



MARSHALL STIMSON

IN MEMORY

MARSHALL STIMSON

Marshall Stimson has gone.

We say goodbye and there is a sadness in our hearts, a tear in our eye, and then so often we forget.

But there is more than this to the loss of this man — a man of virtue, of virility, of strength, who gave his all to make Los Angeles a better city, California a state and America a better nation.

How few there are to do so much.

And so I turn back the pages of life and see again Marshall Stimson of the old Los Angeles High School in 1897, walking up the steps with his bright smile, his happy laugh and his real admiration for his teachers, Prof. Housh, Miss Carr, Miss Foy and those other great teachers who were developing fine men.

This writer is a newspaperman and I am inclined to go into editorial wordage, but after all, a good and successful life is an editorial in itself, so back to young Marshall Stimson, of Los Angeles High.

I first met him as he came down the stairs of the old hill top school. He had a smile on his lips and friendly light in his eyes as he said:

“Junior, you’re in the *Star and Crescent* now, and I’m Marshall Stimson, candidate for *Star and Crescent* president.”

“Sorry,” I replied, “but I’m for the other fellow.”

“I like your frankness,” said Stimson, shook hands and walked away.

I merely tell this little incident as a sidelight of this man in his youth when his character was building.

He won the presidency of *Star and Crescent*, and in that same old high school, on a landing of the stairs, he met Marie Gordon, a beautiful Glendora girl whom he later married and who was his adored companion during the balance of his life.

Marshall Stimson was an advocate, a battler for what he thought right, but in his wife he had a balance wheel who touched him lightly and gently pulled his coat when he became too vehement or too lengthy.

An outburst of his affection for her was when, many years later as they were pulling down the old Los Angeles High School, he went to the school and cut out of the landing place on the stairs the circle of wood where Marie Gordon stood when he first saw her.

An eager boy of 11, in knee breeches, was Marshall Stimson when he arrived in Los Angeles in 1887.

With him were his parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Stimson, of Cambridge, Mass. His father became a pioneer banker here. His mother, whose grandfather had fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill, died in 1942 at the age of 93.

She was one of the oldest members of the Friday Morning Club and the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles.

Following Marshall's high school years, his parents dispatched him to Harvard where he completed his law course. After practicing in Massachusetts from 1901 to 1903 he returned home to Los Angeles and began his law career here.

Out of his law practice stemmed much of his drive into civic affairs and reforms. Just before his death he secured the release of several persons from mental institutions. He believed that they had been placed there improperly, and planned to get the Bar Association and other aid in making it impossible for a sane person to be so incarcerated.

In these campaigns he may not always have been right — but his friends credited him with believing deeply in whatever he did.

His boyhood look at Los Angeles he never forgot.

“It was quite a place when I came here in 1887 — and it's quite a place now, if you know your way around.”

Marshall Stimson

Water was the big need then; the chief topic of his elders. He fought all his life to bring it here, and never missed a chance to say: "*Los Angeles limitations are that of its water supply.*"

Like all westerners, he was touched with the miner fever at one one time or another. He rode the stage in 1903 to Ballarat, now a ghost town, and explored Panamint Valley.

He may not have found gold, but he and a partner, Robert P. Flint, threw a party for the miners and taught them Yale and Harvard cheers and songs that the old prospectors never forgot.

As he matured in the practice of law, his civic consciousness began to be felt in the community. Page lines like these might better intimate the scope of his early activities:

- 1904 — Marshall Stimson marries Miss Marie Gordon of Glendora.
- 1907 — Marshall Stimson named Chamber of Commerce director.
- 1908 — Stimson renamed to Chamber Board; interested in preserving historical places.
- 1909 — Aids Pioneer groups in historical studies.
- 1912 — Stimson delegate to Republican convention; supports Theodore Roosevelt; serves 10 years on Republican Central Committee.
- 1914 — Stimson campaigns for water expansion.
- 1916 — Stimson named Republican campaign director for Southern California.
- 1917 — Stimson active in war efforts.
- 1919 — Republican Stimson selected by Democrats to handle visit of President Woodrow Wilson here.
- 1924 — Stimson named on Calvin Coolidge's campaign committee.
- 1928 — Stimson heads speakers' bureau for Herbert Hoover.

Aiding campaigns for more water, a great harbor and other civic betterments were interdelinated within this headline chronology through the years. Better transit and traffic were among his pursuits, also.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

His stature had been recognized in 1907 when he named on the Chamber of Commerce directorate, where he served through 1910. From then on, he threw his weight towards scores of betterment programs. Perhaps his most rewarding interest was in the *Historical Society of Southern California*.

He served as president of it at one time; spoke at meetings often, and compiled legal and other records of the pioneers, their families and their activities. He researched the early clipper ships and was active in *Los Fiesteros*, a group dedicated to maintaining early California customs and monuments.

Giving much time to numerous tax groups, in 1939 he chairmanned The Good Government Organization, supporting councilmanic candidates of top reputation. After opposing the Fair Deal and the Truman administration, he said before his death:

"I am convinced the Democratic party has been in power too long. Too many regard their jobs as a sort of inheritance."

He fought the recent attempt of Arizona and Texas solons to grab the Colorado River water from California for the Arizona "project."

He was a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason, and chairman of the Board of Directors, Third Church of Christ Scientist.

Just as he was "for" many projects for the betterment of the community he loved, he turned his zealous efforts against many he thought injurious.

He supported Mayor Bowron when elements in the city tried to recall the executive. And he went on the air to tell how the electorate, in upholding Bowron, had "made me proud." "Gamblers and vice profiteers have been warned the city wants no part of them," he declared.

He took an interest in the housing problems here, but threw up his hands when the Public Housing Authority's recent tactics hit home for him. This happened when, sitting in his home playing with his grandchildren, a process server from the Housing Authority demanded to see him.

When Stimson asked his wife to request the process server to

Marshall Stimson

wait a moment, the server threw the summons on the floor and stalked out.

The service, incidentally, was in connection with a suit for condemnation of property that had been an uncle's — dead thirty years.

"My poor uncle has been gone from this earth for many years," Stimson explained.

"The Housing Authority also named his wife. That is very strange, since he was a bachelor. Besides, he sold the property ten years before he died.

"Furthermore, I am not my uncle and therefore will ignore the suit."

He was among those who asked the county supervisors to fly the United Nations flag, declaring his support for the UN, which, he held, believed also in freedom and democracy.

For 50 years he was prominent in civic, state and national affairs, and like all patriarchal figures, he took to prophecy now and then.

His latest peek into the future, as usual, had to do not with his, but his community. He said, while serving as a member of the Los Angeles County Centennials Commission:

"I think in the future, we'll find people living just where they like; on a farm, at a lake, at the ocean, on mountains or on the desert, coming to their work in downtown Los Angeles on helicopters they will park on the roofs of office buildings.

"Or thousands of them may be coming to work at 100 miles an hour or faster by monorail rapid transit.

"Los Angeles will be limited in size only by the supply of water we'll have available.

"But by that time science probably will have found the way to get water from the ocean as cheaply as we now get it from streams and lakes."

He opposed public housing when it was wrong; corruption in office; political empires and national, state or local stagnation. He kept his eyes on the future, remembering the best in the past.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Marshall Stimson found time for his community, his state and nation — and tried to make them all a little better.

He was a member of the Los Angeles County Pioneer Society. He served on the Pan-Pacific Exposition committee, the Civil Service League of Southern California and the National Civil Service League.

He was active on the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies and in the California Taxpayers Alliance. A member of the Police and Firemen's Pension Fund Commission in 1937, he also was a member of the Harvard Club, University Club, Town Hall, Scribes, and the Los Angeles Country Club.

He died at the age of 76, and spent much of those fruitful years devoting himself to civic improvement.

Besides his widow, the beloved attorney leaves a son, Gordon Stimson of Los Angeles, and four daughters who are Mrs. Sam Haskins of Sierra Madre, Mrs. Eleanor S. Treanor, widow of the noted newspaper man Tom Treanor, Mrs. Harry Murphy, San Jose, California and Mrs. Thompson Webb jr., Madison Wisconsin.

“He lived as mothers wish their sons to live.”

— *John B. T. Campbell*