

History Comes Alive!

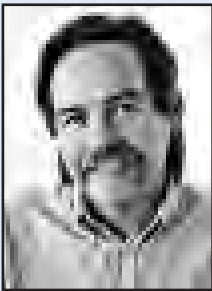
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Tales From the City Archives

A Foundation of Social Activism

■ John and Dora Haynes translate their passion for social activism into their foundation. Part 2 of 2.



Dr. Tom Sitton, author of this article.

Last month, guest columnist Dr. Tom Sitton wrote part one about Dr. John Randolph Haynes and his importance to Los Angeles. Tom continues with part two here, further introducing the public to the vast impact of Haynes' "Progressive" activities.

The Haynes imprint on

Los Angeles history continues to be felt to this day. I am eternally grateful to Tom Sitton for enlightening the readership through his professionalism and his historical insights that have broadened all of us. — Hynda Rudd

Early in the 1900s, John Randolph Haynes also became a crusader for public ownership of natural resources required by citizens for everyday living. For this reason he supported municipal ownership and operation of utilities including water and electricity systems (and City regulation of gas, telephone and public transportation services). He began speaking out on the subject by 1905 and advocated the Owens Valley Aqueduct project to supply water and electricity for the City. He served on several committees to politically protect and advance the program in the 1910s, and was appointed to Public Service Commission – soon to become the Board of Water and Power Commissioners – in 1921. On this board, he defended the principle and the department in major political battles over public ownership in the 1920s, and with a mayor who tried to give the City's program to private power interests in the early 1930s. Haynes was also instrumental in bringing Hoover Dam hydroelectricity to Southern California just before he died in 1937.

In the area of regulating private utilities in the interests of Los Angeles residents, Dr. Haynes was instrumental in requiring safety equipment for streetcars that saved lives and reduced injuries to many on streets in the City. Alarmed by the increasing number of accidents involving streetcars and pedestrians in the busy downtown district, Haynes worked with Mayor Owen McAleer in 1905 to conduct his own survey of trolley accidents across the nation in which pedestrians were needlessly run over and seriously maimed or killed. He determined that the solution was the addition of a fender which, when operated properly, could safely catch and hold the victim in front of the trolley until the vehicle came to a stop. Haynes began a political crusade to require such fenders within the City limits, a campaign in which he was assisted by the Voters League and the local branch of the Municipal League. After many bouts with representatives of the street railway companies and lobbying of City Council members, he convinced the City Council to pass such an ordinance in 1906. For the next three decades he countered the arguments of opponents to have the fender law nullified and arranged public demonstrations of the effectiveness of

the fenders. With changes to the design of streetcars in the 1930s intended, in part, to halt the decline of this mode of transportation in Los Angeles, the law was finally cast aside in 1937, just before a very sick Dr. Haynes passed away. By that time the fenders had saved countless lives and prevented many serious injuries, a claim made by the street railway companies themselves.

In these situations Haynes was a fierce competitor in defending and advancing the City's best interests as he interpreted them. Early in the century he emerged as a political force who tried to forge an alliance against the leadership of the region's large corporations and the wealthy city elite (of which he was a member). As a social reform progressive who worked for much more than just

reform activism – by his spouse. Dora Haynes embraced the reform movement at first through her participation in women's clubs in the late 19th century. She was active in various civic and social welfare issues that husband John advanced, and helped to organize political groups, meetings and progressive election campaigns. But she was especially interested in the crusade for women suffrage in Los Angeles and California, and an important role in the local and state victory in 1910. She continued to work for the success of this goal at the national level. When it was achieved in 1920, Dora Haynes became a founding member and the first president of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles, the local branch of the national organization created

electricity in an ever-changing energy market. (The physical reminder of Dr. Haynes's role in water and power is the DWP's Haynes Steam Plant near Seal Beach, which was named in his honor in 1963.)

John Randolph Haynes's legacy of political and social reform activism is apparent today as Los Angeles city government grapples with some of the same challenges addressed by Dr. Haynes. In many ways the City functions within administrative systems and democratic processes that were modernized in the era of his reform activity. And through the Haynes Foundation, as well as in Los Angeles municipal government, the ideals for which John and Dora Haynes worked so hard for so many years are still being pursued.



Dora Haynes



John Randolph Haynes.

structural changes to government, elections and representation, he was willing to cooperate with everyone – from staunch conservatives to socialists at times – to win the political battle. In the early years he fought the Southern Pacific Railroad "machine" of corporations, saloon interests, and archconservative partisans who controlled City and state politics. In the 1920s Haynes was aligned with "Boss" Kent Parrot's political organization in Los Angeles, which defended municipal ownership and City employees while protecting less respectable groups. (The Los Angeles Times even called Haynes the "Boss of the Boss" in referring to his influence over Parrot.) And in the 1930s Haynes was the leading light of the municipal ownership progressives who had to contest every municipal election to prevent opponents from dismantling the program with antagonistic candidates, restrictive charter amendments, and defeated bond measures. Overall, Haynes was remarkably successful in these wars, adding to his amazing record as a civic leader.

In all of these endeavors Dr. Haynes was supported – and sometimes surpassed in

to examine political issues, educate all citizens, and encourage participation in the political process. From the inception of the Haynes Foundation in 1926 until her death in 1934, she and John Haynes, as founders and leaders, together shaped the direction of this organization designed to continue the advancement of the ideals shared by these two progressives.

Since Dr. Haynes's passing in 1937, Los Angeles government has continued to develop within the parameters of his reform agenda. Further City Charter reform has been almost constant, culminating in the new compact approved by the City's voters in 1999. Direct legislation measures have been used less frequently, but are always reminders that citizens have another alternative available in the event that municipal representatives go astray. Civil service procedures protect City employees from political pressure and assure the City a competent workforce. The DWP, faced with many new political, environmental and economic issues since Dr. Haynes was a commissioner, continues to provide the City's residents and businesses with a stable source of water and

