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300 CITY HALL

CITY OFFICIALS

NAME Thom, Cameron Erskine (deceased February 2,
1915)

PUBLIC OFFICES HELD

(DATE)

CITY:

City Attorney May 5, 1856-May 10, 1858
Mayor December 9, 1882-December 9, 1884
Board of Freeholders, May 31, 1888

COUNTY:

District Attorney 1854 - 1858

STATE

Senator 1859 - 1860

FEDERAL:

Assistant Law Agent, United States Land Commission -
1853

CIVIC ACTIVITIES:

BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Gold miner
Lawyer
Banker
Capitalist
Realtor
City, county, and state official

PORTRAIT:

ATTACHED OR ENCLOSED IN ENVELOPE: none

PORTRAITS APPEARING ELSEWHERE (DATES)

Portrait Index
Los Angeles Times, February 3, 1915

ANECDOTES AND PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS:

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

BOOKS:

See other page

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS:

Los Angeles Times

PERSONAL INTERVIEW: none

INTERVIEWED BY:

DATE OF INTERVIEW

Written by: Clare Wallace
March 15, 1938

The Los Angeles Public Library
Local History Collection
Biography

NAME Thom, Cameron Erskine (deceased February 2,
1915)

Occupation Lawyer and Banker

Address

Birth (Date and Place) June 20, 1825, Culpeper County, Va.

FATHER John Thom

Birth (Date and Place)

If Deceased, When

MOTHER

Birth (Date and Place)

If Deceased, When

IF MARRIED, TO WHOM 1st, Susan Henrietta Hathwell

2nd, Belle Cameron Hathwell

Birth of Same (Date and Place) 2nd wife, 186-, Marysville,
Calif.

If Deceased, When 2nd wife, November 19, 1924, Los
Angeles

When Married

CHILDREN (Married Names of Daughters)

Cameron DeHart

Charles Catesby

Erskine Pembroke

Belle: Lady Arthur Collins, London, England

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.)

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.)

Workman, City That Grew
Newmark, Sixty Years in Southern California
Guinn, History of California, Los Angeles and
Environs, vol 11, p 44
McGroarty, History of Los Angeles County, vol 111,
p 401
Wilson, History of Los Angeles County (CL)
Warner, Hayes, Widney, Historical Sketch of Los
Angeles County, 1876
Spalding, History and Reminiscences of Los Ange-
les City and County, vol 1

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.)

Subject's Scottish grandfather distinguished himself in the battle of Culloden, under the banner of Prince Charles Edward, the Stuart Pretender, who presented him with a gold snuff-box.

His father, John Thom, was an officer in the War of 1812, and for thirty years senator of Virginia.

EDUCATION (Schools, Colleges, Degrees, Etc.)

Private schools, Virginia; University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

CLUBS, LEARNED SOCIETIES, ETC.

Founder and charter member of the Society of Colonial Wars; no other clubs or social orders

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION Episcopal

POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS Democrat

RESIDENCE IN CALIFORNIA SINCE 1849; Los Angeles
1854

SKETCH

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

Cameron Erskine Thom was born June 20, 1825 on his father's plantation at Berry Hill, Virginia. After being privately educated he took courses at the University of Virginia, including law, and was admitted to practice before all the courts of his native state.

Instead of doing so however, he set out with a party of adventurers for the far west. The party included thirty young men, plenty of supplies in canvas-roofed wagons, drawn by mules, negro cooks, wagon men, and riding horses, a luxurious caravan for the times. They crossed the plains, hunted buffalos, spent some weeks with the Sioux in Dakota, and then headed for the gold camps of Northern California. They arrived in Sacramento in November of 1849 where the party disbanded.

Captain Thom engaged in mining on the south fork of the American river for a short while, also in Amador County, and acquired some wealth. Mining palled upon him under the primitive conditions and he returned to Sacramento and opened a law office.

In the fall of 1853 he left Sacramento for San Francisco as deputy agent for the U.S. Land Commission, and the following year removed to Los Angeles in the interests of the same governmental business.

Shortly after arrival in the city he was appointed district attorney for the county, an office to which he was later elected and in which he served about eight years. After he was elected City Attorney, 1856-1858, he held both offices simultaneously.

Captain Thom's next public service was in the state legislature. In 1859 he was elected senator from a district which now embraces six southern counties, and served a two-year term.

After the Civil War had begun he journeyed back across the continent and volunteered his ser-

continued

VICES to the Confederacy at Richmond, Virginia. He served the South as an officer with the rank of captain, was slightly wounded at Gettysburg, and was active to the Battle of Sayler's Run, the last battle of the war.

At the close of the war he returned to Los Angeles impoverished, and began life all over again. He resumed the practice of law and his interests in civic affairs. An ardent Democrat he was prominent in party councils, also in many pioneer civic and legal problems. He was among those who favored the division of California into two states. Some time in the Eighties when the project was revived he served on the legal committee endorsing the proposed division.

In December of 1882 he was elected mayor of Los Angeles, and served to December 9, 1884. Following this he returned to his law practice which by this time was so extensive as to require all his time, although he did serve on the first Board of Freeholders which framed the first City Charter.

In the early days Captain Thom was among the pioneers of vision who believed the village of Los Angeles had a metropolitan future. He invested heavily in real estate, and retained permanent possession of large parcels of it. A part of the City of Glendale is located on acreage which he held, and at one time planted to orange, lemon, and olive groves.

He was one of the incorporators of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, now the Farmers and Merchants National Bank, and served on the board of directors from the time of incorporation.

When he was about seventy years of age Captain Thom retired from active practice, and participation in public affairs, though he continued to direct his large personal interests until his death. He died February 2, 1915, at his West Adams Street home in Los Angeles.

CALIFORNIA BIOGRAPHY
FILE

Cameron Erskine Thom was born at Berry Hill, his father's Plantation in Culpeper County, Virginia, June 20th, 1825. His mother, Abigail DeHart Thom, was the daughter of Col. John Mayo, the owner of Powhatan, the historic site of the dramatic incident of the intended killing of Captain John Smith by the powerful Indian war chief, Powhatan, when he was saved from death by the intervention of his daughter, Pocohontas. The stone upon which Smith's head was laid to receive the fatal blow has been protected by a vandal-proof enclosure for many years. His father, Col. John Thom, was a statesman and a scholar. He was an officer in the War of 1812-14, commanding a regiment of Virginia troops throughout the entire period of military activity. For thirty years he served his state in the legislature as senator, and on retiring was appointed "High Sheriff" of his county by the Governor, as a partial remuneration for valuable judicial services as magistrate. His grandfather was a Scotchman of note as a military officer. He followed the fortunes of Prince Charles Edward from the beginning until his downfall on the bloody field of Culloden, April 16th, 1746. There he so distinguished himself that the Prince presented him with his own gold snuff-box as an evidence of his appreciation of his fidelity and great personal valor. The snuff-box was prized as an heirloom in the family until Berry Hill was looted by Federal soldiers, when it disappeared.

Capt. Thom took an extensive course at the University of Virginia, including law in all its branches, and received a license to practice his profession in all of the courts of his native state, but the call of the West was ringing through the land, and the adventure-some blood of his forefathers which coursed through his veins quickly moved him to action. He at once laid plans for the formation of a company to make the trip. Having accomplished that, in the fall of 1848 he went South to visit his two sisters, one living in Mobile, the wife of a lawyer of distinction there, the other spending the winter in New Orleans with her husband, owner of the superb Point Coupe estate in

Louisiana, who was then the nearest male relative of the to be President Taylor, and was the guardian of his daughter Elizabeth while the General was in Mexico.

He left Fredericksburg late in November for Weldon -- then the terminus of the railroad via Richmond-- escorting Mrs. Ann Stringfellow, a friend of the family who was going to Wetumpka (a small town on the Alabama River above Montgomery, to visit relatives there), and to Montgomery, Alabama. He had with him also Dave Lycurgus, his body-guard. -- A word about Dave: It was the invariable of Colonel Thom (the father of the subject of this sketch) to give to each of his children whenever he or she left the parent nest, a body servant, male or female as the case might be,-- choice to be made by the child. Cameron selected David Lycurgus, a playmate of his in the days of his earlier youth. Dave was nineteen years old, six feet high, as straight as a sapling, as black as triple folds of midnight darkness, kinky hair, large, lustrous, most intelligent eyes, pearly teeth, an unusually aquiline nose and thin lips for a negro. He was as agile as a panther, with an intelligence almost startling in its versatility, brilliancy and quickness. In fact, he stood before one as a statue from the studio of Praxiteles-- a god in flawless black marble. He was inexhaustible in resource, true as dial to the sun, always in the right place at the right time; by the "sole act of his unlauded will" he won victory in the mighty battle of life. Under a satisfactory agreement with his owner he bought his freedom before the age of twenty-five, and subsequently that of his wife, of whom he spoke in this manner: "She ain't no straight-har'd merlatter gal, she's jest a nigger wid har an' eyes an' mouf an' nose same as me." The day of leaving Fredericksburg was dark and gloomy, the passengers silent and uncommunicative. The snow since three o'clock P.M. had been and continued falling in bounteous bewildering beauty. They were travelling through an immense pine forest of primeval growth, and giant trees which swayed their restless branches at the command of the chilling blast, and growled and groaned their discontent.

Presently a blood-curdling roar was heard in their front; the train stopped with a violence so powerful and sudden that the windows were all shattered and the passengers thrown in an indiscriminate mass of wounded, frenzied, shrieking and mourning humanity.

In a short time Dave walked in to where Aunt Ann and young Thom had been sitting, and with a voice full of solicitude and thankfulness said: "Thank Gawd! Marse Cam, you an Miss Ann is here; dis am de mos' horriblest accident you eber seen! De Injun done bus' all to pieces an' kilt two men wid hot water all same you scall horgs at horg killin'time. One man's hade is de redides' hade you eber see, dey say he die too. I jes' set down an' cry lak a baby. We is about ten mile fum whar we wuz guine to stop at, but 'daint no way to let folks know whar we is 'cept somebody goes dar an' tells um. De kinductor ast if nobody would go, but nobody said nothin', kase dey was mos' all white folks, an' dis ain't any kind ob weather fo' white folks to be out in. Den I say, 'Masta, if Marse Cam will let me, I'll go, if you will sho'me de way'. He say, 'De railroad will sho' you de way.' Kin I go? You kno' I is mighty handy on my feet; hit's gwine to get dark an' I'll hab to hab a lantrum wid me."

His proposition being assented to, he said: "Miss Ann sho mus' be hongry; dar is a mighty fine house close to here an' I'm gwine to go dar and git some pervisions fo' her befo' I go on". He did so, and soon returned with hard-boiled eggs and delicious ham sandwiches, and a kind invitation from the owner of the house for any of the passengers who desired to do so, to at once come there and they should be made as comfortable as circumstances would permit. In a little while thereafter the gentleman himself appeared with servants bringing hot bread and coffee and baskets of provisions, and gave his attention to relieving the injured as far as he could. Several were taken to his house. In the meantime Dave had sped on his mission of mercy, and in about three hours was back on an engine which was brought to haul the teain to Weldon, where they arrived at 2 P.M. and were warmly welcomed and bountifully supplied with all comfort and

luxuries. The conductor offered Dave a silver dollar (the first he had ever seen) but he declined, thanking the conductor and telling him he "didn't want nawthin' for nawthin' he done"; but his conduct at the time of and after the accident had metamorphosed Dave into a hero. The journey from Weldon to Montgomery was without special interest. Arriving there in three hours, Mrs. Stringfellow was put on a steamer for the last leg of her journey to meet her friends at Wetumpka. She did not forget to gush by language and letter over the gallantry of her escort and the fidelity and heroism of his black body-guard. Thom met friends and old acquaintances in Montgomery. Reuben Thom had formerly resided there; his name was a sesame to the hearts and hands of all with whom he had ever associated. The attractions of this beautiful town were strong enough to keep young Thom there many days longer than he had anticipated before taking steamer for Mobile, which city he reached after a most enjoyable trip down the Alabama River. The only incident of special note was the transfer of all the cash from his pocket to those of two splendid young strangers who hospitably entertained him with a game of "draw."

Reaching Mobile, he entered a stricken city, a city of sorrow, of gloom, of paralysed business, deserted streets, and with a mortality of hundreds a day from epidemic cholera. Thom found his sister and family out of the town, occupying a small house in a pine forest on a sandy ridge. The meeting of devoted brother and sister after so many years of separation was such as might be expected. After remaining with his relatives in their isolation for a number of days, he bade a sad final farewell, and took passage for New Orleans-- a city of crowded streets, of gaiety, of balls and parties, of open places of amusement, of beautiful and superbly gowned women.

Another sister (under whose immediate watchful care young Thom had been brought up) was overjoyed at meeting him, and lavishly bestowed upon him all the affection, ease, and comfort that flowed from a heart full of love for him. After a sojourn with her family in unalloyed happiness for more than a month, he was placed in charge of

the Captain of a palatial steamer,-- in which his brother-in-law, Mr. Taylor, was largely interested-- with satisfactory instructions as to what his treatment was to be en route. He left for Wheeling, the objective point of the boat. The recollections of this voyage (which was made in about ten days) are among the whitest letters in the alphabet of pleasure that have been compiled during a life of many many years.

"They laughed in the gale, they slept in the calm," and sang and danced 'neath the pale moon's light. Only two untoward incidents: an attack of ptomaine-- the victim being the light and life of the party-- and the steamer afire at night in midstream with the accompanying panic.

From Wheeling Thom's party took stage and passed over the Allegheny and Blue Ridge ranges of mountains to Baltimore; thence he returned to Fredericksburg.

Reaching Fredericksburg in February, 1849, he was one of a party of thirty picked young men bound for the far west. They were not actuated by the love of gold or by the hope of the accumulation of a fortune from any source, but by the innate love of untrammelled freedom and the ecstasy of perilous adventure. The party was well equipped for the expedition, saddle horses for those who cared to own them personally, an abundance of arms, ammunition, provisions, six wagons, two ambulances (all drawn by first-class mules), six negro cooks and wagon-men, a gentleman who could preach when they started, but forgot the days of the week before getting through, two fiddlers, three banjoists, and a portable platform on which to dance, about made up the outfit.

Influenced by a stupid legend that flour could not be carried from the Missouri to the Sacramento River without becoming unfit for food-- with the exception of a limited quantity packed in buckskin sacks-- they had their breadstuff prepared in St. Louis. It consisted of biscuit, absolutely uniform in size, being four inches in diameter, a half an inch thick, kiln dried to a point where every indication of moisture was evaporated. Flour could be subjected to no known process

that would bring it to more granitic invulnerable hardness. A hammer was the least powerful implement that could reduce it to a condition of approximate usefulness.

They left St. Louis on the last days of February. Most of the men went by land in charge of the animals; the remainder of them took passage on the Dakota, a small stern wheel steamer bound for Council Bluffs as objective point; cholera was epidemic and raged on all sides of them (they passed a steamer that had been abandoned on account of it and tied up to the shore); they got about one hundred and twenty-five miles above St. Joseph when their boat struck a "sawyer" and sunk to her upper deck in short order, but not before she was brought within gangway distance of the easterly bank of the river at a dismal snow-covered locality known then as the Nishabotena Valley. They assembled on the hurricane deck of the foundering Dakota and made the forest on the banks of the muddy old Missouri jubilant with the ringing notes of:

"Come all ye jolly sailor boys
And listen to our song
And if you will agree with us
Why we will go along.
We'll take our hammocks on our backs
And altogether go,
And we'll settle on the banks
Of the Sacramento.

Chorus:

"And if the wild Indian
Should chance of us to hear
We'll all unite together, boys,
And meet them without fear.
We'll all unite together boys,
And strike the savage foe,
When we settle on the banks
Of the Sacramento."

They remained in camp there about ten days, having been joined by the land party, and resupplied from St. Joseph with what was lost in the shipwreck they broke camp for Council Bluffs, crossing the river there. Then really commenced the journey for California. They were in no hurry -- took plenty of time -- finding, as they did, some new interest and adventure every day. Stops were made whenever fancy pointed, and then they remained until satiety pushed them on. They lingered some weeks at a romantic spot on the Platte River known as Ash Hollow. Some two thousand Sioux warriors and squaws were in camp there. They found them hospitable and gentle in their domestic life, and well worthy of much consideration and study. These Sioux had recently returned from a great battle or battles with the Pawnees (a powerful tribe which had been almost exterminated), and were celebrating their victories and resting in the bosom of their families. They entertained the travelers with exhibitions of horsemanship, racing, bow and arrow shooting, war dances, etc. In return the travelers charmed them with The Arkansaw Traveler, Fisher's Horn Pipe, Irish Washerwoman, etc.

Game was abundant, and there are but few experiences in human life so exhilarating as that of being well mounted in the midst of a herd of buffalo with a band of Indian braves after meat.

Fort Bridger, the next picnic ground, then Salt Lake, was the next point. Visiting Brigham Young and his family, revelling in the glories of scenery and good things to eat for man and beast, reading the "Book of Mormon" and studying at its source the features of polygamy, they spent a profitable ten days among the "Saints", and then resumed their journey toward the land of gold. They endured intense suffering from heat and thirst in crossing what was then known as the great American Desert. Many of them would have died, had they not received assistance, but they succeeded in reaching Carson River, at the sink of which they had a fight with a band of Indians in an endeavour to recover some mules which the Indians had stampeded and

stolen. In the mix-up Mr. Thom was shot through the calf of his left leg with an arrow, which penetrated the side of the mule he was riding. The animal died in great agony in a few hours. Mr. Thom's wound did not permanently heal for about six years.

The party arrived at Sutter's Fort near Sacramento late in November, and disbanded. Many of them went to Rose's Bar on the Yuba River, and died there of typhoid, almost to a man within a few months. Thom with his party of five engaged in mining on the south fork of the American River at Mormon Island (now Folsom), and later at Mathena's Creek, lured thither by an expert mine salter, and never took out a dollar after taking out what the swindler had put in. The winter was intensely wet and cold, provisions were high, beef \$200 a barrel, pork \$250, potatoes \$4 a pound; no other vegetables could be had except beans. Mining under these not too pleasant conditions soon palled upon the young adventurers, they pulled up stakes, and looked about for pastures new. Mr. Thom went to Sacramento and opened a law office, and became agent for the firm of White, Jennings & Company, from Oregon, at a salary of \$500 a month. His duties consisted in collecting rents, general supervision of their properties, and such legal services as were required. The first great flood of Sacramento City occurred in the early '50s, and through this Mr. Thom passed with many thrilling experiences and dangers. The second flood was no more redolent of comfort and peace of mind than the first. On both occasions he was asleep when the waters came and roused him from his slumbers. The great conflagration that destroyed almost the entire business portion of the city consumed his office library and papers. He had built up an appreciable law practise, and at various times had been associated with other clever attorneys. Among them were Wm. Ferguson, who was killed by Pen Johnson in a duel, A. T. Ward who had been wounded in a duel by his cousin, Ned Marshall, and Bankhead, who became a distinguished officer in the Confederate Army.

In the fall of 1853 Mr. Thom left Sacramento, having received the appointment of Assistant Law Agent for the U.S. Land Commission sitting in San Francisco. Here one of his duties was the supervision of some thirty clerks and draughtsmen, etc. In the spring of 1854 he was ordered to Los Angeles to attend to the taking of testimony on behalf of the Government to be used before the Commission, appointed under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, to settle private land claims in the State of California. Having finished his labors in that behalf, he resigned his position and was appointed City and District Attorney respectively of Los Angeles, to fill unexpired terms. Being on both sides of all the questions involved he did not find the combination burdensome or inconvenient in a satisfactory settlement of all conflicting claims between the City and County, in the matter of the title to the property at the northwest corner of Spring and streets, known as the jail and court house property. Later he ran for the office of District Attorney and was elected by a large majority. He served in that capacity with success and so well satisfied his constituency that he was elected at intervals to the same office for three different terms. During a portion of the time it was the duty of the District Attorney to collect all delinquent County taxes. This involved the necessity of bringing hundreds of suits, and the responsibility and anxiety incident to collecting and paying over large sums of money. Mr. Thom had but one assistant, his nephew, E. M. Ross, the embodiment of ability, now on the bench of the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals. When the accounts were fully and finally adjusted by the supervisors, that body ordered a warrant drawn in Thom's favor for an amount paid into the treasury in excess of what was due them.

Other honors grew out of the quality of his public services, and in 1856 he was elected to the State Senate by a large majority from a district in which now lie the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside San Bernardino, San Diego and Imperial. While in the Legislature he served on the Judiciary Committee, was Chairman of the Committee on

Public Expenditures, and on Public Morals. He introduced a bill authorizing the German Colony at Anaheim (a corporation) to buy and sell real estate, cultivate vineyards, etc. The proposition was new and startling, and the conservative were afraid of it. The opposition to the measure was long and fierce, growing out of the fear of the Senate that to vest such a power in a corporation would make it so strong and monopolistic that it would jeopardize morals and impose a heavy burden upon the commonwealth. The bill was passed and became a law, and in earlier days Mr. Thom had the distinction of being spoken of as the sponsor of the Colony.

He was instrumental in the passage of the joint resolution for the division of the state, and was chairman of a joint committee to investigate the management of the State Prison at San Quentin and to make a full inventory of all the property belonging to the State. The work required two weeks of time and much hard labor to accomplish but was satisfactorily performed to those who sent them.

The intense excitement occasioned by the Civil War imbued Mr. Thom into the act of returning to his people in the East and with several others he commenced his journey across the continent for "Dixie". He started from Placerville in a vehicle known as a "mud-wagon" that carried passengers (among whom on this occasion was one with a well-developed case of delirium tremens), and the U. S. Mail. An incident of the trip of startling happenings was when on reaching a changing station about forty miles west of Salt Lake the party was horrified to find that Indians had captured the place, murdered and mutilated the bodies of the two keepers, and has stolen all the stock. The stage party then consisted of seven well-armed men and the driver. They knew that the savages were still in the vicinity and made ready to resist an attack by erecting a breast work of sacks of barley on the flat roof of the adobe station house. In a condition of unpleasant expectancy the party remained unmolested for some sixteen hours, when they were relieved by a squadron of cavalry sent out to ascertain

what was delaying the U.S. mail. Without further startling incident, Thom and his companion ultimately reached Baltimore. After a sufficient delay among friends to make arrangements, they took passage on a steamer for the eastern shore of Virginia. The steamer was disabled en route and the party was thrown upon its own resources to extricate themselves, which they did by getting into Northampton County, when every old resident they met was a friend. The country was swarming with Federal soldiers. The party was concealed in a thick pine forest, awaiting an opportunity to run the blockade. At last the time came--a dark night with a favorable wind, They embarked in a dugout canoe to cross Chesapeake Bay at a point where it is forty miles wide. A heavy sea was shipped an hour after starting, which necessitated bailing the boat, and that required the attention of two men the remainder of that night of hideous horrors. Just at break of day they reached the shore at Guinn's Island and found themselves within easy shooting distance of a Federal gunboat. To land and take to the woods was the work of but a moment. Hoping that they had not been discovered they blindly traveled until reaching a cornfield. Seeing two negroes at work Thom crossed the fence and went to them for information as to their whereabouts. While conversing with them a great noise at the fence attracted him. All of the party were being made prisoners by a squad of marines from the gunboat. Getting the negroes between himself and the captors he made his way with more than his accustomed promptness and dispatch in search of a more congenial climate. As a tribute to the rapidity of his movements a volley was fired, one shot of which raised the skin of his left shoulder. Reaching the fence on the opposite side of the cornfield and turning around he was astonished to see that the two negroes had followed him. On arriving and recovering breath one of them remarked that "if dem damn Yankees don't stop dat foolishin' dey sure will hurt somebody some of dese days," "I wish dey was ebery one on em on de bottom ob de bay. No dat aint de mos' prosperes' place; de fish mout eat um and dat would spile de fish for sure. Well, I wishes dey

was all in Hackle Barry. Dey tells me dat is ten mile tother side er hell where dey say de brimstone and de fire 'is de hottes'." Thom bowed his head in solemn acquiescence. These boys were invaluable to him in the next few days, kept him concealed, gave him food and information, and insisted on his taking up his quarters in an old cemetery, "if you ain't afraid of ghostes, kase dat's on a hill an' is mo' drier, and 'taint so many skeeters, and nobody ain't gwine ter look fo' nobody else in a grabe yard." Kilpatrick's raiders were abroad in the land at that moment, hence swamps and bushes, and even cemeteries by day or night were considered more congenial to longevity than a personal interview with any of that gang. Having been played at sixes and sevens by fickle Fortune to her heart's content, Thom reached Richmond and at once offered his services to the Confederacy, which he freely gave, until the end came with General Lee's surrender. After the battle of Sayler's Run, the last fought, he was paroled at Petersburg and given transportation to Richmond on the top of a freight car. Remaining there for a while with his relatives, amid hideous wreck and ruin and black despair, he went to New York and took passage on a steamer via Panama for San Francisco. Thence he returned to Los Angeles. Arriving there he was confronted by a statute of the state prohibiting any one from practising his profession who had actively sympathized with the Confederacy. Having lost everything "save honor" through the fortunes of grim-visaged war, and having to start anew in life's struggle, this was distinctly a stunning handicap. His good name was all the recommendation he could offer, and by the light of subsequent events it seems was all he needed. At the close of the war his old ante-bellum friends, Gen. W. S. Hancock, Gen. Ord, and others had tendered their good wishes. Shortly after his plight became known a pardon from President Johnson was handed him. Who procured it is now known, however. Within a short time he was doing a thriving law practice. His services were soon utilized in another capacity also. He was elected mayor of the City of Los Angeles by a flattering majority. He served his term, then returned to his private affairs, which by this time required his entire attention.

Honorable Cameron Erskine Thom.

Descended from a long line of distinguished ancestry, with a forebear in each generation who won for himself distinctive honors on the field of battle, and which is easily traceable to the sturdy Scotch Highlanders of the good old fighting days when the clans rallied around the standards of their indomitable leaders to bleed and if need be to die for their liberty, Capt. Cameron E. Thom has lost none of the dash and dignity and valor of his race, and his own record as a soldier and a gentleman will stand valiently beside that of even the bravest of his forefathers, or the courtliest. His residence in Los Angeles has been long and continuous--except his absence during the civil war-- and he has been so closely identified with the life of the city in every phase of its development that no record would be complete without a detailed account of his multitudinous activities and interesting achievements. Himself a distinguished attorney, he has helped to mold the standards of the profession and of the local courts; as a business man of more than ordinary acumen and dependability and wisdom, he has been a guiding hand on the "steering-wheel" in things commercial and has aided in steering a safe course through more than one troubled sea; a Democrat in political beliefs, he has sat in the inner councils of his party and lent to its aid the sagacity of his wisdom and advice, and has served it with more than ordinary ability and success. As a citizen, he has never faltered in his duty to the city, whether in a private or official capacity, and as a friend, business associate, councillor or mere acquaintance he has won for himself a record of enviable character and lasting worth among men.

The life story of Capt. Thom is as full of interest as a modern romance, and contains as many thrilling experiences as a detective story or a tale of the South Seas. It crosses the continent in Forty-nine, and again in the sixties, and on many other occasions it

takes the hero through fire and famine and flood-- through civil strife and Indian warfare and pioneering perils, and the hardships of early days, and leaves him at last in a charming home, amid friends and family, in a land of sunshine and birds and flowers, where there is no winter and where the storms never beat. It is indeed almost a fairy tale from some enchanted volume of ancient lore.

Capt. Thom was born on his father's plantation at Berry Hill, Culpeper County, Virginia, June 20th, 1825. His father, John Thom, was a soldier of distinction, a gentleman and a scholar, as well as a statesman of marked ability, and he was an officer in the War of 1812-1814, commanding a regiment of volunteers through the entire period of military activity. For thirty years he served in the State Legislature as senator, and upon retiring from that office he was commissioned by the Governor, by and with the consent of the Senate, to be "High Sheriff" of his county, as some partial compensation for many years' service as magistrate. His grandfather was a Scotchman of note, and distinguished himself at the Battle of Culloden, fighting under the banner of Prince Charles Edward, the Pretender Stuart, who in commemoration of his great valor, presented him with a gold snuff-box.

Receiving his education in private schools, Capt. Thom took an extensive course at the University of Virginia, including law in all its branches, and received a license to practice his profession in all the courts of his native state. The call of the west, however, was ringing through the land, and the adventuresome blood of the military forefathers which warmed in his veins responded with a thrill, and in 1849 he was one of a party of thirty picked young men bound for the Far West, the enchanted Land of Gold. The party was well equipped for its trip across the plains, having riding-horses, eight wagons drawn by mules, plenty of supplies, and eight negro cooks and wagon-men. They were in no hurry and took plenty of time, finding as they did some new interest and adventure at every step of the way. They stopped wherever fancy pointed and remained until

satiety set in. Their first stop was at Ash Hollow, Dakota, where they spent six weeks with the Sioux. A thousand Indians, warriors and squaws, were encamped there, and the young men from Virginia found them a noble body of men, and even hospitable and gentle in their domestic life, and well worthy of consideration and study. These Indians had just come from a great battle, or rather a series of battles, with the Pawnees, and were celebrating their victories and regaining their own wasted strength. Journeying onward, the party passed many herds of buffalo dotting the wide plain, and now and then paused long enough for an exciting chase. They arrived at Sacramento late in November, and here the party dispersed, scattering over the new country as their fancy called, a majority of them going to Rose's Bar on the Yuba River, and dying, almost to a man, in six months, of typhoid. Mr. Thom, with a party of personal friends, engaged in mining on the south fork of the American River, on Mormon Island, and later on in Amador County. The prices of food products were almost prohibitive, and, although wages were high, the cost of living was so great as to make the problem of a livelihood a very vital one. Potatoes that winter sold as high as five dollars a pound, and salt beef was two hundred and fifty dollars a barrel, with other things in proportion.

Mining, under these not too pleasant conditions, soon palled upon the young adventurer, and he went to Sacramento and opened a law office. He became an agent for the firm of White and Jennings, a lumber and general merchandise company from Oregon, with a salary of five hundred dollars a month, part of his chief duties being the collection of their rents and general supervision of their property. The great flood of the Sacramento Valley occurred in the early 50's, and through this Mr. Thom passed with many thrilling experiences, his responsibility for the White & Jennings Company holdings adding not a little to his anxieties. The second flood was more disastrous to his comfort and ease than the first. While in Sacramento Mr. Thom built up an appreciable law practice, and at various times was asso-

ciated with other clever attorneys. A disastrous conflagration that destroyed most of the business portion of the city burnt up his library. In the fall of 1852 Mr. Thom left Sacramento, having received the appointment of assistant law agent for the United States Land Commission in San Francisco. Here one of his duties was having supervision of the work of some twenty-five clerks and draftsmen. In the spring of 1854 he was ordered to Los Angeles, where he was employed by the Government to look up testimony to be used in the land cases. That work being finished he resigned from his Government position and was appointed by the council of Los Angeles, City Attorney, and by the supervisors, District Attorney of the County, to fill unexpired terms, holding both offices at the same time. Later he ran for the office of District Attorney and was elected by a large majority. He served in this capacity with such success and so well satisfied his constituency that he was elected to the same office for three terms at different times. Other honors quite naturally grew out of the quality of his public service, and in 1856 he was elected to the state senate by a large majority, from a district in which now lie the counties of San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial. While in the Legislature he was a member of the Judiciary Committee, and was chairman of several important committees.

The excitement of the Civil War penetrating even to the Pacific Coast, the fighting blood of Mr. Thom from Los Angeles was stirred, and he journeyed back across the continent to his native Virginia and offered his services to the Confederacy at Richmond. He served in the army as a volunteer officer with the rank of captain, without charge to the government, from Gettysburg (where he was slightly wounded) to the last battle fought, the Battle of "Sayler's Run", and conscientiously did his duty at all times, and on all occasions. He was paroled at Petersburg.

At the close of the war he returned to Los Angeles, where he was confronted by a statute of the state prohibiting anyone from practicing his profession who had actively sympathized with the Con-

federacy. Having lost everything "save honor" through the fortunes of grim-visaged war, this was distinctly a heavy handicap. When hostilities had ceased his old ante-bellum friends, Gen. W. S. Hancock, Gen. Ord, and others, tendered their good wishes to him. Shortly after his plight became known a pardon from President Johnson was handed Capt. Thom. By whom it was obtained for him he has never learned. His name, however was all the recommendation that was needed in the Angel City, and within a short time his law office was doing a thriving practice. His services were soon needed in another capacity also, and he found himself elected Mayor of Los Angeles by a striking majority, the vote cast being exceedingly large. He served one term and then returned to his private affairs, which by this time required his entire attention.

Being a firm believer in the future that awaited the city of his adoption, it was but natural that Capt. Thom should invest in real estate, and this he did with such wisdom and foresight that his holdings increased in value by leaps and bounds. At an early date he secured possession of a tract of several hundreds of acres northeast of the city, and a portion of this he planted to oranges, lemons and olives, entering upon an extensive cultivation of these fruits. This ranch is now in part the site of the thriving City of Glendale. Parts of the tract were subdivided and sold off for city purposes at various times, but Capt. Thom still holds much valuable acreage in that section, as well as much property in Glendale itself. The acreage is still devoted to the culture of fruit, and some valuable groves are among his possessions.

Capt. Thom in spite of his extensive law practice and his large personal interests, has always been active in all movements pertaining to civic welfare, and the business life and prosperity of the city in general has ever been as dear to his heart as have been his personal affairs. He is a member of the Chamber of Commerce. He was one of the incorporators of the Farmers & Merchants Bank (now the Farmers & Merchants National Bank), and has been on the Board of Directors from the time of incorporation.

Mrs. Thom is a native daughter of the Golden West, her father having been a prominent physician in Marysville in the pioneer days. They have one daughter and three stalwart sons. The daughter is the wife of Arthur Collins, of London England, while the sons, Cameron DeHart, Charles Catesby, and Erskine Pembroke, are all well known in Los Angeles, where they were born and reared.

Capt. Thom makes his home in Los Angeles, and anticipates that for many years he will still enjoy the fruits of his labors. He has retired from active practice, but it is still his own hand which directs the conduct of his vast business interests, and he is reckoned as a power in the affairs of the city and county, where his influence has for so many years been a benefit to mankind and a source of general strength and power for good.