



The Life and Times of the Duck Pier

The “Duck Pier” was built in the 1920s by Baywood Park developer Richard Otto. It reached 180 feet out into the bay with a floating dock at the end, enabling small boats to launch when the tide was low. Hunters stayed at The Duck Inn across the bay at Sweet Springs and came to hunt the plentiful ducks and geese in season. This was one of several piers built to accommodate visitors, and the boats seen here were for rent.

Visitors were encouraged from a sales office in Los Angeles by the area’s original investor Walter Redfield, who owned 3,000 lots. The second investor, Richard Otto, bought 1,000 acres from Redfield and sold lots from his office in Hollywood.

Otto built four cabins and a grocery store within a stone’s throw of this pier in 1940 (the same year he ran for state senate but lost). The cabins were rented by the day, week or month. Otto lived in a house on 7th Street, and in the early days flew his small plane up from Los Angeles, using 11th Street as a runway. Prospective vacation home buyers were lured with Otto’s picture-filled brochures touting fine weather, beautiful scenery and cheap land. Otto and his wife Shirley lived in Los Osos/ Baywood Park for 15 years before moving to Santa Barbara in 1963.

The arched pier was torn down in the 1930s. The Army Corps of Engineers deemed the pier unsafe. Any piers along the bay today (there are five) must be maintained if they are to stay in use. The California Coastal Commission will not allow the building any new ones.

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