Los Angeles History Highlights

The Haynes Foundation

2017–18

“Promoting the Well-Being of Mankind”
Contents

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Q: There is a 1930 photograph of the formal dedication of UCLA’s Westwood campus that featured Dr. John R. Haynes as a UC Regent. What were the connections among Dr. Haynes, the UC system and UCLA and how strong were they?

There was a very strong connection. It began in earnest when Dr. Haynes was appointed a Regent of the University of California (UC) on December 30, 1922.

At that time, the UC officially had only a single campus, in Berkeley. Founded in 1868, the UC created the Southern Branch of the University of California (SBUC) in 1919, when the UC took over the Los Angeles State Normal School on Vermont Avenue in Los Angeles. Thus, at the close of 1922, SBUC was only a branch of UC and only offered a two-year curriculum. In the next few years, Dr. Haynes would play a key role in several historic decisions that resulted in the establishment of the University of California, Los Angeles.

The first decision came in early 1923. The UC Regents, with Dr. Haynes’ strong support, authorized the SBUC to add a third year of instruction to the SBUC curriculum. Later in 1923, to the delight of the SBUC student body, the Regents added a fourth year to the course of instruction, allowing SBUC to award an undergraduate degree.

By 1925, SBUC, with 3,200 students, was the fifth largest university in the country, surpassed only by the state universities in Texas (3,300), Minnesota (3,700), Michigan (4,800) and the largest by far Berkeley (8,000).

And it was later in 1925 that the Regents, after a lengthy investigation, approved Westwood as the new home for the Southern Branch. In 1926, student leaders at the Berkeley campus settled on the nickname of “Golden Bears” and offered the name “Bruins” to the Southern Branch, which was quickly adopted.

Finally, in 1927, the Regents renamed the Southern Branch of the University of California campus as the University of California at Los Angeles (soon to be known as UCLA).

CITATIONS

Author: Dundjerski, Marina
Title: UCLA: The First Century
Year: 2011
Call #: Xxxxxx

Author: Sitton, Thomas
Title: John Randolph Haynes, California Progressive
Year: 1992
Call #: 92H424Si
Recognizing Dr. Haynes' strong support for each of these initiatives, Dr. Haynes joined Governor William Stephens of California and Director Ernest Carroll Moore, the founding Director of UCLA, at the formal dedication of the Westwood Campus on March 27, 1930.

On a related note, while Dr. Haynes' first seven years as a UC Trustee was a time of great and lasting change for the University of California and for Los Angeles, it was in 1926 that Dr. and Mrs. Haynes founded their own institution, the Haynes Foundation, an institution that continues to follow their vision today.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Q: Dora Fellows Haynes was born in 1859, and married Dr. John Randolph Haynes in 1882. During those times, what opportunities did a woman in Los Angeles have in participating in politics and public issues?

In 1887, Dora Haynes and the Haynes family, seeking a healthier climate, relocated to Los Angeles, where Dora joined a number of prominent women who were active in politics and leading the fight for women. These women, often referred as “Clubwomen,” had developed their own political culture focused on reform. They were no doubt encouraged by the example of Mrs. Belva Ann Benett Lockwood, who ran for President of the US in 1884 and 1888 on the National Equal Rights Party ticket, the first woman to appear on the Presidential ballot.

These Los Angeles Clubwomen took on the role of municipal housekeepers. In that capacity, they actively discussed, lobbied, and raised money to fund and support their recommended reforms.

By 1909, Dora Haynes’ reputation and her success as a leader in the suffrage movement in Los Angeles had attracted the attention of the Los Angeles Times. Unfortunately for the Times, it was opposed to Mrs. Haynes’ work.

In 1919, she hosted a meeting of suffragists where the plan to found a branch of the League of Women Voters for Los Angeles was discussed and approved. She was subsequently elected its first president.

The success of the Clubwomen in Los Angeles was due in part to their close collaborations. For example, in addition to Dora Fellows Haynes (co-founder of the Haynes Foundation), four of the nine members of the first Board of Trustees for the Haynes Foundation were women: Florence Lindley, Anne Mumford, Ethel Richardson Allen, and Mary Simons Gibson.

The credentials of these four women were impressive. Anne Mumford graduated from Vassar College in 1910 and served for 24 years as a Trustee on the Board of Occidental College (1930-1954). Mary Gibson was a commissioner on the California Commission on Immigration and Housing (1913-1922) and a leader in educating foreign-born women as a key step in Americanizing foreign families. Ethel Richardson Allen was an advocate for adult education in California.

CITATION

Author: Deverell, William and Tom Sitton
Title: California Progressivism Revisited
Year: 1994
Call #: 320.9794 C1537-4

Author: Flaming, Douglas
Title: Bound for Freedom
Year: 2005
Call #: 301.45096 F581
She served on the California Department of Education as the Assistant Superintendent for Americanization (1919-1926) and later became the first chief of the new Division of Adult Education in the California Department of Education (1926-1930).

Florence Haynes Lindley, John’s younger sister by three years, also became a trusted confidante of Dora and freely offered advice and support. Florence was married to Walter Lindley, an important and politically conservative physician. She helped to found the California Hospital with her husband and was active in medical and other philanthropy. Florence shared the humanitarian political views of Dora and John and, with Dora, belonged to the same civic- and social-reform women’s clubs in Los Angeles.

Dora Haynes lived to see the goals of the women’s suffrage movement become law. Dora Haynes was 52 years old in 1911 when voters in California prohibited sex-based restrictions on voting. And Dora was 61 when the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified in 1920. Dora passed away in 1934, devoting much of her wealth to the work of the Haynes Foundation.

Looking back, we can get a sense for Dora’s interests and the interests of the Haynes Foundation’s Board of Trustees from the first three research grants the Board awarded in its founding year of 1926. The grants were directed to the American Indian Defense Association (general support), the American Association for Labor Legislation (prevention of mine accidents) and UCLA (a study of California state taxation).
Q: Los Angeles and San Francisco seem to be following very different approaches to economic success with very different results. Is this accurate?

Based on research funded by the Haynes Foundation, Professor Michael Storper of UCLA argues that since 1970, the San Francisco economic region has surpassed the Los Angeles region in every important economic measure. Using per capita personal income as the yardstick, the research finds that the economy of Los Angeles was ranked #4 in 1970 behind San Francisco, New York and Chicago. However, by 2009, Los Angeles had fallen to #25, with San Francisco still #1, Washington, D.C. #2 and New York #3.

According to Professor Storper, there are many factors that help to explain Los Angeles' fall, such as the decline of aerospace and defense industries, the growth of low-margin light manufacturing jobs, and a business community that suffered from relocations and reductions. Similarly, explanations for San Francisco's rise include the growth of IT and biotech and concentrations of new corporate headquarters and high-end finance in Silicon Valley. Professor Storper also noted the cohesive business leadership that developed in San Francisco, in contrast to the more scattered business leadership in Los Angeles.

However, Los Angeles based organizations, like the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, are asking the important questions: Is LA's past a reliable guide to LA's future? What are the key elements of a pathway to success for an economic region? Is there only one pathway? What should Southern California do now? One suggestion for the citizens of Los Angeles: become involved and offer your own suggestions.

CITATION

Author: Storper, Michael
Title: The Rise and Fall of Urban Economies: Lessons from San Francisco and Los Angeles
Year: 2015
Call #: 338.4C67 S885
Q: In light of Los Angeles’ natural advantages, why does Los Angeles need so many massive infrastructure projects (rail, air, auto, port, water supply) and will they be sufficient to meet the needs of tomorrow?

The geography of Los Angeles has always presented a unique set of challenges. For example, as late as the 1920s, San Diego was assumed to have many advantages over Los Angeles. San Diego had a natural harbor and a new airport (LA had neither). San Diego was also a strong contender for a transcontinental railroad terminal and was better off than Los Angeles when it came to supplies of fresh water.

In his book, “Globalizing L.A.,” Dr. Steven Erie examines the globe and concludes that Los Angeles has become one of the world’s great regional economies and global laboratories. Dr. Erie gives the primary credit, not to LA’s natural advantages, but to the citizens of Los Angeles who were willing to make the “huge public infrastructure investments” that were called for.

The accomplishments are impressive. The San Pedro ports (Los Angeles and Long Beach) are now the busiest container ports in the United States. Los Angeles is the principal air cargo and passenger hub on the West Coast. And the vast Los Angeles Alameda Corridor rail complex links the air and sea ports with downtown Los Angeles. It was the citizens of Los Angeles who chose to tax themselves to build the first aqueducts bringing water from the Owens Valley and the Colorado River to Los Angeles. And perhaps the most enduring achievement of all was Los Angeles’ creation of municipal agencies to build and operate this vast infrastructure.

Dr. Erie emphasizes that the challenges continue. He notes that Los Angeles’ major public works, like all infrastructure, require constant upgrades to meet the competition and to satisfy new laws and regulations. However, in Dr. Erie’s view, an informed citizenry remains the single most important and essential ingredient for good public policy for Los Angeles.

CITATION

Author: Erie, Steven P.
Title: Globalizing L.A.: trade, infrastructure, and regional development
Year: 2004
Call #: 382.794 E68
BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

Q: In 1941, at the beginning of World War II, planners in Los Angeles needed a plan to accommodate industry, housing and transportation. Where did they find help?

Fortunately, they were able to turn to a recently completed study funded by the Haynes Foundation. In 1938, three years before the US entry into World War Two, the Haynes Foundation offered to assist the City of Los Angeles in the area of regional planning. The Foundation declined to assume an official title, but offered to aid the City’s efforts through the Foundation’s support of objective and comprehensive research.

The result was a collection of essays from twenty-one social scientists, city officials and other professionals that provided readers with factual data and offered an expert interpretation. This study provided a comprehensive look at current Los Angeles and pointed the way to the future.

Not all of the Haynes studies were directed at professional researchers and government officials. For example, a lively and understandable text about urban planning, “Cities Are For People” was adopted by Los Angeles schools in 1942. “Metropolitan Los Angeles: One Community” and “Metropolitan Los Angeles: Its Governments” both appeared in 1949. Nearly 80 years later, these references still make for interesting reading.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Q: The popular view seems to be that Los Angeles has little great architecture and few historic homes. Is this in fact the case?

There is much more to this story. Between 1850 (when California became a state) and the start of the 20th Century, Los Angeles was transformed from a small pueblo to a vibrant business center. The new railroad links to San Francisco (1876) and to Chicago (1885) brought Americans by the thousands, all in need of housing.

Enabled by this newfound wealth, great architects arrived to build great homes. In his two volume set, Houses of Los Angeles, Sam Watters documents a total of 74 great homes between 1885 and 1935. Volume 1 (1885-1919) documents 38 homes, while Volume 2 (1920-1935), lists 36 more.

One of the greatest of those homes was built in 1912 for Dr. and Mrs. John Randolph Haynes (Watters, Vol. 1, pp. 232–239). Located at 2324 South Figueroa Street, the French style home was designed by Robert D. Farquhar, the same architect who designed the California Club, Beverly Hills High School and the Clark Memorial Library.

After the passing of Mrs. Haynes (in 1934) and Dr. Haynes (in 1937), the Haynes home became the headquarters of the Haynes Foundation. That continued until 1952, when the home was condemned and dismantled to make way for the Harbor Freeway Interstate 110.

CITATION

Author: Watters, Sam
Title: Houses of Los Angeles, Volume 1
Year: 2007
Call #: 728.091 W346
Q: Politics in California has some unique features, one of which is “direct democracy.” What does this term mean?

Direct democracy can take many forms, but initiative, referendum and recall are the most familiar and the most debated. In his text, “California Initiatives and Referendums 1912-1990,” the author, John Allswang, begins with an important insight: “It is very unlikely that direct democracy would have been part of California progressivism were it not for one man, John Randolph Haynes.”

The author notes that Dr. Haynes shared with others a suspicion and a concern about the political power of big business. In the early days of Los Angeles, that power was best exemplified by the influence of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Southern Pacific (SP) had provided Los Angeles in 1876 with its first rail link to the eastern United States (via San Francisco). These concerns had a solid foundation; SP had dominated local Los Angeles politics for decades, with heavy lobbying in both Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

California voters took a first step in support of “direct democracy” when they voted in 1902 for a constitutional amendment permitting cities like Los Angeles to amend their charters by initiative. These changes later helped Los Angeles to prevent SP from maintaining its control over land and infrastructure in Los Angeles.

In the present day, direct democracy continues to serve an important role. The process has become far more sophisticated, with complex proposals and paid workers gathering signatures, financed by advocacy organizations with very large budgets. Now more than ever, these increased responsibilities challenge voters to become and remain informed and engaged.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Q: I understand that the government of the City of Los Angeles was originally designed to be simple and to function without political parties (unlike other big U.S. cities). How is the City governed today?

The initial concepts may have been simple, but as described in this Haynes-funded project, municipal governments in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the US have had to modernize to reflect the changing needs and wishes of its citizens.

As a city, Los Angeles, compared to the well-established cities of the East Coast, came late to the game. Los Angeles only became a Mexican city in 1835 and a US city in 1850 when California became a state, long after major east coast cities and states already possessed large populations and extensive infrastructure.

Population first boomed in Los Angeles when the first rail service arrived in 1876, a decade after the end of the Civil War in 1865. Then, as times and conditions continue to change, the structure of Los Angeles City Government also changed, driven by people, ideas, events and agencies. For example, large infrastructure projects for seaports, airports, and sewer and water supply have attempted to keep up with demand. And, in contrast to the majority of cities in the US, these large projects are owned and operated by the City of Los Angeles.

You will find the full story in this two volume set, with articles written by an outstanding group of historians, political scientists and public administrators. Take a look.
Q: Elections seem to emphasize divisions among voters: by race, income, heritage, gender, religion, marital status. Can these divided groups ever work together?

Dr. Raphe Sonenshein suggests, even in these contentious circumstances, that political coalitions can find common ground and work together on important issues. In his book, the author describes in detail how a coalition between blacks and white liberals in Los Angeles found common interests. That coalition, expanded to Latinos and Asian-Americans, was of sufficient strength and staying power to elect and retain a black Mayor, Tom Bradley, through five terms as Mayor of the City of Los Angeles.

The most significant test of Mayor Bradley's biracial coalition came in 1991 and 1992 with the Rodney King case, and with the Christopher Commission's conclusions in July 1991 and the subsequent not guilty verdict by the Ventura County jury in April 1992. The broad scope of the violence that followed hollowed-out the coalition and deeply eroded support for Mayor Bradley. However, Professor Sonenshein suggests that the passage of Charter Amendment F in June 1992, which increased civilian control of police officer performance, came at great cost to Mayor Bradley but may have been his greatest achievement. This result also suggests that coalition-building still has broad applications for Los Angeles.
Q: By the 1760s, the colonial port cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Savannah, Mobile and New Orleans were thriving, but Los Angeles is not even on a map. Where can I get the facts about the origin of the City of Los Angeles.

Unlike the founding of most of the cities in the American West, the settlement and development of early Los Angeles was carefully planned, principally in Spain and Mexico.

In 1769, the location of Los Angeles was first selected as a site for a new pueblo and a Franciscan mission. In the decade which followed, close coordination among officials in Northern California, Mexico and Spain produced a plan describing how the new pueblo would be settled, governed and administered.

As a first phase in the plan, farmers and soldiers were recruited in Mexico. In 1779, these parties began a long trek from Mexico and Baja through Arizona to California. The pueblo of Los Angeles was officially founded on September 4, 1781.

You can find these facts—and many, many more—in the “Founding Documents” reference.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Q: Los Angeles County with its mountains, deserts, cities, beaches and a population of 10 million is extremely difficult to govern: How is it done today and can it be done better?

Scholars recognize that the story of the development of the Los Angeles metropolitan area is unique in the United States. Although seemingly confined to one county in one state, the area was vast and the initial development was uneven. Later, the widely separated developments grew quickly and led to the creation of multiple governments in LA County, with the City of Los Angeles representing just one of 88 cities in the County.

Recognizing the urgent need for relevant information about the duplication of service and waste of resources, the Haynes Foundation initiated and supported a comprehensive investigation (16 separate volumes) of the structure and functions of local government. These 16 volumes addressed topics like law enforcement, sanitation and health, fire protection, highways, water supply, recreation and parks, personnel administration, governmental purchasing, schools, libraries, finance and taxation, intergovernmental relations, and metropolitan integration.

While these sixteen volumes provide an introduction and guidelines for effective governance for a 20th Century Los Angeles, they include insights that remain relevant to 21st Century Los Angeles.

CITATION

Author: Cottrell, Edwin A.
Title: Characteristics of the Metropolis
Year: 1952
Call #: 352.73 L88Co
Q: The City of Los Angeles is the most spread out, decentralized city I have ever seen. How is the City of Los Angeles organized and most importantly, who do I call to get something done?

With the goal of providing citizens with a roadmap for navigating city government, the Haynes Foundation provided support to the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles for the update of an indispensable handbook: “Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government” (2006) assembled by Dr. Raphe Sonenshein.

This handbook is a valuable resource for residents, businesses, and government employees and describes how the City Government is organized and functions.

The Haynes Foundation’s connection to the League goes back to Mrs. Dora Haynes, co-founder of the Haynes Foundation, who served as the first President of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles.

CITATION

Author: Sonenshein, Raphael J.
Title: Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government
Year: 2006
Call #: 352.0794 L4344 2006
Q: After 15 years of the Great Depression (1929–1940), World War II (1941–1945) and the Korean War (1950–1954), Americans must have been looking forward to a return to a more normal, secure and unpretentious way of life. Where did they find it?

They found it in East Coast-based “shelter” magazines, like *House Beautiful*, *Architectural Digest*, *Sunset*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*. These publications prominently featured the homes and terrain of Southern California as examples of West Coast living and were avidly read and replicated by the rest of America.

Many of the best of their life-style portraits were staged and photographed by Maynard Parker. In their book, the Huntington and Ms. Watts assembled an impressive collection of Mr. Parker’s photographs from that period and put them in context along with their thoughtful analysis.

CITATION

Author: Watts, Jennifer

Title: Maynard L. Parker: modern photography and the American dream

Year: 2012

Call #: 770.914 P2418Ma Folio
Q: In 1900, I heard that the most popular beach in the Los Angeles area was the beach on Terminal Island. What happened to that beach and how was it connected to the “Great Free Harbor Fight”?

The beach on Terminal Island in San Pedro was a very popular beach. It faced south, thus avoiding the glare from the afternoon sun. It was also safer, because it was protected from heavy ocean waves and because the beach receded gently into deeper water.

Initially, many of the wealthiest families in Los Angeles bought property on the beach and built a line of magnificent homes. Later, development brought many immigrants (particularly Japanese) to work in these homes and on the local farms, ships, railroads, and factories. However, saving the Terminal Island beach was not a high priority for everyone. Southern Pacific Railroad, the dominant political force in California in the late 1800's, viewed Terminal Island as a threat to its monopoly. The SP was the first long-distance line in the West, and already controlled the Oakland waterfront. SP did not want competition from a competing harbor at Terminal Island that could be built by the City of Los Angeles.

To further its plan to protect its main facility in Oakland, SP proposed to provide Los Angeles with an SP port to be built in Santa Monica. The Santa Monica Port would serve Los Angeles, but would be a small satellite facility that supported the principal SP port in Oakland. The Los Angeles City leaders did not agree and the result was the “Great Free-Harbor Fight,” between SP and the City of Los Angeles. Southern Pacific sought federal funds to build a breakwater for its satellite port in Santa Monica, where SP had acquired all available waterfront property. While SP relied on its monopoly position and its lobbying power in Sacramento and Washington D.C., the anti-Southern Pacific effort, led by the City of Los Angeles, focused on the excellent geography and geology offered by a port centered on Terminal Island and San Pedro.
After years of confrontation, Los Angeles finally received federal funding and dredging began at San Pedro. But with the end of the Great Free-Harbor Fight, a new challenge arose: the need for huge investments in and Los Angeles City control over port infrastructure.

As a first step, in 1906, the voters in Los Angeles approved the annexation of the narrow, 16 mile strip linking Los Angeles and the new harbor (the “Shoestring Addition”). Next, in 1909, Los Angeles received approval from the State of California to incorporate San Pedro and Wilmington into the City of Los Angeles. As a final step, Los Angeles turned to the 1848 Act admitting California as a State. Under that Act, Los Angeles and other California cities asserted that waterfront land, particularly property in the area of potential ports (the “tidelands”), belonged to the State of California and not to private interests like SP. This was confirmed in 1911 by the Tidelands Trust Act when port cities like Los Angeles were designated as trustees of the tidelands, removing control from private owners like SP.

This is only a brief snapshot of the long Free-Harbor Fight. The details are still interesting and informative and are well-worth investigating.
Q: Whenever the topic of “water” comes up in a conversation, someone always refers to the 1974 movie “Chinatown” as the final word about Los Angeles’ early efforts to control the distribution of water and electricity. How accurate is that movie?

Although entertaining, the movie lacks a solid base in Los Angeles City history or in water policy. Many historians have provided more background on the actual history and policy.

For example, Dr. Steven Erie, in his book “Beyond Chinatown,” contrasts the movie depiction of unscrupulous developers partnering with conniving city water officials with the historical record that reflects extensive public debates leading to the creation of a vast and innovative publicly owned and operated power and water infrastructure.

Moreover, the movie tends to focus on what was to become the City of Los Angeles’ Department of Water and Power (DWP). In reality, the issues are far more regional than local. For example, the Los Angeles DWP is essentially a “retail” supplier of water to the City of Los Angeles. The movie omits the “wholesale” water provider to the region: the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). The MWD was established by the State of California in 1928. Reflecting its vast charter, the governance of MWD is extremely diverse and complex (26 member agencies, 37 directors) and is the venue where the most serious challenges and conflicts, both internal and external, are adjudicated.

Finally, the movie did not offer a view of the future, suggesting that the unscrupulous conduct continues to this day. In contrast, Dr. Erie’s book addresses the real challenges of today: more people, more growth, more environmental degradation and new threats of terror attack. Each topic requires study, discussion and action.

Readers may wish to keep Dr. Erie’s text handy during any discussions about water and power in Southern California.

CITATION

Author: Erie, Steven P.
Title: Beyond Chinatown: the Metropolitan Water District, growth, and the environment in southern California
Year: 2006
Call #: 339.09794 E68
Q: It is rare for a foundation in Los Angeles (or anywhere else) to fund Archival Grants. What is the purpose of the Haynes Foundation’s Archival Grants program and what do the results look like?

Archival Grants have been part of the Foundation’s research program for three decades. The program began with a focus on the preservation and cataloging of certain early Southern California manuscripts and photographs.

Early successes led to the program’s modest expansion. Currently, the Trustees have expressed a preference for archives that: are of significant value to the social science community; are closed and their creator is defunct; and lack alternative sources of funding. The Foundation expects that the materials preserved by Archival grants will be shared with the public and will be available to scholars for future social science research.

The Archival Grant program is allocated about 10% of the research budget. Individual Archival Grants are typically smaller than Major Research Grants. Also, the Haynes Foundation encourages recipients to obtain project funding from multiple sources.

A review of the Foundation’s archival grant-making illustrates the diversity of the institutions and archival projects. Some of those institutions are: 1) Public Universities (UCs and CSUs); 2) Private Schools (University of Southern California, Loyola Marymount University, Occidental College, Whittier College, Pomona College, Claremont Consortium); 3) Historical Societies (Chinese Historical Society, Los Angeles City Historical Society, Historical Society of Southern California, Go For Broke National Education Center); and 4) Libraries and Museums (The Huntington Library, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles Natural History Museum, Southwest Museum, Chinese American Museum, Japanese American Museum, The Gamble House).

More details can be found at the Haynes Foundation website at www.haynesfoundation.org.
Q: Is the County of Los Angeles able to work with the agencies of the City of Los Angeles, the State of California, and the US Federal Government and if so, how effective are those relationships.

At the start of Dr. Tom Sitton’s book “The Courthouse Crowd,” Tom has inserted an insightful quote from another researcher: “The American county is an important yet often neglected and maligned unit of local government.”

While often “neglected” and “maligned,” there is nothing simple about Los Angeles County. It is the largest county in the US by population and one of the largest by size. It has mountains, deserts, beaches and islands, with 88 cities and well over one hundred of unincorporated areas. Yet, federal, state and municipal governments are often seen as more significant and relevant by citizens of Los Angeles County.

That was not always the case. Dr. Sitton’s research shows that in 1850 and for the first hundred years of its existence, the County of Los Angeles was the principal unit of government for its citizens.

From its founding in 1850 through 1865, the principal business of the County was cattle. The principal functions of the County Board of Supervisors were similarly modest: maintain law and order, record land and personal records and collect taxes.

As thousands migrated to Los Angeles from cities in the East and South following the Civil War, farming, agriculture and thousands of new residents quickly transformed LA County. And the County government responded with new roads and railroads and the City government took the lead on a new port.
But even after 50 years, the real “change” for LA County was just beginning. The Progressive Era and World War I brought modernization, a new airfield, and new wealth and tens of thousands of new residents to the County, but the Great Depression, World War II and the expansion that followed saw the County and State governments often eclipsed by Federal funds and programs.

In addition to Dr. Sitton’s book, those interested in learning more about Los Angeles County (or anything about Los Angeles and its environs), can refer to two great bibliographies funded by the Haynes Foundation (1973 and 1990) which can be found on the shelves of the Los Angeles Public Library.

In sum, Dr. Sitton observes that Los Angeles County and its five supervisors, although rarely in the spotlight, have been busy creating a new model of county governance for the 21st Century.