

# Mr. Torrance's Own Story About The Founding of Industrial City

The story of Torrance's founding, dictated in 1916 by Jared Sidney Torrance, is one of the most complete reports on the early days of the city.

The manuscript of Mr. Torrance's recollections was published first in The HERALD 20 years after it was dictated. Mrs. Dorothy Damieson, niece of the city's founder and city librarian for many years before her recent retirement, made the manuscript available to The HERALD at that time. It is here republished as a valuable historical guideline to the city's founding.

By JARED S. TORRANCE (August, 1916)

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 to which subsequently the name of Torrance was given.

The Union Tool Company, one of the subsidiary corporations controlled by the Union Oil Company, 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 \$2.50 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-saving device possible and the most efficient machinery and equipment obtainable. The then-existing plant was obsolete, inconvenient, and inefficient, having been built up piece-meal upon opposite sides of San Mateo Street.

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 2,800 acres of land from the Dominguez Estates Co. for the sum of \$980,000. (Ed. Note: If our figures are right, that's \$350 an acre.) Shortly afterwards an additional 730 acres was bought from one of the Dominguez heirs for about \$550,000.

THE DOMINGUEZ Land Co. 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 particularly paid for the land. This latter corporation became the operating company.

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

THE ENTIRE tract was supplied with water by the Dominguez Water Co., formed to supply domestic and irrigation water for nearly 20,000 acres of land. It's 33-inch water main crosses our lands to a large, substantial reservoir near our northwestern corner.

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

AFTER protracted negotiations, a deal was closed with the Pacific 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 1, 1915. (It is now Reynolds Metals, Crenshaw and Dominguez.)

NEXT IN order of importance, a contract was made with the Lewellyn Iron Works of Los Angeles, which provided that they were to acquire a 15 percent 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 thereto.

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 operating.

COINCIDENT with the commencement of construction work by the Union Tool Co., 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 distributing plant, a sewer system, street lighting, etc. and for the 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 a model industrial city. Indeed, some of them, in reference to racial matters, tread pretty hard on the toes of the Constitution of the United States.

IN ORDER to provide funds for construction, the company created a serial six percent

coupon note issue of \$750,000, due in from one to five years, and the stockholders paid in part for their 5,000 shares of stock. The notes were taken largely by the stockholders.

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 (now Columbia-Geneva Division, U. S. Steel) were nearly ready to begin actual construction on the ground but stringent financial conditions made it impossible for them to proceed. As the skies began to clear in the summer of 1914, the awful European war burst forth and business stagnation ensued. (A year after this was dictated by Mr. Torrance, the A.E.F. began moving to France from American ports.)

The Union Tool Co. was employing about 500 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 plants which, of course, was granted. The Lewellyn Iron Works were unable to finance their construction and carry out their contracts and they, too, were given an extension of time.

At this writing, August, 1916, the Union Tool Company has resumed work, now employing nearly 400 men; the Lewellyn Iron is erecting its plant, and the Pacific Electric is to start construction work at once.

There is absolutely 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 most part, have to be rented as no one seems to be in a mood to purchase real estate in any form.

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

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 the 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.

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.

(Ed. Note: We wonder what Mr. Torrance would think now, seeing his city stand at more than 120,000 residents, with industries undreamed of when he dictated the above material in 1916, but with many of the same homes he spoke of, hundreds and hundreds of the same trees he spoke of still standing as a memorial to those men of half a century ago.)

## Supervisors Studied New Vehicle Law

County supervisors were considering changes in the speed limits imposed on county roads 50 years ago, according to the first issue of The Torrance Herald.

Supervisor Sidney A. Butler had asked to have the limit lowered from 30 miles an hour to 25, and for other regulations.

Supervisors were compiling suggestions at year's end to present to A. J. Hill, county counsel for preparation of a new statute.

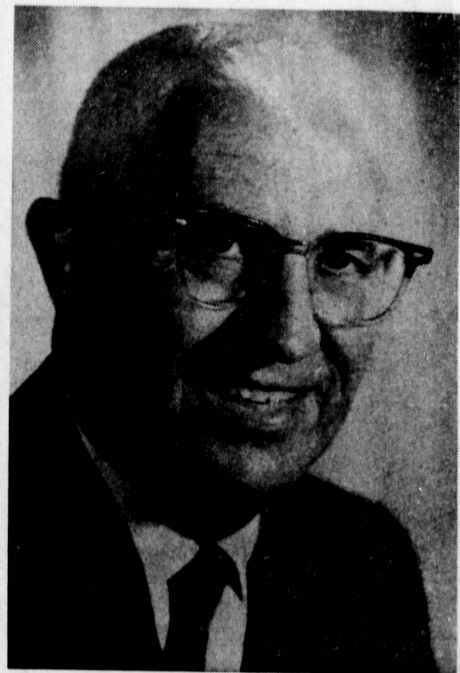
Among the suggestions was a proposal to have all vehicles carry at least one white light in front and one red light in the rear.

Another suggestion was to require red lights to be shown on freight which overhung a vehicle's rear axle.

Or, so the first Torrance Herald reported on Jan. 1, 1914.

## STREETS READY

Torrance had about 20 miles of paved oil macadam streets installed when the first edition of The Torrance Herald was published on Jan. 1, 1914.

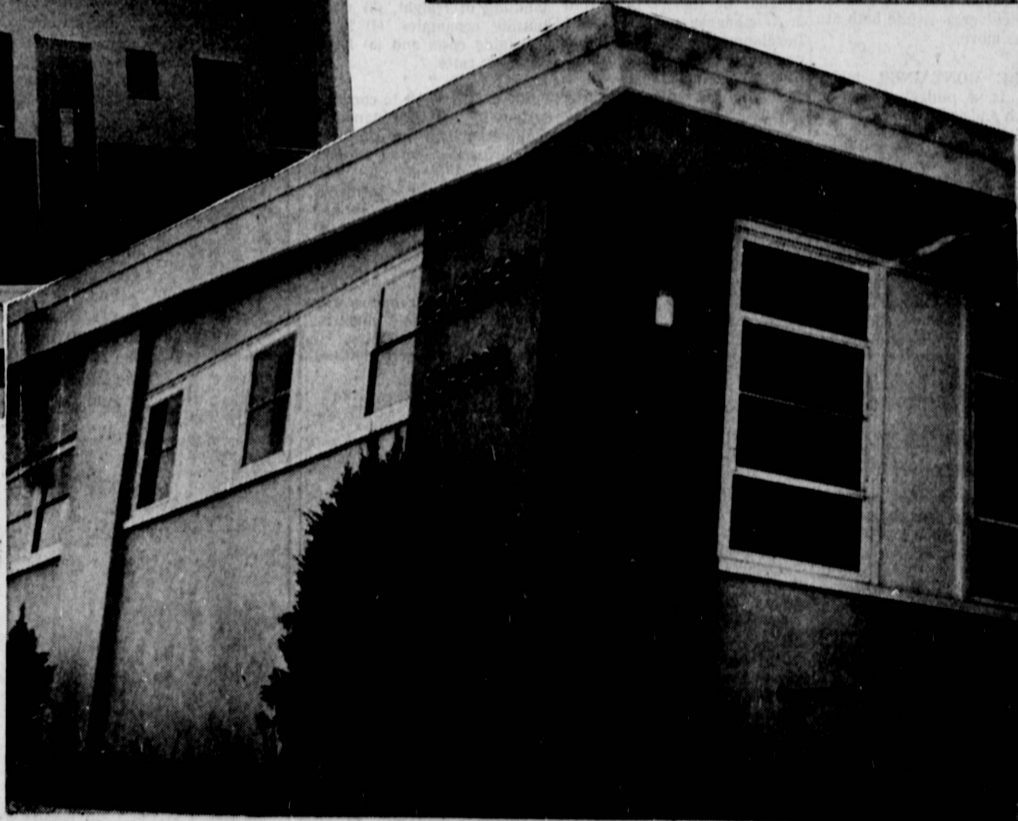
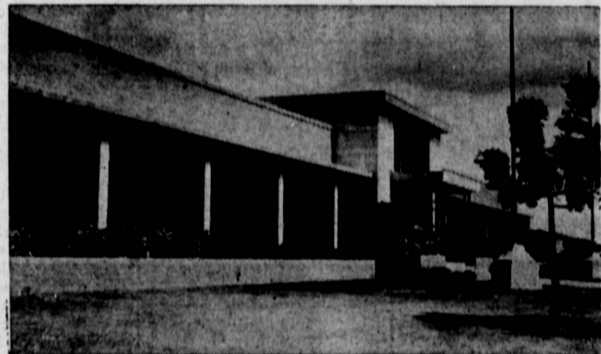


CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES TO THE TORRANCE HERALD on the occasion of its 50th ANNIVERSARY

may your progress continue in step with that of the City of Torrance, Los Angeles County's fourth largest city.

SUPERVISOR BURTON W. CHACE  
FOURTH DISTRICT  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

## TORRANCE SCHOOLS KEEP PACE WITH RAPID GROWTH



Torrance's nearly 31,000 public school students attend classes in modern, safe buildings, most of them constructed in the past dozen years to meet exploding school populations.

Typical of scenes around the city's four public high schools and more than 30 elementary schools are shown here. The schools have been developed from a nucleus of four elementary schools and one high school, the system which came to Torrance from the Los Angeles School System in 1947.