



THE BEACH HOUSE STORY

A BEACH LIKE NO OTHER

The Southern California beach occupies a unique place within the physical and cultural landscapes of America. The first inhabitants of Santa Monica were the Tongva, also known as the Gabrielino, people. They were followed by Mexican rancheros called Californios, who were given land grants by the Mexican government to promote settlement in California.

Santa Monica was founded in 1875, a time that marked the beginning of the tourism and leisure industry, starting with affordable train travel and the first bathhouses, casinos, saloons, dance halls and inexpensive hotels. In the Gold Coast era of the 1920s, glamorous private beach clubs and elaborate private residences sprang up along Santa Monica's beach. Along with pleasure piers, this activity spurred the growth of activities that are now synonymous with Santa Monica State Beach, like sunbathing, swimming, surfing and volleyball.

Santa Monica State Beach is home to the iconic Santa Monica Pier and the original Muscle Beach. Following an extensive renovation of the beach south of the Pier, including Chess Park, in 2000, the American Planning Association named Santa Monica State Beach a 'Great Public Space in America' in 2008.

A REMARKABLE PAST

The 5-acre oceanfront site upon which the Annenberg Community Beach House now sits was originally developed during the Gold Coast era of the 1920s by William Randolph Hearst for actress Marion Davies. The Davies estate featured a mansion of 100-plus rooms and ornate marble swimming pool. As with many Hearst projects, the vision of architect Julia Morgan provided a cohesive grace to the rambling estate. The Beach House was a hot spot on Santa Monica's Gold Coast, with Hearst and Davies entertaining luminaries from the Hollywood set, such as Charlie Chaplin, Louis B Mayer, Samuel Goldwyn, Greta Garbo, Clark Gable and other stars of the day.

In 1947, Joseph Drown purchased the property from Davies and converted it to Oceanhouse, "America's Most Beautiful Hotel," along with the Sand & Sea Club, a limited-membership beach club. After the Oceanhouse venture ended, the main mansion was demolished in 1956. The popular Sand & Sea Club continued to operate.

A PUBLIC PLACE HENCEFORTH

The property was sold to the State of California in 1959, continuing to operate as the ever-popular Sand & Sea Club under a concession agreement. The City of Santa Monica ran the facility, known as '415 PCH,' in the 1990s until the 1994 Northridge Earthquake severely damaged all structures on site.

In recovering from the earthquake, the City of Santa Monica embarked on an extensive public input process to re-envision the role of 415 PCH as an important gathering space. A reuse plan was adopted by Santa Monica City Council in 1998 for a project that would:

- Preserve the history of the site
- Encourage a light touch on the site
- Create a community-oriented destination
- Provide public recreational activities
- Increase public access to the beach
- Create a range of uses
- Encourage diverse users
- Provide year-round use
- Link to the regional open space network



Annenberg Community Beach House

AT SANTA MONICA STATE BEACH



The project, however, sat on hold while the City tried to secure funding. Wallis Annenberg of the Annenberg Foundation, had fond memories of visiting the Sand & Sea Club as a child. When she learned of the City's struggle to identify funding in order to realize its vision for a year-round public beach facility, she enthusiastically offered to help. The Annenberg Foundation provided a \$27.5 million grant that paved the way for the site's rehabilitation.

The Annenberg Community Beach House is open to the public year-round, no membership required. During the summer it offers the public an opportunity to experience the quintessential Southern California experience – a great day at the beach. During the rest of the year it offers dramatic spaces for special meetings and events.

Staff from the Annenberg Foundation and City of Santa Monica worked with Frederick Fisher Partners, Architects; Charles Pankow Builders; Historic Resources Group; Mia Lehrer & Associates; and Roy McMakin to form the new Beach House. The project involved rehabilitation of the historic Marion Davies Guest House and pool, as well as construction of new recreation and event spaces. The Beach House is another step forward in Santa Monica's commitment to sustainability – it is a green facility expected to be awarded a Silver LEED Rating from the US Green Building Council, at a minimum.

