

Port of Los Angeles Centennial Oral History Project
Charles Queenan Oral History
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Interviewer: MS – Unknown
Transcriber: NCC

Male Speaker: The first question is a tough one. Please say your name and spell it.

Charles Queenan: Charles F. Queenan, C-H-A-R-L-E-S, F, Francis, Queenan, Q-U-E-E-N-A-N.

MS: Charles, tell us where you were born and when.

CQ: I was born in Medford, Massachusetts on October 27th, 1924.

MS: Terrific. Okay. You're the author of a book, and many say THE book, about the history of the Port of Los Angeles. So, I'm going to ask you some early questions about the port and its history.

CQ: Okay.

MS: The first question is, tell the story of the first European discovery of the port by Cabrillo.

CQ: It's a very, very interesting situation. Fifty years after Columbus discovered America, 1542, now, that's when Cabrillo sail from Mexico for the Spanish crown, which had taken over, as you know, what is now Mexico. He sailed up the coast outside of Baja California. Of course, it had never been explored or charted before, and he thought that was another island. He didn't realize it was attached at the top. So, he sailed up along the coast and against very strong headwinds from the north. He stopped briefly in what he found – discovered was a very natural port, which turned out to be later San Diego. He paused very briefly there. Then he came up along the coast further, and he saw land again. Well, it was Catalina, the island of Catalina, a week after stopping in what he called San Diego. He looked east. Incidentally, he met the Indians there, but these were very friendly Indians. In fact, they were fascinated by the strange clothes and vessels that these – because they have never seen anything like it. So, they were very friendly. But anyway, he looked east, and he saw land again. At the left end of the land, he saw a large jutting body of land jutting up above the level part. That, of course, was the Palos Verdes Peninsula. He thought he was looking at another island. What he was looking at was the entire unexplored wilderness of the continent of North America. He stayed – he first called it the Bay of Smokes because he saw smoke rising that the Indians used to drive small game into the open. When he left – he stayed briefly there, didn't last long, Cabrillo, Juan Cabrillo. He continued on up the coast. Now, he got opposite what is now Santa Barbara, and he broke his arm in a shipboard fall. Of course, medical assistance was absolutely primitive at the time. He got great gangrene and died. He was buried at one of the islands right off Santa Barbara. In those days, as I put in the book, a man had to be buried quickly. There was no help, and he had to be taken care of very quickly. So, he was buried up there. His remains remain were later removed to Spain.

MS: I'm going to ask you to answer that question again. Who was Juan Cabrillo? Why was he selling up the coast?

CQ: Okay. Now, Spain had this whole area, and they called it Alta California. They were thinking of colonizing this part of the wilderness that they – the Russians – the little – what are those little animals that run a thousand –

MS: Sea otters.

CQ: Otters. Yes.

MS: Start again.

CQ: Okay. One of the reasons was that they understood that the Russians were coming down –

MS: You've got to go all the way at the beginning. We don't know what the reason was for what.

CQ: Okay. The Spanish, of course, had Mexico by then. They occupied it for quite a while. Then they discovered that there was some – there were Russians coming down from the north. Now, sea otters had a –

MS: Stop. You're way ahead of yourself. That wasn't until the 1700s. 1542, the Russians weren't coming down.

CQ: No, no, no, but later they were going to –

MS: We've got to go through Cabrillo [laughter].

CQ: Okay.

MS: We're starting again and as if you've never talked to me.

CQ: All right.

MS: How was San Pedro discovered?

CQ: Juan Cabrillo was commissioned by the Spanish authorities in Mexico to try to come north and colonize or rather settle this western coast that they own. He came up alongside what is now Baja California and passed it and discovered it was not an island as the Spanish thought it was. Then he came up, and he paused briefly in a very natural harbor, which was very unusual. It's what is now San Diego. He continued north, and a week later, he found land again. It was the island of Catalina, and the Indians were very friendly. These Indians were very friendly. They had never been faced with anybody else, any White people or anybody else. They had no battles over land like some of the Indians did in the interior of the – over territory. They had wars and everything in the interior apparently, unseen by anybody. But anyway, these Indians were very friendly. He looked eastward, and he saw a low land. At the end of it, the left end of it, he saw a rising crag or part of – which is now the Palos Verdes Peninsula. He named the bay the Isle of Smokes.

MS: No, the Bay of Smokes.

CQ: The Bay of smokes.

MS: Start again.

CQ: He named this bay the Bay of Smokes from – after – I don't know what – I forget the Spanish name for that is. But he saw small smoke rising in the bay set by Indians to drive small game into the open. He didn't stay there very long. Oh, incidentally, he thought he was looking at the – another island when he saw – what he was looking at was the entire continent of the United States, which was, of course, completely unsettled. Now, the only thing to come close to that was in 1607, the English settlement in Jamestown. But that was –

MS: Jamestown.

CQ: Jamestown.

MS: You've got to start again.

CQ: Okay. By comparison, he was much ahead of – the next thing that happened in the whole continental United States was in 1907 at the – with the English settlement.

MS: 1607.

CQ: 1907.

MS: 1607. Start again.

CQ: I'm sorry. The only thing that even remotely was close to that was in 1607 when the British – the English settlement of Jamestown on the eastern coast of this continent in 1607. But he thought he was looking at another island, and it was the entire continent. So, he proceeded –

MS: We're just interested in San Pedro. So, that's good.

CQ: Yes.

MS: Why didn't he get off and explore?

CQ: He wasn't sent to explore. He was just sent to settle the coast to make – not colonized but to establish the –

MS: No, he was sent to explore.

CQ: But he never went inland.

MS: What happened was that although the Indians were friendly in San Diego, there were other Indians who weren't so friendly. He was afraid to go onshore.

CQ: He was supposed to claim these places, at least in the name of the Spanish crown. So, that's

basically what he did. He never did get inland. Then when he left San Pedro, he proceeded up the coast. Santa Barbara is not far up the coast. That's where he had the shipboard fall and broke his arm and eventually died of gangrene. Then that was the end of him. Then now, I forget the name of the next guy that came up [laughter].

MS: Vizcaino.

CQ: Vizcaino. Yes.

MS: Tell me about him.

CQ: Sebastian Vizcaino was sent – another one sent on a mission by the Spanish crown to explore – look more closely at San Diego Bay. And with none of Cabrillo's sailings on record, he renamed the bay, Andres?

MS: Ensenada de San Andres.

CQ: With no official record of Cabrillo's exploration, he renamed the bay after San Andres in the belief that date that he landed there – I think it was November 24th, I think [laughter] –

MS: November 26th.

CQ: 26th, and he thought it was the – I don't remember all that at all.

MS: How did the harbor get the name San Pedro?

CQ: After Cabrillo's explorations, over almost a century and a half later at least – who was the third guy?

MS: Cabrera Bueno – I've never heard of – gave the bay its present name of San Pedro in honor of St. Peter.

CQ: The archbishop of Alexandria, wasn't he?

MS: Yes. Start again.

CQ: The guy's full name now again.

MS: Cabrera Bueno is what you've got here.

CQ: Probably two centuries or nearly so, after Cabrillo's original exploration, Cabrero Buena [sic] renamed the bay, the Bay of San Pedro, after the Archbishop of Alexandria.

MS: Good. Okay. Now, let's get out of that early stuff, and let's get into the early history of the port. How would you describe the port in its earliest days? What did it look like? Was it like San Francisco or San Diego? What was the port like?

CQ: The Port of Los Angeles, in its earliest days, was as primitive as it could be. First of all, incredibly, the water was – should do that again. One of the remarkable things and incredible things about it was that entire bay, the water was so shallow, a man could walk across it with water up to his waist, that enormous bay of San Pedro which proved to be a terrible problem when it was being developed. Because it was so shallow that ships couldn't come in there. It was years and years before they were able to deepen what they decided was the harbor and make it available for ships of any size. Most of them had to anchor outside this line of – 2 feet deep under the main channel was a bar of sand and rock. Most of them had to anchor outside and then use small boats to take goods and people ashore. In fact, somebody had to usually jump out of the boat and push it over the barrier. That's how bad it was and how restrictive it was when they were trying to – attempting to make it a port.

MS: Let's talk about the Mexican days and the Dominguez and Sepulveda families. Who were they?

CQ: Okay. I forget Dominguez's first name. Could you look up his first name? Because I've got a chapter there on Dominguez and Sepulveda. He was a member of a group –

MS: Juan Jose Dominguez.

CQ: Now, I said what year he came up here. They sent a land group up.

MS: In 1769, was the land group.

CQ: Okay. In 1769, the Spanish also sent a land group overland rather than by sea to really explore and establish something on land in that particular area. Juan Dominguez was a member of the group and for that – should I start again?

MS: The name of the party was the Portola party.

CQ: Yes.

MS: So, start again.

CQ: In 1769, the Spanish crown decided they wanted to explore inland in this territory they own. So, they sent a land group by foot, which was a terrible – there was nothing but hills and mountains to climb over. Juan Domingues was a member of this group. For that, he was given a land grant of 75,000 acres, which now occupies most of what the whole port and the whole area is here, many, many towns that are now named there. He established the – and it included the Port of Los Angeles, or rather what is now the Port of Los Angeles. It was called – what did he call it? It says there. He called it –

MS: It was Rancho Palos Verdes.

CQ: Not Palos Verdes, the other one.

MS: Rancho San Pedro.

CQ: Rancho San Pedro. Sepulveda calls it Rancho Palos Verdes later, when he later came. Because of his service to the crown on that land expedition, Juan Dominguez was given a 75,000-acre land grant, which included not only what is now the Port of Los Angeles, but thousands of acres, north and south and east of what is the present day – the cities number, there's about a dozen or more cities now named for that area that he owned. He established what he called – his rancho was called Rancho San Pedro.

MS: We need to go back and pick up that land expedition. That was very famous because Father Serra was setting up all the –

CQ: That's right.

MS: The town of Los Angeles was in 1781. So, tell us about this land expedition. Who was leading it?

MS: Okay. In 1769, Portola, a soldier named Portola was commissioned by the Spanish crown to explore the land part of this anonymous territory they owned. Along with that expedition was Father Junipero Serra. He was 56 years old, a very small man, under five feet tall, and lame. This man came with these people over nothing, no land, no trail at all. It was over hard, natural land. I'm screwing this up.

MS: Actually, they followed Indian trails which were all through the area.

CQ: Yes. That's right. They did.

MS: So, what was Junipero Serra there for?

CQ: Serra was there to establish a chain of missions all the way up the coast, and which he eventually did fourteen of them.

MS: Twenty-one of them.

CQ: Is it twenty-one? Okay, twenty-one of them. He did this work in his physical condition. It must have been really driven by his faith to be commissioned to do this.

MS: So, in the Los Angeles area, he founded a mission.

CQ: San Gabriel.

MS: San Gabriel. That was 1771.

CQ: Yes.

MS: In 1781, they founded the Pueblo of Los Angeles.

CQ: They sent another mission to settle a city up – a town up here. They sent eleven families who travelled for seven months. The missions were already started by then, by – also the mission San Capistrano was another one mission that had been –

MS: Start again. In 1771, they found a mission San, Gabriel; ten years later, a pueblo, Los Angeles.

CQ: Yes, was founded by a –

MS: You don't have to tell me that because no one's going to hear me.

CQ: I see. Eleven families were later sent up again, but this one with the intention of establishing a real city or a town which had not been established before and anybody – by anybody else. They established the city of LA.

MS: It's the pueblo.

CQ: The Pueblo of LA – Los Angeles. They had a big, long Spanish name for it. I wrote about it. They were trying to establish this town as close to the coast as they could, but they couldn't find fresh water. So, that's why the city of Los Angeles is now 22 miles inland from its port, which is extremely unusual. Because most cities grew up around their ports, like Long Beach, for instance, and San Francisco and San Diego. But that's why the city is located 20 miles inland and why many people know nothing about the port. They've never had anything to do with the port.

MS: So, let's skip ahead. 26 miles, by the way.

CQ: Is it 26?

MS: Yes.

CQ: I thought it was 22.

MS: But you said 22 once and 20 other times.

CQ: Yes.

MS: So, somewhere in there.

CQ: Yes. Okay.

MS: Richard Henry Dana, why is he important in this story?

CQ: Richard Henry Dana was an unusual person to come to this primitive port, very early. He

dropped out of Harvard because of ill health and joined a crew which was mainly illiterate, which maritime, seagoing men then were. He hated it here because at the time, they would – he would – they would – where shall I start again?

MS: The main cargo onboard was hides.

CQ: Hides, that's right.

MS: Start again.

CQ: Richard Henry Dana was an unusual person to come to this primitive port. He came as a crewman on board the *Pilgrim*. The unusual thing – am I screwing it up again?

MS: No, no. Go ahead.

CQ: The unusual thing about him was that he had dropped out of Harvard because of ill health and became a crewman among a lot of crewmen who were absolutely illiterate, which most of those maritime seagoing people were then. He complained bitterly about it because they – he – the *Pilgrim* came here to get hides for the New England leather industry. The hides had to be taken down – there was a small – the first building in the port was the hide house. That's where they kept the hides. The missionaries or rather the missions and the rancheros would bring their hides there. That's where the ships coming up from – coming from New England – which incidentally had to go all the way around the Cape of Good Hope, which was over 14,000 nautical miles. It was a terrible months-long trip. The hides were thrown down from the hide house. Then they had to be carried – now, these were stiffened, cured hides. Two years before the mass, Dana pointed out that there were no banks. There was no currency here. The thing to exchange were – all they had were hides. But they couldn't use them really for currency because of the size and smell of them. They were stiffened hides. Then you had to carry the hides out to the water, to the boat, to the ship, so they could be packed and brought back to New England. Now, that's awfully complicated.

MS: Yes. Basically, he called this place "this miserable hole."

CQ: Yes. Oh, terrible. He said that it was so tough on the crewmen too, this kind of work. They had to go up there, first of all, and carry – and they exchanged goods with some of the goods with – that the people here needed and wanted, you know, for their comforts. Because they had no comforts here. So, they had to, first of all, carry this stuff up, including things like dressers and things like that, up the hill. Then they had to take these hides that were thrown down to them and carry them to the water, out to the ship.

MS: So, what did he call the place?

CQ: He called the place the worst he had ever seen and a blight to all seamen. Well, two years later, the – two years before, the mass came out. What it really did was arouse and shock the public about the terrible treatment of seamen at sea by brutal sea captains. Because there was no control over them. They did what they wanted, and they mistreated the crewmen terribly. It

brought the first national awareness of the plight of the seamen at sea and the first actual action to protect them or provide for them and some defense for their seagoing misery that they were enduring with these brutal sea captains.

MS: Okay. Now, we talked about the Sepulveda family. Who were they?

CQ: Sepulveda – I forget his first name. It's there though.

MS: It's Jose.

CQ: Jose Sepulveda was a young Spanish officer from Spain, but he turned and fought against the Spanish for Mexico. He was the head of a detachment in Los Angeles. He bought some cattle and horses and was given permission to pasture them on Dominguez property. He shocked Dominguez finally by turning around and demanding a part of Dominguez's rancho. They fought over that constantly. Sepulveda, apparently, was a very sharp guy, as he proved later when he became a big important politician and landowner and everything. But by then, the provincial capital had been established up in Monterrey. He had to go there to see Governor Pio Pico to get permission to enforce his claim for the portion of Dominguez's Rancho San Pedro. On the way back, he was caught and captured by Indians and killed right near the mission up in – it's the thing, the mission, in the book it is. Anyway, he was caught and captured by Indians and killed. The sympathetic governor gave his children grant of that part of Dominguez's rancho that he had claimed. They later ran it and of course – oh, I know. Anyway, Dominguez died. He was very elderly. He died. His son took over, and he became very good – young son, very young son took over the whole rancho, and he turned out to be a great businessman and a political leader, a landowner, and quite a man, an important man in that early part of the history of the whole area.

MS: Why did that have anything to do with the port? Why is that important?

CQ: Well, because he took over the port of – the Rancho San Pedro that his father left him, and he was instrumental in a lot of improvements there. He had companies there. He had a transportation company there. He was very instrumental in getting the port off the ground, sort of, as was the son of – I think it was Roman Sepulveda, did a lot of work in getting things done in the harbor. Because there was no one – no one was in charge at the harbor. It was a squatter's delight. People would come there. They'd do business there. They would leave or whatever they did. Nobody owned it at the time. It was quite a while before the state legislature realized that this was important property, and they had better take charge of it and own it and put some sort of order into its use. Because people were using it for all kinds of reasons. They would do anything they wanted there. There was no law. There was no organized – you know, people in charge of the whole thing. It was completely wide open to anybody.

MS: There's a lot of smuggling.

CQ: The smuggling is interesting.

MS: We're going to get to that.

CQ: Okay.

MS: Talk about the role of smuggling in the development of the port.

CQ: Okay. The port was awfully primitive then. There was very little trade. There was nothing traded. There was nothing to trade really. The Spanish – one of the reasons for the smuggling was that the Spanish authorities refused to allow any foreign ship to come into that little port, unless it was badly in need of water or repairs. The missionaries and others, the rancheros by then too – the mission.

MS: Start again.

CQ: Start again? Okay. There was very little real trade there because there was nothing to trade really, except for the hides that were being taken by the New England shipping industry when they sent their own boats. But in normal trading, there was very little of that. One of the problems was that the Spanish authorities did not allow any foreign ship to enter that hot little port, unless it was badly in need of water or repairs. Therefore, they were sending two ships a year down from Mexico City, with supplies they thought the missions would need and so forth. But they weren't the things that they really needed. They wanted some – a few luxuries that they enjoyed from a past life and didn't have any longer. So, pretty soon, the smugglers discovered that [laughter] they could do business there. In fact, they were beautifully set up because Catalina was about 20 miles away. They headquartered there and then just slipped across the 20 miles and give them some of the niceties of living that the Mexican authorities were not sending – and other Spanish authorities were not sending them. In fact, the first smugglers were among the priests, the missionary priests. They needed those niceties to at least have a halfway decent living. So, they were among the first smugglers there. It became a very thriving business and made much easier by the fact that the only authorities were 20 or 26 miles away up in Los Angeles. There was no communication by any way, except by mouth. So, whenever the smuggling went on, the authorities didn't hear about it until a long time later, much less get to the harbor in time to do any preventive work or anything. So, it was a wide-open situation, and it really became a very big thing there, the smuggling, at the beginning.

MS: Who was Phineas Banning? Tell me about him.

CQ: Phineas Banning was a terrific guy, a dynamic young man, arrived here on a clipper ship from –

MS: Delaware.

CQ: From Delaware.

MS: Start again.

CQ: Phineas Banning was really a tremendous surge of energy here in the Port of Los Angeles. He came aboard – he was 19 when he came aboard a clipper ship from –

MS: Start again. Delaware.

CQ: Phineas Banning was a real special person to arrive here at the age of 19 from Delaware, aboard a clipper ship. He was only 19 at the time, yet he immediately rented a boat and started selling freshwater to ships in the harbor. Very few people had shown that much initiative here at – in the Port of Los Angeles. He soon got a job driving a stagecoach. Within a year, he had bought in a part of the company, the transportation company. In fact, eventually, another year or two, he owned it. He was that aggressive a man, which, as I say, was quite an example of initiative that was very much lacking in this particular place. He became the leading force for improvement and modernization and everything. He really was the father of the modern port of San Pedro. There was no question about it. Do you want more details about his – what he did?

MS: Yes. When did he come here?

CQ: Banning came here – what year?

MS: In 1853, I think.

CQ: Banning came here, I believe, in the 1850s and immediately made his mark here with his ideas and his initiative and everything. He quickly got a drive –

MS: That's okay. We've gone through. That's fine.

CQ: Okay.

MS: Tell me about the founding of Wilmington? Why the name Wilmington? What he do?

CQ: Banning eventually had a transportation company of his own, a very good one. It was, of course, stagecoaches and horses and stagecoaches. He had to compete with some very –

MS: Start again.

CQ: Banning had his own very good company of stagecoaches and horses and all that stuff and wagons. But he had to compete with a couple of very cantankerous old guys on the – further out on the – closer to the edge of the water – the ocean. So, he got sick of that. They took him to court and all this stuff. He got very fed up with it. So, he bought some property further up in the Bay, which of course was so shallow that men was still walking across it and up to their waist. He called it new San Pedro. It was tough stuff to deal with. He had to deal muck out of there, mud and everything else. The wags around the – hanging around the bay called it Banning's Hog Waller. He just laughed and went ahead with his plans. He later changed the name to Wilmington because that's where he is from in Delaware. Now, he started to get a lot of – it was terribly shallow up there. So, he solved that problem by flat-bottomed barges and special boats with very shallow draft. Because they were still bringing people in small boats to the – anywhere along the land there to get them into the – on to dry land. He saw that. He began to take a lot of the business away from these transportation companies that were out close to the

edge of the ocean. In fact, when the Civil War came, he was getting a lot of – most of the business from San Pedro during the Civil War. His transportation company was great. He petitioned the – by now, the country was – they had the – 1838 – the war with Mexico. But anyway, during the Civil War, he was a great supporter of the union when the war was going on. He brought in the first – arranged to have the first telegraph established in the harbor for the military. They had Fort Drum here, and they had a group of – company of men here. They weren't doing anything in terms of fighting. Because the Civil War, of course, was on the East Coast. But he brought in the first telegraph, the first post office – things that he brought in, his influence brought them in – the first telegraph, first post office, the first newspaper that the harbor ever had. He was doing things like that. He was an innovator. Eventually, he – the legislature, he brought in the plans for the first breakwater. He knew that any legitimate port had to have a breakwater to protect it from the tides, the tidal movement of the oceans and all. Because a port can't operate – ships can't safely dock there without a breakwater. He knew that, and he brought in the first plan for a breakwater.

MS: Even more important than that, in 1869, he brought in the first railway.

CQ: That's right.

MS: Talk about that.

CQ: In 1869, he petitioned the legislature for the first railway to connect the harbor to the city of Los Angeles. It was called The San Pedro and Los Angeles railroad. Instead of going right down to the edge of the port, the harbor, it ran right to his Wilmington company up there. So, he had – that was his small, little victory over these people who were trying to harass him at the outer edges of the harbor. So, he was a fascinating guy, and he did all kinds of things like that. He eventually died at 55. He was in San Francisco on business. He stepped off a cable car and was hit by a passing wagon. He was only 55. He had all kinds of things going for him, plans everywhere, doing everything. So, he was a tremendous force for modernization and as I call him in the book, the Father of the port – Modern Port of Los Angeles. No one ever challenged him for that title.

MS: The railroads had a big influence, of course, on the ports. By the 1890s, you have this big battle about where there's going to be a port. Talk about that.

CQ: Okay. The Union Pacific.

MS: Southern Pacific.

CQ: I'm sorry, the Southern Pacific. The Southern Pacific Railway was organized by four men who had made money during the gold strike up north, selling equipment to the miners. Because they flooded out here by the thousands when they struck gold up in near San Francisco. These four men, now they were Collis Huntington, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, and the fourth one. He's a famous name too. Leland Stanford, whose wife persuaded him to give enough money to start Stanford University.

MS: You don't mention the names here.

CQ: Crocker –

MS: It's okay.

CQ: Yes, but there's a fourth one we should mention. They're all famous names in California history. Do you want to talk about the Southern Pacific at all?

MS: Yes. Explain what's Southern Pacific, and what effect does that have on the history of the harbor?

CQ: Well, the Southern Pacific was formed by four men who made their fortune selling supplies to the Gold Rush people up north. It was Collis Huntington, Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford, and Mark Hopkins.

MS: You've got to start again.

CQ: Okay. The Southern Pacific was formed by four men who made a fortune – made their fortune rather selling supplies to the gold miners up north during the Gold Rush. Leland Stanford, Collis Huntington, Charles Crocker, and –

MS: Mark Hopkins.

CQ: – Mark Hopkins. I would have to start all over again, huh? Four men formed the Southern Pacific railroad. All had made their fortune selling supplies to miners at the – during the Gold Rush days. It was Charles Crocker – no? What are the four – Huntington –

MS: Crocker, Hopkins, and Stanford.

CQ: Mark Hopkins. Yes. I better do it again.

MS: Just say, "There were four men."

CQ: There were four men headed by Collis Huntington who formed the Southern Pacific Railroad. They were the only game in town really. Of course, when the railroad came through, that immediately outmoded transportation by horse and wagon and everything else or anything like that. Immediately, it was the only game in town, and they knew it. So, when they started south from San Francisco, they would – as they approach to town, they would put in the demand for a large section of land in the middle of that city, a good sum of money. For that, they would run the railroad through the town. The town refused. They just went right around it and let them die on the vine. They quickly became known as the octopus. Because this was their policy, Huntington in charge of all this, naturally. As they got close to Los Angeles, Los Angeles really needed – knew that they had to have this railroad if they were to go inland at all, with much of the city's growth, except that the Union Pacific threatened to just turn left and go right into Texas and just bypass Los Angeles. So, they put out a very terrible ultimatum to the city of Los

Angeles that they wanted to handle all transportation in and out of the city of Los Angeles. If the city didn't like it, they would bypass the city. So, it was very much a case of blackmail and all that type of thing. So, finally, the city had to submit to this.

MS: The city gave them \$600,000 and Banning's railroad.

CQ: That's right.

MS: That was the deal.

CQ: That was part of what they took over. The ultimatum was, from the Southern Pacific, that they would be paid \$600,000 and the possession of the railroad that Banning had founded from the Los Angeles to the port – to the harbor – San Pedro. The San Pedro-Los Angeles railroad was given – had to be given to the Union Pacific, which gave them total control of all transportation. The city gave the Union Pacific \$600,000 and –

MS: It was the Southern Pacific not the Union Pacific.

CQ: The Southern Pacific gave –

MS: It's okay. We've gone through that.

CQ: Okay.

MS: What's the harbor fight about? They want to go to Santa Monica. Talk about that.

CQ: Collis Huntington decided that he was going to create a new harbor nearby and force Los Angeles to take it as its official harbor and abandon San Pedro. In fact, he bought up – a senator – one senator did put in a railroad from Los Angeles to Santa Monica. It was pretty good because the people use it to get to the beach a lot. But Huntington bought that too. Then he built a mile-long pier in Santa Monica Bay. Pretty soon, he was getting a lot of big business intended for San Pedro, and he was trying to force the city of Los Angeles to accept his harbor, which was absolutely a Southern Pacific monopoly. It became a big, big fight. The tremendous Free Harbor Fight, it was called. It went on for years. Finally, it looked as though the Santa Monica harbor, his harbor, was doing so much business and taking so much away from San Pedro that pretty soon, the city would have to agree to let him run everything and total transportation. His agents would go to companies and look at their books and charge them just short of bankruptcy. If they wanted to use a transportation available, which was strictly the Southern Pacific, they had to pay like this. It was absolute – it was extortion of the worst kind. But there was nobody to control it. There were no government ethics rules at all enforced at that time.

MS: So, how did San Pedro win then?

CQ: Well, this bill came up – I don't know the name of it. It's in the thing. This bill came up before Congress. It's said that it was sponsored by senators in the pay of Huntington, and there was outright bribery used there to get these votes. Then Senator White, Stephen White,

appeared. Now, he hadn't said much. He was a senator from California, a young senator, and he hadn't said much. But when this bill came up, he finally stepped in. He said that if Santa Monica did win this right to be – handle all of this business out of San Pedro, any other railroad would be able to use the tracks and do business through the Santa Monica themselves. It will ruin his monopoly. Because he wanted to control all, everything that went through the Santa Monica Harbor that he had built. Of course, that destroyed his monopoly, when the amendment to the bill by Stephen White said, "Any other railroad could use this, or any business could use this." That was –

MS: There was more than that. The federal government came and did engineering.

CQ: They did.

MS: They said San Pedro was a better port.

CQ: When White stopped this thing with his amendment and the thing was in limbo, the government appointed a new board of engineers. The board of engineers ruled for San Pedro, four to one. So, San Pedro got to keep the business. Of course, Huntington's business withered after that. He wasn't getting that kind of business because –

MS: Not really. He made a fortune carrying rock for the breakwater.

CQ: Oh, yes. No, he did a lot of things because he still –

MS: We've got the port established now. Talk about the shoestring annex and how the Los Angeles and the modern port began.

CQ: Well, Los Angeles, being that far from its port – I mean, it wasn't even its port then. It was just, as I say, it was almost a squatters' place with no rule there, no legal thing of anything, no legal situation at all. It was a very wide-open place. Of course, once the government or the city government of Los Angeles began thinking about it, they realized they had to have something, holding them to that port. Because they didn't have anything. So, they decided to annex this 22-mile or 26-mile-wide stretch right down to the harbor – which later of course, became the harbor freeway, modern harbor freeway – to take charge of the harbor and Wilmington, San Pedro and Wilmington. Now, the people who lived in San Pedro were pretty independent people. No one was telling them what to do at all. They resisted furiously the fact that they would become a little piece of Los Angeles, which in effect, they would be. They fought it bitterly. There were brawls everywhere and fighting and all sorts of, you know, battles about this. But the fact was that what the city offered the people in San Pedro was, unmistakably, really something; a modern Police Department, which they didn't have, a well-manned and supplied Fire Department, which they didn't have, a public library, which they didn't have, a school system, and also all sorts of things that a town really needed, but there was nobody to organize them or put them there in San Pedro. Another thing they did was they really offered them a new Shelter Island to San Pedro ferry. The city would own and operate it, and no one could charge over a nickel, five cents, to go across.

MS: That was much later. That was Terminal Island Ferry. That was much later.

CQ: No, it was then. It was then, that package. But one of the big things they did offer that the city really needed was a guaranteed supply of fresh water. Because that was becoming a very critical thing because the increasing population of San Pedro was making that a very iffy – chancy problem, the freshwater supply to the city. That was considered one of the most important things. So, in the face of what the city was offering them, they really – it was an offer they couldn't refuse, frankly. Because they were just staggering along, led by no one in particular. It was just a bad situation for them. So, that's how they became the annexation of the of the harbor.

MS: So, 1907, the Harbor Commission.

CQ: Yes.

MS: Tell me about that.

CQ: In 1907, the Harbor Commission, the city passed a law that the harbor – oh, I know, they created a board of harbor commissioners.

MS: Start again.

CQ: In 1907, the city officials created a board of harbor commissioners, and with that, automatically came the birth of the Port of Los Angeles. From that, it became quite a – became one of the world – I called the book "From Wilderness to World Port." That's what it was. It became one of the – it reached a stage where between lumber – you see, this was basically at that time, agricultural, oranges and that kind of thing in this part of the coast. Once the city started building, they badly needed lumber. They were getting tremendous supplies of lumber. It became the biggest lumber port in the world, but only in lumber. Then later, when oil was discovered in Long Beach in 1927, then they began getting a tremendous – a whole procession of oil tankers taking oil out and taking it back to the East Coast and elsewhere for refining. So, between the two of them, they became – this little, tiny port, which was dealing in almost nothing but lumber and oil, was one of the biggest ports in the world.

MS: Perfect ending. Good.

CQ: Then later – may I continue a little?

MS: Yes.

CQ: Okay. Later, the city, they didn't have any – many products at all here. Ship captains would go along the coast, and inevitably, they would go back to – when they took a cargo here and unloaded, they wanted to take a cargo back. But Los Angeles had nothing to offer. Instead, they'd stop in San Francisco, which was an established city by then, and they could pick up cargo going back. The city fathers of Los Angeles realized that they had to bring industry or something in here so that they would have exports. Because, you know, even at that time, this

great surge of business from the Orient, China, Japan, that was nonexistent at the time. That's why the Panama Canal meant so much to them. Because they were right on – 70 miles off the curve of the world as the entrance to the Atlantic Ocean. But that business was yet to come, you know. Of course, the Panama Canal, do you want to mention that?

MS: Sure. Go ahead.

CQ: Okay. The Panama Canal was, of course, one of the great maritime achievements of all time. Because it joined two tremendous oceans. It was a 50-mile waterway, and it connected two – and saved that terrible trip around the Cape of Good Hope, which everybody had to make before that, in the sailing ship, which was terrible, months and months, if they made it at all. The Panama Canal opened in nineteen –

MS: Fourteen.

CQ: – fourteen.

MS: Start again.

CQ: Yes. The Panama Canal, this great waterway that connected the two great oceans, opened in 1914. Well, eleven days before that, England had declared war on Germany. So, that meant that most of the maritime activity shifted to the Atlantic Ocean because that's closer to the war area, and most of the war stuff – war was over there. So, the Canal closed, and it didn't open until after the war. In fact, it didn't open until 1921. The war ended in 1918, I think. It was 1921 because it had – this new waterway that was rockfall and landfall, dirt fall and everything into the unused canal, and it had never been repaired at all. So, it was 1921 before it reopened, the Canal.

MS: Okay. Good. I think we've covered the ground up to the period we wanted to do, the early period.

CQ: Yes. Is there anything else? I'm sorry it took so long.

[end of transcript]