

History Comes Alive!

Tales From the City Archives



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

100th Alive! SPECIAL EDITION

Hynda and History

Hynda Rudd recalls how she came to write this column, and loving Los Angeles.

Photo of Herman Silver courtesy the Security Pacific Collection, Los Angeles Public Library photo archive, Christina Rice, interim director.

Commendations must be given to the City Employees Club of Los Angeles and its inspiring President and CEO, John Hawkins, for delivering 100 months of the City of Los Angeles' newspaper, *Alive!*, for and about the employees of the great City of Los Angeles. For this remembrance, I decided to look back at my thoughts and feelings over the years being given this monumental honor to re-create the incredible history of this unbelievable city, Los Angeles, by John Hawkins and the City Employees Club.

I was born and lived in Salt Lake City for 43 years. I am not a Mormon. But because of my innate tendency toward historical methods, I fell madly in love with many of the same historical concepts that the Mormons live by. Of course, I did not truly realize this until I moved to the Los Angeles area in late August 1978.

I must be honest – at first, before moving here, I didn't believe Angelenos cared much about their history. I also felt that any building in this City more than 15 years old was destroyed. Since then, of course, I have learned differently, with one exception! That will come later.

When I moved to the L.A. area, it was because I wanted a second master's degree in library science from USC, which I did receive. In a million years, I had never considered what reality had in store for me!



From Jan 2005: The Archive team: Jay Jones, Acting Archivist; Todd Gaydowski, Records Management Officer; and Hynda Rudd, retired City Archivist.

In Salt Lake, prior to my leaving there, I received my first master's degree in the history of the Jews of the Intermountain West from 1826-99. At the same time, I worked for the University of Utah's archives and records management program.

While working on my first master's thesis, I ran across a young man, Herman Silver, who was about 18 years old and came from Hamburg, Germany. His parents sent him to America because he had a history of chest congestion problems. At that time, circa 1898, many hospitals in the States were treating this common problem. Nevertheless, Herman survived and moved to Denver, Colo., where he became an accomplished citizen in both professional and religious milieus. He eventually moved to the Los Angeles area, where he became a City Councilman, twice (1896-1900) and the first President of the Water Commission circa 1900. Oh, and by the way, Silver Lake was named after Herman Silver.



Herman Silver.

Finally, this is where I came into the picture, and my life was changed forever. Herman Silver continued to fascinate me. I wanted to know more about him here in L.A. On July 5, 1979, I decided to find out what records the City Clerk's Office had on Herman. When I arrived at the Clerk's Office, I was sent to the vault in the Office, where many historical records were kept. First, I was shocked to find out the City had any historical documentation. Second, I had come from Salt Lake City, where historical records were

shelved, but there was no one in the L.A. facility protecting and/or cataloging them, like in Salt Lake City.

Finally, I found a bound copy of the Star newspaper, the oldest City of Los Angeles paper. I was perusing it when a man came up to the vault and introduced himself as the Assistant City Clerk, William (Bill) Ashdown. We started talking and discovered we had both come from Utah. After much conversation, he told me that their Office wrote a Federal Humanities grant to request an eight-month archivist to come to the City of Los Angeles to give an overview of its historical records in the City. He then asked me what my professional background was. I told him. He wanted my business card; I told him I didn't have business cards. He asked me if I would like to apply for the position. All I could say was, "Is the Pope Catholic?"

In November 1979, the grant was approved. I have no idea how many people applied; I was told about 100. I really don't know. I was in Library School at USC. Sometime in January or February 1980, I was interviewed for the City Archivist position. The first week in March, I was called out of my classroom for a telephone call. I was then told that I was the first Archivist for the City of Los Angeles!

My life changed in a few moments. I continued my master's thesis in library science; I graduated in early 1981. Also, I was performing my eight-month grant from the Federal government, and learning fabulous information about the city. After the grant was completed, I was

hired to be the official City Archivist. I held that position for five years. I then became the City's Records Management Officer and Archivist. It was a whirlwind time for me.

Finally, a few years later, I met John Hawkins. I can't tell you when, but it also became another focal point in my life. He and, I believe John Burnes, the *Alive!* editor, took me out to lunch to ask me to write a monthly historical article about the "City's History." I was thrilled and said yes immediately. There is much raw historical material in this City, and I want to share it with the people, especially children, who need to know who they were and are so they know where they are going. Thank you, John Hawkins and John Burnes. The two of you changed my life. [You're welcome! – Ed.]

Earlier in this article, I use the phrase, "That will come later." Later is now here. I love this City with a passion. What I do not understand is why we the second largest city in this nation has no City of Los Angeles Museum of History. We have many community museums, which are wonderful. But the City as a whole deserves its own museum in the Pico House in the El Pueblo Historical Monument.

Thanks for reading!



January 2005: Hynda's first column.



February 2005: Hynda's second column.