

# History Comes Alive!

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



Tales From the City Archives

## Boyle Heights: Beginnings, 1835-1912

Boyle Heights has had a lengthy history and a varied ethnic population that has created a rich mosaic of culture and tradition giving the city of Los Angeles an unparalleled jewel in its midst. In a 1979 Community Plan from the City of Los Angeles Planning Department is the following physical description of the area. "Boyle Heights contained 3,842 acres or approximately 6 square miles and has a population of almost 82,000 (1970)." Continuing it "is bounded by the Los Angeles River on the west, Indiana Street on the east, Marengo Street and the San Bernardino Freeway on the north...and approximately 25th Street on the south."

The area story begins during the early years of the Pueblo de Los Angeles on the east side of the Los Angeles River, where there was a mesa known as Paredon Blanco or White Bluff. The first Anglo to have lived there was Andrew A. Boyle. He purchased the property from the family of Estevan Lopez in 1858. Boyle operated a vineyard and winery there. Boyle Heights was eventually named after him by his son-in-law, William H. Workman in 1876.



Boyle House in Boyle Heights.

### The Early Years

But the area has an important early history prior to the arrival of the Anglo citizenry. In 1826, Estevan Lopez was a councilman in the Mexican Ayuntamiento in the town of Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles. His father, Don Claudio Lopez, arrived in Alta California in 1773. The term Alta California referred to the Spanish definition of their land possessions along the Pacific coast north of the Mexican state of Baja California. The elder Lopez gave 40 years of service assisting missionaries to Christianize the aborigines of Alta California to open up the country on the west coast. The younger Lopez, also known as Don Estevan Lopez, originally owned the property for the future home of Andrew Boyle. On Sept. 28, 1835, the land had been granted Lopez by the Los Angeles Ayuntamiento. In time, Estevan Lopez owned a great deal of property in the area which was given to his children.

### Three Anglo Pioneers

Andrew A. Boyle was born in Ireland, one of eight children. His original name was Andrew Michael O'Boyle. In time he dropped the Michael and the O' from his last name and added the initial A. to formalize his name.



Andrew A. Boyle.

His mother died in Ireland, and his father left for America. When Andrew was 14, he and his seven siblings left for America. They never found their father and eventually joined a group of Irish colonists headed for Texas. As a boy of 18, Boyle accounts he almost lost his life when he joined the Texas army and fought in the Texas Revolution referred to as the Massacre at Goliad on about Palm Sunday, 1836. This supposedly occurred a few weeks after the fall of the Alamo.

According to Harris Newmark in his bible of early Los Angeles history, *Sixty Years in Southern California: 1853-1913*, Andrew Boyle arrived in Los Angeles in 1858. A decade earlier, Boyle had left Mexico for the States with 20,000 Mexican dollars. "While attempting to board a steamer from the mouth of the Rio Grande...it capsized. Both Boyle and his treasure were thrown into the water. Boyle narrowly escaped with his life, but his treasure went to the bottom, never to be recovered." The shock of the presumed

death of Boyle killed his wife. He was left to raise an infant daughter, Maria Elizabeth, who later married William H. Workman, from a very prominent Los Angeles family.

Andrew A. Boyle was dedicated to developing Los Angeles. One of his major interests occurred during the time he sat on the City's Common Council from 1867-70. The term Common Council was used in Los Angeles city government from 1850 through 1876, when the terminology changed to the current name City Council. Boyle's interest dealt with water. His major concern, as well as that of others of that time, revolved around the privatization of water in Los Angeles, which he was against. The fury over this leasing issue lasted for at least another 20 years.

With the advent of the railroad in Los Angeles during the 1880s, the White Bluff mesa began to develop into one of the first suburbs, an inner-city community. A land boom was beginning. Agriculture developed due to Boyle adding additional zanjas (ditches) for irrigation. This area would become an exclusive residential section, with a splendid view of the city and mountains to the north. There have been accounts that as many as 300 or 400 businessmen and civic leaders and their families lived in the area during the latter part of the 19th and into the early 20th centuries. In 1876, when Boyle Heights was named, the area was divided into 35-acre tracts. Andrew A. Boyle died Feb. 9, 1871, at the age of 52, never knowing that an important piece of Los Angeles history bore his name and fine reputation.

William Workman was born in Missouri Jan. 1, 1839. With his parents he arrived in Los Angeles in 1854, four years after Los Angeles became an incorporated city. As a teenager he worked for two early newspapers, the *Southern Californian* and later the *Los Angeles Star*. He also worked for the Phineas Banning Transportation Company along with his older brother, Thomas. This was often a precarious and dangerous business working to deliver company payroll while avoiding bandits. He later joined another brother, Elijah, and opened a saddle and harness shop at 76 Main St. (near today's Commercial Street). This business flourished for years.

William Henry Workman is not to be confused with his uncle, William Julian Workman, of the famed Rowland-Workman Party of 25 individuals who arrived in the Los Angeles area in 1841. The senior Workman and his friend, John Rowland, owned the nearly 49,000-acre Rancho La Puente along with other major land holdings in Southern California.

In 1867, William Henry married Maria

Elizabeth Boyle, Andrew's daughter. They had seven children. They built a home atop "White Bluff" that rose 100 feet above the Los Angeles River. Workman became civic-minded. He worked conscientiously to bring the Southern Pacific Railroad to Los Angeles. In the 1870s he ran for public office. From 1872-80, he was a Common Councilman. He was Mayor from 1886-88 (two one-year terms at that time). He was also City Treasurer from 1900-06.

While as City Councilman, William Henry Workman initiated the idea of naming the "White Bluff" area of Los Angeles Boyle Heights after his father-in-law. As community names came into existence, there was no official mention of these new locations found in the Los Angeles City Archives. In all likelihood, newspapers of the era tell the story.

Some of William H. Workman's contributions to the City of Los Angeles included:

- As mayor, he mandated the first paved streets, electric lights and electric street cars;
- Additionally, he was instrumental in securing the first bridge over the Los Angeles River at what is now Cesar Chavez Street, as well as wooden bridges at Aliso and First Streets.

Workman was a real "progressive." His endowments brought Los Angeles well into the 20th century, before it happened.

John Edward Hollenbeck was born June 5, 1829, in Hudson, Summit County, Ohio.

Young Hollenbeck realized at a young age that farming was not to his liking. He preferred the work of trade and travel, especially abroad. He even became a diplomat for the government of Nicaragua to the United States. In 1874 he and his wife visited Los Angeles, which was then booming in expectancy of the Southern Pacific Railroad coming in, and while there he made several purchases of real estate and deposited a large sum of money in the Temple & Workman Bank.

In 1876, he purchased land on the east side of the Los Angeles River, and built what was in those days one of the finest residences in that part of the state, expending many thousands of dollars in improvements. This home, called the Villa de Paredon Blanco, was where he lived until his death in 1885. Across the street from his incredible mansion,

he formed a lake and a 20-acre park that bore his name thanks, once again, to William Henry Workman. The park still exists. After Hollenbeck's wife died, the villa became a home for the aged.

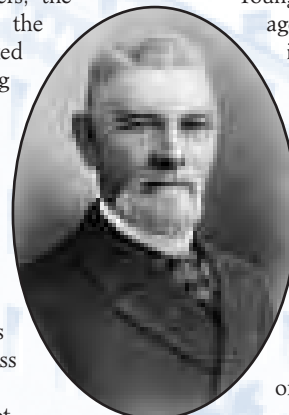
In time, it was necessary for the Boyle Heights residents to have their own police station. Lawlessness was evident as far back as the 1870s, when citizens were asking for protection. The location of the first station remains unknown to this author, but in 1911, ground was broken for a new \$30,000 station. It was first named the Boyle Heights Station, but later named after John Edward Hollenbeck. The address for that station was 2015 East First St., which remained at that address for 52 years.

In 1878, he became a stockholder in the Commercial Bank of Los Angeles, and was elected its president. He held that position until 1881, when he, with others, organized and established the First National Bank, of which he was chosen president. He held the position until failing health compelled him to resign. Mr. Hollenbeck also sat on the Common Council from 1877 to 1878.

To be continued. The next chapter is about the ethnic invasion of Boyle Heights. It is scheduled to appear in September.



John Edward Hollenbeck



William Henry Workman.



**Did You Know?**  
In 1804, the first orange grove in California is planted at the Mission San Gabriel. At that time, California was divided into Baja California and Alta California.

*Did You Know is provided by Larry Williams, Bureau of Contract Administration.*