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Shamrock Skate Arena



The Shamrock Skate Arena closed in 1985 after more than 30 years in business. Photo credit: Shamrock Skating Rink Facebook page and Mark Montgomery.

Located in Old Torrance at 1851 Mullin Avenue, the Shamrock Skate Arena delighted generations of children and families as well as serving as a teen hangout for older kids during its 30-plus years of operation.

The old-school wooden roller rink opened sometime in the mid-1950s and did a steady business instructing customers on how to do the hokey-pokey on skates.

Its biggest heyday came during the roller-boogie craze that blossomed during the disco era of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Teens flocked to the rink decked out in the dance-floor fashions of the era to skate to music played by a DJ who would alternate between calling for fast skating, slow skating, backwards skating and the ever-popular couples-only skate.

Many would later remember paying their entrance fee to Herb Provost of Lomita, who served as the rink's manager starting in 1971 until its closure.

The rink even featured live music on occasion. Former South Bay resident Don Waller recalls in an interview playing a live show there in December 1972 with his band the Imperial Dogs, who were opening for another South Bay band, The Clap: "We didn't know there wasn't going to be a real stage — just wooden pallets stacked about four feet high and covered in sheets of plywood. When we got up there and started leaping around, everything started moving up and down — it was like playing in a rowboat! — and all the cords kept getting caught between the moving sheets of plywood and 'causing guitars and mikes to become suddenly unplugged ... But at least 300 people showed up and — even though they didn't know who we were — we went over really well."

Unfortunately for the Shamrock, business tailed off drastically in the early 1980s after the disco/roller boogie craze cooled. The owners, Ella Schwartz and Norma Greene, fell two months behind on their rent, and made the decision to close the rink down.

The last night of public skating at the Shamrock was on Tuesday, Aug. 27, 1985. The very last skates took place in private sessions on Wednesday and Thursday, Aug. 28 and 29.

According to a Daily Breeze story about the rink's demise, several young die-hard Shamrock regulars showed up on skates in front of Torrance City Hall on Friday morning, Aug. 30 carrying signs protesting the closure.

The city's then-recreation administrator Bill Klement told them their skates were damaging the tiled grounds and they would have to remove them, which they did. He also told them of plans to build an outdoor rink at Wilson Park, an idea which became the park's roller hockey facility that finally opened in October 1993.

As for the Shamrock, the South Bay's last indoor skating rink was one of many small businesses on a 26-acre parcel north of Torrance Boulevard and east of Van Ness Avenue in downtown Torrance that was purchased by American Honda Motor Co. for its U.S. headquarters, which opened in 1990.

It was torn down to make way for the headquarters, and no trace of it remains today. The long-gone facility still has its fans, though. A Facebook site devoted to the Shamrock began in 2009 and currently boasts more than 800 followers.



Photo courtesy Shamrock Skating Rink Facebook page.

Sources:

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"Shamrock uprooted – Wheels stop rolling at Torrance rink," by James Bronson, The Daily Breeze, Sept. 1, 1985, Page B1.



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