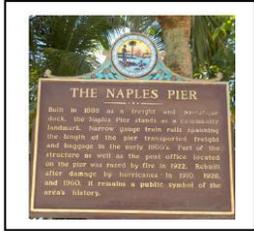


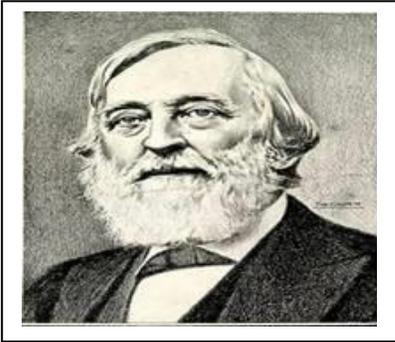
Naples Historic Pier



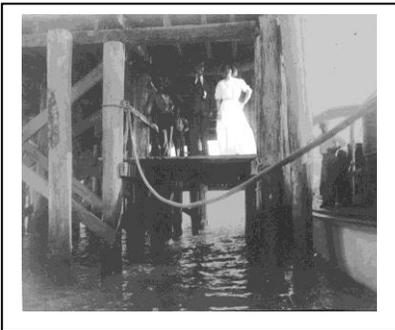
It is hard to imagine Naples without its iconic pier at the end of 12th Street South. Yet, our wonderful pier, the symbol of our city, was almost lost.



When you walk along the pier, particularly during the height of the season, it's a little "United Nations" of languages. People from around the world leisurely stroll to the end of the pier to catch site of a dolphin, to watch people fish, and to enjoy the wonders of the Gulf and the beach. Spectacular sunsets are enhanced by the 360 degree vistas from the pier's furthest point. It's hard to fathom life here without this treasure.

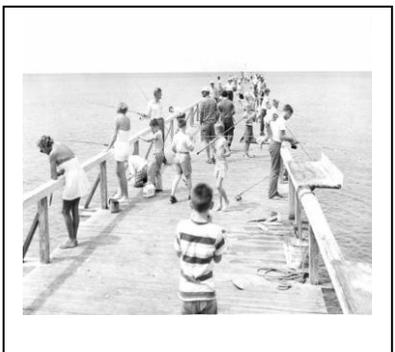


Construction of the first pier began in the summer of 1888. A firm from Fort Myers was awarded the job by Walter Halderman of The Naples Company. The company had just completed the initial 20 rooms of the Naples Hotel on 12th Ave and 3rd St. to accommodate potential land investors and tourists. Until the pier was built, people and goods had to arrive by boat, either in the Gulf or Naples Bay, or travel by ox cart from Fort Myers.



The pier extended 600 feet into the Gulf to a depth of 18 feet. It had two wings forming a T at the outer end. It was a double deck structure, with goods unloading on one level and people disembarking on the other. A railroad handcart extended from the pier to the hotel.

The pier became a gathering place for socializing and dances in the early 1900's. Yet, the early 1900's were also hard on the pier. In 1906 a storm damaged the pier and in 1910 a hurricane destroyed it. The pier was rebuilt; however in 1922 a fire partially destroyed the pier as well as the Post Office which had been located at the foot of the pier. Rebuilt again in 1924 it was then lengthened to 1000 feet but was severely damaged by storms in 1926 and again in 1944.



But incredibly resilient the pier still stood on through the 1950's. On days when fishing was especially good, stores closed in town and

everyone went to the pier to fish. With a population of only about 1,700 and delivery of supplies infrequent, fish were a vital food source.

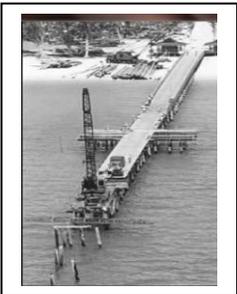


When hurricane Donna struck on September 10, 1960 the pier was totally destroyed. A 9 1/2 foot storm surge sent the collapsed pier out into the Gulf and the city was faced with a difficult decision as their insurance for the pier only covered a small fraction of the rebuilding cost. Numerous ideas were discussed, including relocating the pier to 5th Avenue South, a utility tax or charging to walk or fish on the pier.



A local philanthropic couple, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Norris, came forward and agreed to pay for rebuilding the pier on its existing site. The pier reopened 10 months later at a cost of \$130,000, over \$1 million in today's dollars. Ten years later though, the structure had been eaten away by worms and again the Norris's agreed to pay for the repairs.

However, they had one stipulation; there could be no charge to access or fish on the pier. On a handshake, an agreement with the city was secured. "My parents felt the pier meant so much to people and had been a necessary morale booster after hurricane Donna. It was the towns gathering place. People always said I'll meet you at the pier," noted Mrs. Lavern Norris Gaynor. Mrs. Gaynor is the founder of Naples Backyard History, Inc. a 501©3, the parent organization of the Naples Panorama website.



During the past 50 years the pier has needed repairs but has suffered no major damage from storms. However, the constant use of the pier did require the floor boards to eventually be replaced in 2015 using a Brazilian hardwood called IPE. The pier was closed for most of the summer but reopened in November, just in time for the tourist season and for the New Year's Eve fireworks display.



Today, fishing from the pier still does not require a license nor is there a charge to walk the pier. A concession stand sits at about the halfway point. It is a favorite place for families to enjoy a hot dog or ice cream while gazing out at the remarkable vistas. Around the world people can also enjoy the wonderful view from the pier due to a webcam located on the pier. To view go to www.naplespanorama.org