

The Los Angeles Public Library
Local History Collection
Biography

Erving Epstein

NAME EDWARD Augustus THICKSON

Occupation former editor and publisher, Los Angeles

Address 425 So. Windsor Blvd (L.A. 5)

Birth (Date and Place) August 29, 1879

Shelbygan, Wisconsin

FATHER William H. Thickson

Birth (Date and Place) Pennsylvania, 1848

If Deceased, When 1885

MOTHER Gerie Iverson

Birth (Date and Place) Lesja, Norway, 1849

If Deceased, When 1899

IF MARRIED, TO WHOM Wilhelmina de Wolff

Birth of Same (Date and Place) Indiana, 1852

If Deceased, When _____

When Married 1907

CHILDREN (Married Names of Daughters)

TITLES OF BOOKS, ARTICLES, MUSIC, OR OTHER CREATIVE WORK

(In the case of printed matter, please give date and publisher; of periodical publications also name of magazine and date.)

Editor and Publisher of the Los Angeles
Evening Express - 1919-1931

Address

Various articles in Historical
Quarterly of Historical Society
of Southern California

FATHER

Birth (Date and Place)

If Deceased, When

MOTHER

Birth (Date and Place)

If Deceased, When

REVIEWS, CRITICISMS, AND OTHER BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES

(Please note printed matter concerning yourself or your work. We would appreciate any such material you may send, clippings, reviews, portrait.)

If Deceased, When

When Married

CHILDREN (Married Names of Daughters)

ANCESTORS OF DISTINCTION OR LOCAL INTEREST SKETCH

(Please include names of local interest as "forty-niners," or any one connected with the affairs or development of the state or city, as officials, professional men, merchants, etc.)

EDUCATION (Schools, Colleges, Degrees, Etc.)

B. L. University of California, Berkeley, 1901
L. L. D. (honorary) Moravian College, Pa

CLUBS, LEARNED SOCIETIES, ETC.

California Club - Sunset Club -
Lincoln Club (past president)

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION

Methodist

POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS

Republican

RESIDENCE IN CALIFORNIA SINCE

1887

SKETCH

(Please make this as full as possible, giving business affiliations, positions of honor or trust with dates if possible.)

1. See biography in "Who's Who in America."
2. Co-founder "Lincoln-Roosevelt League" in 1907.
3. Co-founder University of California at Los Angeles.
4. Chairman Board of Regents of University of California (Chairman)
5. Decorated by two foreign governments (France and Italy) for "distinguished service in fields of journalism and education."
6. Member Board of Library Commissioners (Los Angeles)
7. Delegate to Republican Nat'l Convention, in 1932.
8. Historical Society of So California (former president)
9. Nat. Cyclopedian of Amer. Biog. - C: 438

EDWARD A. DICKSON

Biographical Sketch (as of 1948)

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER of the Los Angeles Evening Express, 1919-1931.

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CHAIRMAN Board of Regents, University of California, and member of the Board since 1913. His present term extends to 1958. He was co-founder of the University of California at Los Angeles in 1919.

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MEMBER of the Board of the Department of Water and Power, 1940 to 1945; was chairman of the Finance Committee.

- - - - -

MEMBER of the Community Development Board, which built the Coliseum, and brought the Olympic Games to Los Angeles in 1932.

- - - - -

PRESIDENT of Western Federal Savings and Loan Association.

- - - - -

MEMBER of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce; also the State Chamber of Commerce.

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MEMBER Board of Directors of the Central Investment Corporation, owners of the Biltmore Hotel.

- - - - -

MEMBER of the Board of Directors of the Down Town Business Men's Association.

- - - - -

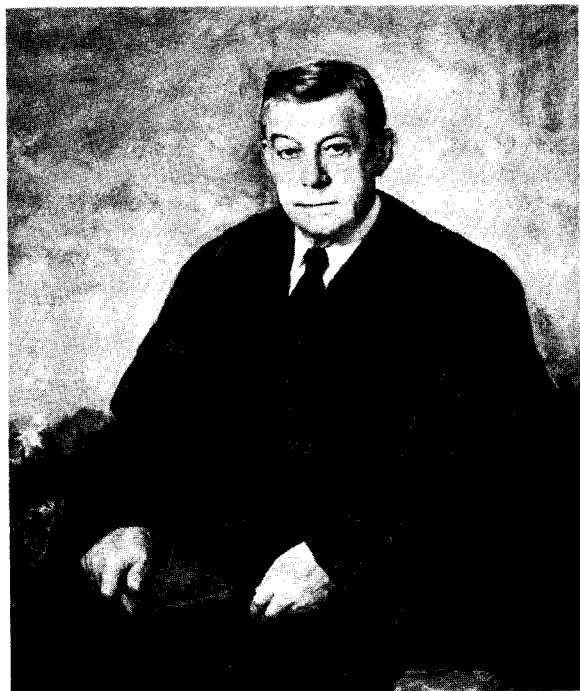
PRESIDENT of the Historical Society of Southern California.

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Recently appointed to City Library Board, for term ending 1953.

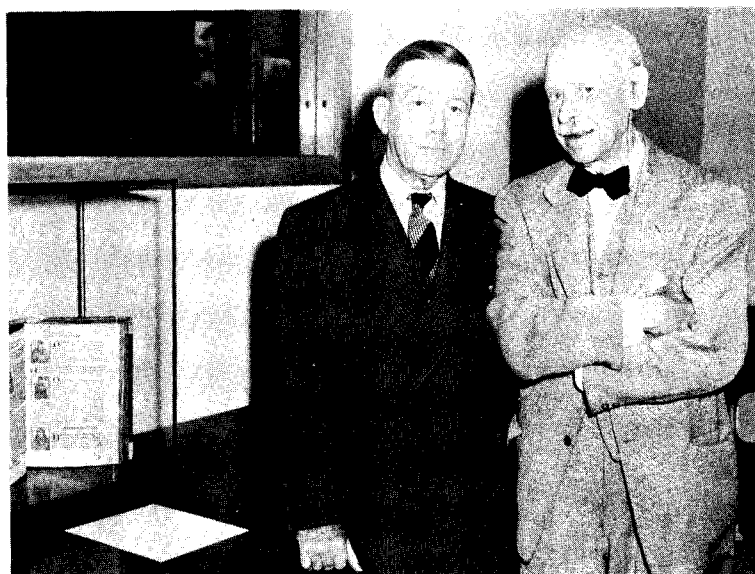
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University of California graduate. Came to Los Angeles in 1906, and joined editorial staff of Evening Express, of which he became owner and editor in 1919. Married and lives at 425 South Windsor Blvd. Member of the California Club.



Left: The portrait of Edward A. Dickson by Arthur Cahill, painted in 1953, which hangs in the Library; above: President Sproul and Regent Dickson (1953).

Below, left: Regent Dickson and Professor William A. Nitze, fellow donors on Friends' Day, 1952 (Mr. Dickson presented a copy of the Cologne Chronicle, 1499); right: Regent Dickson and the late Provost Ernest Carroll Moore, on Friends' Founding Day, 1951.



IV

Certain qualities of Edward A. Dickson's character built singular strength into his endeavors. He had a tremendous zest for life. Never was he too pressed by other concerns and duties to take on another constructive idea and see it through to fulfillment. And his interests swept broad horizons--education and art, history and libraries, civic duties and significant celebrations.

On the Los Angeles Board of Library Commissioners his remarkable executive ability was always evident. A quick survey of facts, an analysis of the problem, and what to do about it stepped along with precision. He speedily shifted the day's agenda into high gear. His were never snap judgments but welled up from a deep reservoir of thoughtful and widely varied experience.

Of special value to the great city library and the swiftly growing one at UCLA, too, was his feeling for history. He sensed the stuff of which history is made. Constantly he encouraged the writing of reminiscences, the collecting of colorful anecdote, the salvaging of documents, letters, and photographs. He was an active archivist, ever ardent and alert. Both as a collector and an actor on the scene he has enriched the heritage of our libraries.

His service to the University of California throughout the state and his warm devotion to UCLA inscribes him in our memory in a time-fast blue and gold.

--Mrs. Elmer Belt, *formerly a member of the City of Los Angeles Board of Library Commissioners.*

V

Regent Edward A. Dickson, a doer of the first rank, knew, respected, and had a deep affection for scholarship and higher education. He began his professional career as a teacher of English in Japan, and his pursuit of learning, especially in the fields of journalism, biography, history and art, was a life-long mission. He was an avid Lincolnian collector and student. He knew the lives and many of the works of Horace, Dante, Petrarch, Voltaire, and Columbus. A prime motive for his travels was a yearning for a deeper understanding of the lives of these and other men of letters, arts and action. He knew California history, and he helped make it. He had a great love for most classical art and a profound dislike for certain types of modern art. We are indebted to his interest in art, and his own practical art in getting things for UCLA, for the Hole collection of paintings. The *Los Angeles Times* has reminded us that Edward Dickson, as President of the Los Angeles Art Association, championed the policy of bringing new artists and their works to the attention of the Southern California public.

Two incidents in Mr. Dickson's recent travel in Spain reveal his concern for books and art. While visiting the Christopher Columbus library in Seville, he noted that the ceiling was in need of repair and learned that the library needed \$5,000, which it did not have and could not raise, to pay for the necessary repairs. Upon his return to Los Angeles, Edward Dickson quietly but effectively set about raising the \$5,000. I was told yesterday that some of the last letters addressed to Edward Dickson contained checks for the repair of the Columbus library.

During this same visit to Spain, Regent Dickson, and Mrs. Dickson, who complements him in all things, had luncheon in Madrid with the cultural attaché from the United States. In the luncheon conversation, in the typical Dicksonian manner, Edward Dickson suggested that it would be fitting for California, whose early culture was Hispanic, to send to Spain, as a loan exhibit, about one hundred of California's best paintings. He promised to do it, and that promise is now well on its way to fulfillment.

You could always depend on the presence of Edward Dickson at University Commencements, Charter Day exercises, military reviews, University lectures, faculty high jinks and many other University activities. Night and day, as host or guest, the development of UCLA was uppermost in his serious and fertile mind. He would "buttonhole" everyone who could help the University, and begin unfolding and encouraging some new plan of his for the development of UCLA. It might be the faculty club, a school of librarianship, additions to the art museum, the Near East program, the University's retirement system, a scholarship in journalism, his beneficent endowment of professorships for our own distinguished emeriti, or one of his many other plans for the University he loved so dearly.

Edward Dickson's dedication to UCLA was admirably complete. It was characterized by vision, intelligence, consecration, negotiation, operation, and consummation. May we never forget how much we are in his debt, and may others rise to dedicate their lives to the great University to which he gave so large and rich a portion of his own life.

--Vern O. Knudsen, *Professor of Physics and Dean of the Graduate Division.*

VI

Edward A. Dickson loved the University of California so much that his greatest ambition was to expand its influence to the Southern part of the State, and as few men before him have done, he lived to see his goal achieved.

From the time of my first active participation in the life of the University in 1924, I have known of no man who has contributed more to the phenomenal growth of UCLA than Mr. Dickson. He was a man of great vision who had the tenacity, even to the very end of his career, to pursue his objectives. Among the Alumni he was fondly referred to as "Mr. UCLA" for, indeed, he was. It was his foresight that not only made the University of California a truly state-wide institution, but also made the whole University rank as one of the all-time great centers of learning in the world.

He was a successful man because his wealth extended far beyond worldly measures. He gave of himself, not only to his local community, but to the State, and even to the world. As we look back over his long years of service, we can only state that the full measure of all the good he accomplished in his lifetime seems beyond our comprehension.

He will not be forgotten because the University of California at Los Angeles stands as a perpetual monument to his memory.

--Thomas J. Cunningham, *UCLA '28, General Counsel of the Regents, formerly Judge of the Superior Court, Los Angeles.*

VII

The bond between us was books. Edward Dickson was a bookman, collecting and reading them all his long life, and taking great pride in the growth of the UCLA libraries. He loved books both for their content and their format. He was an *amateur* of fine printing. Thirty years ago he saw the significance of the Clark Library and joined with Ernest Carroll Moore, another great bookman, to secure it for UCLA. He was a charter member of the Friends of the UCLA Library, who published his documentary history of the Los Angeles campus.

Our conversation was never far from books, as we took turns talking about our latest discoveries. Out of sight was never out of mind, for wherever he travelled, at home or abroad, Edward Dickson remembered the Library's needs, that greatness comes from growth, and he would visit bookshops and ask their owners to write us about items he thought we might need.

On his last trip to Europe he sent back postcards of bookstalls on the Seine and of the Vatican Library, and when he returned he was still on fire from his visit to the Biblioteca Columbina in Seville, recalling his emotions in poring over Columbus's own books. He had also been pleased to encounter there in Seville the Bancroft Library's representative for the foreign microfilm project, Dr. Adele Kibre, and to rejoice in a world-wide University of California.

Thought in Edward Dickson always led to action. He was both dreamer and doer. I did not always agree with what he did or proposed to do, and my telling him so did not disturb our working friendship. He respected sincere beliefs that differed from his own.

Since 1948 he was a strong member of the Board of Library Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles, convinced of the importance of free inquiry to an enlightened citizenry. He believed also that we should add library education to the graduate schools at UCLA, and for twenty-six years this belief was constant with him.

Only two months ago he participated in a regional conference to plan a UCLA library school, and our last memory of the living man recalls Edward Dickson following this four-hour conference with the alert zest of a young enthusiast, an unforgettable demonstration of what it means to be faithful, persistent, and believing. In this man was the creative power that builds cities and temples and campuses--places of dedication and purpose, and of lasting influence. Only thirty years ago he surveyed this land whereon we meet today, and because of his vision which saw beyond the green grass and the yellow mustard, it is now a dynamic center of education, a stronghold of democracy, each rosy brick of which was figuratively laid in place by Edward Dickson.

I am supposed to confine myself to his bookishness, but I cannot close without speaking of the man, who was like a father to many of us--a man of personal modesty, always unassuming, working for his ideas and never for himself.

Suddenly there he was, a book under his arm brought for the Library, quietly authoritative, always impeccably dressed and courtly in manner, with the shy smile and the appreciative chuckle.

Now he is gone. Much can and will be done in his memory. In that sense he will never be lost to us.

--Lawrence Clark Powell

EDWARD A. DICKSON

1879-1956

The name of Edward A. Dickson won dual respect from librarians at UCLA, for it was inextricably linked with the founding of the University at Los Angeles and with the development of its Libraries into major resources of the University. Newspaper stories of Regent Dickson's death on February 22 spoke of him as the "godfather" of the southern campus, for he was credited with having first discovered the present site of UCLA. His own book, *The University of California at Los Angeles, Its Origin and Formative Years*, published last May by the Friends of the UCLA Library, provides the best account of his long and fruitful efforts to build a strong University here. We have asked several members of the faculty and the administration and others who were associated with Mr. Dickson in the work of the University or in the community to write briefly of their recollections of his life and work. Following are their contributions.

I

We of the early faculty knew Regent Dickson and many of his friends well from 1918 to 1956. On all occasions, he sought us out for counsel on new ideas or to suggest a more lively public attitude on the part of the faculty. At house parties and in social groups, he talked of the welfare of the university. For nearly half a century he practiced close personal contacts with members of the faculty. He urged us to be community men by appearing at clubs, on the forum and in the press.

Part of his kindly interest in me in these early days stemmed from my contributions to the *Los Angeles Times*. It was uplifting to meet him often as a colleague and as a friend whose vision of 1918-1919 was rapidly becoming a reality.

The ideal of the university as a great collection of books was in his mind. At times I added the slogan, "Seek ye first the kingdom of scholarship and all else will be added unto you."

Regent Dickson instinctively grasped the necessity of a great library and able men to use it. And as an active member of the Historical Society of Southern California, he saw the need for massive collections of documents, especially as they bore on the development of the West. By nature he thought in large terms and possessed a sanguine and indefatigable spirit, contagious to all.

--Frank J. Klingberg, *Professor of History, Emeritus, who joined the faculty of the State Normal School, forerunner of UCLA, in 1919.*

II

My acquaintance and friendship with Edward A. Dickson stem from membership on the board of directors of the Historical Society of Southern California and on the executive committee of the Friends of the UCLA Library.

From 1946 through 1950, the years when Mr. Dickson was vice president and then president of the Society, there were many pleasant dinner meetings of the directors at the Clark and Biltmore hotels in Los Angeles, usually preceding the public sessions. Here Edward Dickson was a quiet but vital force, launching and carrying out detailed and practical ideas for expanding the historical group's influence in the community, for enlisting the support of outstanding

Californians, for securing a permanent home for the Society, and for active participation in California's centennial year (1950)--especially for sponsorship of the most successful Literary Centennial. Mr. Dickson was only an occasional attendant at the Society's public meetings, but--in the best use of the phrase--he loved to "pull the strings" from behind. The other directors leaned on the opinions of this persuasive man, for they were important and sound, and ordinarily they followed his recommendations.

So, too, Edward A. Dickson was the "strong man" who year by year devoted himself eagerly and lovingly to building up and fostering the University of California at Los Angeles. I was personally aware of his vital interest in every phase of University activities when I became the first president of the Friends of UCLA Library--a library which, due in part to the Dickson enthusiasm, is one of the country's most important research collections. The purpose of the Friends, acting as a liason group between the public and the men and women of the campus, is primarily to enrich the resources of the library, particularly the Department of Special Collections. While the Regents gave formal approval to the formation of the Friends in midyear 1951, it was Chairman Dickson who not only became a charter member of the group but showed his continuing interest by being present at every meeting--from the first on November 13, 1951--and by a variety of generous contributions. Also, he not only found time to serve actively on the Los Angeles Public Library Board but to give support to all bookish endeavors in our rapidly growing region. Librarians inevitably turned to him as a friend, a tower of strength, and a man who translated good ideas into actual achievements.

--W. W. Robinson, *Vice President of the Title Insurance and Trust Company, and former President of the Friends of the UCLA Library.*

III

Edward A. Dickson was a member of the Los Angeles Board of Library Commissioners from July 28, 1948 until his death.

From the day of his appointment the library staff was aware of Mr. Dickson's keen intellect and sincere interest. He did not take his responsibilities lightly, and followed each item brought before the Board with close attention. There was only one way to persuade Mr. Dickson of the value of any proposition under consideration, and that was solely on its own merits. He could not be appealed to except in terms of public interest.

In all affairs Mr. Dickson had one standard--the highest possible. It was sometimes irksome to him to see the limited budget under which the Library operated, yet he would have been the last to vote for an extravagance. Mr. Dickson was greatly interested in defending the Library against attack or weakening influences. He took a vigorous part in resisting the recommendations of the late "Little Hoover Commission" to reduce the powers of the Board of Library Commissioners because he felt that lay interest and participation is vital in democratic government.

In spite of a sometimes severe outward manner, Mr. Dickson was humane and warm-hearted, and always showed immediate concern when matters of staff welfare were before the Board. We in the Library shall miss his strong guidance, and we join the rest of the community in mourning him.

--Harold L. Hamill, *Librarian of the Los Angeles Public Library.*