

MUNICIPAL REFERENCE LIBRARY
300 CITY HALL

CITY OFFICIALS

NAME Criswell, Ralph Luther

PUBLIC OFFICES HELD

(DATE)

CITY:

Civil Service Commission ... 1916-1917
City Council -..... 1917-1927
President 1921

COUNTY:

STATE:

FEDERAL:

CIVIC ACTIVITIES:

BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Linotyper
Typographer
City Official
Colorado River agent

PORTRAIT:

ATTACHED OR ENCLOSED IN ENVELOPE: 2
PORTRAITS APPEARING ELSEWHERE ^{enclosed} (DATES)
Portrait Index

The Los Angeles Public Library
Local History Collection
Biography

NAME Criswell, Ralph Luther

Occupation Typographer

Address 529 West 41st Place

Birth (Date and Place) October 12, 1861, Rushville, Ill.

FATHER Edmund L. Criswell

Birth (Date and Place) Sept 1835, Adams County, Pa.

If Deceased, When _____

MOTHER Susan Catherine Wright

Birth (Date and Place) November 27, 1841, White County, Indiana

If Deceased, When _____

IF MARRIED, TO WHOM May Greene

Birth of Same (Date and Place) November 27, 1859, Petersburg, Illinois

If Deceased, When _____

When Married December 1885, Tecumseh, Nebraska

CHILDREN (Married Names of Daughters)

Ralph Greene (Ensign during World War)

ANCESTORS OF DISTINCTION OR LOCAL INTEREST

(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.)

Great grandfather was a private in the Virginia Line in the Revolutionary War. Mr. Criswell has the old gourd which this great grandfather used as a powder horn during his war service.

Wife's great grandfather also served in the Revolutionary War being killed 1782, during the Battle of Bluelick

Wife's father, L.M. Greene, is said to have taught Abraham Lincoln English grammar. Her uncle clerked in the store in New Salem in which Lincoln worked and later had a partnership.

EDUCATION (Schools, Colleges, Degrees, Etc.)

Public Schools of Rushville, Illinois

CLUBS, LEARNED SOCIETIES, ETC.

Odd Fellows; Elk; Member of the Typographical Union since July 1, 1885.

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION Methodist

POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS Republican

RESIDENCE IN CALIFORNIA SINCE 1897

SKETCH

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

Ralph Luther Criswell was born October 12, 1861, in Rushville, Illinois, and received his education in the public schools of the same city.

Leaving school at the age of fourteen years he learned the trade of typography which he practiced the following forty-two years.

Before removing to California, 1897, Mr. Criswell worked on county newspapers in various localities. He managed the "Johnston News" in Johnston, Nebraska, and founded the "Northwestern County Gazette" 1886, in Kansas.

In California Mr. Criswell spent a year in Santa Paula before settling in Los Angeles. He worked first as a linotyper on the old "Morning Herald." When the "Examiner" was started by Hearst in 1903, Mr. Criswell assisted in planning the composing room in the old building which stood on the site now occupied by the Fifth Street Store.

Appointed to the Civil Service Commission in December 1916, he served until August of the following year when he resigned to assume office in the city Council, to which he had been elected.

Mr. Criswell served on the Council ten years. During this time he interested himself in labor problems and was instrumental in putting through the ordinance which gave all city employees a work week of five and one-half days, with paid holidays and vacations.

As chairman of the Council Water & Power Committee he became familiar with the features of all the dam sites proposed for Boulder Dam. He traveled extensively over Arizona on missions connected with the project.

In 1921 Mr. Criswell served as president of the Council. His knowledge of the Boulder Dam project was so comprehensive that he made many trips to Washington, D.C., to appear before Congressional Committees having to do with Boulder Dam Legislation.

(Continued)

SKETCH

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

RALPH LUTHER CRISWELL part 2

After retiring from the Council in 1927

Mr. Criswell was appointed Colorado River Agent, in connection with which duties half of his time is spent in Washington.

When not occupied by business affairs elsewhere Mr. Criswell lives at his home in Los Angeles.

HOBBIES: Digging in his rose garden.

ANECDOTES AND PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS:

Ralph Luther Criswell has been a member of the Typographers Union-which is one of the oldest unions in America-for fifty-one years.

Very much interested in industrial problems he was at one time active in the Socialist Party, and is credited with the successful passage of the ordinance whereby the unimportant city employee shares equally with the "white collar" job holder in holidays and vacation privileges.

In 1925 while on a Boulder Dam survey trip in the Indian country near Peach Springs, Arizona, Mr. Criswell and his associates were stranded on an old Indian trail fifteen miles from anywhere, when the crank case of one of the automobiles sprang a leak when struck by a stone.

One of the men climbed under the car and after locating the hole, suggested it might be plugged up with chewing gum. The entire party then protestingly chewed gum until repairs were completed, while one member plaintively queried:

"If we HAVE to chew this stuff why can't we at least chew until we get the sweet out of it?"

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

BOOKS:

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS:

Los Angeles Times

PERSONAL INTERVIEW:

INTERVIEWED BY: Luella Sawyer

DATE OF INTERVIEW: October 24, 1934

REWRITTEN BY: Clare Wallace --- August 3, 1936

