

Trivial Matters

■ Photos from the Security Pacific and Herald-Examiner photo collections, Los Angeles Public Library photo archives, Carolyn Cole, director.

I am a really crazy for trivia. I like information short and sweet, and the more the better.

So I've put together some interesting facts. In this first installment, I'll feature Los Angeles City trivia from the 19th century.

Many of these pithy facts of Los Angeles history come from Larry Williams of Public Works/Contract Administration. Thank you, Larry. The remainder comes from obscure places and a publication, *Los Angeles: A Chronological and Documentary History, 1542-1976*.

Sometime in the future I will deliver to you, dear readers, exciting 20th- and 21st-century tasty tidbits of our local history. For now, enjoy!



Cutlines to come.

Los Angeles 19th-Century Trivia

⊙ In 1818, the Avila Adobe was built by Francisco Avila, former Mayor of the Ayuntamiento (Mexican city council). It is the City's oldest remaining building, located on Olvera Street.

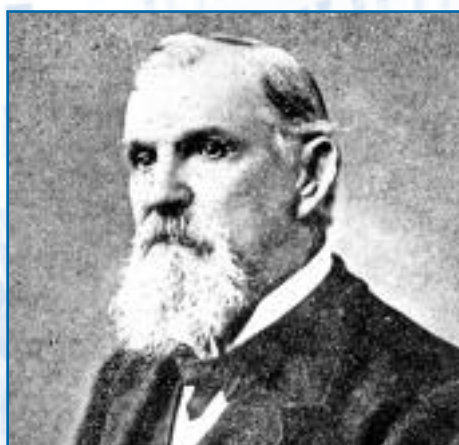


Avila Adobe.

⊙ In 1847, construction of an adobe fort began on Fort Moore Hill, where the Los Angeles Unified School District headquarters is currently located.

■ On April 9, 1850, the first Post Office was established in the City.

⊙ On July 10, 1851, the first City police force was formed by the Common Council.



John G. Nichols, President of Common Council, 1855.

■ In 1854, the City of Los Angeles was granted its first City Seal. It depicted a cluster of grapes. It was replaced in 1905 with the current City Seal.

■ In 1856, Catholic nuns from the Daughters of Charity order arrived and began the City's first orphanage, along with a school at Alameda and Cesar Chavez Streets. They also treated their first patients at what is known as St. Vincent Medical Center, the longest continuously run hospital in Southern California.

■ In 1857, the first franchise for a water company was given to Judge William G. Dryden. He constructed a brick reservoir in the plaza and laid iron pipes along Main and Los Angeles Streets. Within the reservoir the pipes were wooden. The system was maintained until 1861.

■ In November 1860, national elections were held. The City cast 179 votes for Abraham Lincoln, 263 votes for Stephen A. Douglas and 267 votes for John Breckinridge. This illustrates how the City was pro-Southern and pro-slave at that time.

■ In 1861, Capt. W.S. Hancock was sent to Los Angeles to ensure that no arms were captured by the pro-Southern element. Also, the Los Angeles National Guard was mobilized to protect government property.

■ In 1864, the City suffered its worst recorded year for the cattle industry, after two years of floods, drought and smallpox.

■ In 1865, the City was badly in need of money and sold 35-acre lots for \$5 and \$10 an acre.

■ In 1870, the records showed that there were 110 drinking establishments in the area.

■ On May 25, 1874, prostitution was outlawed.

■ In June 1875, the first class graduated from Los Angeles High School.

■ In the summer of 1875, Caroline M. Severence helped start the first kindergarten in Los Angeles.

■ In 1877, the City Marshal's office was abolished and J.F. Gerkins was appointed Chief of Police.

■ In 1878, the responsibilities for the Department of Public Works were expanded to include sidewalk repairs. At the same time, the City Surveyor was ordered to begin house numbering.

■ In 1881, the State Normal School, a forerunner of UCLA, was opened.

■ On Dec. 4, 1881, the *Los Angeles Times* began publication.

■ On April 3, 1882, a City ordinance granted the Los Angeles Telephone Company the right to erect poles in the City, and telephone service was brought to Los Angeles.

■ In November 1883, the Historical Society of Southern California was formed.

■ In 1883, the last volunteer fire companies were organized, one for the Morris vineyard tract and the other for East Los Angeles.

■ On Feb. 4, 1884, Charles F. Lummis arrived in Los Angeles after hiking 143 days and 3,507 miles from Ohio. He joined the staff of the *Los Angeles Times* and wrote many articles sent back east about his trek to Los Angeles. His stories served to generate interest in the City.

⊙ On May 24, 1884, the Childs Opera House was opened.



The Childs Grand Opera House, 110 S. Main St. This photo was taken in 1920; the opera house, built in 1884, was razed in 1936. It was located approximately one block from the Club Store and Service Center.

History Comes Alive!

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



Tales From the City Archives



Cutlines to come.



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- On Nov. 4, 1884, the City voted overwhelmingly Republican for the first time in history.
- In 1885, the privately run Selig Zoo opened on Mission Road in Lincoln Park. It was the City's first zoo.
- In September 1885, Los Angeles College, a school designed for the higher education of women, was opened.



A view of North Broadway from Fort Hill, 1860.

- In 1887, the Los Angeles School of Art was founded.
- In 1888, there were 600 manufacturing establishments in the City and its environs.
- In 1888, Occidental College was founded.
- In March 1889, the first home-rule Charter for the City of Los Angeles was adopted.
- In Summer 1889, an ordinance was adopted, whereby all gambling houses in the City were closed.
- In 1889, the Department of Parks was created by City Council.
- In 1890, the population of the City was 50,393.
- In 1890, the assessed value of City property totaled \$49 million.
- In 1890, the United States Congress appropriated \$5,000 to reinvestigate a site for a deep-water harbor in the vicinity of Los Angeles. The Army Engineers were appointed to oversee the project.
- In 1891, the Army Engineers report that San Pedro would be the site for a favored port was submitted to Congress. The future endorsed port continued to have problems. While it could admit 18-foot vessels, it could not accommodate larger craft and warships.

- In 1885, the first medical school, a branch of the University of Southern California, was founded.
- In 1885, the old *zanja* (ditch) system, originally devised to furnish domestic water and irrigate small farms adjacent to the town, was abandoned.
- In January 1886, floods again hit the City. Every bridge and some buildings were washed away, including the depot of the Los Angeles and Independence Railway. Many lives were lost.
- In July 1886, the first bank with safe deposit boxes opened.
- In August 1887, at the height of the land boom, building lots were sold as quickly as grain futures and changed hands too fast to be recorded. Everyone in town was speculating in real estate, and prices rose 400 to 500 percent that year.
- In 1887, the first public night schools were established in the City.
- In 1887, Main, Spring and Fort (later known as Broadway) Streets were paved.

- In 1892, Edward Doheny and a partner, while digging a well near Glendale Boulevard and Second Street, struck oil, setting off Los Angeles' first oil boom.
- In April 1894, a three day street carnival in Los Angeles was held by the name of "La Fiesta de Los Angeles" that was held to celebrate the City's Hispanic beginnings.
- In 1895, bicyclists petitioned the Council to sprinkle the streets after 8 a.m. so cyclists would not muddy their clothes while riding to work.
- In 1895, Highland Park was annexed.
- In December 1896, Col. Griffith Jenkins Griffith donated 3,500 acres of hill land to the City. After improvement and landscaped as a park, it was named after its donor.

- In 1896, manual training was introduced into high schools of Los Angeles.
- In 1896, fire destroyed the main building of Occidental College.
- In 1897, the San Fernando Mission was restored by the History and Landmarks Club.



Mission San Fernando Rey. The mission was restored in 1897.
(Photo by Vratislav Sabouk.)

- In 1897, the last horse-car disappeared in the City when the Main Street line was absorbed by the electric transportation system.
- In December 1897, Los Angeles produced 1.3 million barrels of oil, and California became the third largest oil-producing state in the Union.
- On March 5, 1898, Griffith Park was formally presented to the City.
- On April 19, 1898, the outbreak of the Spanish American War created excitement in the City. Volunteer troops mobilized.
- In 1898, Los Angeles became the fifth city in the nation to support a symphony orchestra.

■ On Aug. 23, 1899, in a city-wide election, the voters authorized issuance of \$2.09 million in City bonds to pay for the purchase and improvement of the water works.



Col. Griffith Jenkins Griffith.