

Water drove Eagle Rock into joining city of LA

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By Charles Cooper

"Once you're in, you can never get out," the people of the city of Eagle Rock were warned by a Santa Monica judge 50 years ago as the "fastest growing community in LA County" became part of the city of Los Angeles in the summer of 1923.

According to the Eagle Rock Sentinel historical files, the actual ordinance of annexation was passed by the voters in March, 1923 by a vote of 1107

to 810, but LA city officials had other things on their mind, including an upcoming election of their own, and so the some 6000 citizens of Eagle Rock didn't become Angelenos officially until months later.

At the time of the annexation, the Eagle Rock city fathers were going through an actue case of boosterism, a common happening in the booming 1920's.

CITY GROWTH

They pointed out that the

city had grown from 2000 to 6000 residents since 1920, was outstripping such major cities as Boise, Idaho and San Jose, California in new building, and "by 1930 would be a city of 25,000 residents." It had only been a city since 1911.

There was only one problem with all this; the city didn't have a sufficient supply of un-polluted water for the 6000, and had no immediate means of getting more except by a large capital expenditure or by annexation to Los Angeles.

A petition for annexation was filed with the Eagle Rock city directors on Dec. 18, 1922; and two months later, on Feb. 19, 1923, the directors voted to hold an election on March 27.

The annexation battle was a spirited one, with opponents complaining that Eagle Rock's share in the new Glendale Union High School would go down the drain, that the tax rate would immediately go up to pay for Los Angeles bond projects, and that public utility rates would remain as high or higher despite promises to the contrary by supporters of annexation.

EXPANSIONIST

Los Angeles was in an expansionist mood at the time, and much of the debate in Eagle Rock centered around what had or had not been done for such recently-acquired Los Angeles districts as Van Nuys and Sawtelle.

H. H. Maxson was chairman of the anti-annexationists, assisted by city attorney R. L. McNitt, and mass meeting followed mass meeting in the Eagle Rock Central School auditorium (now Eagle Rock Elementary) before the matter came up for a vote.

After the registered voters in the city approved the annexation, no one seemed quite sure what was to happen next. After several delays, members of the Los Angeles City Council came out to meet with the city directors.

The directors quietly voted themselves out of existance on May 14, and on May 17 Eagle Rock ceased to be a city after official notification to Sacramento.

LEGAL LIMBO

The community promptly went into a sort of legal limbo while all of the problems surrounding annexation were straightened out. The school district passed into the hands of Los Angeles; a new zoning map was adopted, and street names were changed to avoid conflict with Los Angeles names. In the process, Central Ave. became Eagle Rock Blvd., among other changes.

And the municipal tax rate went up from \$1.33 to \$1.71, exactly as predicted.

During the transitional period, the newly augmented Eagle Rock Chamber of Commerce more or less administered the city from the Eagle Rock City Hall which had been completed just a year before.

A projected visit from President Warren Gamaliel Harding drove the annexation problems off the front page of the Eagle Rock Sentinel, at least for a time.

And Harding's death on Aug. 2, the day before he was scheduled to ride in a procession down Colorado Blvd., not only led directly to the exposure of the Teapot Dome scandal of his administration but effectively marked a close to the era of boosterism that the city of Eagle Rock was such a part of in its short history of 12 years of independence.