

BIOGRAPHY OF MERRILL BUTLER
ENGINEER OF DESIGN, BUREAU OF ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, CITY OF LOS ANGELES
RETIRING ON OCTOBER 31, 1961

Merrill Butler, Engineer of Design of the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Engineering, Department of Public Works, is retiring on October 31, 1961, after more than 45 years of City service, at the compulsory retirement age of 70. He is the Deputy City Engineer for design under Lyall A. Pardee, City Engineer.

Mr. Butler was born in Gouverneur, New York, on October 5, 1891. His family, whose ancestors came from the Ulster District in North Ireland, moved to Los Angeles, California, for health reasons in June 1903.

He has always had a deep interest in railroads and bridges and his job record indicates the fulfillment of this ambition.

After graduating from Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles, Mr. Butler was first employed by the Los Angeles Railway Company in the Fall of 1909 as a draftsman on special street railway work.

He continued to educate himself by taking correspondence courses in mathematics and civil engineering from the University of Wisconsin.

Mr. Butler began his first period of City employment on November 11, 1912 when expected advancement opportunities in his former job didn't materialize. He began as a draftsman in

the Bridge Division and advanced to Assistant Engineer in 1915, working on bridge plans and designs.

In February 1917, he applied for and was granted a Reserve Commission as a 1st Lieutenant Engineering Officer. After training at the Presidio, San Francisco, and the Engineer Post at the Vancouver Barracks, Washington, he was sent to France in July 1918 with the Combat Engineers, the 316th Engineers Regiment of the 91st Division, of the American Expeditionary Force. Mr. Butler received a service ribbon with 4 battle stars for participating in the following engagements:

The Toul Defensive Sector, the Saint Mihiel Offensive, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, and the Ypres-~~Cys~~ Offensive in Belgium.

Lys

He was discharged in 1919 with the rank of Captain.

He returned to the City of Los Angeles in 1919 as an Assistant Engineer working on street improvement plans.

Shortly thereafter in 1919 he accepted the position of Bridge Engineer of the Arizona State Highway Department and thereby continued to fulfill the ambitions of his youth. A change of political party control in Arizona in March 1923, precipitated his return to Los Angeles.

He returned to City service on May 1, 1923 as an Assistant Engineer. Shortly thereafter he advanced to Structural Engineer and was placed in charge of the Structural Design in the Bureau of Engineering of the Ninth Street and Macy Street Viaducts over the Los Angeles River.

In 1924 the Bridge and Structural Design Division which was dissolved during World War I was recreated within the Bureau of Engineering and Mr. Butler was made Bridge and Viaduct Engineer in charge of this new Division, a position he held until 1932. Among the notable projects designed under his direction were, in the order of their construction: The Los Angeles River Viaducts at First Street, Seventh Street, Fourth Street, Sixth Street, North Spring Street, Glendale-Hyperion, and Washington Street; the Anaheim Street Viaduct over Dominguez Channel; the Figueroa Street Tunnels; and the Sepulveda Boulevard Tunnel.

From 1932 to 1933 he served as Engineer of Maintenance and Operation supervising refuse collection, incinerator, street, structural, sewer and storm drain maintenance.

From 1933 until the date of his retirement, a period of more than 28 years, he has as Deputy City Engineer (Design), been responsible for coordinating and directing the design work of all the design divisions of the Bureau of Engineering including Bridge and Structural, Sewer, Storm Drain, and Street and Freeway Design. In addition to these responsibilities he was from December 1947 to March 1951 placed in direct charge of design and coordination of design of the Hyperion (Activated Sludge) Sewage Treatment Plant.

When asked what engineering accomplishments he is most proud of he unhesitatingly mentioned first the Hyperion Sewage Treatment Plant and second, the Los Angeles River Viaduct series. In practice, however, he has always treated the job at hand, regardless of size or cost, as if it were the most important one.

Merrill Butler's contribution to the engineering profession has not been confined to his salaried positions alone but is further illustrated by his participation in the following technical societies:

American Society of Civil Engineers,

Served as President in 1934
Vice-President in 1932
Treasurer 1930-31, and
Chairman of numerous special committees,
all in the Los Angeles Section.

He became an Associate Member in 1923,
Full Member in 1934,
Fellow in 1959, and was recently elected to Life Member

American Society for Testing Materials,

Member of C-13 for Reinforced Concrete Pipe
continuously since 1952

Society of American Military Engineers

City and County Engineers Association, and

American Public Works Association

He has been a Director (2 years) of the League of California Cities, representing the Public Works Officers Department of the League and served as President of that Department (1 year), and Chairman and member of numerous committees.

Mr. Butler is registered with the State of California as a Civil Engineer and as a Structural Engineer.

Mr. Butler is a member of Arlington Lodge No. 414 F. & M. of the Masonic Order, and in 1936 was President of the City Employees Masonic Club.

He is a member of the First United Presbyterian Church, 1809 West Boulevard, Los Angeles, and has served on its Board of Trustees.

He is a long time member of the All City Employees Association of the City of Los Angeles.

Merrill Butler met his wife Mary in Phoenix, Arizona where she was working as a YWCA Secretary. They were married in her home town of Modesto, California on March 12, 1923, although her birth place is Tacoma, Washington.

They have one child, Merrill Butler Jr., age 36, daughter-in-law Sally, and grandchildren Merrill Butler III, age 7 and Sally Lou, age 22 months. Merrill Butler Jr., lives in Newport Beach, California and is President of the Butler-Harbour Construction Company.

His fondness for his grandchildren is readily apparent by noting the pictures he keeps of them in his office and by his frequent visits to them. He says there are strong pressures to get him and his wife to move from their present home at 1053 South Sierra Bonita, Los Angeles 19, to a location closer to Newport Beach.

His retirement plans are primarily to slow down, by first taking a short vacation at Palm Desert which is about 16 miles south-east of Palm Springs. He and his wife plan to travel to Scandinavia next summer if all goes well.

Thus October 31, 1961, brings to an end the City employment of Merrill Butler; career employee; dedicated public servant; an Engineer's Engineer with childhood dreams

transformed into reality by study, application, hard work, and ability; a man of high, unwavering principles and exemplary character.

That the richly deserved rewards of retirement may be realized by Merrill Butler and his wife Mary is the wish of all of his friends and co-workers.