



Los Angeles City HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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The 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Los Angeles

by Michael Holland

No matter what the final outcome is, the current Covid-19 pandemic is already one of the most disruptive and traumatic events most of us will ever experience. A term we often hear from newscasters and journalists is that this pandemic is “unprecedented.” But the coronavirus is hardly the first time we’ve faced a devastating pandemic. Just over 100 years ago, the entire world was ravaged by a virulent disease, and there are lessons to be learned from that pandemic that could be very valuable as we cope with the current crisis.

In this article from 2015, Los Angeles City Archivist and LACHS member Michael Holland gives us a look at how Los Angeles responded to the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 and the effect it had on the city.

Historical amnesia deprives us of the painful and sometimes tragic lessons learned at someone’s expense in our collective past. That’s a shame. I hope to illustrate my point by reminding all of us about a serious threat was everywhere in America, including Los Angeles almost a century ago. I am referring to the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 and I will be using both Council files and the Health Department reports to make my case.

According to the National Archives website, it is estimated that 50 million people worldwide died during the pandemic of 1918-1919. This was a time when people traveled by ships and trains and many of the medical advances we rely on didn’t exist.

There have been several books written about the 1918 Influenza and its effects around the world. *The Great Influenza* by John M. Barry is one that puts the global impact in perspective. Our 1919 Health Department Annual Report, from Box B-1059, is more of a snapshot composed of what was known or believed to be true at the time.

“This disease was introduced into Los Angeles by an infected training ship . . . after September 15th, 1918 and also from infected tourists . . .” begins the report. The Health Department was caught off-guard



Mill Valley, California, 1918

Photo by Raymond Coyne. Courtesy of Lucretia Little History Room, Mill Valley Public Library. © The Annual Dipsea Race.

as the first patients arrived at the General Receiving Hospital on September 22nd. The Mayor’s office reacted quickly by establishing not one but two committees. One committee was composed of doctors and the second of business and public safety entities.

The Health Department’s accounting division reported that the first emergency hospital at 936 Yale Street was up and running within 48 hours. “We

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President’s Message

A Muffled Greeting to Everyone from Behind My Mask!

June 17, 2020

I hope you are surviving the pandemic in health and comfort!

Boy, what a year this has been, so far. When our last newsletter came out we were getting ready for our annual gala, looking forward to the 2020 Marie Northrop Lecture Series, and planning new events for the year. In one bit of good fortune, we actually pulled off our gala just before everything began to shut down. And what a gala it was! Everyone had a good time, the speaker and the musicians were delightful, and the food was also excellent. I also have not heard that anyone feels they contracted the Coronavirus as a result of attending our gala.

Unfortunately, most of our plans for the rest of the year were cancelled or postponed shortly after the gala. We have had some noteworthy successes however.

We have issued another round of scholarships in the second year of our scholarship program. Again two awardees were selected from three Cal

State Universities: Northridge, Los Angeles, and Long Beach. You will hear a little about each of their papers later in this newsletter and their full papers will be published on our website. We also look forward to having the awardees present their papers at our annual membership meeting in the fall. For the past two years we have held our annual membership meeting at the Pico House. We are considering a new location this year, possibly the Los Angeles Police Museum in Highland Park. (<http://laphs.org/>)

We know that we will be together again soon with more events and lectures, it just is still unclear when this can all start up again.

Until then, now more than ever, I wish you and your families all the best of health and thank you for your ongoing support.

Todd Gaydowski, President

As always, I thank you for your ongoing support.

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PANDEMIC. *continued from page 1*

were called upon to equip a hospital when equipment and supplies were extremely scarce and deliveries problematical.” Remember that the First World War was still being fought and medical supplies and gasoline were prioritized for the war effort. Two other hospitals were established in San Pedro and Mount Washington despite concerns from local citizens about having them in their neighborhoods.

As I read the report, I was struck by how quickly the city got things done to combat the virus. The City Council was quick to approve funding for more nurses and facilities to deal with the flu. They also passed Ordinance 38522, on October 10th, to quarantine the citizens by closing schools, theatres and other public gatherings to prevent the spread the virus. The Quarantine report details other measures: funerals being private instead of public affairs and the closure of poolrooms and auction houses. Café entertainment was prohibited. A “stay at home week” was proclaimed and factory work schedules were staggered to prevent crowding on streetcars to reduce the odds of transmitting the illness.

But there was pushback over inconsistent application of the rules laid out in the quarantine ordinance. Movie theatres were closed but stores and restaurants were allowed to stay open. The Theatre Owners Association sent a petition to the Council, demanding that the theatres be reopened and all citizens compelled to wear facemasks instead. They argued that the “incomplete closure law had allowed influenza to increase 500% since October 10th.” Likewise, the Merchant & Manufacturers Association protested that any action to restrict access to stores to appease the TOA was “unpatriotic, unfair and unjust”

The opponents had a point. The quarantine report contains this statement: “Interpretation of the closing ordinance presented daily problems. Music was stopped in cafes — should the demonstration of phonographs be permitted? Schools were closed — should this include music teachers giving lessons in studios? The Department sought at all times to avoid discrimination and to enforce the ban with as little discomfort and financial loss as possible.”

In early December, Dr. Powers responded with the

Health Commissioners request that the TOA petition be granted as the number of reported cases had dropped. The ordinance was rescinded on December 2nd. However, an almost immediate resurgence of infections brought about a different approach that sought to limit exposure from the home.

Badge-carrying health inspectors and LAPD officers were given broad powers to place a house under quarantine, preventing anyone from entering or leaving. Some 4,036 buildings were quarantined in Los Angeles during December 1918 alone.

The report includes details of the role played by the Health Inspectors. Over 350 strong, they covered 100 distinct neighborhoods throughout the city “running errands, delivering groceries and otherwise minister to the needs of families in quarantine.” Many



Soldiers at Camp Funston, Kansas hospital ward, ca. 1918. Public Domain

of the inspectors were returning soldiers from the battlefields. Special effort went into identifying sick passengers arriving at railway stations for treatment and isolation. Streetcars and taxis were inspected, followed by regular disinfecting treatments.

Ethnic communities — not named in the report — were described as being difficult to manage due to language issues and customs such as large public funerals and parades. One social club had its entire membership quarantined at the same time. The penalties for violating the quarantine ranged from a \$15 dollar fine (the equivalent of \$281.00 today) up to 30 days in jail. There were 29 cases taken to trial

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Flu Isolation Ward at Wilson High School in Pasadena
Harold A. Parker Studio. Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

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between December 30th, 1918 and June 14th, 1919. Most were settled with the fines or a few days in jail. The number of quarantined buildings reached 13,876 during that same time.

The 1918-1919 annual report listed a total of 57,774 reported cases of influenza, although Dr. Luther M.

Powers, the head of the Department of Health, believed that this was less than half of the actual cases due to under-reporting. The most likely influenza victim during 1918-1919 was a married white male aged 20 to 45 years. The death toll attributed to the flu as primary or as a secondary factor between September 1918 and May 1919 was 3,482. The 1920 annual report described a resurgence of influenza in January of that year with 9,147 cases recorded and 239 deaths. The city of Los Angeles recorded 17,863 deaths from all causes within this two-year period and the total death toll by the flu was 3,721 — just over 20%.

Two ironies that caught my attention as I was finishing the research for this story were that - during the flu outbreak in Los Angeles - not one death from measles was listed in the statistics. The second was that an LAPD officer — just returned from fighting in France — died of influenza while serving as a quarantine inspector.

The pandemic of 1918-1919 proves that the adage is still valid — “They who forget their history are doomed to repeat it” Stay healthy. ♦

The “Spanish” Flu

The so-called “Spanish flu,” also known as the 1918 influenza flu pandemic, did not originate in Spain. In fact, experts still disagree where the disease started. The first cases were documented in Fort Riley, Kansas, New York City, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. At the time, the U.S. and most of the nations in Europe were embroiled in the First World War. Military censors suppressed reports of the flu to maintain morale. Spain, however, was neutral and not subject to such censorship, so the first real reports on the epidemic came from Spain — hence, the name.

The first wave of the flu was in the Spring and early Summer of 1918 and was relatively mild, more like typical flu. The second wave hit in August and was much deadlier. This wave ravaged the soldiers fighting in Europe and returning troops spread it around the United States. A third, somewhat less lethal, wave hit in January 1919. By this time, the flu was a true pandemic, affecting almost every area on

the globe. Even remote Inuit villages in Canada were impacted by the epidemic.

When the first wave hit California, both San Francisco and Los Angeles initiated “lock-down” policies, closing restaurants, shops, theaters and churches and requiring all residents to wear masks or face fines or even jail. When the first wave subsided, San Francisco relaxed restrictions and was hit hard by the following wave. Los Angeles kept the restrictions in place and emerged relatively unscathed.

By the time it subsided, the Spanish flu had infected an estimated 500 million people, about one-third the world’s population. The worldwide death toll is estimated to have been anywhere from 17 million to 50 million, and possibly as high as 100 million. In the United States, more than one quarter of the population was infected and an estimated 500,000 to 850,000 people died. ♦

—Richard Ross

How Mexican Food Became “Mexican:” The Evolution of Mexican Food in Southern California

by Daniel Aburto

CSUN alumnus Daniel Aburto was one of six awardees for the 2019 LACHS Scholarship program. The following article is adapted from his presentation on the history of Mexican food in Southern California at the LACSH membership meeting in September 2019.

The study of food — how it is prepared, marketed, discussed, or consumed — can shed light on the development of social relationships, the allocation of power, the formation of identity, and the cultural appropriation of gastronomy.

Mexican food is not peripheral but rather central to the questions and themes of identity, citizenship, and Americanization in Los Angeles during the early 1900s. This period coincides with the time when city boosters were fascinated with selling the city and food through a Spanish romanticism palatable to an audience who viewed the increasing presence of Mexicans as a threat to their community. Even though Euro-Americans did not view Mexican food positively in the late-nineteenth century, a clear movement emerged in the early twentieth century to appropriate and “sanitize” Mexican food.

In Southern California during the early 1900s, Euro-Americans were curious about traditional Mexican dishes and devised methods to appropriate Southwestern cuisine, making it more to their liking. As part of this process, Euro-Americans promoted restaurants, menus, and cookbooks as agents of appropriation to recreate a Spanish fantasy past or to fabricate a marketable version of “Old Mexico.”

As boosters, railroad owners, and preservationists desired to further extend the Spanish legacy in Los



El Cholo Cafe, featuring “Spanish Food” (1937)
Security Pacific National Bank Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

Angeles, they modeled several restaurants to evoke a Spanish mission-like environment suitable to a clientele that disregarded the presence of Mexicans in the city. Such restaurants presented Mexican food to elites by disguising or mislabeling it as “European” and the attempt to make it more marketable required restaurants to omit “Mexican” from Mexican food.

Euro-Americans defined Southwestern cuisines as “safe” and palatable fragments of the past because many believed Californios and Mexicans would inevitably vanish from the city.

To further displace Mexicans from a Euro-American society and establish themselves as the rightful inheritors of California, Euro-Americans promoted the commercialization of Mexican food as “Spanish” or “Spanish-Mexican” since both terms

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indicated a European, foreign legacy. Furthermore, Euro-Americans constructed their identities as sophisticated and civilized in contrast to the fabricated images they created of Mexicans who they viewed as remnants of a “primitive” past. Euro-Americans appropriated Mexican food and used it as a tool to marginalize and caricature the Mexican and Mexican-American population while also promoting a civic image appealing to Euro-American society.

One of the earliest examples of a restaurant to illustrate this was **Casa Verdugo**. Located in Glendale, CA this site is no longer a restaurant, but still stands as a well-preserved historic building that reflects just how popular Spanish romanticism and boosterism coincided with food consumption. As the owners of the San Rafael ranch, where the restaurant would be situated, both Henry E. Huntington and Leslie C. Brand desired to create a revival of Spanish nostalgia within the ranch to attract tourists to visit a site that resembled much of “Old California.” The restaurant’s Spanish adobe architectural structure placed alongside the beautiful, vivid landscape proved to be a successful site that gained numerous clients for the remaining years.

Despite the restaurant’s success in promoting California’s past as uniquely related to Spanish



Casa Verdugo restaurant in Glendale
Los Angeles Photographers Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

influence, it also sought to marginalize the presence of Mexicans in Southern California. Rather than label themselves as a Mexican restaurant that actually sold traditional Mexican dishes, the restaurant owner preferred to label herself as Spanish and branded the entire menu as Spanish cuisine. The restaurant offered a variety of traditional dishes such as *sopa de albondigas* (meatball soup), *chiles rellenos* (stuffed chile), *frijoles* (beans), *tortillas*, *enchiladas*, *tamales*, and *huevos á la rancheros* (fried eggs in tomato sauce). Casa Verdugo was not the only restaurant to promote such appropriation. Rather, many popular

restaurants such as **El Cholo** and **El Coyote** would use the label Spanish and limit the term “Mexican” in every dish to assure their customers that such dishes were “safe.”

By the early 1960s, the distinction between Spanish and Mexican cuisine became much more apparent. The promotion of Spanish nostalgia in Southern California gradually lost its support and more Mexican restaurants were able to claim their dishes as culturally Mexican. No longer did tortillas, tamales, and enchiladas become further associated with boosterism. Rather, these dishes and ingredients became symbols of Mexican culture and a triumph for Mexicans to reclaim their identity and cuisine as Mexican and not Spanish. ♦



El Coyote Café, featuring “Spanish Food”
Security Pacific National Bank Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

News from the Los Angeles City Archives

by Michael Holland



The Los Angeles City Archives has been a beneficiary of the Los Angeles City Historical Society for many years and continues to research and preserve the history of the Los Angeles city government. This is a brief summary of our recent efforts.

Before the pandemic closed our office on March 19th, there had been some developments at the Los Angeles City Archives. Here are a few highlights...

Tour of Dodger Stadium

January 2020 featured a field trip to Dodger Stadium with archivist Mike Holland and his three current volunteers Erika Serrano, Judd Lieberman and Danielle Palacios. They met with Dodger team historian Mark Langill and toured Dodger Stadium, which was going through renovations in preparations for the coming season. A number of photo opportunities occurred in the dugout, the exhibits on the concourse and in the press box.

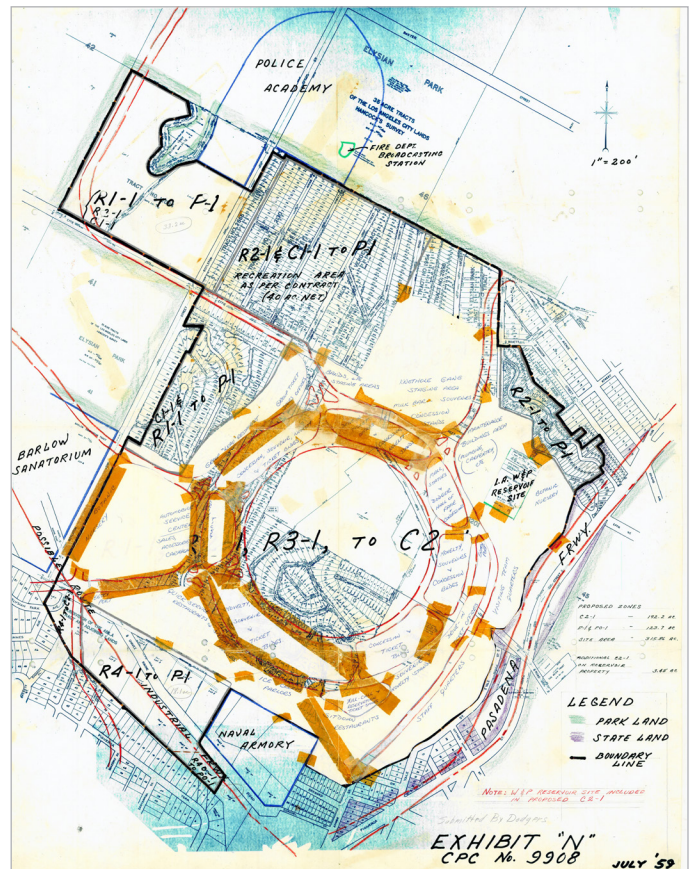
The highlight, depending on whom you ask, was the photo op or the document scanned and presented to Mark Langill during the visit. The document was a city council exhibit showing a proposed design of Dodger Stadium submitted in 1959 by Walter O'Malley. The original includes many pieces of paper taped together over an overlay of the proposed stadium in Chavez Ravine. Mr. Langill confirmed

that the notations were in Mr. O'Malley's hand and were specific to his original vision of the stadium development.

There were supposedly some people in the City Planning department who considered Mr. O'Malley's submission amateurish and somewhat unprofessional. It was a revelation to Mr. Langill who set to framing the 24" X 20" print immediately after we left.



From left to right: Dodger Team historian Mark Langill with volunteers Judd Lieberman, Danielle Palacios and Erika Serrano. Photo courtesy of Michael Holland



Proposed design of Dodger Stadium submitted in 1959
Courtesy of the Los Angeles City Archives

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Film Footage of Malcolm X Interview

Another discovery brought to light was a press conference by Nation of Islam spokesman Malcolm X in May 1962 after an LAPD raid at a Nation of Islam temple that left one man dead and six injured. Malcolm X had come to present the Nation's side of the story in several events that were covered by local press and television. But, for some reason, the press conference at the Statler on May 4, 1962 was only covered by press journalists — or so it was believed. Somehow a 16mm film in the city's LAPD film collection appeared.

The UCLA Film and Television archive wanted the material and agreed to cover the cost of cleaning and scanning the film to video. KPCC Radio discussed the material on their *Take Two* program and the film is available for researchers through the city archive.

Here is a direct link to the KPCC *Take Two* show for June 4th — [Throwback Thursday: Malcolm X](#)

Video Footage of L A Symphonic Chorus Civic Arts Orchestra

A third development prior to the pandemic was a video digitized by UCLA of a concert that was recorded in 1962, the premiere of "Gloria in G Major" by Francis Poulenc and performed by the Los Angeles Symphonic Chorus Civic Arts Orchestra. The concert was organized by the city's Municipal Arts Department, known today as the Cultural Affairs Department. The performance had been recorded in an obsolete video format and had been sitting in the vault for years and now has been preserved for posterity. ♦

Michael Holland is Los Angeles City Archivist and a member of the Los Angeles City Historical Society.

The online LACHS photo collection is available to search at

<https://lacityhistory.pastperfectonline.com/>

Other useful resources are available on our web site as well: <https://www.lacityhistory.org>



Construction of the Hyperion-Glendale Viaduct, looking towards bridge from Riverside Drive, showing houses in foreground and Griffith Park in background (ca. 1928)
Collection of Los Angeles City Archives Department of Engineering Historical Photos

“Nobody Walks in L.A.?”

by John E. Fisher

As the myth goes, Southern California is the birthplace of American car culture, and, indeed, its popularity exploded after the First World War. And although the song goes, “Nobody walks in L. A.,” the reality is that pedestrians are and always have been ever-present on the streets of Los Angeles. Since the automobile first arrived on the scene, the city has struggled to reconcile the demands of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

This article by John E. Fisher, former Assistant General Manager for the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation, discusses the pioneering efforts of Los Angeles and its dual challenges to bring order to previously unregulated drivers and pedestrians.

Like many large cities in the 1920s, Los Angeles had a convoluted set of traffic laws. As automobiles made the transition from gentleman’s novelty to common man’s necessity, provisions were added on a piecemeal basis over the years. By 1924, the traffic code included 134 pages of legal, ambiguous and contradictory language. Because traffic safety and congestion had become such a concern, a simplified traffic code was sought.

To draft the ordinance, Los Angeles hired recent Harvard graduate and Southern California native, Miller McClintock. At the time, there were no established traffic experts in the nation. McClintock’s only traffic expertise was his thesis at Harvard, which pioneered the concept that a professional, public administrative and scientific approach was necessary

to solve the country’s emerging traffic control problems. Six short years later, he would become the nation’s most sought-after consultant and a founding member of the Institute of Traffic Engineers.

McClintock quickly drafted the new ordinance. It was approved by City voters and became effective on January 25, 1925. It was noteworthy for its simplification and standardization, as it condensed 134 pages into just four pages. It introduced many pioneering concepts and became the model for other municipal ordinances in California.

The new ordinance formalized the use of painted curbs to designate special curb zones. This was viable since it virtually never snows in Los Angeles. Thus, yellow curb paint was designated for commercial

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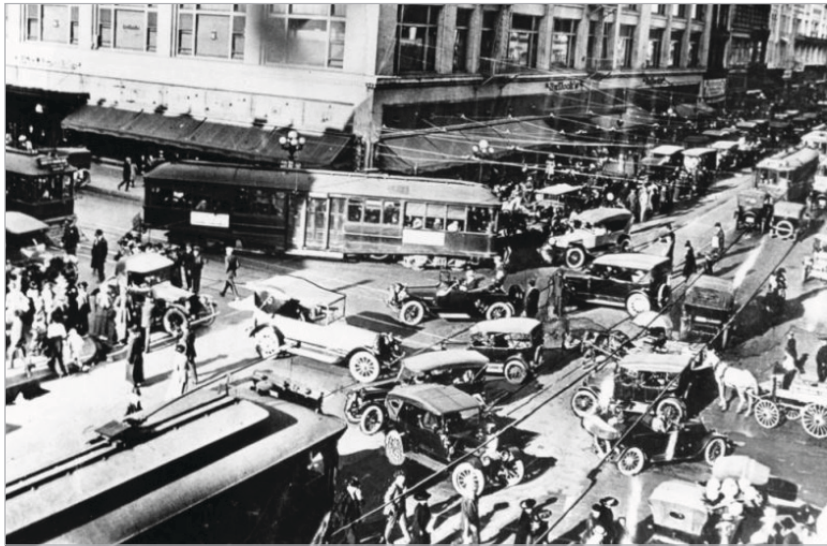
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For more information and comments and queries, please visit <https://www.lacityhistory.org/>

NOBODY WALKS IN L.A.?, *continued from page 9*

Traffic jam at 7th Street and Broadway
Security Pacific National Bank Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

loading zones and red curb paint for no parking zones. As a result, people jokingly claimed that McClintock had turned Los Angeles into a Spanish omelet. Also, it introduced and legalized right turns on red after stopping.

But for the most part, the code, often called the “Jaywalking Ordinance,” was considered to be a pioneering pedestrian safety measure, as it introduced the concepts of pedestrian obedience of traffic signals, right-of-way at unsignalized locations and yellow school crosswalks.

The practice of facilitating vehicular flow and minimizing pedestrian danger by regulating pedestrians is so universally accepted and taken for granted today that it’s hard to imagine conditions prior to 1925 when no such regulations existed.

The first major effort to address the growing conflict between vehicles and pedestrians began in 1918 with the construction of school pedestrian tunnels.

Although the pedestrian tunnels helped alleviate some of the problems, the more complex challenge in the 1920’s was controlling pedestrians where tunnels were not planned.

Los Angeles’ experiment with traffic signals between 1920 and 1924 helped bring order out of vehicular chaos but did

not improve pedestrian safety since pedestrians were not regulated by them. During 1924, 73 pedestrians were killed in Los Angeles, and it was estimated that 70% of all traffic fatalities were pedestrian-related. This grim statistic led to landmark legislation to control pedestrians. Thus, the new challenge shifted from eliminating the conflict to managing it.

With necessity being the proverbial mother of invention, pioneering regulations were developed to address the at-grade pedestrian problem.

Pedestrian regulation, untested anywhere in the nation at that time, became a recurrent and controversial issue. Between 1921 and 1924 a pedestrian control ordinance was considered by the Council and Mayor on three occasions and each time it was vetoed by the Mayor. This third time, the Council overrode the mayor’s veto and pedestrian regulation was proposed as part of the comprehensive new traffic control ordinance drafted by McClintock. The ordinance included new laws for both motor vehicles and pedestrians. The ordinance was approved by voters at the November 4, 1924 election and became effective on January 25, 1925.

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School tunnel at 67th Street and San Pedro Street (1928)
Los Angeles City Archives Department of Engineering Historical Photos

NOBODY WALKS IN L.A.?, *continued from page 10*

Educating the public to this first ever ordinance was a monumental task and innovative, if not forceful, methods were used. In addition to newspaper coverage, the radio stations, not yet even five years old, assisted in educating the public. Every station in the City agreed to broadcast the same information regarding provisions of this new ordinance at 8:00 P.M. each night during the week preceding the effective date of the ordinance.

Each broadcast speaker was furnished with the same copy, so that if a listener tuned out one station and into another he would receive the same message. Listeners were truly captive to being educated on the new ordinance.

The ordinance included the following pioneering pedestrian provisions:

- Pedestrians have the right-of-way at unsignalized crosswalks (but shall raise their hand toward approaching traffic as they cross)
- Pedestrians may cross the street only with parallel released traffic at signalized intersections
- Painted crosswalks are to be maintained as extensions of sidewalks in business districts and midblock crosswalk may be established near the middle of any block Downtown where it exceeds 400 feet in length
- Standing or walking outside a safety zone or (painted) crosswalk in such a manner that it interferes with traffic is prohibited
- Yellow painted school crosswalks are to be marked at identified locations near schools and shall be preceded with the yellow pavement message, "School Crossing" along with a yellow painted arrow 100 feet in advance of the painted crosswalk. In addition, where there is a "School Crossing" sign posted at a school crosswalk and a pedestrian is crossing the driver's half of the roadway then the driver must stop and wait.

When the pedestrian regulations went into effect no other city in the United States had accomplished the taming of the ped as had Los Angeles. By 1930, only three other cities — Portland Oregon, Seattle Washington, and Cleveland Ohio — had successfully accomplished this feat. After the first year of operation with the ordinance, 46 pedestrians were killed. Compared to the 73 killed during the year prior to the ordinance this represented a significant reduction of 37 percent.

In Los Angeles, successful pedestrian control was not accomplished by regulation and education alone.

The Acme traffic signal and its operation by traffic signal operator, Ralph Dorsey, complemented the new regulations. Police officers were stationed at the traffic signals for several years after the ordinance became effective but did not use a heavy-handed approach. Like the bouncer at the cocktail lounge, the mere presence of officers encouraged voluntary compliance with the law.

But each time the arms would rise a loud bell would ring out. San Francisco had bells for their Wiley signals but few other cities that had traffic signals at this time had this signal feature. Ralph Dorsey claimed that the bells were chiefly responsible

for the success of the regulation, since pedestrians could not avoid hearing the changes in right-of-way assignment.

The timing of the signals also contributed to pedestrian compliance. A 75-second cycle length provided frequent crossing opportunities for pedestrians and motorists, thus making them more inclined to cross with the signal. In addition, de facto pedestrian clearance intervals also were provided although pedestrian heads hadn't yet been developed.

Before the "GO" arms and light indications of the Acme semaphore signals were displayed there was a period of from 7 to 12 seconds where "STOP" was displayed in all directions. During this all-red period

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Pedestrian traffic signal

Security Pacific National Bank Photo Collection,
Los Angeles Public Library

Just Say “Tex”

By Michelle Juliette Carr

Taix French Restaurant in Echo Park has been a Los Angeles institution for nearly a century. Last August, it was announced that the property had been sold to a real estate developer who will build a housing and retail complex on the site. According to owner Mike Taix, a smaller version of the restaurant, including the bar and the lounge, will be preserved. Taix Restaurant will survive in a new configuration, but many of the loyal customers will miss the old-school charm of this venerable establishment. Native Angeleno Michelle Carr offers her fond memories of this Los Angeles institution.

FULL DISCLOSURE: For quite some time, the Board of Directors for the Los Angeles City Historical Society has regularly held its monthly meetings at Taix and the restaurant holds a special place in the hearts of all of us.

From the moment I pull up to the porte cochere my heart is filled with *joi de vivre* because I know that a good time will be had, guaranteed. No matter what evening of the week it is, I will see neighbors and overlapping circles of friends old and new, and we will laugh and carry on about art and politics and table hop and buy each other drinks. We will be served by a loyal staff that knows our faces. In the tradition of Musso and Frank and The Pacific Dining Car, Taix is one of the last great dimly lit tuck n’ roll joints that still boast proud career waiters in crisp white shirts.

The Taix that we all know in Echo Park is its second location. The roots of this Los Angeles landmark go back to the early part of the 19th Century. What is now modern day Chinatown was once a thriving French community known as Frenchtown. In 1831 French settler Jean-Louis Vignes, an entrepreneur whose name lives on in the street near Union Station, purchased a sizable parcel of land



Taix French Restaurant. Photo by Richard Ross

adjacent to L.A.’s original pueblo and along the west bank of the LA River.

Vignes quickly discovered that Los Angeles’ Mediterranean climate was perfect for cultivating vineyards so he established one of Los Angeles’ first commercial vineyards and opened a successful winery.

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between gongs of the bell, pedestrians would complete their crossing and vehicular right-turns could filter through. For Downtown streets varying from 40 to 56 feet in width 7 to 12 seconds provided adequate pedestrian clearance.

Los Angeles had led the nation in managing pedestrian traffic. Pioneering pedestrian regulations served as a model for California and the nation by

defining pedestrian right-of-way, formalizing the marking of crosswalks, establishing yellow school crosswalks and providing pedestrian clearance intervals. ♦

John E. Fisher is a former LACHS Board member and retired Assistant General Manager of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation. This article is taken from his “Transportation Topics and Tales,” which is available online.

JUST SAY “TEX,” *continued from page 12*

It wasn't long before throngs of eager French settlers emigrated to the “lost French Quarter.” In 1882, boulanger Marius Taix opened Taix French Bread Bakery on 321 Commercial Street in Downtown Los Angeles. After 30 years in business, the ambitious Monsieur Taix decided to do something all together different, so he razed his successful boulangerie and built the Champs D'Or Hotel.

In 1927, Marius Taix Jr. took over an existing restaurant in the hotel and opened Taix French Country Cuisine. Meals were served “family style” on rows of long communal benches. For a mere 50 cents per person, the whole table would get a hearty and delicious meal of soup, salad, Taix's famous French bread, entree and fruit. They were known for their succulent roasted chicken dinner. If one desired a little something more hush hush – for, perhaps, a rendezvous – a private booth was on offer for a 25 cent surcharge.

In 1962 Taix moved to its present location on Sunset Boulevard in Echo Park. The elegant French Tudor Cottage Revival architecture is whimsical with just a sprinkle of Disneyesque kitsch so as it doesn't take itself too seriously. It transports you to another time and place that was popular in Southern California commercial architecture during the middle of the 20th century.

In the last 58 years Taix has been the place to bring relatives and friends from out of town, to have a quick drink after work, first dates, to celebrate birthdays, to have meetings, to plan revolutions, to celebrate holidays and even funerals.

I have been a regular at Taix for going on thirty years. My father, who used to work for the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, would have his three martini lunches at Taix. I remember seeing the matchbooks he would bring home on top of his dresser when I was just a sprite.

When I started going to Taix my father was tickled

that I was hanging out at one of his old watering holes. One day we got into a debate about how Taix was pronounced. The debate among Angelenos about the proper pronunciation of “Taix” is as long-running and contentious as the debate about how to pronounce “Los Feliz” or whether “Silver Lake” should be one word or two.

“It's pronounced ‘Tex.’” I said.

“Noooo, it's pronounced ‘Tays’!”

“Dad, I promise you, it's Tex!”

He would took a drag off of his Parliament, look at me squarely and say, “Little girl, it's pronounced Taaays!” – billowing cigarette smoke. Not giving in, I informed him that they had printed in the menu, “Just say Tex” but he still wasn't buying it.

I cannot overstate the importance of this beloved institution in our local community. My heart swells when I sit either in the dining room receiving exquisite yet homey service by Taix's wonderful staff in the gaily festooned dining room or am knocking back some stiff ones

in the dimly lit lounge and I take a look around at the people.

I defy anyone to find more diverse group of people gathered in one place celebrating the simple human act of enjoying company and breaking bread. There are elderly couples having an early supper, local families grabbing dinner after a Dodger game, Echo Park artists and musicians, county and city employees like my father, young couples with their small children, transplants and native Angelenos, the well heeled and the worn heeled, every race, every creed represented. It is the most beautiful microcosm of Los Angeles in one place together, all our woes left on Sunset Boulevard, pretending all is right in the world, dining in the French countryside.

There is no place like Taix. Vive le Taix! ♦

Michelle Carr is the founder of Velvet Hammer Burlesque and former proprietor of Jabberjaw Coffee House



**Taix French Restaurant, original location at
321 Commercial Street (ca. 1956)**

Security Pacific National Bank Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

BOOK
REVIEW

MAKING BLACK LOS ANGELES: Class, Gender, and Community, 1850-1917, by Marne L. Campbell. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. 285 pp. Figures, Tables, notes, Bibliography, Index. Paper, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Abraham Hoffman

Josh Sides, Douglas Flamming, and other historians have helped move the experiences of African Americans from the margins into the mainstream of Los Angeles history. Marne Campbell, assistant professor of African American studies at Loyola Marymount University, adds to that history with her analysis of Black Los Angeles by examining the relatively little-known era spanning the period from California's statehood until World War I. Campbell utilizes Federal Census data, newspapers, archival collections, city directories (forerunners of the White Pages), online sources, primary documents, and secondary works. She paints a portrait of pioneering African Americans who came to Los Angeles in search of a better life and greater opportunity. Initially they came as slaves, entering a state of contradictions since California was a free state yet allowed some slave owners to bring their slaves under certain conditions.

Most prominent among the slaves who either were able to buy their freedom or succeed in getting it through the courts, Bidy Mason started a dynasty that benefited from her acumen in acquiring choice real estate. This legacy made possible her descendants being among the wealthiest Black citizens of Los Angeles by the beginning of the 20th century. Campbell points out that Mason was not alone in achieving this success. Recognizing that Los Angeles offered a more hospitable environment than did the post-Civil War South, ambitious African Americans worked in a variety of occupations—bakers, barbers, laborers, laundresses—and were able to save enough money to purchase homes in the city.

Campbell isn't content to write about a successful Black elite that eventually included doctors, lawyers,

teachers, and other successful professionals. She also describes the lives of working-class Blacks, especially women. Her research reveals, in a series of tables, the numbers of households headed by Black widows, single and married women, and other categories that reveal a full-fledged African American community.

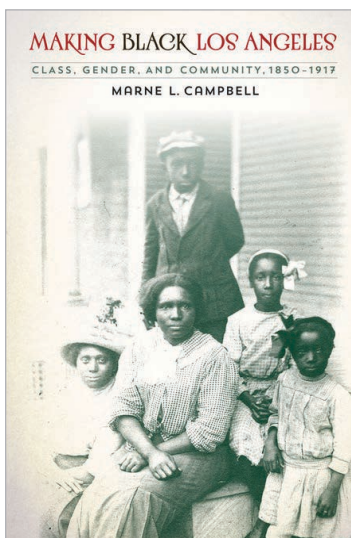
This was a community that established churches, newspapers (especially Charlotta Bass's *California Eagle*), social and fraternal organizations, and businesses. In effect, African Americans, though denied full opportunity, particularly in politics, did create a successful parallel universe that while relatively small in numbers, drew interesting contrasts with the experiences of Black people in the southern and eastern states.

Two famous Black leaders visited Los Angeles, W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington in the early 1900s. Du Bois was impressed by the "talented tenth" of wealthy Black Angelenos who welcomed his arrival. Washington tended to compare the

condition of African Americans in the Pacific states to those in the South, believing that Southern Blacks, mainly as farmers, were more successful in acquiring land and cultivating crops. Campbell doesn't mention the challenges Southern blacks faced in trying to save enough money as tenant farmers and sharecroppers to buy their own farms. Washington seemed oblivious to the lynchings taking place in the South. Nevertheless, Black Angelenos hailed Washington as the nation's preeminent black success story, and they contributed to his fundraising for Tuskegee Institute.

By World War I Black Angelenos faced new challenges with the arrival of thousands of African Americans leaving the South for better opportunities elsewhere. Whereas the Black community in Los Angeles had achieved a measure of acceptance by the city's white majority, the Great Migration, taking

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place at a time following the Supreme Court’s *Plessy v. Ferguson* segregation decision, raised barriers that circumscribed where black people could buy homes, restricted where their children attended school, and limited occupational opportunities. Du Bois had cautioned that California was not a paradise for people of color, nor would it be one for another half century, if then. Nevertheless, Campbell concludes that African Americans “continued to establish social, economic, religious, and political networks, doing the necessary work of making Black Los Angeles” (p. 200).

Nowadays it seems nearly impossible to find a book free of typos or factual errors as publishers cut

back on copy editors and proofreaders. Fortunately, Campbell’s book is generally free of such errors, but there are a couple of goofs that can’t escape notice. Leland Stanford was a benefactor, not an educator, in founding the university that was named not for him but for his son who died tragically young (p. 169). And Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps, not interment camps. Sometimes just one missing letter can make a great deal of difference in what it means. ♦

Abraham Hoffman teaches history at Los Angeles Valley College.

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