

History Comes Alive!

~ Tales From the City Archives ~



by Hynda Rudd
City Archivist (Retired) and Club Member



The Lacy Manufacturing Co. on N. Main in the 1920s.

The Lacy Legacy

The vastly influential and pioneering Lacy family of Los Angeles is charted from 1887 to the present. **Part 1.**

By Nicholas A. "Nick" Curry

Photos courtesy Herald Examiner collection, Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, Christina Rice, Acting Senior Librarian; and courtesy the author

Richard Henry Lacy (1866-1945) was the third mayor of the city of San Marino, succeeding Col. George S. Patton Sr. (1856 - 1927), the father of the World War II general. Lacy served on the original council for 29 years, 18 of which as mayor from 1924 to 1942.

His father, William Lacy Sr. (1837 - 97) was a true entrepreneur – an architect, farmer, retailer, innkeeper, banker, manufacturer, oil pioneer, gold miner, volunteer fireman and founder of the Lacy Manufacturing Co. in Los Angeles in 1887. At one time, it was one of the largest businesses in California. Richard, along with his father and older brother William Jr., developed the Puente Hills oil fields, which also included a refinery in Chino that stretched from the San Gabriel Valley into Brea.



William Lacy atop crated oranges headed to Asia, 1927.

The Lacy family partnered in 1886 with William Rowland, who was the son of John Rowland (1791 - 1873), one of the famous 1841 Rowland/Workman-Temple party that settled a large portion of the western San Gabriel Valley. William Rowland is best remembered for the capture of the notorious outlaw Tiburcio Vasquez, accomplished while Rowland was the Los Angeles County Sheriff during the 1870s.

Later, the Lacys ventured into real estate subdivision work and gold mining interests in Baja California, where the father died in 1897 at the age of 60. He was buried there at Molino de Lacy, Punta Final, San Luis Gonzaga, Baja, CA.

There is speculation to this day as to the probable cause of death: appendicitis or possibly murder. A cenotaph (tomb or monument) was erected at Evergreen Cemetery in East Los Angeles to commemorate him.

Richard was born Aug. 14, 1866 in Bolinas, Marin County, to William Lacy Sr. and Isabella Rigg, who were both natives of London. William Lacy's parents emigrated from Ireland to London prior to the 1845 to 1848 potato famine. Richard's older brother William Jr. was also born in Bolinas in 1864 and subsequently became his business partner in future years.

William Lacy Sr. emigrated from England to Champaign, Ill. in early 1860, where he took up farming with his brothers. On June 11, 1861 he married Isabella Rigg in Urbana, Ill. In 1863, the family moved to Bolinas (a seaside village just north of San Francisco) where William Sr. owned and operated a hotel and retail establishment until 1869. The Lacy family then moved to San Diego, where William Sr. earned his living as an architect of many residences and commercial buildings.



William Lacy in 1927.

In 1875 the family moved permanently to Los Angeles, where William Sr. co-founded with Edward F. Spence what ultimately became known as the Bank of Los Angeles. In 1883 he established the Lacy & Viereck Hardware Co. and in 1884 he co-founded the first sheet iron pipe factory in Los Angeles with John D. Hooker. This was the forerunner of the Lacy Pipe Manufacturing Co., formalized in 1887. In 1887, William Sr. was a founding member of the California Club, with several other movers and shakers of that era.

In 1898, following the unexpected death of their father the previous year, the two brothers bought out a former partner, Lemuel A. Hard, and re-organized the business under the new name of Lacy Manufacturing Co., which engaged in its original business of sheet metal manufacturing, sheet metal fabrication, steel pipes and tanks, expanding into heavy

plate metal, boilers, petroleum refinery stills, storage tanks, water works appliances and the like. William Jr. was the president and Richard was the corporate secretary and vice-president. As a matter of interest, the company was located adjacent to Frank Seaver's Hy-Drill Co. (once a property of Los Angeles oilman E.L. Doheny), which manufactured anti-blowout devices for oil wells, and was also across the street from where Philippe's Original French Dip Sandwich Deli is today.

Richard Lacy married his first cousin, Maud Sullivan, in 1893 at the Church of our Savior in San Gabriel. His father (William Lacy Sr.) and the bride's mother (Charlotte Lacy Sullivan) were siblings, and in turn her mother was married to the older brother (Frederic Sullivan) of Sir Arthur S. Sullivan of the famed operetta twosome, Gilbert and Sullivan.

Maud's father died at 39 in 1877, and her mother died in 1885 at 44. Upon her father's untimely death, her uncle, Arthur Sullivan, stepped in and became the guardian and financial supporter of his late brother's family for the remainder of his life. Sullivan never married and had no offspring. In 1908 Richard and Maud settled and built their home, named "Wildwood," at 1518 Garfield Ave., on the border of South Pasadena and what would ultimately become a part of San Marino. There, they raised their family of one son and five daughters.

To be continued.

About the Author

Nick Curry is a phenomenal Southern California historian. He loves chasing and compiling biographical family manuscripts of the following: the Dohenys; the Bixbys of Long Beach; the Spreckels; the William Randolph Hearsts; the Henry E. Huntingtons; the J. Paul Gettys; and the E.J. "Lucky" Baldwins.

Nick's publications with others include: *Rivers in the Desert; Dark Side of Fortune-The Triumphs and Tragedies of Edward L. Doheny; the 75th Anniversary Celebration of the Biltmore Hotel; Childrens Hospital of Los Angeles Centennial publication; Bullocks Wilshire publication; The Culture Broker: Franklin D. Murphy biography; and Privileged Son: The Chandler Family of the Los Angeles Times.*

Please welcome him to *Alive!*

– Hynda Rudd



Nick Curry