

Trivial Matters, Part 2

Los Angeles tidbits from the Los Angeles 20th-Century Trivia century through 1950.

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

Last month's article covered the trivia of the City of Los Angeles for the 19th century. My intention this month was to cover the entire 20th century, which became a problem due to the vast accumulation of information on such an enormous topic with so many facets of life.

One thing I have learned since my tenure as archivist for this magnificent City, is that it is a living, breathing, anthropomorphic animal, ever changing and growing. So this month I will limit my column to bits and pieces of the first half of the 20th century.

Again, I would like to thank the following sources for the trivia in this article: Larry Williams of Public Works, Contract Administration; *Los Angeles A to Z*, by Leonard and Dale Pitt; and another publication, *Los Angeles: A Chronological and Documentary History, 1542-1976*. I am truly appreciative.



Los Angeles Harbor, 1937.

Los Angeles 19th-Century Trivia



City Hall.

1928

- 1900: The population of Los Angeles was 102,479. A boosters campaign was instrumental in doubling that number in another ten years.
- 1901, Dec. 1: The initiative, referendum and recall were placed on the ballot for the first time.
- 1901: The market became glutted with crude oil. The price fell from \$1.80 a barrel to 15 cents a barrel.
- 1902: The Electric Theater, the first all-movie theater, was constructed on South Main Street.
- 1903: The Board of Education was elected at large on a nonpartisan basis as provided by the 1889 Charter.
- 1904: The City of Venice was founded. The area originally was called Ocean Park, but Abbot Kinney, a New Jersey entrepreneur, devoted himself to this area. He built canals and created a theme park known as "Venice of America." In 1927, the city of Venice became a part of the City of Los Angeles.
- 1905, Feb. 21: The San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad became the fourth transcontinental line in this area.
- 1905, July: The Los Angeles *Times* broke the story of the City's plan to obtain water from the Owens Valley.
- 1905, Sept. 7: In a special election, voters approved a bond issue of \$1.5 million for the Owens River Valley Project.
- 1906: The City annexed a shoestring strip of territory that was contiguous to the city of Wilmington. Since Wilmington was adjacent to San Pedro, this set the stage for the annexation of both to become part of the City of Los Angeles in 1909.
- ◎ 1907: The Board of Harbor Commissioners was created, marking the founding of the Port of Los Angeles.
- 1908: The original Phillippe's restaurant opens.
- 1909, March 10: Mayor Harper was removed from office by the nation's first recall movement. After 10,000 signatures were gathered, the Mayor resigned. The Council then elected W. D. Stephens to fill the vacancy. But on March 26 there was a special election, when George Alexander was elected, thus running the Southern Pacific machine out of the City.
- 1909: Los Angeles was the first major city in America to adopt a zoning ordinance that defined the differences of industrial and residential zones.
- 1910: An air meet held at Dominguez Field was one of the first aviation demonstrations held in the world.
- 1911: The Municipal Arts Department was formed. It was restructured and became the Cultural Affairs Department in 1980.
- 1912: Arroyo Seco was annexed to the City of Los Angeles.
- 1912: The Griffith Park Zoo opened. It was the City's second zoo and was largely inhabited by former circus animals.
- 1913, Jan. 1: The use of smudge pots began when a blizzard and frost caused much damage to orange orchards in Southern California.
- 1914: Ford Motor Company opened its first auto assembly plant in Southern California at Seventh and Santa Fe Streets to assemble Model Ts.
- ◎ 1914: The first municipal wharf was opened at the Port of Los Angeles.
- 1915: The City annexed San Fernando Valley, Palms and Bairdstown, adding some 215,000 acres to Los Angeles.
- 1915: The Public Utilities Board insisted that telephone companies either interchange service or lose their franchises.
- ◎ 1917: Grand Central Market opened. This market was on the site of the former "City of Paris," once the largest department store in the City of Los Angeles.
- 1917: The City annexed Huntington, Palisades, Owensmouth and West Coast.
- 1918: Many German citizens and "sympathizers" were interned in government camps.
- 1919, June: Prohibition was instituted in California. Los Angeles went dry following wild partying in local saloons.

- 1919: A 100-inch telescope was installed at Mount Wilson.
- 1919: UCLA began its rise as the State Normal School. In 1919, it moved to Vermont and Heliotrope Avenues, the site of the present Los Angeles City College.
- 1920, June 7: George E. Cryer was inaugurated Mayor and served until 1929. He was responsible for the increase of public ownership of City services.
- 1920: The City experienced a postwar building boom.

1932



At the 1932 Olympics.

- 1920, Dec. 8: Because of much immorality in the movies, Postmaster General of the United States, Will H. Hays, was asked by the movie industry to act as a censor. Results were the production of more inspiring and uplifting films.
- 1921: The Rose Bowl celebrated its first Easter sunrise service. This was before the Hollywood Bowl was built.
- ◎ 1922, June 5: Voters authorized \$5 million in bonds for a new City Hall.
- 1922: The Los Angeles Port was selected as one of the bases for the Pacific fleet, and Los Angeles became the home for 15,000 officers and civilians.
- 1924, April: The real estate boom collapsed as sellers outnumbered buyers, and, by 1925, subdivisions had given way to farming.
- 1924: The population of the City reached 1 million; 43,000 people were real estate agents.
- 1924, Spring: The building boom slowed as



The original hangar at LAX.

History Comes Alive!

Tales From the City Archives

by Hynda Rudd,
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and Club Member



Grand Central Market.



Los Angeles Harbor, 1888.

banks tightened credit, but businesses continued to make gains.

- 1924: The City appropriated \$2.5 million for street improvements, and 150 miles of City streets were paved.
- 1925: The second Home-Rule Charter for the City of Los Angeles became a reality. Amended many, many times, it has remained active for 75 years.
- 1925: The Department of Building and Safety was established by the 1925 Charter.
- 1926: The name of the Auditor of the City, instituted in 1878, was changed to the Controller in the 1925 Charter.
- 1926: Watts becomes part of the City of Los Angeles.
- ◎ 1928, April 26: The new (current) City Hall was opened and occupied.
- 1928: The Los Angeles City Employees Association, better known now as the City Employees Club, is established.
- 1928: Fourteen new playgrounds were opened by the Department of Playgrounds.
- 1929, Oct. 16: Ordinance 65104 changed the name of 10th Street to Olympic Boulevard to commemorate the 10th Olympic Games coming to Los Angeles in 1932.
- 1929, Oct. 23: The first transcontinental flights from New York to Los Angeles began. The total flying time was 36 hours, including an overnight stop.
- 1930: Ordinance 66883 (N.S.) created the City's first transportation agency, called the Bureau of Street Traffic Engineering. The director of the Bureau reported to the Police Commission.
- ◎ 1930, June 7: Mines Field in Westchester was dedicated as the first City Airport in Los Angeles. Today it is known as Los Angeles International Airport.
- 1930: The Hays Office, officially became known as a Hollywood self-censorship agency in movie production.
- ◎ 1932, July: The Tenth Olympiad was held in Los Angeles.
- 1933, November: Frank A. Shaw was elected Mayor of the City.
- 1933: The City won its 20-year fight in which three transcontinental railroads were compelled to build a City railroad station. The victory was empty, because the railroads did not have the money to begin the construction.
- 1934, April 1: The Police Department began

use of radio equipment.

- 1935: The Harbor was dredged to 35 feet and the main channel was widened 1,000 feet by the U.S. government at a cost of \$12.5 million. The old San Pedro Bay became one of the leading harbors in the nation.
- 1937, May: Frank Shaw was re-elected as Mayor but was accused of corruption. He allegedly used relief funds to help keep himself in public office. He, along with his brother, Joseph, the Mayor's Secretary, were convicted of selling civil service positions. A recall election followed where Judge Fletcher Bowron became Mayor.
- 1937: The Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System was established under the exclusive management and control of a Board of Administration.
- 1938, Sept. 22: The City was bankrupt and City employees were paid in scrip.
- 1938: A special traffic study prompted passage of a new state law that created nonstop parkways, which would later be called freeways. The freeway complex was thus planned for Los Angeles.
- ◎ 1938: Judge Fletcher Bowron was elected Mayor by a recall coalition that overthrew Frank Shaw because of corruption.
- 1939, March 25: Joseph Shaw, brother and Secretary to the ex-Mayor, and an ex-Civil Service Commissioner McCormick were convicted of selling civil service positions.
- 1940: The population of the City was now 1,504,277.
- 1942: The Bureau of Inspection was made into a separate Bureau in the Department of Public Works. In 1952, the Bureau's name was changed to Contract Administration.
- 1942, April 23: Mayor Bowron voiced his disapproval of women wearing slacks to work.
- 1942, December: Japanese-American police employees were removed from their jobs and interned in relocation camps.
- 1943, July 26: Visibility in Los Angeles was less than three blocks. This was the first known time Los Angeles experienced smog. In



Fletcher Bowron.



Mayor Frank Shaw.

September of that year, a second smog attack occurred, and it was worse than the first.

- 1943: Racial tension flared when sailors from the Chavez Ravine Naval Base were attacked by teenage Mexican Americans in colorful and dramatic-looking clothing. This new racial war became known as the "Zoot Suit Riots." One hundred sailors invaded East Los Angeles in 20 taxicabs and beat up the young Mexican Americans.
- 1944: As a result of the racial riots of the previous year, the Board of Supervisors established the County Commission on Human Relations to investigate sources of racial tension in the area. It was the second commission of its kind in the country. Eventually the federal government decided to move all military bases away from Los Angeles.
- 1945, Oct. 16: The City, concerned about its future growth and development, approved a Master Development Plan.
- 1947, December: The Los Angeles County Air Pollution Control District was founded. One of its major concerns was reducing smog.
- ◎ 1947: Kenneth Hahn, age 27, became the youngest Councilperson in the City of Los Angeles at that time. Five years later, he became the youngest county supervisor, in 1952.
- 1947: The Community Relations Conference of Southern California was organized by church, labor and other similar groups.
- 1948: The City released 17 employees because they refused to sign loyalty pledges.
- 1949, June 2: Mayor Fletcher Bowron was re-elected Mayor.
- 1950: The population of the City was 1,970,358.
- 1950: Los Angeles became the first metropolis in the nation to remove wartime rent controls, thereby stimulating postwar building construction.
- 1950: One of the largest land developments in the country began 14 miles south of downtown Los Angeles. It was called Lakewood, and considered an instant city of 77,000 people. It began as a private land development on 3,375 acres of farmland. This community was to have 17,000 homes and a population of more than 70,000. When incorporated in 1954, it became the 17th largest city in the state. It was considered to be twice as large as the well-known Levittown of New York.



Kenneth Hahn.