

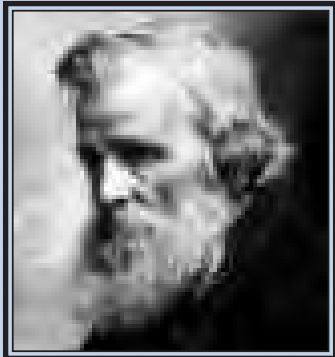
History Comes Alive!



by Hynda Rudd,
City Archivist (Retired),
and Club Member

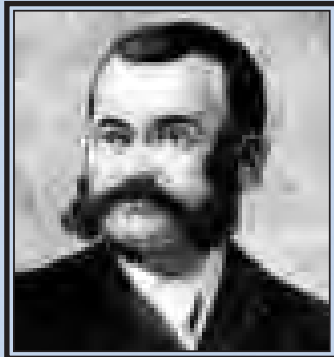
Some Past L.A. Mayors Made History, Notoriety

With the anticipation of the General Election May 17, it seemed appropriate to give thumbnail sketches of some of the mayors in the history of the City of Los Angeles. Each mayor has brought his own character to the office, but due to space limitation only a few of the distinguished can be profiled here.



Stephen Clark Foster (1854-55, 1856)

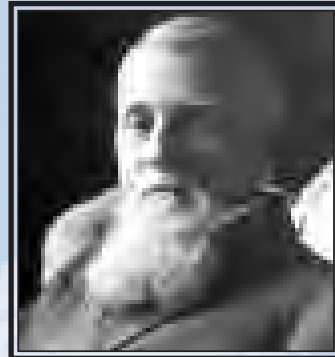
Mr. Foster was not the composer. Mayor Foster was an 1840 Yale graduate who came to California with the San Bernardino Mormon Battalion as an interpreter. Prior to and after becoming mayor he served on the Common (City) Council. He was also on the Board of Education and became Superintendent of Schools. At the state level he helped frame the first California State Constitution, and eventually became a state senator. He was also responsible for translating many of the Spanish documents to English found in the City Archives. As mayor, he resigned his office to join a lynch mob. Foster resumed his position as mayor, after the lynching!



Prudent Beaudry (1874-76)

Mr. Beaudry was a French Canadian from Montreal. He served on the City Council prior to being mayor. He also became the first City Auditor (precursor to City Controller) after he served as mayor. In 1868, he organized the Los Angeles City Water Company. Bunker Hill, known today as downtown Los Angeles, was developed by him, where it was quoted that he paid \$517 for the hillside property. In the 1870s and 1880s the Bunker Hill development was considered a high-society neighborhood, where Angels Flight became a necessity for local inhabitants who lived on the hill.

As stated above, he was a responsible party in developing the water system for the City. It was noted that he laid down 12 miles of iron pipes and planned reservoirs in the hills so that citizens could develop new neighborhoods.



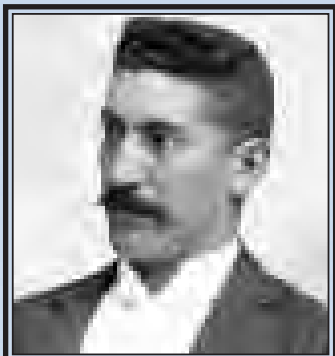
Cameron Erskine Thom (1882-84)

Cameron E. Thom was a Southern gentleman from Virginia who arrived in Los Angeles in 1854. During the next decade he returned south to fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Upon his return to Los Angeles and prior to becoming mayor, he was a City Attorney, police judge and sat on the Police Commission (then the Board of Freeholders) to draft the first home rule charter for the City of Los Angeles, which was adopted in 1889. He was also the County District Attorney for four terms.

As Mayor, Mr. Thom was determined that City government should have its own City hall built for such a purpose. The municipal facility was built in 1885, where it sat on Second Street between Spring and Fort (later Broadway) Streets. But, within two years, the City hall became inadequate for all the services rendered by the municipal government.

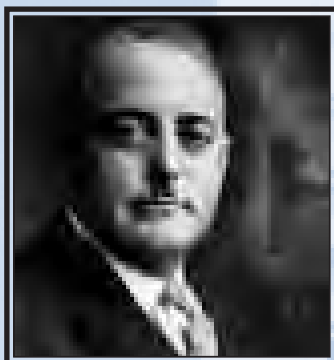
Meredith Snyder's second term, 1900-02, continued to revolve around water and electricity. The Third Street Tunnel that collapsed in 1900, and was rebuilt, was bored through Bunker Hill from Hill street to Hope, making the Hill more accessible to business activity. During his third term from 1903-04, the 1889 City charter was amended. The Civil Service Commission (precursor to the Personnel Department) was established.

Snyder ran again in 1905, but was defeated by the Republican Los Angeles Times retaliation due to a 1904 political disagreement with the newspaper. He remained involved in civic activities for the next 15 years. Then in 1919, "Pinky/Pinkie" returned for his fourth term as mayor. His appeal to the local populace never failed. Los Angeles between his first term and his last had literally grown from a small city to a future metropolis. The size of the City grew from 30 square miles to 300. The population soared from 100,000 to a half-million residents. Meredith Pinxton Snyder retired as mayor in 1921.



Cristobal Aguilar (1866-68, 1870-72)

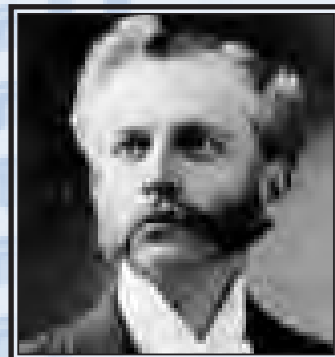
Mayor Aguilar was the last Latino mayor of Los Angeles. He succeeded Antonio Coronel (1853-1854) and Manuel Requena (1856). Prior to Aguilar becoming mayor, he served on the Common (City) Council as well as being the City's Water Overseer. He was also a Los Angeles County Supervisor. During his administration as mayor an ordinance was signed that eventually gave the City the land known as Pershing Square. Also, water works negotiations began. He vetoed a Common Council proposal to sell the City's water rights. His decision protected Los Angeles in becoming a future metropolis.



Frank L. Shaw (1934-38)

Canadian born, he was the only mayor in the history of the City of Los Angeles to be successfully recalled for criminal intent. Prior to being mayor he served on the City Council. He also served on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. He and his brother Joseph, the Secretary to the Mayor, were accused of running a corrupt administration. Some of the issues under investigation and conviction related to imposing authority over the Police and Fire Departments, selling civil service positions, and protecting gambling and prostitution rackets. In 1937, a bomb exploded in the car of a private investigator and former policeman who was investigating the Shaw regime. He was going to testify against the Shaw administration. Miraculously, he survived. Controversy over who did the "dastardly deed" led to much speculation. Finally, an LAPD captain was indicted and convicted. But, blame in the mayor's administration never wavered.

By 1938, Shaw's second term, the local citizens were fed up with the Shaw administration. There was a clarion call to recall Mayor Shaw. Judge Fletcher Bowron, a conservative Republican, who had participated in the City Hall corruption Grand Jury investigation, was elected Sept. 18, 1938, to replace Frank L. Shaw. Bowron finished the remaining three-year term and additionally three more terms for a total of 15 years (1938-53) as mayor.



Meredith Pinxton Snyder (1896-98, 1900-02, 1902-04, 1919-21)

"Pinky" or "Pinkie" Snyder was the only man to be mayor of the City of Los Angeles three different times, and four times altogether. His nickname became a caricature of his middle name, even though he did have red hair and "mutton chop" sideburns. He was a Democrat during a Republican era. Prior to becoming mayor he served on the City Council, Police Commission and Police and Fire Pension Fund Commissions. He was considered a "Distinguished L.A. Citizen." Snyder became a Los Angeles resident in 1880.

His first term as mayor came about because of his determination for municipal ownership of water. Water was the most politicized issue in City government at that time. Los Angeles, the most improbable City because of the lack of local water availability, was the main topic of discussion everywhere because of the growth of City population and land. He ran again in 1898, but lost to Republican Fred Eaton, who had been City Engineer for the Department of Public Works, and one of those responsible for bringing Owens Valley water to Los Angeles.



Fletcher Bowron (1938-41, 1941-45, 1945-49, 1949-53)

As stated above, Judge Fletcher Bowron became mayor after the recall election of Frank Shaw in 1938. Bowron was known as the "Reform Mayor." One of his first charges was to remove all City commissioners. He also revamped the Fire, Police and Civil Service Commissions. He brought more efficiency and economy to the Department of Water and Power. He appointed the first City Administrative Officer (formerly known as the Bureau of Budget and Efficiency). During World War II, he presented fireside chats on the radio, emulating those of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat. Typed copies of those chats can be found in the City Archives. Even though he was a staunch Republican, he worked well with the Democrats. But, his downfall at the next election came from two issues. One, he backed the federal government in World War II of forced removal of Japanese Americans to internment in concentration camps, such as Manzanar in the Owens Valley; and two, he supported integrated public housing, which at the time sounded like socialism, which eventually helped create the "Red Scare" in America during the late 1940s. After serving the City as mayor, Bowron returned to the bench as a Superior Court Judge.