

- 39 Franklin Street (now Court Street)
- 40 Third St.
- 41 Spring St. School
- 43 Dan Sheck Residence
- 44 AG Mappa Residence
- 45 Col. Vinyard Residence
- 46 Site of Times Building
- 47 Fort St (now Broadway)
- 48 Billy Buffum Residence
- 49 Henry Dockweiler property (John Milner used to live here) Site of City Jail
- 50 Wooden Water Pipe line
- 51 Hill Street
- 52 Old man Bear home, Father of Henry Bear
- 53 Central Park
- 54 Site of Third Street Tunnel
- 55 St. Vincent College
- 57 Geo. C. Tiffany Residence
- 58 The Hazard Pavilion
- 59 Harley Taft Homesite
- 65 Old Overland Stage Corral
- 69 Bannings hay barn.

## The City's First Health Checkup



Los Angeles in 1869, a decade before Dr. Walter Lindley issued the City's first annual report on the health of its citizens.

### Check out the City Health Officer's report from 1879.

*Photos courtesy Los Angeles Public Library, Photo Archive, Christine Rice, director; and the Honhold Mudd Library Special Collections, Claremont McKenna College*

From 1850 to 1888, the City lived under the Act of Incorporation from the State of California Senate. In 1878, our City received its first charter from the state fathers. As our City evolved, it became necessary to add more City officials. But one of the important advances in this 1878 charter was to mandate department heads, including the mayor, to write an annual report to be handed over to the Common (City) Council. This report was to be given at the second meeting in November of each year.

In 1878, the rights, powers and duties of the Council included many items relating to having a healthy environment in our City, such as:

*to prevent the introduction or spreading of any loathsome, contagious and other diseases into the city; to make regulations and provisions for the removal of persons affected with any contagious or loathsome disease to a suitable hospital, provided and prepared by the city or other party for that purpose...*

Also, a responsibility of the Council and new mandates for department heads, including the mayor, was to prepare a comprehensive report about the department activities during the past year. Thus was born the department annual report, which continues to this day. In 1878, there were only eight annual reports, including one by the mayor. Once the Council reviewed and accepted the reports, they were printed and bound and retained in the City Clerk's archives for distribution.

It is now time to introduce the first Health Officer's report to our readership. On Nov. 13, 1879, Dr. Walter Lindley, M.D. the City's Health Officer, wrote the Department's first annual report to the Honorable Council of the City of Los Angeles. Lindley

began his report by listing favorable progress during the prior ten-month period relating to sanitary conditions and the collecting of vital statistics.

#### The Sewer Systems

Lindley wrote: "I look with especial pride to the system of sewerage that your Hon. Body have inaugurated by small pipes. The large sewers ... were first used in Los Angeles are being discarded by Sanitary Engineers the world over." He continued: "During the year the Temple Street sewer and the Fort Street sewer have been constructed to the great advantage of the city near those streets." It should be noted that on Feb. 19, 1890, Fort Street became known as Broadway.

On the same subject, Lindley stated that a great need for the city was to have a sewer built on Alameda Street that would drain First, Commercial and Aliso Streets, Chinatown and the vicinity of a new depot. He stated that this project would take about a year to complete. He also noted that there were demands for Spring Street to have a sewer system. Other demands from citizens related to property owners who lived in the vicinity of where the main sewer empties. Dr. Lindley noted: "Very soon it will be the city's imperative duty to either have the sewage disinfected or to extend the main sewer farther from the city."

#### Chinatown

The Chinatown referred to in Lindley's annual report was the first of three in the City of Los Angeles. It became a reality in the 1870s on the eastside of the Plaza, where Union Station now stands. The grungy, neglected street was known as "Negro Alley" or "Calle de los Negros." It became home to Chinese workers who were building the railroads. It soon was known as "Chinatown." Much of the area included overcrowded tenements, markets, eateries, native temples and such. This was also the area of the 1871



James Toberman was mayor of Los Angeles twice, from 1872-74 and again from 1878-82.



# History Comes Alive!

Tales From the City Archives



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

Chinese Massacre, where 19 Chinese men and boys were hung and 11 white men risked their lives to restore order and protect the Chinese. But *that* is another story!

"This is the crying sanitary evil of Los Angeles," Dr. Lindley wrote. "The Chinese are crowded into a number of old dilapidated buildings in the heart of our city. Their habits of living are filthy in the extreme. Soon after I had the honor of receiving an appointment from you, I attempted to enforce the cubic air law that requires 500 cubic feet in the clear for each person in a sleeping apartment. The attempt was ineffectual mainly, I believe, because of the prejudice against what is called Chinese persecution. The death rate [is unusually high like in San Francisco]."

Dr. Lindley concluded this subject by noting that in spite of the unusual cases of death in Los Angeles, he would show that the death rate in the mortality report was not excessive.

In February 1879, the Council appointed a committee composed of the Chief of Police, City Engineer and Health Officer to report on a plan to improve the sanitation problems of Chinatown. Two plans were established. The first was to condemn the buildings and have them vacated. The second was to recommend that a sewer be built on Alameda Street and the extension of Los Angeles Street. Dr. Lindley claimed it would probably take another year to see the second project carried out.

## Diseases

During the few years previous to the report, Los Angeles had been relatively free from scarlet fever and diphtheria. During the year previous, there was only one death of the former and four from the latter within the City. Dr. Lindley then thanked the Council for cooperating with him in his efforts to preserve "the health of our beautiful city." He then thanked Mayor James R. Toberman "for being always accessible [sic] when I desired his authority to take any steps in the Health Department. His Honor has displayed a knowledge of sanitary and hygiene questions and an intelligent interest in the health of the people" of this city.

## Haven for Invalids

Dr. Walter Lindley reported that Los Angeles had become known all over the world as a resort for invalids. But, he continues, "It behooves us for that reason as well as for the preservation of the lives of our own families to put it in the very best sanitary condition." He then characterized Los Angeles as a soapbox advertisement ending with his diatribe about the "Chinese Problem."

*We have the health-giving sun almost every day in the year, we have the ocean breeze just properly tempered by hills and orange groves, we have the best altitude for health, we have pure water pouring down from a mountain stream, we have porous soil and excellent drainage, we have the most equable temperature in the civilized world, we have in fact everything God could make this a healthful city and yet we allow that rotten spot - Chinatown - to grow and pollute the air we breathe and poison the water we drink.*



An illustration of the City's first Chinatown, circa 1878.

Dr. Lindley continued with the subject of illness and dying here in Los Angeles and its ramifications on the population. He noted that a large part of the population was elderly, who want to spend their remaining years in a warm climate. Lindley claimed that this increased the mortality rate. Also, because invalids moved to Los Angeles because of diseases they acquired elsewhere, they often died when they arrived.

Consumption was often the case. Death statistics in County Hospital were often inmates who had not been residents of the City; they were also counted in the mortality report.

Finally, the last group Lindley counted in the mortality report was the native Californian population. He noted that these people "totally ignored all ordinary hygiene and sanitary [protection]. I desire to express my thanks to Dr. Den for his assistance in encouraging the native population to take proper sanitary precautions."

## Births

For the ten-month period from Jan. 1 through Nov. 1, 1879, in the City of Los Angeles: The total number of births from January through October was 223: males, 119; females, 104.

## Mortality

For the ten-month period from Jan. 1 through Nov. 1, 1879, in the City of Los Angeles:

The total number of deaths, including stillbirths, was 175. Estimated population was 16,000. Annual rate per thousand: 13.1. "Fifty of the deaths in this report occurred in our hospitals," he reported.

## Causes of Death

Dr. Lindley reported the following causes of death:

"1. Zymotic (Infectious Diseases): Scarlet Fever; Diphtheria; Croup; Whooping Cough; Typhoid Fever; Diarrhea; Dysentery; Cholera Infantus; Cerebral Spinal Meningitis; Syphilis; [and] Alcoholism.

"2. Constitutional (Physical Weakness): Rheumatism;

Cancer; Hydrocephalus; and Testicular Meningitis.

"3. Local Diseases: Peritonitis; Epilepsy; Apoplexy; Heart Disease; Bronchitis; Pneumonia; Gastritis; Enteritis; Hepatitis; Bright's Disease; Tetanus; [and] Cystitis.

"4. Developmental Diseases: Marasmus (Wasting Away); Old Age; Teething; [and] Still Born.

"5. Violent Deaths: Burned by Kerosene.

"6. Unable to Decipher: Masturbation."

## Dr. Walter Lindley

Dr. Walter Lindley (1852-1922) was born in Monrovia, Ind. His medical education was on the East Coast, as well as his early years as a practicing physician. At 23 in 1875, he moved to Los Angeles, where four years later he was the Health Officer for the City. He had been a widower twice, and at 44 he married a widow, Florence Hardie, sister of Drs. John Randolph and Francis L. Haynes. John Randolph was not only a physician, but also political progressive. He became the father of our 1925 Charter, which was viable for 75 years. Dr. Lindley had four children.

After moving to Los Angeles, Dr. Lindley became involved in politics, philanthropy and his medical practice. He helped organize and establish the Young Men's Republican Club of Los Angeles and became its first president. He established the Free Dispensary of the Medical College on Requena Street, which treated underprivileged people at no cost. Prior to his being the City Health Officer, he held the same position for the county, where he set up free vaccinations for children attending school and established a system for registering births and deaths. As the City Health Officer, he issued the first health circular, warning the public about the outbreak of scarlet fever.

Dr. Lindley felt Los Angeles needed a medical school. In 1885 he and others established the College of Medicine at the University of Southern California. During his lifetime, he served as dean and on the faculty of obstetrics and gynecology. He, along with others, published the first medical journal in Los Angeles. It was entitled, the *Southern California Practitioner*, and was published for 36 years.

Dr. Lindley opened a private practice in 1886, which became known for more than 20 years as Lindley's private hospital. His two brother-in-laws joined him. The facility was at 315 W. Sixth St. Also in the 1880s he helped found the Los Angeles Orphans Home. A decade later, Lindley opened a reform school originally named the Whittier State School; later to be called the Fred C. Nelles School for Boys. The school no longer exists.

In 1907, Walter Lindley ran for mayor on the Republican ticket. Sadly, he came in third to Democrat Arthur C. Harper. On Jan. 20, 1922, Dr. Walter Lindley died at home of a cerebral hemorrhage at 70. He was survived by his wife and four children.

## A Civil War Answer

On another matter: In my June column on the Civil War, I asked for information about troops stationed downtown on Main Street in Los Angeles. I had previously either read or heard about it, but could not find it to include in the article. Fortunately, Lee Nichols found it and e-mailed me what I had been looking for.

He found it in one of the editions of the City's bible, Harris Newmark's *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913*. Mr. Nichols' edition states:

By the end of July (1863), troops had been sent from Drum Barracks to camp in the city - for the protection, so it was asserted, of Union men whose lives were said to be in danger, although some people claimed that this movement was rather for the purpose of intimidating certain leaders with known sympathies for the South. This military display gave Northerners more backbone; and on the 26th of September a Union mass meeting was held on Main Street in front the Lafayette Hotel.

The Lafayette Hotel was across the street from the prominent Bella Union Hotel, which sat somewhere in the vicinity 300 Main St.

Lee Nichols is a retired public relations director from Airports and Rec and Parks. He is now at the LAX Flight Path Museum. Thank you, Lee. I am most appreciative for your help.



The City's first Chinatown, 1882.