

# Timeline of the Fishing Industry in Los Angeles Harbor

1893 Golden Gate Packing Company moved its operations from San Francisco to Los Angeles and re-established itself as the California Fish Company. A small sardine cannery began in San Pedro.

1897 Admiral John C. Walker recommended that port development continue in San Pedro, creating plans of expanding port activity to help create today the Port of Los Angeles.

1903 Albert Halfhill, co-owner of the California Fish Company, developed a method of canning whereby albacore were steamed (removing the oils and changing the color white), and the meat was packed in vegetable oil. This gave the tuna a more acceptable taste and appearance (some said like chicken) to Euro-American consumers.

1905 Tuna canning began due to depletion of sardines.

1906 City annexed the harbor.

City of Los Angeles annexed a 16-miles of land along the ocean in San Pedro and Wilmington; three years later they would become the City of Los Angeles.

1907 On December 9th the Los Angeles City Council created the Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners, marking the official founding of the Port of Los Angeles.

1909 Numerous harbor improvements occurred, including completion of a two mile breakwater, broadening and dredging of the main channel, construction of Angel's Gate lighthouse, and completion of wharfs, piers, and warehouses.

Canning sardines stopped due to desire for white meat of albacore.

San Pedro and Wilmington were annexed.

1912 Wilbur Wood opened the California Tuna Canning Company at Los Angeles Harbor. Two years later, Frank Van Camp bought the company and renamed it Van Camp Sea Food Company. This new company became best known for its Chicken of the Sea product line.

1914 Panama Canal opened with the Port of Los Angeles as became the natural port-of-call for most transpacific and coastal users.

California Fish Company's first building was destroyed by fire.



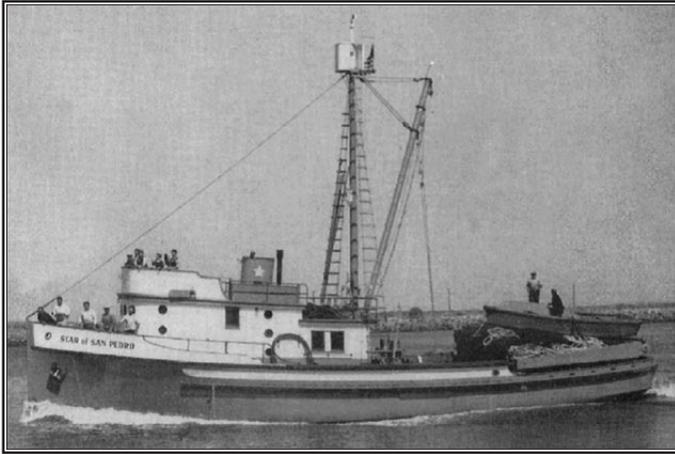
Rear Admiral John C. Walker (Queenan 1983).



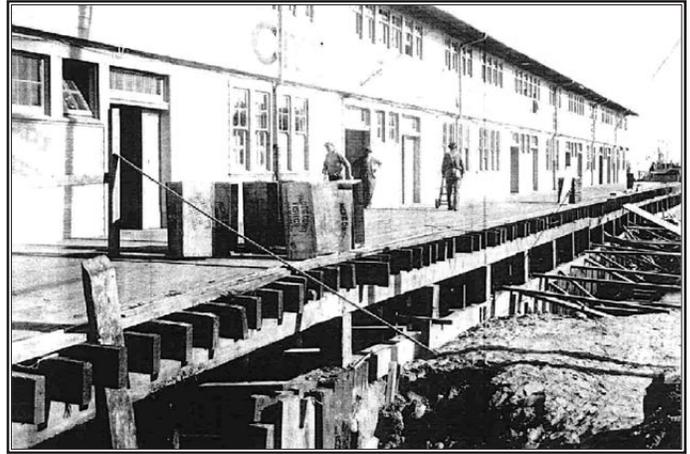
Pacific Tuna Canning Co. (top) opened in 1911. White Star Canning Co. (above) opened in 1912 (Pacific Fishermen 1952).



California Fish Company's first building, destroyed by fire in 1914 (Queenan 1983).



Purse seine boat, circa 1916 (Scofield 1951).



The rear elevation of the Wholesale Municipal Fish Market at Berths 79–80, 1917 (San Pedro Historical Society).

1915 As a part of the LA port development program Fish Harbor was constructed.

1916 The purse seiner, a type of boat that catches surface fish by encircling them with a net and then drawing (pursing) the net, was introduced.

16 tuna canneries in Southern California had 1,800 workers and were valued at approximately \$1 million.

1917 Martin Bogdanovich founded the French Sardine Company, better known by its later name Star-Kist. Eventually, the company became the largest fish cannery in the world.

Peak year of albacore with 34 million pounds caught.

Warehouse No. 1 was completed.

Market value of Albacore dropped and desire for other types of tuna arose.

Within 2 years, sardines caught rose from under 16 million to 158 million pounds, and a total of 40 canneries were established.

The first Municipal Fish Market was constructed at the port.

1928 Fish Harbor was completed for \$1.5 million, where canning operations congregated, allowing for more efficient landings of raw fish and a concentrated railroad and truck distribution point.

Mackerel became 2nd in popularity under sardines and tuna.

1929 75% of the catches in California were canned in Los Angeles Harbor.

Los Angeles brought in 45% of catches in California and 1/4th of total catches in the United States, including Alaska, with a total of 857 million pounds.

LA Harbor generated 2.25 million gallons of fish oil and 20,000 tons of fish meal.



Warehouse No. 1, 1917 (Queenan 1983).



The French Sardine Company first established a building in 1917. In the picture is owner Martin Bogdanovich (Queenan 1983).

1930 Beginning in 1917, increase in trade at the Port led distributors to construct a large number of warehouses and transit sheds, and a vast railroad network developed around the harbor and Los Angeles. Harbor facilities served a diverse range of products, including oil, lumber, shipbuilding, cotton, citrus crops, steel, and fishing and canning.

Peak year for tuna fishing with 40% of 111 million pounds from LA Harbor.

1930s Fishing and canning became a significant industry in Los Angeles; it was tied with San Diego as the largest center for fish canning in the country, and it ranked among the world's largest.

1931 Loss in markets with 37% of state catches, only 441 million pounds.

1932 75% of over 1,800 commercial fishermen were foreign born.

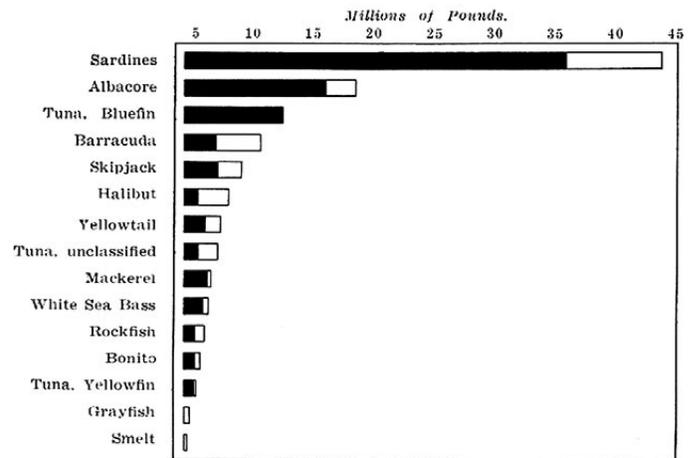
1939 The canneries and fishing fleet at the Los Angeles harbor employed more than 6,000 workers with a combined payroll of \$6.75 million.

1941 Municipal Ferry Terminal was established to carry cars and people from San Pedro to Terminal Island until 1963 when the bridge was completed; it later turned into the Maritime Museum when the bridge was completed.

1945 Formerly known as Sardamack Fisheries and an established canner of tuna, mackerel and sardines, Pan Pacific broke ground on a new cannery in September of 1945. This plant was the first of a number of expansions in cannery facilities following WWII.

1946 Tuna canning in Los Angeles Harbor became the largest in the world in following WWII.

Pan Pacific Sea Food plant was completed on October 1, 1946, opening day of the sardine season. The new cannery plant cost approximately



Average annual landings of common marine fish in Southern California, 1919-1921. Black, of local origin landed in Los Angeles County (Skogsberg 1925).



Municipal Ferry, constructed in 1941 (Queenan 1983).



Main Channel and Municipal Fish Market, circa 1940 (Port of Los Angeles).

\$500,000 and was designed by James R. Friend, who worked in the Long Beach and Los Angeles areas and designed other Port buildings. The cannery was considered the most modern plant of its kind at Fish Harbor in 1946.

1947 Coast Fisheries Company constructed a building at Fries Avenue and Water Street.

1950 Los Angeles Harbor area produced nearly half of the 9.5 million cases of tuna packed in the U.S. during that season, approximately \$78 million.

1950s LA Harbor accounted for 80% of the 12 million cases of tuna produced in the U.S.; the canneries employed 5,000 people with payrolls of \$15 million, and they maintained a yearly volume of business exceeding \$150 million.

1951 Municipal Wholesale Fish Market was constructed.

The new Canner's Cooperative Steam Company was formed to supply steam to canneries throughout Fish Harbor. The cooperative was incorporated in December 1950 and consisted of five Fish Harbor tuna canneries: Van Camp, French Sardine, South Coast Fisheries, Terminal Island Sea Foods, and California Marine Curing & Packing. By the early 1950s, the five participating canneries were so successful that they required their own steam processing plant. Eventually, other canneries at Fish Harbor, including Pan Pacific, joined the cooperative.

1952 French Sardine Company became Star-Kist.

The new Star-Kist plant was completed at a cost of \$1 million was said to be the largest tuna-packing facility in the world. The plant covered 10 acres, could pack more than 400 tons of tuna in a single 8 hour shift, and contained modern docking facilities and innovative machinery.

1953 Coast Fisheries had become a division of the Quaker Oats Company and was advertising and marketing "Puss 'n Boots" cat food extensively around the United States, labeling the product's maker as "Coast Fisheries Division of Quaker Oats Company, Wilmington, California.

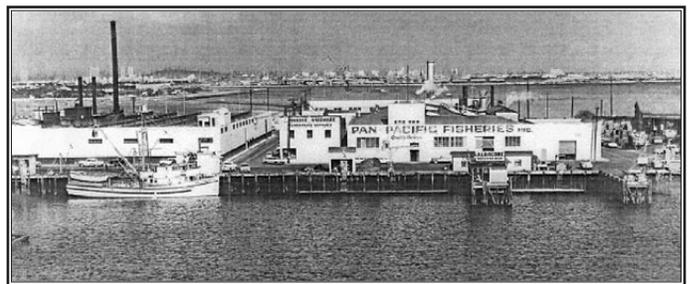
1954 LA County seal was established and included a tuna fish, along with other well-known industries—oil, film, and cattle in the early days.



One of the Star-Kist Canning facilities, built in 1943 (courtesy J. Deluca, 2007)



Inside of one of the Star-Kist facilities, no date (Queenan 1983).



Pan Pacific Fisheries Canning Building, no date (San Pedro Historical Society).



Municipal Wholesale Fish Market (San Pedro Historical Society, 1951).

1963 C.H.B. Seafoods acquired Pan Pacific, Heinz Corporation acquired Star-Kist, and Ralston Purina acquired Van Camp. The dominant tuna canning operations, once locally based, were now part of multinational food-processing conglomerates.

1973 The Commercial Diving Center Inc. bought the Coast Fishing Company Building and was renamed the National Polytechnic College of Engineering and Oceanering.

1980s Tuna industry became contracted to one small operation.

1984 Star-Kist was the first big cannery to shut down.

1992 CHB Foods cannery, formerly known as Pan Pacific, was shut down.

1994 Pier 300/400 underwent construction as the largest capital improvement undertaking of all US seaports and the Port's most ambitious development project.

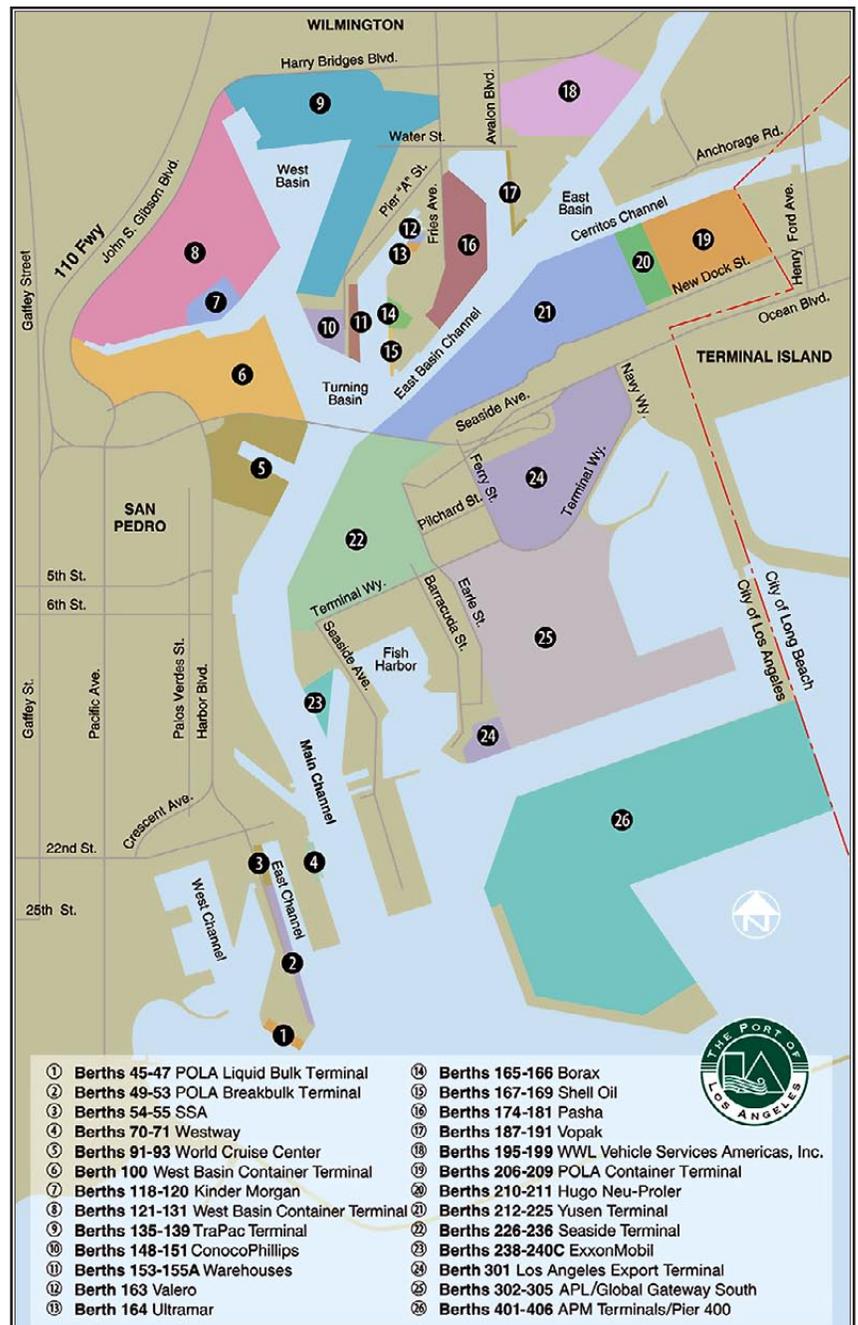
2001 Chicken of the Sea tuna canning plant at the Los Angeles Harbor closed down, displacing 250 workers in the San Pedro area of Los Angeles and representing the last tuna fish canning operation in the continental U.S.

2006 Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach together create the San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan, which plans to reduce emissions by 50% within five years.

2007 The Port's Centennial birthday.



Coast Fisheries Building (David Greenwood, Jones & Stokes, 2006).



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