary, a 35-step concrete staircase (noncontributing structure) connects an upper, pedestrian sidewalk to the lower, grass area (**Photo 7**). Staircase railings are welded steel, square hollow, structural sections. Its specific construction history is unknown as are any modifications during or following the period of significance. The 0.6-acre upper grass lawn was developed following the period of significance by re-routing north-south traffic along Ocean Way. This upper grass lawn, gazebo, and benches are not included within the district boundary. Crescent Bay Park is public trust land owned by the City of Santa Monica and managed by the city's Community and Cultural Services

⁷ For an introduction to the dynamics of breaking waves, see: Willard Bascom, *Waves and Beaches: The Dynamics of the Ocean's Surface* (New York, NY: Anchor Press, 1990).

⁸ “Malibu.” In *Surfer Magazine's Guide to Southern California Surf Spots*. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006).

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Department.⁹ Immediately below Crescent Bay Park, and included in the district boundary, is a portion of the city's 4 South public parking lot. The State of California owned ¹⁰ property is managed by the city, and is sometimes noted as part of Crescent Bay Park.

Beach area (one contributing site): The beach is a 14.5-acre area, extending between Vicente Terrace and Bicknell Avenue on public trust land owned by the State of California and managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation as part of Santa Monica State Beach. The area offers continuous access to the shoreline and Pacific Ocean on one side, and Ocean Front Walk, and coastal Santa Monica, on the other. The beach offers panoramic views of Santa Monica Bay as well as prominent coastal attractions like Santa Monica Pier and Venice Pier (**Photos 5, 6, 9**). The area offers traditional beach leisure in addition to active recreation, *e.g.*, walking, running, biking, through a number of public amenities. The area has been significantly widened through a number of direct sand nourishment projects completed both during and since the period of significance. The area has always been associated with, and utilized for, beach recreation, though portions of the area were at one time accessible only to members of nearby exclusive beach clubs. These restrictions effectively segregated white beach club members from African American Angelenos and other non-members, and formed a dimension of the area's history of contestation for leisure access and opportunity.

Nearshore area (one contributing site): The nearshore is a 35.3-acre area of coastal Santa Monica Bay. The area extends between Vicente Terrace and Bicknell Avenue and follows the mean high tide line extending 1,640 feet (500 meters) to sea on submerged public lands owned by the State of California and managed by the California State Lands Commission. The area can be accessed continuously from the adjoining beach. Popular forms of contact recreation—bodysurfing, paddling, wading, surfing, and swimming—are performed in the area and were during the period of significance. Not all district visitors went in the water. The coastal ocean's views, salt air, and moderate temperatures are also part of a beach visit, and of the district overall.

Crescent Bay Park pergola (*one contributing structure*): A flat, open-top pergola—extending approximately 170 feet parallel to the shoreline—prominently marks the lower portion of Crescent Bay Park and thematically connects the area to Ocean Front Walk (**Photos 8, 21**). The pergola's main walkway is 12.5 feet and paved with 12 by 12 inch tiles. The pergola's 60 Tuscan columns are 7-feet, 1 inch high, with abaci at the column base and top. Main walkway columns are spaced 11 feet apart on center, except at the ends, where they are grouped in pairs and triplets. Headers and support beams either rest directly on column abaci or, at the pergola's ends, on decorative tails. Archived photographs of the beach or Crescent Bay Park area all contain the pergola.¹¹ The pergola was constructed in 1911, though a specific history of modifications during or following the period of significance is unknown.

⁹ <http://www.smgov.net/Departments/CCS>; Parcel Nos. 4289-025-900; 4289-026-900; portions of 4289-025-902.

¹⁰ The parking lot is located on a portion of Parcel No. 4289-025-902.

¹¹ For an example of a pre-1940 photograph of the area, including the pergola, see: Santa Monica Public Library Image Archives Photograph No. #4183 img0031: "Arcade south of the Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica, Calif."

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IMPROVEMENTS AND ALTERATIONS

Typical of other popular beach sites, the district offers public improvements that provide access to, and safe enjoyment of, the area. The area also conspicuously supports a piece of municipal wastewater infrastructure, conveying stormwater from adjacent coastal areas directly to the ocean. Improvements, alterations, and public amenities that do not relate to the documented significance of the property are classified as noncontributing resources.

Access Improvements: Visitors access the area directly from Ocean Front Walk or via abundant automobile parking, either hourly (street/metered) or day-use (lot). Parking lot 4 South (noncontributing structure) is an important public improvement and prominent visual feature; comprising 1,334 day-use and short-term parking spots, of which 125 are within the district boundary (**Photo 11**).¹² The lot is managed by the City of Santa Monica on property owned by the State of California.¹³ Between Neilson Way and the beach, there are eighty-eight street and metered parking spots on Bay Street, Ocean Way, and Bicknell Avenue. Together, the plentiful street and lot automobile access in the area is consistent with visitor amenities serving a popular beach as well as a satellite option for the heavily visited Santa Monica Pier area.

Beach Nourishment: Santa Monica beaches, including the Bay Street Beach, are significantly wider than their natural condition, the result of repeated direct sand nourishment (**Figures 6, 9, 11, 12**).¹⁴ Regional nourishment projects were undertaken to reduce or recover from erosion; create wider beaches to accommodate more visitors and visitor-serving amenities; or conveniently re-distribute material excavated from major coastal construction *e.g.*, Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant (1950),¹⁵ Scattergood Generating Station (1959),¹⁶ and Marina del Rey Small Craft Harbor (1965). Between 1935 and 1958, Santa Monica Beach received more than 1.4 million cubic yards of sand, widening some areas by more than 400%.¹⁷ Beach width has largely stabilized since that time, mainly due to the Santa Monica Breakwater and, to a lesser extent, the adjoining Santa Monica Pier.¹⁸

Municipal Infrastructure: The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works Flood Control District operates and maintains the Pico-Kenter municipal stormwater drain (noncontributing

<http://digital.smpl.org/cdm/fullbrowser/collection/smarchive/id/2998/rv/singleitem/rec/7>. Accessed February 1, 2019.

¹² City of Santa Monica Planning and Community Development Department, <http://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD>.

¹³ Parcel Nos. 4289-025-902; 4289-024-901; 4288-033-912.

¹⁴ James G. Zoulas and Anthony Orme, "Multidecadal-Scale Beach Changes in the Zuma Littoral Cell, California." *Physical Geography* 28, no. 4 (2013): 277; Linwood Pendleton et al., "Size Matters: The Economic Value of Beach Erosion and Nourishment in Southern California." *Contemporary Economic Policy* 30, no. 2 (2012): 4-6; Anthony Orme et al., "Beach Changes Along the Southern California Coast During the 20th Century: A Comparison of Natural and Human Forcing Factors." *Shore & Beach* 79, no. 4 (2011): 5; T.D. Clayton, "Beach Replenishment Activities on U.S. Continental Pacific Coast." *Journal of Coastal Research* 7, no. 4 (1991): 1199.

¹⁵ 12000 Vista del Mar, Playa del Rey, California, 90293.

¹⁶ 685 West Grand Avenue, El Segundo, California, 90245.

¹⁷ Orme et al. "Beach Changes," 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

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structure) along Pico Boulevard, whose terminus and outfall extends into the district (**Photos 10, 13**).¹⁹ The drain is part of the county's 3,000 miles of underground storm drainage infrastructure and helps drain 4,200 coastal plain acres in Santa Monica and nearby communities of West Los Angeles and Brentwood.²⁰ The drain is constructed of reinforced concrete cement (RCC) and enters Santa Monica Bay in a 20-foot by 8-foot reinforced concrete box. Direct access to the drain/outfall is prevented by perimeter safety, chain-link fencing. Annually, the drain is typically blocked by sand between June until the first significant storm event. Drain outfalls during storms are conspicuous and flows can be fast moving (**Photo 14**).²¹ Since 2000, dry weather urban runoff has been diverted via a small pumping station to a nearby treatment and water recycling facility.²² Early versions of the outfall were constructed prior to the period of significance, and some conveyance infrastructure existed through the period. The drain is largely hidden from view, especially during the summer when beach visitorship is high, and more so prior to circa 1945, when beach width was considerably narrower.

Safety Improvements: Beach and water safety services are provided by Los Angeles County Fire Department Lifeguard Division personnel stationed at two, movable lifeguard stands owned and maintained by the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors. T-18 is located at the northern end of the district; T-20 between the accessible beach path and the district's southern end (**Photos 15, 16**). Storm-season beach erosion mitigation sometimes requires maintenance activities, including sand berm barrier construction, to protect the stands. Berms erode naturally throughout the storm season or are groomed away at the season's conclusion. T-18 and T-20 (two noncontributing structures) replaced earlier versions of Los Angeles County lifeguard stands present in the area during the period of significance. An increase in lifeguard personnel, and supporting equipment like lifeguard stands distributed more densely along managed beaches, reflect post-period growth in beach visitorship and use.

Visitor Improvements: A variety of public amenities serve beach visitors. A post-period of significance public restroom and outdoor shower facility (noncontributing building) is located at the district's eastern end, and includes Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access and fixtures (**Photo 17**). An approximately 30-foot wide, paved promenade, Ocean Front Walk (noncontributing structure), extends through the area and connects Santa Monica Pier to the north with the Venice neighborhood to the south (**Photo 18**). Ocean Front Walk dates from the period of significance and was once much closer to the shoreline, before several sand nourishment projects widened the beach. The promenade's importance is as a continuous pedestrian path between Santa Monica and Venice Beach, rather than a specific section of it. During the period of significance, African American visitors could access Ocean Front Walk and ultimately recreated at Bay Street Beach. A portion of the 22-mile long Marvin Braude Bike

¹⁹ Flood Control District Asset No. F02000459; The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region regulates storm and non-storm water discharges by the Los Angeles Flood Control District, Los Angeles County, and 84 incorporated cities (except the City of Long Beach) under National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES; US EPA) permit CAS004001.

²⁰ <http://dpw.lacounty.gov/LACFCD>.

²¹ *Pers. obs.; cf. Photo 14.*

²² The Santa Monica Urban Runoff and Recycling Facility (SMURRF)
<http://www.smgov.net/departments/publicworks/contentciveng.aspx?id=7796>.

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Trail (noncontributing structure) also extends through the area. The trail, opened in 1989, is an approximately 19.5-foot wide, Class I path that connects northern Santa Monica at Will Rogers State Beach with the City of Torrance to the south (**Photo 19**).²³

At Bay Street and Ocean Front Walk, a 12-foot wide post-period of significance walkway extends approximately 390 feet across the sand toward the ocean, providing beach accessibility for persons and small vehicles (**Photo 20**). Walkway planks are 11-inch wide pressure-treated timbers spaced 1.5 inches apart. Four tabs of the same materials and design extend out from the main walkway—two are 10 by 10 feet, two are 24 by 6.5 feet. The tabs provide beach vehicles a convenient entry and exit point when crossing the path itself.

Commemorative Plaque: A small monument (noncontributing object) dedicated by the City of Santa Monica recognizes and illuminates the history of beach use by African American Angelenos at the area (**Photo 12**). The monument consists of a bronze plaque inscribed with fourteen lines of text set in a boulder (**Figure 10**). Dedicated in a public ceremony in 2008 following two years of local advocacy, the monument sits at the intersection of Bay Street and Ocean Front Walk.²⁴ The plaque was programmed and dedicated through the city's Cultural Affairs Division Public Art Program.²⁵ The City of Santa Monica Landmarks Commission, responsible for implementing the city's local historic preservation programs to "protect improvements and areas...for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people" was not involved in the planning and installation process.²⁶

INTEGRITY

Location: The district's contributing resources remain in their original location and retain integrity of location.

Setting: The district retains its setting as a public recreational beach along an urban coastline. Typical of urban beaches, the suite of visitor amenities has changed and expanded post-period of significance to meet expectations and rising demand. Infill or other redevelopment occurred during the period of significance, and after, changing both the composition and visual pattern of residential, commercial, and public space. The property's essential character, as a place of seaside recreational and leisure, is present as is its continued relationships with adjacent beaches, the City of Santa Monica, and the larger Los Angeles region. While the relative spatial relationships among the sea, beach, and city have changed during, and since, the period of significance with beach widening projects, the underlying sea/beach/city connection is retained.

²³ Class I: Paths with exclusive right of way for bicyclists and pedestrians, set apart from the roadway, and with minimal vehicle cross flow. See http://www.dot.ca.gov/d4/bikeplan/docs/caltrans-d4-bike-plan_bikeway-classification-brochure_072517.pdf.

²⁴ Gary Walker, "Santa Monica: Plaque is Dedicated at Historic Inkwell Beach, Once the Only Local beach for African Americans," *The Argonaut*, February 14, 2008, <http://argonautnews.com/santa-monica-plaque-is-dedicated-at-historic-inkwell-beach-once-the-only-local-beach-for-african-americans>.

²⁵ Cataloged in the Santa Monica Public Affairs Public Art Collection, <http://www.smgov.net/portals/culture/publicArtCollection.aspx>.

²⁶ City of Santa Monica, California, Municipal Code § 9.56.020.

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Surrounding, panoramic views of the Santa Monica Bay in one direction, and the urban profile of Santa Monica/West Los Angeles in the other, are also retained.

Design: The district sites are public trust lands designed for seaside recreation and leisure. Connected to each other and the surrounding area, they retain their integrity of design. Crescent Bay Park retains its simple grass landscape, without significant modification of hardscape or other alterations. The park's 170-foot long, 70-column pergola retains its integrity of design as a shade structure, identifiable feature of Crescent Bay Park, and symbolic gateway to the beach and shoreline beyond.

Materials: The district's sites consist of a beach, formed by the deposition of sand, and its proximate nearshore and seaside areas. Southern California beaches, like Bay Street Beach, are generally formed by outflows from local creeks and rivers. Sediment outflows may contain beach sand (*i.e.*, grain sizes from .08 - .003 inches) high in quartz as well as other material smaller (fine) and larger (cobble, boulder). Bay Street Beach's history of importing sand through direct nourishment projects has increased the relative amount of fine material relative to beach sand. The specific construction and maintenance history of the Crescent Bay Park pergola, the contributing structure, is unknown. The timber roof, concrete columns, and terra cotta tile walkway were materials common and available in area construction from circa 1930, the earliest photographs of the park clearly showing its pergola.

Workmanship: The pergola's workmanship, including details such as its carved rafter tails and tiled walkway, is retained. The district's sites are geological resources for which integrity of workmanship is not applicable.

Feeling: The district's direct and convenient visitor access, views of the ocean and surrounding coastline, the particular visitor recreation/leisure opportunities and the amenities which support them, and the area's particular biophysical environment, together convey its character as an urban, seaside recreation and leisure area. By looking either north or south, the district offers views of less-developed portions of coastal Santa Monica Bay.

Association: The property's natural and constructed resources remain intact and continue to convey their association with recreational beaches. Identifiable beach areas, including Ocean Front Walk, the grass area of lower Crescent Bay Park, and the pergola, remain intact. Access from the beach to the nearshore waters is continuous and unobstructed. The area has been continuously used for beach recreation and provided to the public for that purpose. The beach areas themselves and their supporting visitor amenities easily link the site to Southern California's history of seaside recreation and leisure.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1908-1965

Significant Dates

1908

1964

1965

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Bay Street Beach Historic District is eligible at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black and Recreation/Entertainment for its contribution to seaside access, recreation, and leisure for African American Angelenos between 1908 and 1965. As a location of contestation the property is eligible in the area of Social History for its association with the broader American Civil Rights narrative—in this case a demanding of access to, and proper enjoyment of, public trust resources. Sometimes derogatorily referred to as “the Inkwell,” noting the skin color of its patrons, the beach was self-selected by African Americans as a place of recreation and leisure where its visitors felt relatively safe from harassment. In the Jim Crow era, California’s lax enforcement or overlooked civil rights laws dating back to the 1890s and Los Angeles’ *de facto* white supremacist policies manifested as restrictive housing, employment, and sometimes access to public lands or facilities. The area became a recognized extension of Santa Monica African American community life and a leisure destination for the region’s larger black population. At times, Black beach visitors recreating elsewhere faced exclusion, harassment, even violence. The period of significance begins in 1908 when the Phillips Chapel Colored Methodist Episcopal (later Christian Methodist Episcopal, CME) Church building, was purchased from the Santa Monica School Board and relocated to the corner of Fourth and Bay Streets, creating an anchor for local African American spiritual and community life. The period of significance ends in 1965 with passage of the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA). The VRA, together with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, removed federal and state discrimination barriers in public places, housing, employment, and voting, ending most Jim Crow policy as an era of *de jure* discrimination and segregation.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

“It was a summer weekend gathering place. You would see everybody...all your friends there.”
—Mr. Ivan J. Houston, former head of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, recalling Bay Street Beach.²⁷

Establishment and Growth of Santa Monica’s African American Community

African descent people have lived in the Los Angeles region since the founding of the El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Ángeles (the Los Angeles pueblo) in 1781.²⁸ There were 1,258 Black Americans recorded in the 1890 census (2.5% of the population) and the community grew in the subsequent decades to 15,579 (2.7%) in 1920, and 170,209 (8.7%) in 1950.²⁹ In the twentieth century, African Americans came to Los Angeles mainly from southern states, traveling frequently by rail to leave the country’s most severe discriminatory Jim Crow

²⁷ Quoted in: Alison R. Jefferson, “African American Leisure Space in Santa Monica: The Beach Sometimes Known as “The Inkwell,” 1900s–1960s,” *Historical Society of Southern California*, 91 no. 2 (2009): 155.

²⁸ Celia Rasmussen, “Honoring L.A.’s Black Founders,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 1995, B2.

²⁹ U.S. Census.

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restrictions.³⁰ In Los Angeles, though possessing its own white supremacist practices and traditions, African Americans nevertheless found employment; a more welcoming, hospitable lifestyle; a moderate climate; and the beach. Census records indicate a slower growth of the African American community in Santa Monica: 282 (1.8%) in 1920, and 1,555 (2.2%) in 1950.³¹

By the early 1900s, Santa Monica's African Americans (living alongside and among whites and other cultural communities of Chinese Americans, Eastern European Jewish Americans, Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, and old Californios) had established themselves sequentially in four local areas.³² African Americans first settled in the less affluent section of the Ocean Park neighborhood, centered loosely in the residential neighborhoods on Pico Boulevard between Second and Sixth Streets. California's first Colored Methodist Episcopal (later Christian Methodist Episcopal, CME) congregation formed in 1905, and worshipped at the Hull House in northern Santa Monica.³³ In 1908, the congregation purchased a damaged schoolhouse and moved it to the corner of Bay and Fourth Streets as the Phillips Chapel CME Church. A parsonage was added later, first on the church grounds, then later to a property across the street.³⁴ Phillips Chapel CME Church is recognized as the city's first Black church. The church, and its continuous presence at the Ocean Park site, has been an anchor of congregant's community and spiritual life. Second were residential neighborhoods that later became parts of the Santa Monica Civic Center and portions of the Santa Monica High School campus.³⁵ The third area was farther north in Santa Monica, around Broadway between Second and Sixth Streets.³⁶ The African American Calvary Baptist Church congregation purchased meeting space from the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the 1920s.³⁷ The fourth area was the multiethnic Pico Neighborhood, centered between Pico and Santa Monica Boulevards, and between Fourteenth and Twenty Fourth Streets.³⁸ In 1921, the First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church of Santa Monica congregation established meeting space in the Pico neighborhood. The formation of institutions, particularly religious institutions like Phillips Chapel CME, Calvary Baptist, and FAME Church of Santa Monica provided formal spaces where congregants could develop spiritual, political, cultural, leisure, and civic identities.³⁹ Other spaces, including the Crescent Bay Lodge No. 19 of Free and Accepted Masons (Freemasons), founded in 1910,⁴⁰ and the Santa

³⁰ Alison R. Jefferson, "Leisure's Race, Power and Place: The Recreation and Remembrance of African Americans in the California Dream" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2015), 199-200.

³¹ U.S. Census.

³² Jefferson, "African American Leisure Space," 161-162.

³³ Jefferson, "Leisure's Race, Power and Place," 200.

³⁴ City of Santa Monica Planning Division, *City Landmark Assessment Report: Phillips Chapel, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, 2001 4th Street, Santa Monica, California* (Santa Monica, CA: PCR Services, 2005), 12.

³⁵ Jefferson, "African American Leisure Space," 163.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 163.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 163.

³⁸ In the 1950s large sections of the Pico Neighborhood, including sections of African American tenancy and home ownership, were destroyed with the expansion of the Santa Monica Civic Center. In the 1960s, further destruction occurred with construction of the Interstate 10 Freeway; its western terminus in Santa Monica.

³⁹ Jefferson, "Leisure's Race, Power and Place," 208-209.

⁴⁰ Crescent Bay Lodge No. 19 is part of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of California F & M. Prince Hall Freemasonry is a branch of North American Freemasonry comprised predominantly of African American members, <http://www.mwphglcal.org>.

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Monica-Venice Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded around 1920, formed these identities, as well.

Discrimination, Segregation, Challenge, and Contestation

During the period of significance, African American Angelenos and Santa Monicans lived under a suite of race-based policies—limiting their civil rights and uniting them with black and ethnic communities elsewhere in the United States. There is also a history of exclusion specific to Santa Monica that determined access, use, and development in, and near, the Bay Street Beach Historic District. Prior to 1940, racial discrimination limited employment opportunities constraining African Americans largely to domestic or service occupations.⁴¹ Phillips Chapel CME congregants included individuals employed as a carpenter, chauffeur/driver, bricklayer, gardener janitor, laborer, liquor store operator, and porter.⁴²

There were black-owned small businesses. One of Santa Monica's first was McCarroll's shoeshine parlor, which opened in 1907.⁴³ Founded in 1879, the Los Angeles weekly newspaper *The Owl* was renamed *The California Eagle* in 1912 under new ownership.⁴⁴ A multiplicity of thriving businesses under black ownership was the exception. In housing, Los Angeles pioneered a practice of restrictive real estate covenants, private agreements limiting African Americans and other marginalized groups from occupying or owning property in certain neighborhoods.⁴⁵ Restrictive covenants were upheld by the California Supreme Court in 1919 and affirmed by the United States Supreme Court in *Corrigan v. Buckley* (1926).⁴⁶ More than twenty years later, the Supreme Court, first with *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), and then *Barrows v. Jackson* (1953)⁴⁷ held restrictive covenants were unenforceable and ended the policy. Not until 1950 though, post *Shelley*, did the National Association of Real Estate Boards update its Code of Ethics that heretofore explicitly prohibited agents from introducing families of color into white neighborhoods.⁴⁸

Other, unofficial intimidation—through vandalism, cross burnings, even death threats—persisted.⁴⁹ In addition to private selling agreements, redlining, the practice of denying home loans within neighborhoods identified as too risky (including portions of Ocean Park and Santa Monica), prevented access to capital for African American and other ethnic communities.⁵⁰ The

⁴¹ Jefferson, "African American Leisure Space," 163-164. Santa Monica Planning Division, "City Landmark Assessment," 5.

⁴² Santa Monica Planning Division, "City Landmark Assessment," 5.

⁴³ Jefferson, "Leisure's Race, Power and Place," 203.

⁴⁴ Douglas Flamming. *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁴⁵ For a review of the variety and history of racially restrictive sales covenants, see: Michael Jones-Correra, "The Origin and Diffusion of Racially Restrictive Covenants," *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 4 (2000): 541-568.

⁴⁶ *Los Angeles Investment Co. v. Gary* 181 Cal. 680 (1919); *Corrigan v. Buckley*, 271 U.S. 323 (1926).

⁴⁷ *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948); *Barrows v. Jackson*, 346 U.S. 249 (1953).

⁴⁸ Stephen Grant Meyer. *As Long as They Don't Move Next Door*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 80.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 219-220.

⁵⁰ The Ocean Park neighborhood surrounding the Bay Street Beach Historic District was either redlined as "Hazardous" or not labeled. For an interactive map of redlined areas in Los Angeles County during the New Deal, see: "How has the Redlining Map (HOLC) Shaped Los Angeles Regarding Socio-Economic Conditions and Health

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result was a downward cycle of deferred maintenance, lower-valued housing stock, and higher loan risk. Together, the practice of redlining and restrictive real estate covenants stunted African American wealth creation, first restricting access to many coastal neighborhoods, then effectively pricing them out of the market as home values there appreciated. By 2016, when compared to the larger population of Los Angeles County, African Americans were 50% *less* likely to live less than 0.6 miles (1 kilometer) from the coast, while Whites were nearly 47% *more* likely.⁵¹

Among attractions, improvements, and facilities bringing visitors to Los Angeles area beaches were several membership-based beach clubs. In Santa Monica, ten clubs were developed along three miles of beach between the Bay Street Beach Historic District and Santa Monica Canyon to the north.⁵² Near Pico Boulevard and the Bay Street Beach Historic District, Club Casa del Mar Club opened in 1924 and the Edgewater Club in 1925.⁵³

The clubs held exclusive membership, denying African Americans direct participation and access to club/clubhouse services.⁵⁴ Fencing, that at times, extended from the club across the sand and into near shore waters, conspicuously excluded non-members (including African Americans and other beach visitors) from those areas (**Figure 5**). The barriers were effective. Members preserved and strengthened their exclusive access, while beach patrons, including African Americans at Bay Street Beach, were denied access to public trust lands and compressed into smaller beach areas, generally between Bay Street and Bicknell Avenue (**Figures 7, 8**).⁵⁵ Various forms of fencing were installed and removed several times, with formerly exclusive areas eventually becoming open to non-member visitors.

Ms. Verna Williams (née Deckard), who moved to California from Texas as a teenager, and was a visitor to Bay Street Beach, recalled in a 1991 oral history:

And one day...we were playing beach ball with one of those big beach balls that you play with at the beach. And my ball went over that fence and I ran over there to get my ball. And a little old white lady comes running up to me saying, "You got no business over here." And I

Equity?" <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2a9f34991c5f4e899d217827139eb9a4>. Accessed February 1, 2019.

⁵¹ Dan R. Reineman et al., "Coastal Access Equity and the Implementation of the California Coastal Act" *Stanford Environmental Law Journal* 36 (2016): 106-107.

⁵² Santa Monica Image Archives, Santa Monica Public Library.

<http://digital.smpl.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/smarchive>. Accessed February 1, 2019.

⁵³ Club Casa del Mar: 1910 Ocean Avenue, Santa Monica, CA, 90405; Parcel No. 4289-025-003. In 2019, the property is operated as the Hotel Casa del Mar. In 2000 the property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as Club Casa del Mar (NRHP #00001169). Edgewater Club: 1 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA, 90405; Parcel Nos. 4290-021-007; 4290-020-042 4290-020-045. Following the Edgewater Club, the property continued operation as an exclusive beach club, first as the Waverly Club, then the Ambassador Club. The property was redeveloped and in 2019 operates as a hotel, Shutters on the Beach.

⁵⁴ Jefferson, "African American Leisure Space," 169-171.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 169.

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just looked at her, didn't say anything. I just took my ball and went on back over there in my spot, where I belonged.⁵⁶

Beyond exclusive membership and exclusive access, the popularity of beach clubs revealed another level of exclusion: capitalism itself. The Ocean Frontage Syndicate, led by two local African American entrepreneurs, Norman O. Houston and Charles S. Darden, Esq., proposed a "first-class resort with beach access," and a supporting regional marketing plan to draw upwards of 60,000 African Americans from across the country to the new facility near the western terminus of Pico Boulevard.⁵⁷ Like whites-only beach clubs, the proposed facility would be exclusive. Syndicate petitioners came before the Santa Monica City Council in 1922, appealing:

...that the colored citizens for whose benefit said improvements are to be primarily erected and constructed are without ocean frontage facilities and advantages such as bath houses, restaurants, dancing halls, and like amusements such as the abundantly owned, operated, maintained and controlled for the use and benefit of other citizens of the United States in the city of Santa Monica.⁵⁸

Unlike white clubs, though, part of its existence depended explicitly upon successfully and fully insulating members from white confrontation. The venture was never approved, its permits denied following a campaign of local, racially motivated opposition. The property was later developed as the whites-only Edgewater Beach Club in 1925.⁵⁹

Despite, or perhaps affirmed by, the failure of Ocean Front Syndicate venture, Bay Street Beach developed in reputation and renown as a beach where African American Angelenos and Santa Monicans could enjoy sand and surf without fear of harassment. Visitors enjoyed swimming, bodysurfing, and even surfing, while others would not go further than getting wet. Ms. Verna Williams remembers:

Yeah, we used to go to the beach a lot. Believe it or not, I never did learn how to swim. But I used to love to go there and play in the water. And then get wet, and then come and cover up in the sand. That really made me feel good to get real wet and then cover up in that sand.⁶⁰

Still, Bay Street's conspicuousness as a site of African American beach recreation was itself a product of discrimination and exclusion elsewhere. African Americans visiting other beaches were potentially subject to harassment and confrontation. On Memorial Day, 1920, Mr. Arthur Valentine, an African American chauffeur, took his family and friends to Los Angeles County's Topanga Beach, just north of Santa Monica. Valentine was ordered to leave the area by sheriff's

⁵⁶ Verna Williams, "Shades of L.A.: A Search for Visual Ethnic History," interview by Amy Kitchener, *Oral History Project, Los Angeles Public Library*, 1991.

⁵⁷ Jefferson, "African American Leisure Space," 176.

⁵⁸ Petitioner's quote from "Negroes Ask Zone Change to Build S.M. Bath House: Syndicate Asks Council to Amend Ordinance to Permit Amusement Resort on Beach," *Santa Monica Evening Outlook*, April 19, 1922; Cited in Jefferson, "Leisure's Race, Power and Place," 235.

⁵⁹ Jefferson, "African American Leisure Space," 178-179.

⁶⁰ Williams, interview.

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deputies. Following Valentine's resistance, deputies beat, shot, and arrested him.⁶¹ Excluding African American Angelenos occurred at other public spaces, as well. Into the 1940s, blacks were not allowed the municipal pool at Centinela Park in Inglewood.⁶² At Brookside Park in Pasadena, blacks and other ethnic minorities could only use the pool between 2pm and 5pm on "International Day," the last session before the pool was drained and cleaned later in the evening.⁶³ International Day persisted into the 1950s.

Bay Street Beach grew in popularity among African Americans because of its convenient access and its proximity to Ocean Park's African American neighborhoods. It also rose in prominence as other Southland sites of black seaside recreation and leisure were destroyed, and subsequently became continued spaces of harassment and animus toward African American visitors. These losses included the 1924 condemnation of Bruce's Lodge and surrounding properties in Manhattan Beach (Los Angeles County) and the 1926 arson of the nearly completed Pacific Beach Club in Huntington Beach (Orange County).⁶⁴

The assertion of the right, even if passively exercised, by African American visitorship to Bay Street Beach during the period of significance—to visit, recreate at, and enjoy public trust lands—places recreation within the twentieth century civil rights movement and recognizes beach visits as claims to power and legitimacy (**Figure 13**).

Surfers of Color: Nicolas "Nick" Gabaldón

Nicolas "Nick" Gabaldón, a product of Santa Monica's African American community and graduate of Santa Monica High School, is the first documented surfer of African American and Mexican American descent in the Santa Monica Bay area.⁶⁵ Born in 1927, Nick learned bodysurfing and surfing at Bay Street Beach. Tall, athletic, and both cool and casual in manner, he was befriended by area lifeguards Buzz Trent, Ricky Grigg, and Peter Cole—themselves expert surfers and among the first group of Californians to successfully and consistently ride large surf on Oahu's North and West sides.⁶⁶ Gabaldón eventually became friends with premier

⁶¹ The deputies were initially indicted for assault with a deadly weapon, but the case was dismissed in 1923 against all three officers due to insufficient evidence.

⁶² Josh Sides. *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles From the Great Depression to the Present*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Jean Simon, "Plan to Sue Inglewood in Pool Bias," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 17, 1947, 1.

⁶³ In a biography of American professional baseball player Jackie Robinson, who grew up in Pasadena and received the effects of the city's policies, Rampersad (1998) wrote: "City officials restricted [Brookside Park pool] use to Whites only...After a storm of protest, the city instituted "International Day" at the pool – one day each week when anyone could use it. At the end of this day, they promised, the plunge would be drained and refilled with clean water."

⁶⁴ Jefferson, "Leisure's Race, Power and Place," 238-239.

⁶⁵ Bill Cleary, "Death at Sea." *Surfwriter: A Personal History of Surfing's Golden Years*, accessed November 25, 2018. http://www.surfwriter.net/nick_gabaldon.htm; Alison R. Jefferson, "Nick Gabaldon (1927-1951): A Southern California Surfing Pioneer" *The Ultimate History Project*, accessed August 25, 2018. <http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/nick-gabaldoacuten-southern-california-surfing-pioneer.html>; Rick Blocker, "Legendary Surfers: Black Surfer Nick Gabaldon." *Surfing Heritage & Culture Center*, accessed November 1, 2015. <http://files.legendarysurfers.com/blog/2005/02/black-surfer-nick-gabaldon.html>;

⁶⁶ Nat Young, *The History of Surfing*. (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1994), 79.

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surfer and lifeguard Preston “Pete” Peterson, who loaned him a thirteen-foot paddleboard that could also be used for stand-up surfing.⁶⁷ Gabaldón used the board at every opportunity to enjoy Bay Street Beach and improve his surfing.

Gabaldón graduated high school in 1945, one of Santa Monica High School’s approximately fifty black students and one of the few black surfers.⁶⁸ One of Gabaldón’s African American surf buddies and high school classmates was Wayne King. Gabaldón entered the Naval Reserve and served 1945-46 in the Great Lakes region. Returned to Santa Monica from his service, Gabaldón enrolled in the local community college and spent time at the beach surfing.⁶⁹ His surfing ability had improved to where he could move from the marginal, if consistent, surfing conditions at Bay Street Beach up the coast to Malibu—at the time, a center of California surfing and an arena for the region’s expert surfers.⁷⁰

By the late 1940s, Gabaldón was regularly appearing at Malibu, often hitchhiking, occasionally paddling the twelve miles from Santa Monica to First Point, or driving once he got a car.⁷¹ So strong was Gabaldón’s enthusiasm for surfing that he was usually in the water until late in the evening. Rest breaks would be taken on the beach facing the water, watching and learning others’ surfing styles. This enthusiasm was recognized and encouraged by the local elite surfers who knew him as, “a handsome, well-liked guy with great surfing ability.” Les Williams, a Malibu standout surfer and friend of Gabaldón’s, at least on the beach, described his surfing as, “...a little slow on his feet, as a surfer, but as an accomplished (former) Navy boxer he was powerful, and fast. As a surfer I would rate him at B+.”⁷² Ricky Grigg, a top Malibu surfer and another Californian who later translated his ability to Hawai’i’s large surf, said of Gabaldón, “Everyone liked him. And he was a pretty smooth surfer, too.”⁷³ Malibu surfing was a cosmopolitan and often meritocratic, if bohemian, activity. As both a good surfer and a congenial person, Gabaldón made friends at Malibu, at least they were friendly enough. Gabaldón occasionally endured racist microaggressions to get along on the beach at Malibu, moving within a coastal culture that was almost exclusively white.⁷⁴

On June 5, 1951, a strong swell brought eight to ten foot waves at Malibu. In the afternoon with the swell peaking, three surfers, including Gabaldón, took off on an outside wave. Witnesses remember Nick’s glide and grace, the hallmarks of a Malibu surfer, on the wave. As the three

⁶⁷ Malcolm Gault-Williams, “Legendary Surfers: Nick Gabaldon (1927-1951).” *Legendary Surfers*, accessed August 25, 2018, <http://legendary-surfers.blogspot.com/2018/07/nick-gabaldon-1927-1951.html>; Craig Lockwood, “Waterman Preston “Pete” Peterson: A Life in Three Acts,” *The Surfer’s Journal*, 14 no. 6 (2005).

⁶⁸ Jefferson, “Nick Gabaldon.”

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*; Gault-Williams, “Nick Gabaldon.”

⁷⁰ Nat Young, “Malibu,” in *The Complete History of Surfing: From Water to Snow*, ed. Nat Young, (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2008), 73-77; Malibu’s significant contributions to the culture and history of surfing are recognized by its designation as the first World Surfing Reserve (2010) and as the first listing in the National Register of Historic Places centered on surfing history (2018, Malibu Historic District #100002022).

⁷¹ Jefferson, “Nick Gabaldon.”

⁷² Gault-Williams, “Nick Gabaldon.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Wayne King (resident of Altadena and, previously, the City of Santa Monica), interview with Alison Rose Jefferson, Spring, 2012.

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approached the Malibu Pier, two surfers pulled out of the wave. Nick remained and tried the never before attempted maneuver of surfing through, or “shooting” the pier. It was Gabaldón’s last wave. His board was found immediately; his body three days later at Las Flores Beach, east of Malibu Pier.⁷⁵ Nick’s Malibu friends and surfing peers attended his rosary service at St. Monica Catholic Church.⁷⁶ Mr. Wayne King, Gabaldón’s African American surfing buddy, who was surfing with him the day he drowned, helped the Gabaldón family pay for the service.⁷⁷

Nick Gabaldón is recognized as a pioneer: the first documented surfer of African American and Mexican American heritage in the Santa Monica Bay area, and a Californian who expressed his love of surfing at a time when recreation and leisure opportunities for Los Angeles’ people of color were intentionally, if not institutionally, limited. Since 2012, a group of activists and organizations have coordinated and produced Nick Gabaldón Day, an annual event at Bay Street Beach that honors his legacy, interprets the area’s history, and advocates for equitable coastal access and recreation opportunities.⁷⁸

Developmental History/Additional Historic Context Information

The City of Santa Monica is within the traditional territory of the Tongva (Gabrieleno) people, indigenous across a 4,000 square mile area including the Los Angeles Basin and Southern Channel Islands.⁷⁹ The Tongva are also known as the Gabrieleño and sometimes the Fernandeseño, referring to area units of California’s Spanish Missions system they were enslaved to construct (Mission San Gabriel de Arcángel; Mission San Fernando Rey de España). The Tongva’s status is recognized by the state, and not as one of 573 federally recognized tribes.⁸⁰

Juan Cabrillo explored the Santa Monica area in 1542, claiming its land on behalf of Spain.⁸¹ Cabrillo is known to have anchored off Santa Catalina Island and in Santa Monica Bay off the cities of San Pedro and Malibu. In 1769, a Spanish colonizing expedition, which included Junipero Serra and other Franciscan missionaries, returned to California as part of the Portolá Expedition.⁸² The expedition encountered the Tongva, who led them to their holy springs to replenish stores of water. In 1839, the government of Mexico issued *rancho* land grants to the area’s prominent families to recognize their patronage and service: Rancho San Vicente y Santa

⁷⁵ *Santa Monica Evening Outlook*, “Popular Community College Youth Dies in Surf Tragedy,” June 6, 1951, 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ King, interview.

⁷⁸ In 2018, the sixth Nick Gabaldón Day partners represented a variety of backgrounds and missions: Alison Rose Jefferson, MHP, PhD, <http://alisonrosejefferson.com>; Black Surfers Collective, <http://www.blacksurferscollective.org>; Heal the Bay, <http://www.healthebay.org>; Santa Monica Committee for Racial Justice; Santa Monica Conservancy, <http://www.smconservancy.org>; Surf Bus Foundation, <https://www.surfbusfoundation.org>; and Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA, <https://www.ymcala.org/weingart-east-los-angeles>;

⁷⁹ Paula Scott, *Santa Monica: A History on the Edge* (Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 9-13.

⁸⁰ CA Asm. Joint Res. 96, Res. Ch. 146, 1994; Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible To Receive Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs 83 Fed. Reg. 141 (23 July, 2018). *Federal Register: The Daily Journal of the United States*. Web. January 15, 2019.

⁸¹ Scott, *Santa Monica*, 14-15.

⁸² Theodore E. Treutlein, “The Portolá Expedition, 1769-1770,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 47 (1968): 291-313.

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Monica (33,000 acres to Francisco Sepulveda), Rancho Boca de Santa Monica (6,656 acres to the Reyes and Marquez families), and Rancho La Ballona (13,920 acres to the Machado and Talamantes families).⁸³ The three ranchos comprise lands in the later neighborhoods or cities of Culver City, Mar Vista, Marina del Rey, Ocean Park, Palms, Playa del Rey Santa Monica, Venice, and Westwood. The Bay Street Beach Historic District includes portions of the Santa Monica and Ballona land grants and is part of the Ocean Park neighborhood.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War, forced cessation to the United States over 50,000 square miles of Mexico's northern territories, Alta California, and Santa Fe de Nuevo México.⁸⁴ Importantly, the Treaty made provision that previously issued Spanish and Mexican land grants would be honored. By 1874, a majority of the San Vicente y Santa Monica rancho was owned by Colonel Robert Baker and partner investor Senator John Jones from Nevada, believing the area could become the "great commercial center of the southwest."⁸⁵ Baker and Jones subdivided their property and began selling plots in 1875 for \$75-\$500.⁸⁶ Santa Monica was incorporated within the County of Los Angeles in 1886. In 1897, Baker and Jones incorporated the Santa Monica Land & Water Company, which oversaw their land interests and ultimately developed over 50,000 acres in West Los Angeles, including Santa Monica.⁸⁷ The company was active through 1983. Ultimately, Jones and Baker did not realize their plan to develop Santa Monica into a commercial center. Industry settled farther south with the Port of San Pedro.⁸⁸ Jones and Baker did oversee the city's birth and initial growth as a seaside community.

While the adjoining areas of Ocean Park and Santa Monica received their land grants, and were later settled at about the same time, their histories are somewhat independent. Ocean Park grew upon an interest in seaside recreation and amusement under the development of Abbott Kinney's Ocean Park Development Company.⁸⁹ There, a series of amusement piers, bathhouses, heated plunges, an event auditorium, and an ice skating rink were constructed.⁹⁰ Kinney dissolved his interest in Ocean Park beginning in 1904, completing the process in 1907 with Ocean Park incorporated into Santa Monica.⁹¹ Kinney focused on the remaining portion of his holdings. He became widely recognized for the development of the town and beaches of Venice, California.

⁸³ Scott, *Santa Monica*, 26.

⁸⁴ United States Library of Congress. "Primary Documents in American History: Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo" Accessed February 1, 2019. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/guadalupe.html>.

⁸⁵ Louise Gabriel, *Early Santa Monica*. (Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 11-14; Scott, *Santa Monica*, 36.

⁸⁶ Gabriel, *Early Santa Monica*, 18.

⁸⁷ "Santa Monica Land and Water Company Archives" Accessed March 20, 2019. <http://www.smlwco.com>.

⁸⁸ Scott, *Santa Monica*, 48.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 64.

⁹⁰ cf. Gabriel, *Early Santa Monica*, 66.

⁹¹ Carolyn Alexander, *Venice, California*. (Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 9.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: Los Angeles County Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 53 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Latitude: 34.007002 | Longitude: -118.492252 |
| 2. | Latitude: 34.005655 | Longitude: -118.490984 |
| 3. | Latitude: 34.005972 | Longitude: -118.490530 |
| 4. | Latitude: 34.005239 | Longitude: -118.489966 |
| 5. | Latitude: 34.000823 | Longitude: -118.496385 |
| 6. | Latitude: 34.002776 | Longitude: -118.498462 |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Within the City of Santa Monica, the property extends approximately 0.18 miles north-south along the Pacific coast from Vicente Terrace to Bicknell Avenue. The northern boundary is a line formed by a point 500 meters (1,640 feet) seaward from the mean high tide line to the intersection of Vicente Terrace and Ocean Front Walk, and parallel to Vicente Terrace. The eastern boundary is formed by areas extending southeast from Vicente Terrace along Ocean Front Walk to Bay Street, northeast to the intersection of Ocean Way and the Crescent Bay Park, and southeast along the fence line of Crescent Bay Park's upper portion to Bicknell Avenue. The southern boundary is a line formed by a point at the intersection of Bicknell Avenue and Ocean Avenue, and a point 500 meters seaward from the mean high tide line, and parallel to Bicknell Avenue. The western boundary parallels the coastline between Bicknell Avenue and Vicente Terrace 500 meters seaward below the mean high tide line. The total area is approximately 53 acres.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

District boundaries, encompassing the three beach areas and the accesses to them, are in Los Angeles County and include portions of California Department of Parks and Recreation's Santa Monica State Beach and the City of Santa Monica's Crescent Bay Park. Through multiple beach accesses, the district boundary also encompasses subtidal areas extending 500 meters seaward from the mean high tide line on submerged lands under the authority of the California State Lands Commission. The seaward district boundary includes areas for wading as well as surfing.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michael Blum, Executive Director
organization: Sea of Clouds
street & number: PO Box 609
city or town: Hermosa Beach state: CA zip code: 90254
e-mail: michael@seaofclouds.org
telephone: (818) 564-4217
date: February 2019; Revised March 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	Bay Street Beach Historic District
City or Vicinity:	Santa Monica
County:	Los Angeles
State:	California
Photographer:	Michael Blum
Date Photographed:	October 11, 2018; January 20, 2019; March 12, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 22 Lower portion of Crescent Bay Park and its pergola, with the beach area and Santa Monica Bay in the background. Visible are a portion of the public parking facility, an area restroom and shower facility (left), and lifeguard stand T-20 (right). Camera facing southwest.

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- 2 of 22 Lower portion of Crescent Bay Park and its pergola, with the beach area and Santa Monica Bay in the background. Visible are a portion of the public parking facility, lifeguard stands T-20 (center) and T-18 (far right), and accessible beach path (right). Camera facing southwest.
- 3 of 22 Beach area with a breaking wave, lifeguard stand T-18, in the background. Camera facing southwest.
- 4 of 22 Beach area and Crescent Bay Park. Visible are Hotel Casa del Mar (far left), Bay Street (left), Crescent Bay Park (center), restroom and shower facility (right), and Bicknell Avenue (far right). Camera facing northeast.
- 5 of 22 Beach area and surfers in the water with the Santa Monica Pier and northern portion of Santa Monica Bay in the background. Camera facing northwest.
- 6 of 22 Beach area and surfers in the water with lifeguard stand T-22 on the left, T-24 in the center. The southern portion of Santa Monica Bay, including Rancho Palos Verdes, is in the background. Camera facing southeast.
- 7 of 22 Concrete staircase connecting lower and upper portions of Crescent Bay Park. Camera facing northeast.
- 8 of 22 Lower portion of Crescent Bay Park and its pergola with the Santa Monica Pier and northern portion of Santa Monica Bay in the background. Visible are a portion of the public parking facility (left), lifeguard stand T-18 (center), and Hotel Casa del Mar (right). Camera facing northwest.
- 9 of 22 Beach area with the Santa Monica Pier and the northern portion of Santa Monica Bay in the background. Camera facing northwest.
- 10 of 22 Beach area and Pico-Kenter drain with Shutters on the Beach (left), Pico Boulevard (center), and Hotel Casa del Mar (right) in the background. Camera facing northeast.
- 11 of 22 A portion of the pedestrian-supported Ocean Front Walk with the beach area and the Santa Monica Pier in the background. Visible are a portion of the beach public parking facility (left), Hotel Casa del Mar (center), and the Crescent Bay Park pergola (right). Camera facing northwest.
- 12 of 22 "The Ink Well" monument and commemorative plaque at the end of Bay Street and Ocean Front Walk. Camera facing south.

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- 13 of 22 Pico-Kenter drain, and surrounding safety fencing, leading to beach area with shoreline in background. Visible are a portion of the Marvin Braude Bike Trail (center) and lifeguard stand T-18 (right). Camera facing southwest.
- 14 of 22 Outflow from the Pico-Kenter drain following a winter (wet season) rainstorm. Coastal properties, including Hotel Casa del Mar (right), are in the background. Camera facing northeast.
- 15 of 22 Lifeguard stand T-18, northwest elevation with the Santa Monica Pier and northern portion of Santa Monica Bay in the background. Camera facing northwest.
- 16 of 22 Lifeguard stand T-20, northeast elevation with Hotel Casa del Mar (left) in the background. Camera facing northeast.
- 17 of 22 Restroom and shower facility. Camera facing south.
- 18 of 22 Pedestrian-supported Ocean Front Walk. Visible Hotel Casa del Mar (right, foreground) and Shutters on the Beach (right, background). Camera facing north.
- 19 of 22 Beach area and a portion of the Marvin Braude Bike Trail, with the Santa Monica Pier and northern portion of Santa Monica Bay in the background. Visible are lifeguard stand T-18 (left) and safety fencing surrounding the Pico-Kenter drain (center). Camera facing north.
- 20 of 22 Accessible beach pathway over sand with shoreline in the background. Lifeguard stand T-20, in the background. Camera facing southwest.
- 21 of 22 Crescent Bay Park pergola with Hotel Casa del Mar in the background. Camera facing northwest.
- 22 of 22 Beach area with shoreline and Santa Monica Bay in the background. Visible is lifeguard stand T-18. Camera facing southwest.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

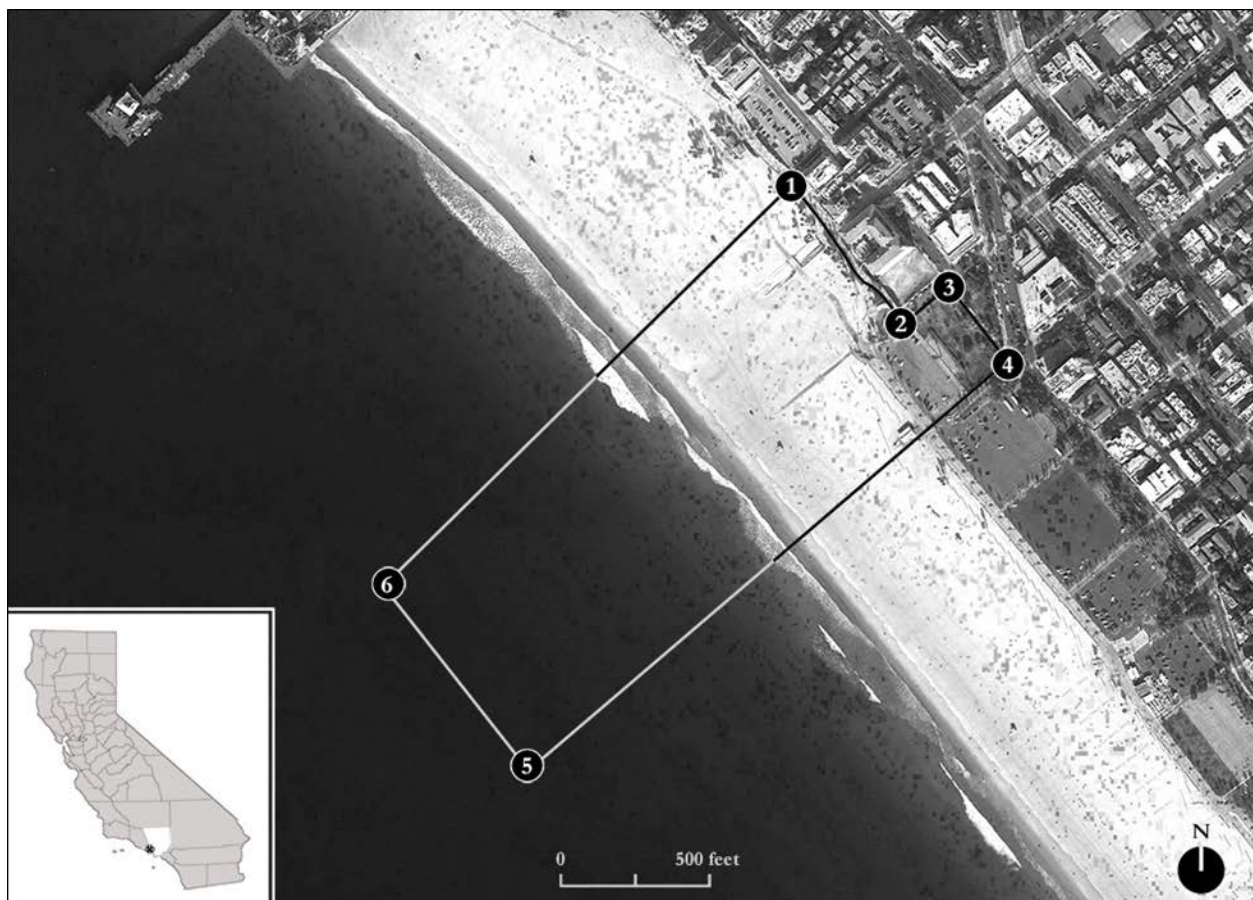
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 1. Location Map

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Latitude: 34.007002 | Longitude: -118.492252 |
| 2. | Latitude: 34.005655 | Longitude: -118.490984 |
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| 6. | Latitude: 34.002776 | Longitude: -118.498462 |

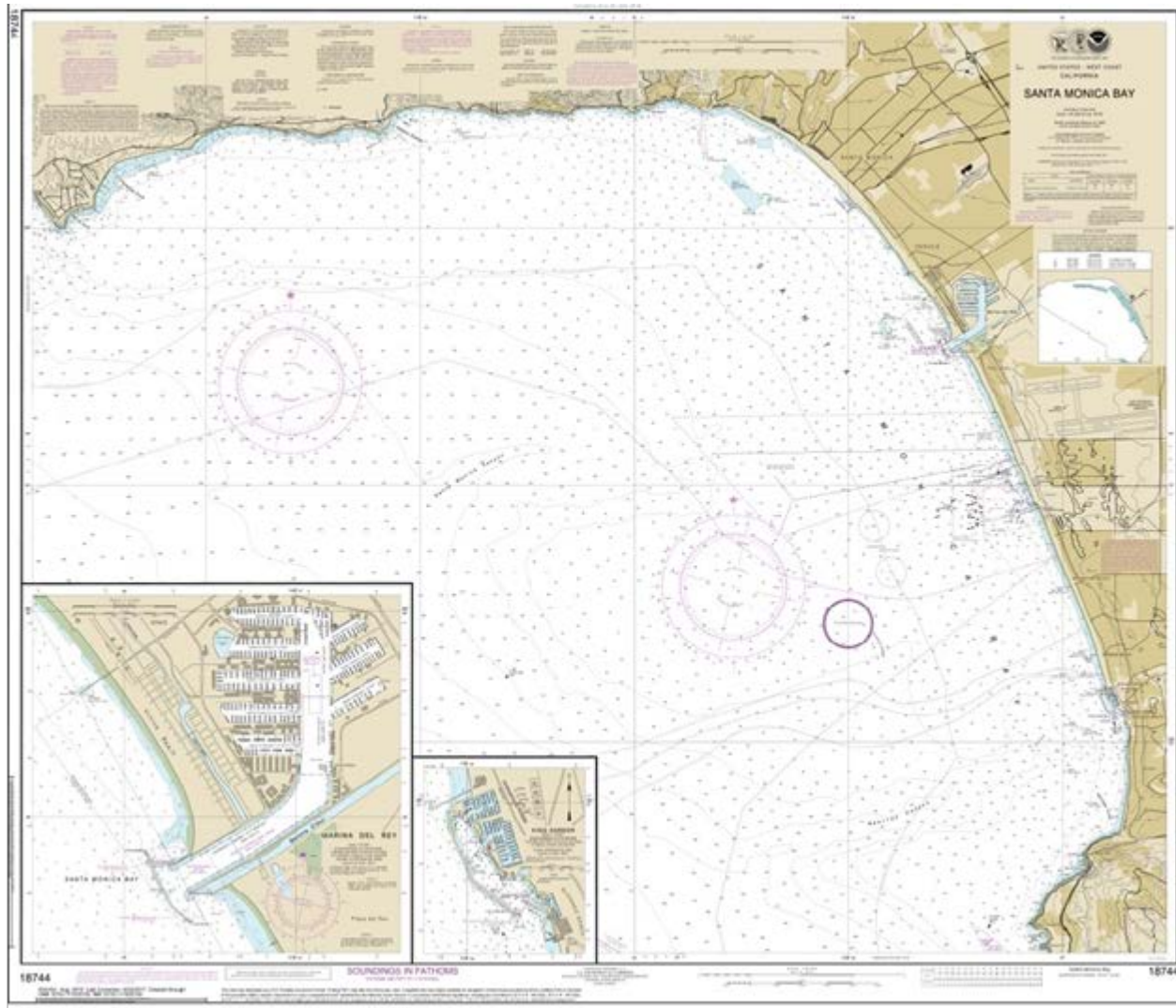


Base image adapted from Google Earth Pro 7.3.2.5491. Google LLC, Mountain View, California, 2018 <http://earth.google.com>. Images retrieved November 2018.

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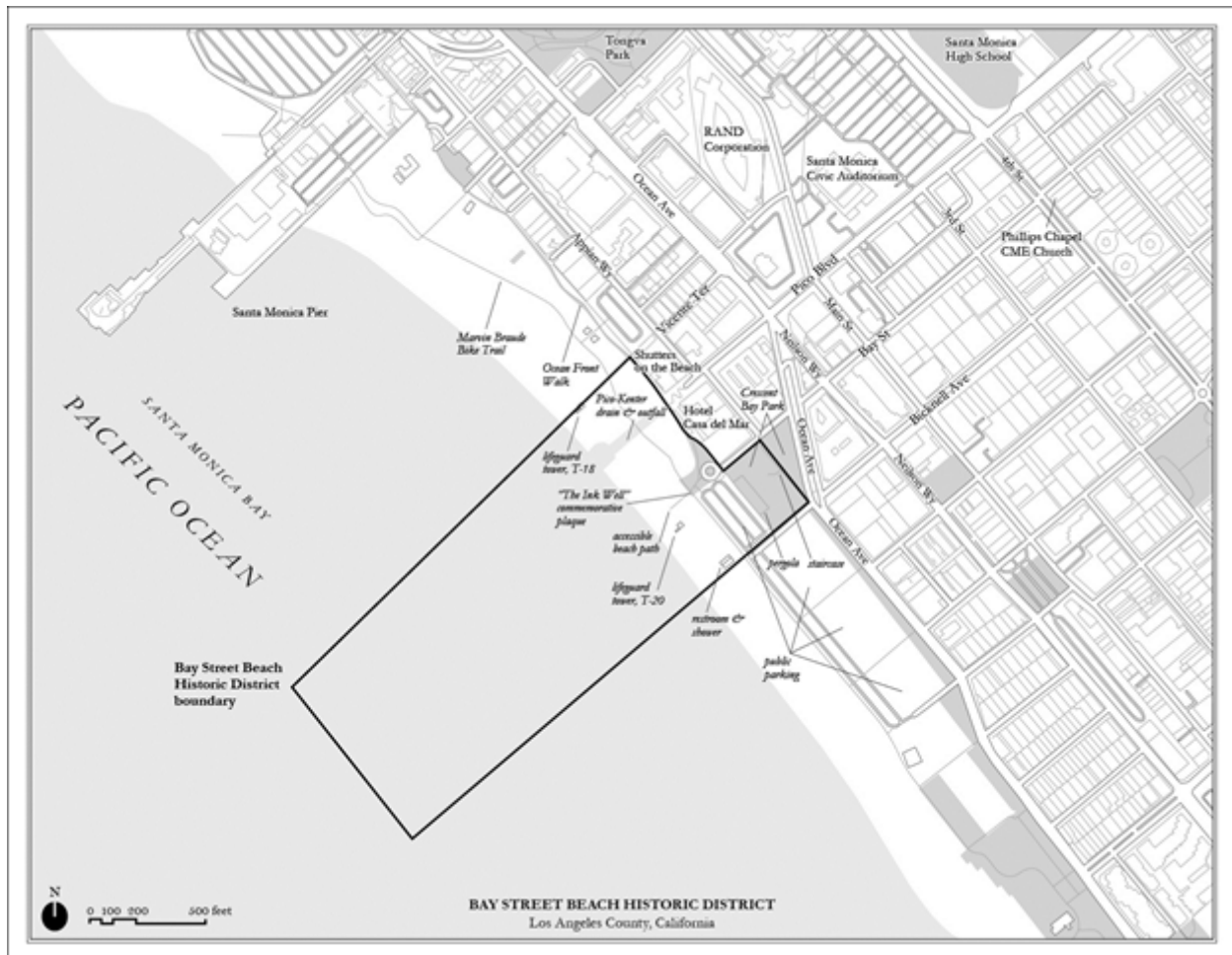
Figure 2. Nautical Chart (No. 18744) of Santa Monica Bay, showing bay's hemispherical shape. Malibu is at the northern end of the bay, Palos Verdes at the southern end. Bay Street Beach, near the middle, faces west-southwest. Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), <http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov>.



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Figure 3. Sketch Map

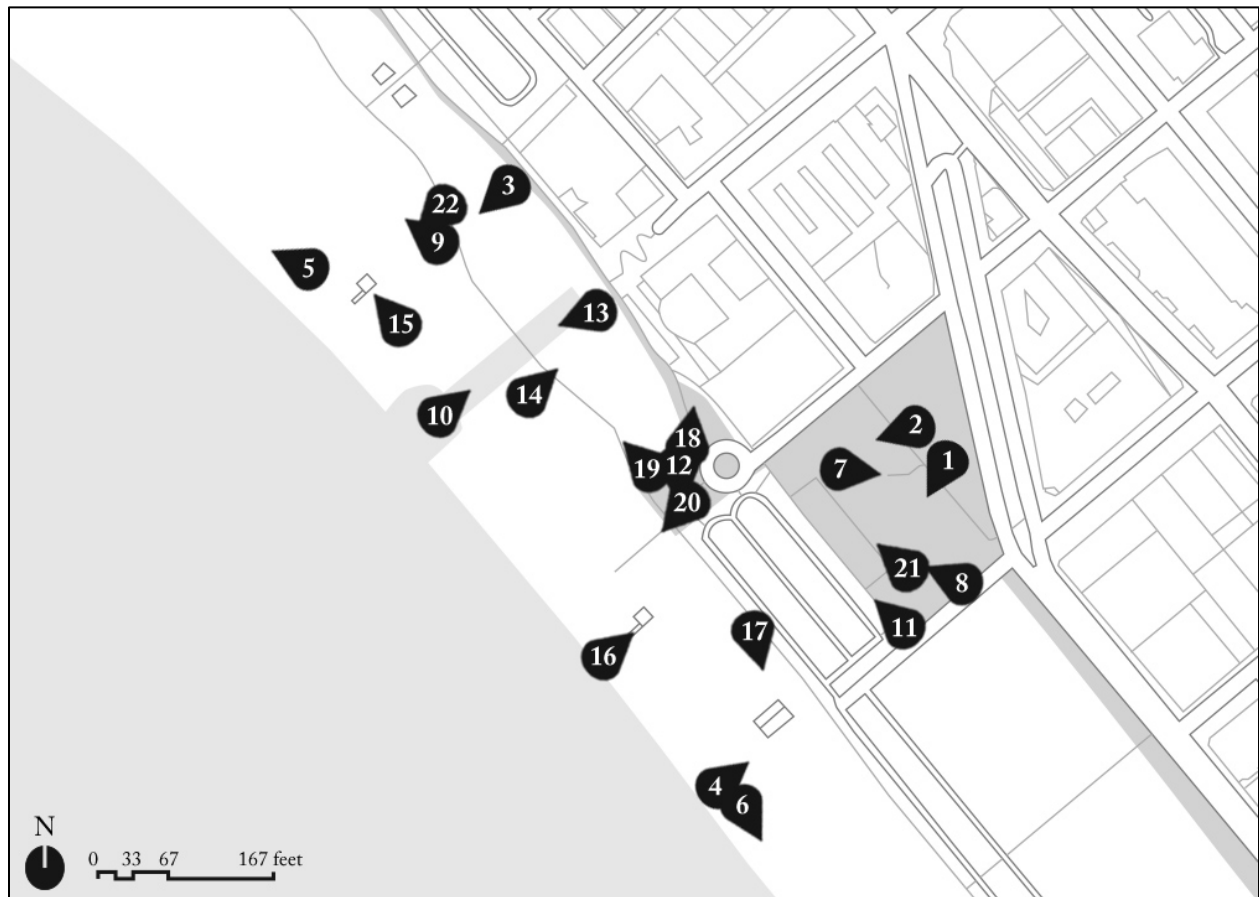


Base image adapted from Google Earth Pro 7.3.2.5491. Google LLC, Mountain View, California, 2018 <http://earth.google.com>. Images retrieved November 2018.

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Figure 4. Photo Key



Base image adapted from Google Earth Pro 7.3.2.5491. Google LLC, Mountain View, California, 2018 <http://earth.google.com>. Images retrieved November 2018.

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Figure 5. Ms. Verna Deckard and Mr. Arthur Lewis at Bay Street Beach, 1924. A sign for Club Casa Del Mar, an exclusive beach club that restricted access to areas of public beach, is in the background. From: Los Angeles Public Library Collection (Accession No. A-006-630 4x5).



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Figure 6. Northwest view across Bicknell Avenue showing visitors enjoying Crescent Bay Park and Bay Street Beach, c. 1930. The park's prominently placed pergola is clearly visible. Club Casa del Mar (later Hotel Casa del Mar) is on the right. An electric tram, which shuttled people across the Ocean Front Walk promenade between Santa Monica and Venice, is on the lower left. Santa Monica Pier is barely visible in the background. From the California Historical Society Collection, 1860-1960, University of Southern California Libraries Special Collections (Accession No. 14119).



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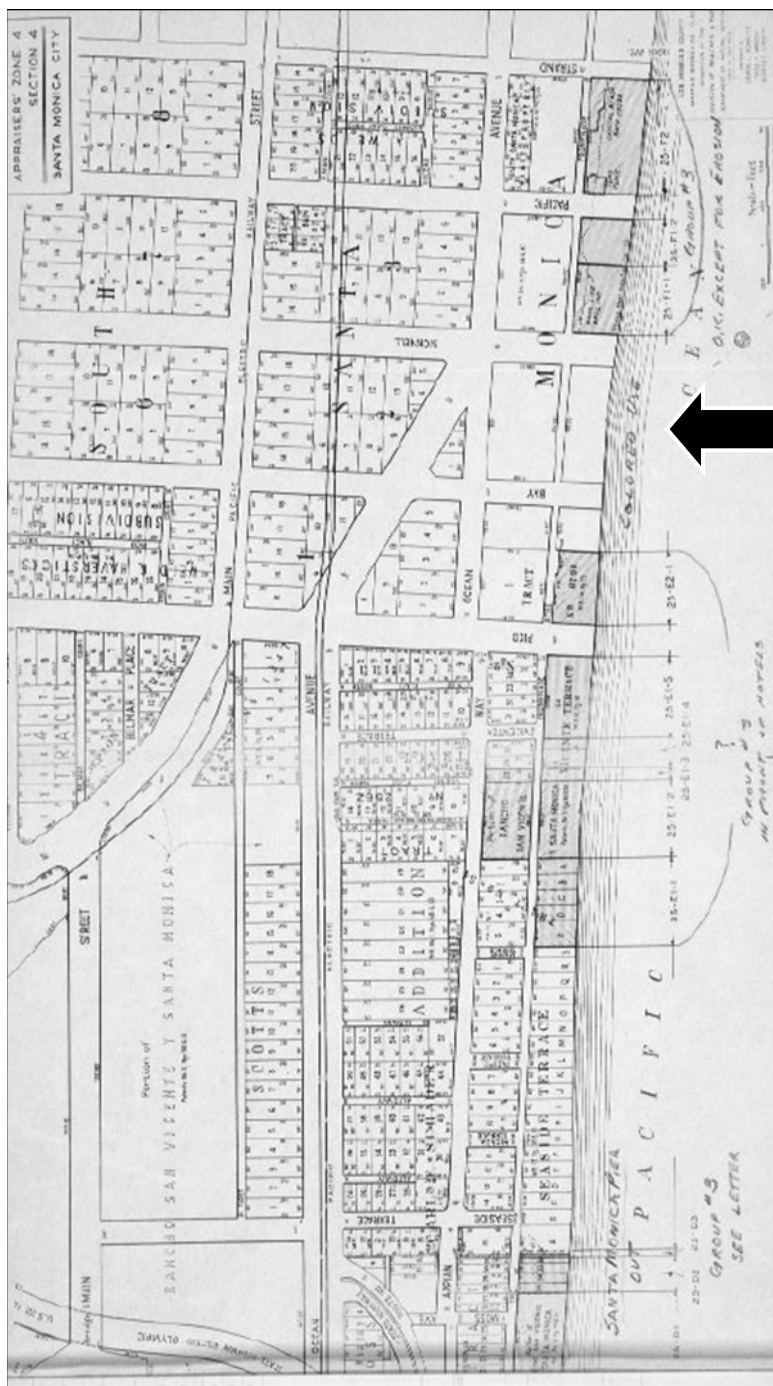
Figure 7. Friends (left to right) Verna, Sidney, Gladys, and Theopolis at Bay Street Beach, 1931. Crescent Bay Park and its conspicuous pergola, is seen in the background. From: Los Angeles Public Library Collection (Accession No. A-006-628 4x5).



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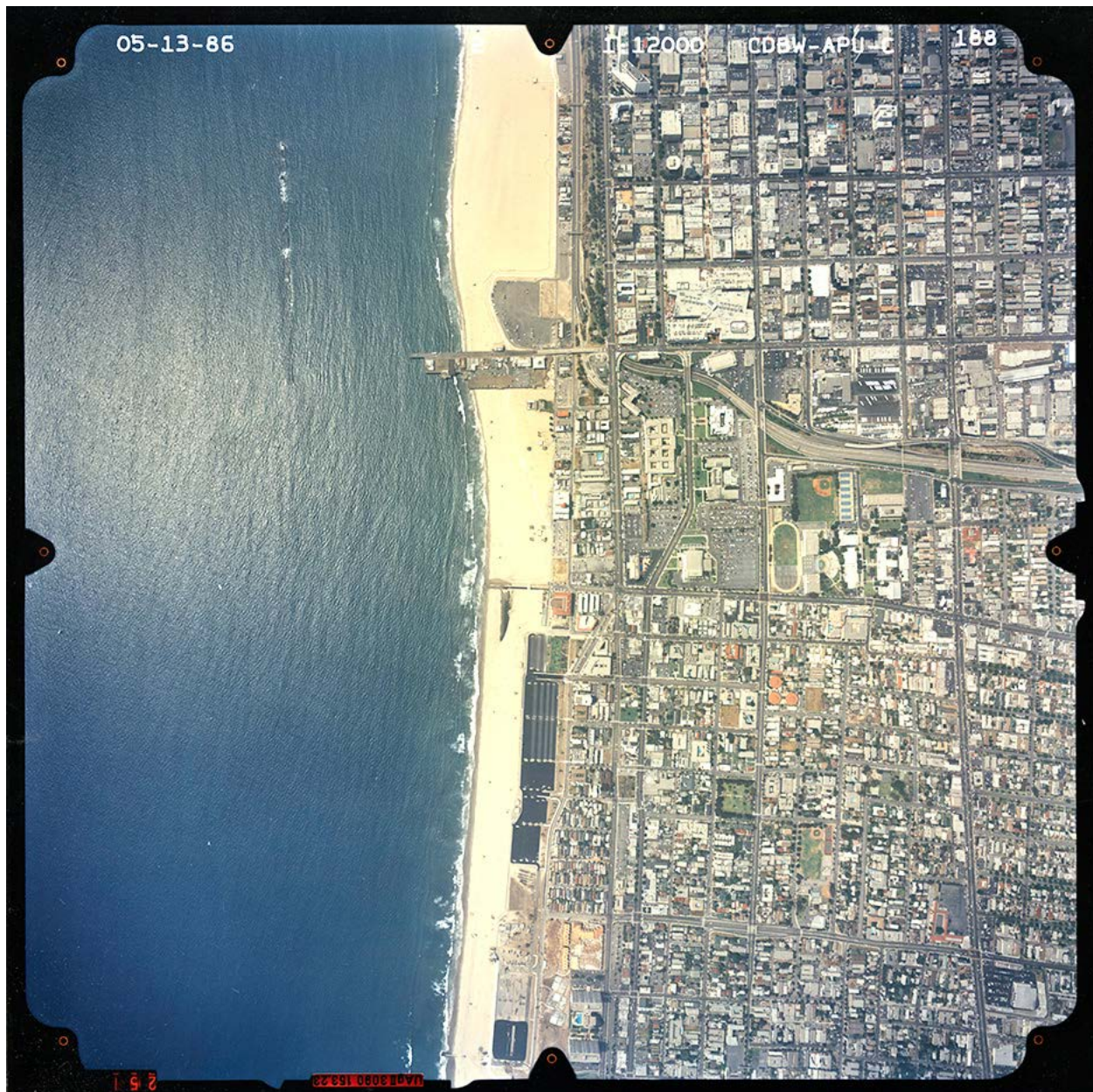
Figure 11. 1947 Master Shoreline Plan Map for the City of Santa Monica, Los Angeles County, California. Note the section labeled “Colored Use.” Map produced by the Division of Beaches and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Engineering, State of California. From: University of Southern California Libraries Special Collections / University Archives Library.



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Figure 9. Aerial photograph of the City of Santa Monica, including the Bay Street Beach Historic District and surrounding Ocean Park neighborhood, May, 1986. Original photograph by the California Division of Boating and Waterways Air Flight Service. Copyright © 2002-2019 Kenneth & Gabrielle Adelman, California Coastal Records Project, www.californiacoastline.org.



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Figure 10. Inscription on “The Ink Well” commemorative plaque dedicated at the end of Bay Street by the City of Santa Monica Cultural Affairs Division in 2008. Text for the plaque was developed by public historian Alison Rose Jefferson, MHP, PhD.

“THE INK WELL”

A Place of Celebration and Pain

The beach near this site between Bay and Bicknell Streets, known by some as “the Ink Well,” was an important gathering place for African Americans long after racial restrictions on public beaches were abandoned in 1927.

African-American groups from Santa Monica, Venice and Los Angeles, as early as the 1920s to the end of the Jim Crow era in the 1950s, preferred to enjoy the sun and surf here because they encountered less racial harassment than at other Southland beaches.

In the 1940s, Nick Gabaldón, a Santa Monica High School student and the first documented black surfer, taught himself how to surf here.

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Figure 11. Aerial photograph of the City of Santa Monica, including the Bay Street Beach Historic District, September 2010. Copyright © 2002-2019 Kenneth & Gabrielle Adelman, California Coastal Records Project, www.californiacoastline.org.



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Figure 12. Aerial photograph of the Bay Street Beach Historic District, September 2013. The high-rise skylines of the Wilshire Corridor (left) and Downtown Los Angeles (right) are visible in the background. Copyright © 2002-2019 Kenneth & Gabrielle Adelman, California Coastal Records Project, www.californiacoastline.org.

