

Power Without Authority: Los Angeles' Elites and the Construction of the Coliseum¹

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Boosters and boosterism have long been important factors in promoting the growth and development of western townsites and cities. One valuable area that historians are becoming increasingly aware of was the use of sport to advance a community's reputation. Since the days of the Cincinnati Red Stockings, professional baseball teams have often been organized with the expressed goal of advertising the hometown. In another fashion, the staging of championship boxing contests added to the fame of such towns as Goldfield, and Reno, Nevada.² This paper examines the use of sports by Los Angeles hometown promoters. Los Angeles was one of the most notorious booster cities in America, a town which has based its ability for survival on self-promotion even before the days of the hype and glamor of Hollywood. After World War I a handful of visionary movers and shakers decided to utilize sport to advance their city's reputation for the purpose of encouraging the expansion of tourism, commerce, and migration. The key to their plan was the construction of a huge outdoor sports facility where great sport spectacles and festivals would be staged. This building was the Los Angeles Coliseum.

I

Unlike the typical eastern and midwestern cities which developed as a series of concentric circles surrounding the central business district, Los Angeles was really an amalgam of many large suburbs where commerce was dispersed throughout the region at a relatively early date. However, these discrete communities were politically unified under a centralized local government located downtown. Political power was not in the hands of potent professional politicians like Abe Reuf in San Francisco or Charles F. Murphy in New York, who were bosses of vigorous urban machines. Leadership and power in Los Angeles was in a hands of a local power elite, a social class which possessed wealth and the ability to realize their will and make decisions of major consequences even in the face of opposition. They were generally WASPs, mainly

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Episcopalian or Presbyterian, who intermarried within their social class, and had access to the major institutions of power like banks or newspapers. They were often self-made men who operated behind the scenes, pulling strings, and made things happen. While the local elite had considerable political power, its members lacked legitimate authority, that is, the power that came from holding a high ranking government position.³

The chief power broker in Los Angeles during the 1920s was Harry Chandler, the immensely wealthy publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, a man reputedly worth 200 million dollars at his death in 1944. Harry Chandler was a very shadowy figure in his day, and scholars still do not know much about him. Chandler was a self-made man who had first gone to work for the *Times* in 1885. He had the foresight to marry the boss's daughter after the death of his first wife. Chandler took over the paper in 1917 and continued the very conservative editorial philosophy of his father-in-law, Harrison Grey Otis. Like his predecessor, Chandler ardently opposed organized labor, and permitted only conservative perspectives to be presented in his paper. The policy of the *Times* was to publish only "good news" which would enhance Los Angeles's reputation. Chandler's goal as publisher was to promote Southern California in every possible way. However, one should point out that his boosterism was not completely altruistic, since he had extensive real estate holdings in Los Angeles and its surrounding areas which stood to benefit markedly from the development of the region. Chandler wielded enormous political clout through his newspaper and various outside interests, and was influential in selecting public officials and helping them stay in office as long as they supported his personal views.⁴

After World War I there was an economic slump which led to a severe decline in tourism. This situation prompted Chandler and other local leaders to become more active in promoting their city. Tourism was an important industry in its own right, and was also an invaluable factor in selling the advantages of this balmy region. Boosters believed that once people had visited Southern California, many would undoubtedly want to return to buy homes and establish businesses. In 1918 'five major publishers, Chandler of the *Times*, F. W. Kellogg of the *Evening Express*, Guy Barham of the *Herald*, Max Ihmsen of the *Examiner*, and H. B. R. Briggs of the *Record* held a meeting and agreed to work together as "a unit on everything that had to do with the upbuilding and advancing of Los Angeles."⁵ Following up on this lead, Mayor Meredith Snyder in the spring of 1919 named one hundred leading citizens to the California Fiestas Association with the immediate purpose of reviving the Spanish atmosphere of the old pueblo as a means of encouraging tourism. This group was reorganized a year later into a new booster society known as the Community Development Association (CDA) comprised of twenty-two members of the local power elite. They included the leading publishers, attorneys, bank-

ers, contractors, realtors, and merchants in the city. Among them were Arthur Letts, a downtown merchant, Russell H. Ballard, a utilities magnate, and Andrew Chaffey, president of the California Bank of Los Angeles. The only non-WASP in the group was David A. Hamburger, a German-Jew. The function of this cooperative, non-profit organization was much broader and forward looking than its predecessor, the Fiestas Association.⁶ Henry McKee, a businessman, who was a member of the CDA's executive committee, clearly outlined the goals of his group in a letter dated March 16, 1920 to its prominent civic-minded attorney, Henry W. O'Melveny:

It is quite evident that the condition of extraordinary financial and business activity in this city has been largely caused by the wealth that is being brought in and spent here through heavy travel and increasing population. It is also perfectly certain that it cannot continue indefinitely, but will at some time in the future be followed by a period more nearly resembling what we passed through during several recent years, unless we prevent that.

In order to avoid a period of business depression in the future, we must plan in advance—not wait until reverses are imminent.

The thing we must plan is the intelligent development of our one most productive natural resource. This resource is the attractiveness of this locality to travelers and home-seekers.

Its (Community Development Association) present purpose is to employ the best intelligence its directors possess in wisely planning to stimulate and encourage future . . . travel to Southern California; the establishment here of new homes and the attraction of new capital for investment . . . if we do not fully occupy and properly develop California, foreign peoples will do it for us.⁷

The business of the CDA was conducted by its eight-man executive committee which included McKee, publishers Barham, Chandler, Ihmsen, and Kellogg, former U. S. Senator Frank P. Flint, editor Edward A. Dickson of the *Evening Express*, and chairman William M. Garland, a realtor and president of the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Garland, like so many other members of the city's elite, was a self-made man who had grown up elsewhere, but then moved to Los Angeles to make his fortune. He was a native of Maine who had worked for a time in Chicago, until poor health forced him to move at the age of twenty-four to Los Angeles. His first job there was as a railroad auditor, but he soon moved into the real estate field. He rapidly amassed a fortune as the principal developer of Wilshire Boulevard along with much of the downtown area. Like many other leading realtors, Garland was a civic-minded booster. He was president of the California Chamber of Commerce and presided over several voluntary organizations including the Board of Education. He was a prominent Republican leader and served as a delegate to a number of national party conventions.⁸

At the initial meeting of the CDA, Max Ihmsen proposed that Los Angeles should apply for the privilege of staging an Olympic Games. He argued that

holding such a spectacle would direct a lot of attention to the city, improve its prestige, and bring a great deal of free publicity. The other board members were intrigued by this proposal, although none of them had the slightest idea of the necessary process or appropriate protocol for securing an invitation from the International Olympic Committee. Responsibility for achieving this difficult goal was given to Chairman William May Garland.⁹

The Community Development Association was naive in thinking that it could obtain the Olympic Games for Los Angeles, but perhaps that was necessary, because more experienced hands might not have dared to try such an ambitious endeavor. The Summer Games were usually held in one of the great European capitals like Athens, London, or Stockholm, and the only Games previously held in the United States back in 1904 in St. Louis had been a dismal flop. In 1920, Los Angeles was only the tenth largest American city and hardly qualified as a cosmopolitan international locale. Another factor which made the selection of Los Angeles unlikely was its great distance of over 6,000 miles from the European Continent, which would make travel costs prohibitive for some countries. Nevertheless, Garland was dispatched to Antwerp, site of the 1920 Games, to lobby on behalf of Los Angeles. He was extremely impressed by the spectacle and its pageantry, and became even more determined to secure an invitation for his city. The CDA chairman spoke to various Olympic officials, including Baron Pierre de Coubertin who had visited the United States during the 1880s and suggested that they consider Los Angeles as a future site. As an experienced booster, Garland was well prepared to extol the virtues of his hometown. Garland hoped to obtain either the 1924 or 1928 Games, but these were committed to Paris and Amsterdam. His proposal did elicit considerable interest among members of the International Olympic Committee, but any formal request to hold the Games still had to be submitted through proper channels, meaning the American Olympic Committee. The American IOC members tried to discourage Garland by indicating that it would probably be impossible for any American city, much less Los Angeles, to get the 1932 Games, but Garland persevered. He secured an appointment to the AOC in 1921, and used it to lobby on his city's behalf. He convinced the AOC that Los Angeles should be given the opportunity to present a formal proposal to the IOC for the privilege of staging the Olympics. A year later, Garland was selected as one of the American representatives to the IOC, and used that post to effectively campaign for his goal. Many of the European members of the IOC opposed the selection of Los Angeles because of the great travel costs, but with Coubertin's assistance, Garland secured an invitation in May, 1923 for his city to host the Tenth Olympic Games. A crucial part of Garland's winning proposal was his report that a huge 75,000 seat arena for staging the major outdoor competitions was approaching completion.¹⁰

II

While the grandiose and long-term goal of the Community Development Association was to secure an Olympic festival, a more proximate aim was to construct a huge public facility for athletic meets, conventions, festivals, football games, and the anticipated Olympics. This was an idea whose time had apparently come. The various major league baseball teams in other cities had already built with private capital enormous fire resistant ballparks which seated up to 50,000 spectators. In addition, eastern and midwestern colleges had begun to build huge bowl shaped arenas for football, supported either by private gifts or state appropriations. However, in 1920 Los Angeles did not have a major outdoor sporting facility. The city's minor league club, the Pacific Coast League Angels, played at a 25,000 seat field, while the University of Southern California Trojans played football at Bovard Park which seated just 7,800.

At the moment when the CDA was discussing the possibilities of a new facility for Los Angeles, there were very few municipally operated stadiums in America. The only one of any consequence built before 1920 had been constructed in San Diego in 1914. Construction costs there had been born by a bond issue, and the grounds were operated by the Board of Park Commissioners with revenues from taxes and admission fees.¹¹ On November 26, 1919, the executive board of the CDA announced that it was their opinion that a stadium seating about 75,000 was essential for Los Angeles. But how would it be constructed? Who would pay for this facility? Who would operate it? Board member Frank P. Flint, the former United States Senator, presented two possible plans to the CDA. One proposal called for the city to raise a bond issue to pay for construction. The other idea, which was preferred by the CDA executive committee, would have the city lease a parcel of Exposition Park, located just a few blocks from USC, to the Community Development Association. This was regarded as a central location, just ten minutes from downtown by car, and accessible to many streetcar lines. At that site the CDA would build an edifice "for the purpose of holding and maintaining industrial exhibitions, agricultural fairs, street pageants, athletic exhibitions and other performances."¹² Once completed, the structure would be rented to the city and county on certain specified dates over a ten year period. Each of these public agencies would pay a total of \$475,000 in rent to pay off the construction loans. At the end of the decade the stadium would be turned over to the local governments to operate. The county board and the city council approved this novel format for financing a public facility on June 21, 1920. However, the syndicate of bankers who were scheduled to lend the necessary funds were worried about the legality of this arrangement. A test case was set up to ascertain the legitimacy of these plans. Mayor Meredith Snyder and County Board Chairman Jonathan Dodge agreed that they would refuse to carry out the approved program even though they both favored the plans. Consequently,

they were taken to court by attorneys representing the city council and the county board who sought a court order compelling Snyder and Dodge to affix their signatures to the agreement, and then to implement it.¹³

While the litigation was under way, the CDA decided to keep moving ahead with the project by trying to implement Flint's alternate proposal. On August 10 a resolution was placed before the city council which called for a bond issue to raise money to build a sports complex. The council quickly approved the measure, and on August 31 the electorate was given an opportunity to voice its opinion on this matter. Two separate bond issues were presented to the voters. One called for capital to build a municipal auditorium and a second which sought \$900,000 to pay for an amphitheater and stadium to be located in Exposition Park. A two-thirds vote was required for approval, and both measures were narrowly defeated. The idea of a sports stadium was popular among Los Angelenos, but the local citizenry had a reputation for niggardliness, and thus the defeat of the bond issue was not entirely unexpected. Certain supporters of the sports facility felt that the presence of such similar measures on the ballot at the same time had confused the voters and thus contributed to the defeat. Of course, the defeat did not mean the Los Angelenos opposed the idea of a great new sports facility. Indeed, most people favored it, but did not want to bear the burden of paying for it with higher taxes.¹⁴

The CDA was disappointed with this turn of events since its leaders had been certain that their fellow townsfolk would recognize the need for a massive new stadium to bolster their city's public image. However, the setback was just temporary, because in May 1921 the state supreme court rendered its judgment on the test case. The jurists ruled that the plan vetoed by the mayor and county board president on the grounds of unconstitutionality, was indeed constitutional. This opened the way for the CDA to negotiate an agreement with the local governments to construct the sports complex. On November 15, the city and county leased seventeen acres in Exposition Park to the CDA as a site for a new stadium, and agreed to pay the building costs through their rental fees. The CDA set up a fourteen bank syndicate to underwrite an \$800,000 loan which was to cover construction expenses. The only collateral the banks received was the good name of the city and county. The interest rate was set at 6 percent instead of the usual 7 percent because of the clout of the CDA and its leaders. Payments were to be jointly made by the city and county as "rent," while the Community Development Association would build the Coliseum and maintain it. The city and county would each ultimately pay \$499,225 over a five-year period as rent.¹⁵

It was not by chance that the site chosen for the Coliseum was Exposition Park, situated just a few blocks from the University of Southern California.

USC was the leading athletic power in the region, as well as the state's most prestigious university south of Palo Alto. It had close ties to the local power elite who sent their children to USC for their education. Exposition Park had been used since the 1870s as a site for agricultural fairs and horse racing. Control over the site resided in the Sixth Agricultural District, a public corporation sponsored by the state to promote agricultural activities. In 1910 to encourage improvement of the site, a portion of the park was leased to the county to build a museum. Four years later, the rest of the park, including the race track, was leased to the city for a period of fifty years.¹⁶

The first public mention of Exposition Park as a suitable location for a sports arena occurred on January 20, 1919 when Judge William Bowen, the head of the Agricultural District announced that he was working towards securing a sports facility for the park with the expectation that USC would use it for its football games. Two years later, the city council approved the hiring of noted Los Angeles architect John Parkinson to sketch plans for such a structure. By May he had completed plans for a 25,000 seat complex. This activity points out that the idea of a major stadium for Los Angeles was not exclusive to the CDA, and that others were working towards this goal.¹⁷

Once the contracts were signed, Parkinson was hired to design the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum with a projected capacity of 75,000. The elliptical shaped facility had an enormous playing field which measured 344' x 680'. Concrete was used in those sections where earth had been excavated, but wood was used on the portion built on landfill. The wooden sections were planned just to be temporary, and were expected to be replaced with concrete after the earth had settled. The low bid for the project was \$833,165 which ran over the \$800,000 budgeted by the CDA. However, the winning bidder agreed to lower his bid to \$772,000 so that he could come in under budget and still leave enough to cover the architect's costs. Parkinson's firm agreed to forego any profits as a civic gesture. When the Coliseum was finished in 1923 it was the most expensive sports facility in the country with the exception of the privately financed Yankee Stadium and was the largest sports arena in the United States.¹⁸

III

There was little organized opposition to the construction of the Coliseum, the method of financing, or the control exercised by the CDA. The main criticisms came from the Municipal League, a good government watchdog organization which complained about the private control of a publicly financed facility. The League was composed of middle class WASPs and had effectively worked for civil service reform in the early 1900s. It supported a strong centralized administration run by trained professionals and it vigorously opposed bossism. The Municipal League's influence was on the wane in the

1920s, although it continued to publish many reports on civic affairs. In the 1920s its efforts were largely directed against the power elite that was currently running Los Angeles. This was of course the same group of newspaper publishers, bankers, and businessmen who were involved in such organizations as the Los Angeles Crime Commission or the Community Development Association.¹⁹

The Municipal League had originally opposed the Coliseum as too expensive and not in the public interest. The reformers claimed that the citizens had spoken their minds in the 1920 referendum which voted down the enabling bond issue, but that their wishes had been circumvented. They felt that it had been presumptuous for a small group of self-designated men to assume that their fellow townspeople could not decide for themselves what they needed, although the elite could, and did. The Municipal League's *Bulletin* pointed out that the city had accomplished many important reforms, such as improving the water supply system, and that the city had capably operated an exceptionally fine park and playground system. The League further argued that this development was a poor example of class legislation because the Coliseum was mainly going to serve the middle classes. The cost of tickets to the publicly financed stadium would be rather steep. The maximum ticket price for USC games was set at three dollars, or about double what the reformers felt was appropriate. Furthermore, the biggest beneficiary of the public largesse was USC, a wealthy private institution, since it now had a superb site for its football games.²⁰

USC football completely dominated the use of the Coliseum in the 1920s although the first event there was a week long Wayfarer musical pageant in the fall of 1923. Shortly thereafter, USC played its first game there before 22,000 spectators who saw the Trojans crush Pomona 30-0. By the time USC played its archrival, the University of California, Berkeley, late in the season, football was drawing packed houses. By early 1924 the Coliseum was already bringing in more revenue than it cost to operate, but little income was earned outside of football. In 1928, for example, the total profits were \$42,440, based on its share of total gate receipts which came to \$129,000. Eighty-six percent of the gate came from USC football games. The Municipal League felt that the Coliseum's management was shortchanged in its financial arrangements with USC because its share of ticket sales was only about 15 percent of the total \$746,000 gate for the football season.²¹

Other critics of the agreements made between the CDA and the local governments pointed out that the Community Development Association was given nearly complete control over what was in reality a public facility. The city and county were each paying for the privilege of using the Coliseum for fifteen days in alternate months until 1931 when the stadium was to be turned over to

them. In the meanwhile, the CDA could use the Coliseum as it pleased, charging fees (which was prohibited to the city and county) and using the profits for maintenance and repairs, but without giving a full public accounting of their financial records. In 1924 a second test case was initiated to seek judicial review of the arrangement, but the CDA easily won the court case. The plaintiffs argued that the original deed to the property had forbidden the Sixth Agricultural District from leasing public land to any private corporation, and now the city could not do otherwise. The jurists ruled that the CDA was simply representing the city and county in constructing and maintaining the facility as well as raising and disbursing funds to keep the edifice in shape. The plaintiffs had further argued that public funds should not be utilized for any private purpose, and thus payments to the CDA should be immediately halted. But the judges decided that whatever the people's representatives chose to do was by definition in the public interest (!), and consequently the arrangements with the CDA were perfectly legal.²²

IV

Control over the Coliseum was scheduled to pass from the Community Development Association to the city and county in 1931. However, far in advance of that date, the CDA decided to seek a continuance of their control. This was a crucial issue because the Olympics were scheduled for Los Angeles in 1932, and the Coliseum would be the focal point of the athletic contests. In 1927 the CDA organized the Xth Olympiad Association to plan and run the forthcoming festival. The Association consisted of the executive board of the Community Development Association plus another seven men selected to represent the rest of the state of California. Many financial problems related to the Olympics were soon alleviated because Californians approved a \$1 million bond issue in the 1928 state elections which would pay for running the Olympic Games. But one other crucial financial dilemma remained unresolved. The Coliseum had to be refurbished for the Summer Games even though it was barely five years old. The CDA wanted to replace the temporary seats with a permanent seating area and also enlarge the capacity to over 100,000 to make room for the anticipated crowds.²³

Early in 1929, meetings were held between the CDA and the local governments to convince the city fathers to permit the CDA to continue operating the Coliseum and also to raise another \$900,000 to pay for the additional improvements needed to prepare the facility for the Olympics. The Community Development Association wanted the present lease extended for another eight years, promising that all future profits would go towards maintenance, with any extra surpluses reverting to the city and county. The county board and the city council quickly approved this proposal, but independent minded Mayor George Cryer was less enthusiastic and in no rush to approve the necessary legislation. Cryer wanted to carefully study the matter before making

any decision, and he requested Roy Knox, director of the Bureau of Budget and Efficiency to make a detailed study of the Community Development Association and its operation of the Coliseum.²⁴

The Knox report was submitted on May 1, and was very critical of the proposed contract, arguing that the costs of further improvements were too great given the original cost of the Coliseum. Director Knox pointed out that the new agreement had a clause in it which prohibited the city from charging any admission fees on those days when it would operate the Coliseum. The mayor was reminded that the original report of the Joint Coliseum Committee of the city council and the board of supervisors had anticipated annual earnings for the CDA of about \$100,000 with half to be set aside for a sinking fund for permanent improvements. But no sinking fund had been established, earnings were far below expectations, and little had yet been spent for improvements. Knox suggested that should the city unilaterally decide to fix up the stadium, it could do that economically by advertising for bids based on plans drawn by competent city architects. He further pointed out that as in the old lease, the new proposed contract had a statement that profits were to "be used in carrying out the purpose of the Association." Since the city and county had supplied all the capital for constructing the Coliseum, Knox felt it was only right that they should have a voice in disposing of any profits. The budget director concluded by pointing out that if the city ran the sporting arena, which was the situation elsewhere in the country, it could then apply revenue from the various events "to the purpose of rebuilding the coliseum and not to the purposes of the Community Development Association."²⁵

The CDA responded to Knox's criticisms in letters to the local newspapers and to the city council. The correspondence stressed that immediate action was needed to get the Coliseum ready for the Olympics, and suggested that by acting promptly and combining the replacement of the temporary seats and the enlargement of the stadium, the city could save money. The CDA pointed out that the major banks had promised to continue the advantageous terms negotiated in 1923 and that would prove cheaper in the long run than a new lower interest bond issue that would take longer to repay. The Association further asserted that its management had been quite effective, and that the new improvements would give Los Angeles a 100,000 seat stadium which would be the largest and most useful in the world at a fraction of the cost of smaller and inferior stadia.²⁶

Bolstered by the Knox report and unswerved by the CDA's response, Mayor Cryer decided to return the legislation altering the contractual obligations to the city council unsigned. A lengthy statement was issued which enumerated his objections. The mayor felt that the contract did not fully protect the taxpayers and hinted that a joint city-county management would be more satis-

factory. He agreed with Knox that the cost of repairs seemed out of line, and also agreed that the profits from the Coliseum should not be retained by the CDA. Cryer did not believe that the city should relinquish control of the stadium to a private corporation with their own private interests, however altruistic they might be. The Association, Cryer pointed out, had made no financial commitment to the edifice, but reaped all the advantages of control. Finally, the mayor chastised the Community Development Association for their inadequate job in reporting their expenditures and revenues.²⁷

As expected, CDA supporters vigorously criticized the mayor's decision. Interviewed upon his return from Europe, where he was working on Olympic business, William M. Garland asserted that Cryer's ruling would curtail enthusiasm for the coming Olympic Games and provide unfortunate publicity for Los Angeles. He felt that the CDA had successfully managed the Coliseum, and that this was no time to transfer control to uncertain political supervision. USC President Rufus von Kleinschmidt threatened to schedule all football games in 1930 away from home and even build his own stadium unless the seating problems were cleared up. He indicated that the present 75,000 seat capacity was too small for USC's major intersectional games, and wanted more seats in a completely concrete structure. Given the importance of USC in the city of Los Angeles, and its position as the primary tenant of the Coliseum, Von Kleinschmidt's words were carefully listened to.²⁸

Mayor George Cryer ultimately decided that the best thing he could do was to leave the final decision regarding the Coliseum's improvements and the city's relationship to the CDA in the hands of the new incoming administration which was to take over on July 1. The city council accepted his choice and the measure was sent back to committee.²⁹

Public discussion over the control of the Coliseum was heated up again in the summer of 1929. An important debate was staged on July 22 at the City Club, a good government organization, on the issues of who should control the facility and how the needed improvements should be financed. The principal speaker on behalf of municipal control was Roy Knox who repeated many of the criticisms which had appeared in his report to Mayor Cryer. A number of taxpayer organizations sent petitions to the city council which castigated the Community Development Association. The Municipal League also continued its steadfast opposition to the CDA. The League's Bulletin reported that certain Coliseum employees were paid allegedly excessive salaries. It was pointed out that in 1928 the Association's secretary, Zack Farmer, held two jobs simultaneously. He was both director of the Coliseum and general manager of the Xth Olympiad Association. His salary for these two positions was \$25,650. W. H. O'Dell, the bookkeeper, received \$5,625 in salary and bonus. By comparison, the director of the city's entire recreation program was

paid just \$5,000. The Municipal League castigated the CDA for understating costs in the original 1921 contract because those plans had called for temporary seating, and that implied future additional construction. The reformers also pointed out how a careful reading of the contract indicated that the title for the Coliseum was in the hands of the Community Development Association although it had never spent any money for its building. When the issue came up for discussion before the new city council, the legislators were advised by the newly elected city attorney that the proposed lease was of doubtful legality. As a result, the councilmen voted against the new contract.³⁰

There was no question that the Coliseum needed substantial improvements before it would be ready for the Olympics. But who was to implement these changes? The joint city and county Committee on the Coliseum suggested that the Playground Department take over the enclosure as soon as the original contract with the CDA expired in 1931. On the other hand, Anthony Pratt, secretary of the Municipal League, and a long time critic of the CDA, thought that it would be all right for the Association to run the facility until the Olympic Games were over, assuming that a new and more equitable contract could be drawn up, but thereafter the CDA should immediately relinquish control.³¹

In November, 1929, a new contract was drafted between the CDA, the Tenth Olympic Games Committee, the Sixth District Agricultural Association, the city council, and the county board of supervisors. It provided for the financing of improvements by the city and county, with control of the Coliseum remaining with the CDA until January 1, 1933, when it would turn over the facility to the city and county. The local governments shared the right to use the Coliseum with the Association (who kept the choice dates like Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, and fall Saturdays), but agreed to use it only for public purposes, and promised not to levy any admission fees. The CDA agreed to devote all excess revenue to maintenance operations and to the various purposes of the Olympic Games. One month later, on December 17, a bill to allocate money for the stadium from the city's permanent improvement fund was submitted to the city council. A \$225,000 appropriation to replace the wooden upper tiers passed two weeks later, along with approval of a revised contract with the Community Development Association. Mayor John Porter signed the contract and the appropriations bill on January 9, 1930, and the board of supervisors followed suit one day later. However, no funds to expand the seating capacity of the Coliseum were included in these appropriations. The CDA and its friends clamored for prompt action, arguing that money could be saved by consolidating the two projects. USC President von Kleinschmidt warned that leaving the work incomplete would be dangerous as well as inconvenient for the spectators. The enlargement of the Coliseum was not given the go ahead until July 28 when the city council approved a measure

cancelling an abandoned project, and reallocated \$227,000 from that public works project to the Coliseum. This appropriation was quickly matched by the county. An interesting sidelight was that the council passed a law requiring contractors to hire only Los Angeles residents for their labor crews as a means of alleviating some of the unemployment caused by the Depression.³²

V

The enormously successful Tenth Olympic Games ran from July 30 to August 14. Not only were records established in nineteen of twenty-two track and field events, but the Games actually made a profit. Once the festival was over, conflict broke out all over again about the future control of the Coliseum. Several different city and county bureaus sought control of the facility, and there was even some sympathy for keeping the CDA in charge because of its excellent leadership in managing the Coliseum and running the Olympics. On January 24, 1933, the CDA turned over checks amounting to \$213,877.29 to both the city and the county. The most vociferous group seeking municipal control was the Los Angeles Board of Playground and Recreation Commissioners who opposed setting up a scheme to establish an independent special commission. The board pointed out that only three of the seventeen major municipal stadiums in the United States were at that time controlled by special commissions.³³

On February 3, 1933, the city council decided that in the future the Coliseum should be operated by the playground commission. This decision was formalized on May 29 when the Coliseum Management Agreement was signed by representatives from the city, the county, the Sixth District Agricultural Association, and the playground board. The city and county were once again recognized as joint owners of the facility as the agricultural association relinquished all claims. The playground board was renamed the Coliseum Commission and given complete control over the arena. A special fund was established by the city's treasury department to pay for the Coliseum's operating expenses. As far as the day to day operations went, little was changed because the staff that had run the stadium under the Community Development Association remained in their jobs and were given exemption from civic service. One year later the commission was reorganized into a nine member board comprised of the five playground commissioners, the chairman of the board of supervisors, the superintendent of the county's department of recreation and playgrounds, and the president and secretary-manager of the Sixth District Agricultural Association.³⁴

VI

The influence of Los Angeles' local elite in building and operating the Municipal Coliseum reflected their power in the city of the Angels. The main movers and shakers, and perhaps even the principal visionaries, were not pub-

licly elected officials with legitimated authority, but newspaper publishers, bankers, and real estate developers. These were confident, accomplished men, people who believed they knew what was in the best interests of their community, especially when the “public interest” coincided with their own. The project reflected their foresight since Los Angeles in 1923 was the first major metropolitan area to complete its municipal stadium. But the endeavor also reflected their arrogance and lack of confidence in both the electorate and the duly elected civic officials. After the voters had narrowly turned down a bond issue to raise funds for construction, the CDA implemented their own novel formula for raising the necessary capital from the city’s major banks.

In other American cities, the new municipal stadia were generally built under the supervision of some governmental agency and operated by the same, or another governmental bureau, generally to almost everyone’s satisfaction. The legacy of this philosophy is very much with us today. In 1970-71, there were seventy-six stadiums, ballparks, and arenas used by major professional sports teams, and of these fifty-three were publicly owned, and five others belonged to universities.³⁵ In its day, the method used in Los Angeles to get its stadium may have been the most efficient and least tainted by political cronyism by comparison to other contemporary cities. Its total cost when completed was \$1.9 million which was much cheaper than the \$2.5 million for Cleveland’s Municipal Stadium, and far better than the 125,000 seat Soldier Field in Chicago which cost \$6 million. The latter was built and operated by a local governmental body called the South Park Commission, whose principal function was running the South Side park system. The costs of construction were paid by a municipal bond issue. On the other hand, several stadia were also constructed far more cheaply. The nearby Pasadena Rose Bowl which seated 52,250 had been completed in 1922 at a cost of \$325,000 exclusive of the land. San Francisco’s Kezar Stadium, with a capacity about half of the Coliseum’s, cost its taxpayers only \$450,000 because a lot of the necessary capital had come from a private gift to the city. Even Baltimore’s 80,000 seat Memorial Stadium, which originally had a greater seating capacity than the Coliseum, only cost \$500,000 when completed in 1924. Only further research and analysis of local governmental operations will fully determine which methods for stadium and arena development were the most efficacious. Nevertheless, the danger of too much influence and interference by elites in their community’s affairs in a supposedly democratic society is a lesson repeatedly learned, but quickly forgotten.³⁶

Notes

1. Research for this project was partly funded by the Committee on Organized Research, Northeastern University.

2. David. Q. Voigt, *America Through Baseball* (Chicago, 1976), 29-41; Steven A. Riess, "The Baseball Magnate and Urban Politics in the Progressive Era, 1895-1920," *Journal of Sport History*, 1 (May 1974): 41-62; Gregg Lee Carter, "Baseball in St. Louis, 1867-1875: An Historical Case Study in Civic Pride," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, 34 (July 1975): 253-63; B. W. Currie, "Prize-Fights as Mine-boomers," *Harper's Weekly*, 52 (August 22, 1909): 25; James Chinello, "The Great Goldfield Foul," *Westways*, 68 (September 1976): 27-30, 88; Al-Tony Gilmore, *Bad Nigger! The National Impact of Jack Johnson* (Port Washington, New York, 1974), 39. See also Stephen Freedman, "The Baseball Fad in Chicago, 1865-1870: An Exploration of the Role of Sport in the Nineteenth Century City," *Journal of Sport History*, 5 (Summer 1978): 42-64; and Janet Northam and Jack Berryman, "Sport and Urban Boosterism in the Pacific Northwest: Seattle's Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, 1909," *Journal of the West*, 17 (July 1978): 53-60.
3. The standard work on Los Angeles is Robert Fogelson, *Los Angeles: The Fragmented Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967). Useful overviews of urban machine politics appear in Howard Chudacoff, *The Evolution of American Urban Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1975), 125-47; and Zane L. Miller, *The Urbanization of Modern America: A Brief History* (New York, 1973), 99-121. For definitions of power elite and authority, see C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York, 1956), ch. 1, esp. 9-15; *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, s.v. "Authority;" and Julius Gould and William L. Kolb, eds., *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1964), 42-44. On Los Angeles' elites, see Gregory H. Singleton, *Religion in the City of the Angels: American Protestant Culture and Urbanization, Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Ann Arbor, 1979), 90-101.
4. *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "Chandler, Harry;" *New York Times*, Sept. 24, 1944; William G. Bonelli, *Billion Dollar Jackpot* (Beverly Hills, 1965), 33, 101, 116; Robert Gottlieb and Irene Welt, *Thinking Big: The Story of the L. A. Times* (New York, 1954), 124-26.
5. William May Garland to Blanche Garland, n.d., William May Garland Papers, *Los Angeles Times* Archives, Los Angeles, Calif. This was, I believe, the entire extent of the collection.
6. Margaret Farnum, "Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum," mimeographed, (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Coliseum Commission, n.d.), p. 1; Grace A. Somerby, "When Los Angeles was Host to the 1932 Olympic Games of 1932," *Historical Society of Southern California*, 24 (June 1952): 125-27. Social data on CDA members was compiled primarily from William A. Spalding, comp., *History of Reminiscences, Los Angeles City and County, California*, 3 vols., (Los Angeles, 1931). Also useful were Rockwell D. Hunt, ed., *California and Californians*, 3 vols. (New York, 1926); John S. McGroarty, *Los Angeles, From the Mountains to the Sea* (Chicago, 1921); and C. W. Taylor, Jr., *Eminent Californians* (Palo Alto, 1953). Information on the religious backgrounds of CDA board members came from an interview with Prof. Gregory Singleton, Nov. 25, 1980.
7. Price v. Sixth District Agricultural Association, 201 Cal 503 (1927), brief of respondents, 1164-65. O'Melveny was an original member of the Los Angeles Board of Civil Service Commissioners, established in 1902, and he had previously served on charter revision boards. See Martin J. Schiesl, "Politicians in Disguise: The Changing Role of Public Administrators in Los Angeles, 1900-1920," in *The Age of Urban Reform: New Perspectives on the Progressive Era*, eds. Michael H. Ebner and Eugene Tobin (Port Washington, N.Y., 1977), 103.
8. *Los Angeles Daily News*, Sept. 27, 1948; *New York Times*, Sept. 27, 1948.
9. Frank Kjørvestad, "The 1932 Los Angeles Xth Olympiad: Its Development and Impact on the Community," typescript (Los Angeles: Citizens' Savings Athletic Foundation, 1967?), p. 1; Somerby, "When Los Angeles was Host to the Olympic Games," 125-26.
10. *Los Angeles Daily News*, Sept. 27, 1948; *New York Times*, Sept. 27, 1948; *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 27, June 9, 1923; William May Garland Scrapbook, Citizens' Savings Athletic Foundation, Los Angeles, Calif.; Pierre de Coubertin to William May Garland, May 24, June 6, Nov. 12, 1921; Feb. 6, Nov. 13, 1922, William May Garland Papers, William Schroeder Collection, Citizens' Savings Athletic Foundation; William May Garland to Avery Brundage, June 13, 1938, Avery Brundage Papers, University of Illinois, Champaign, Ill.
11. "Stadiums," *Playground*, 20 (1926): 198. The modern Pasadena Rose Bowl was not completed until 1922.
12. Price v. Sixth District Agricultural Association, 201 Cal 503 (1927), brief of respondents, 506-7, 1092. "Great Los Angeles Colosseum at Exposition Park Without Peer in World," *Los Angeles Realtor*, 2 (Nov. 1922): 7.
13. Edgar A. Wilson, "Selfish Interests of Coliseum Group," *City and County Employees' News*, 6 (Aug. 18, 1947): 3; Minutes of the Los Angeles City Council, 118 (June 3, 1920), 283, 289, Los Angeles City Hall; Los Angeles, Calif. County of Los Angeles v. Dodge 51 Cal. App. 492 (1921).
14. Minutes, L. A. City Council, 119 (Aug. 9, 1920), 116; (Sept. 3, 1920), 361. The vote was 37,318 for the bond issue and 20,015 against. See Farnum, "Memorial Coliseum," 2.
15. County of Los Angeles v. Dodge, 51 Cal. App. 492 (1921); Farnum, "Memorial Coliseum," 3-4.
16. Marion Parks, "When Olympic Park was a Jack Rabbit Course," *Overland Monthly*, 90 (July 1932): 151,

158; County Counsel of the County of Los Angeles, "History of Exposition Park and Stadium," mimeographed, (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Municipal Reference Bureau, 1929?), pp. 1-4; Mary K. Gibson, "The Changing Conception of the Urban Park in America: City of Los Angeles as a Case Study," (M.A. UCLA, 1977), 45-46, 51-52, 73-74.

17. Bureau of Budget and Efficiency, *A Study of the Organization and Administration of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum* (Los Angeles, 1935 1-4.

18. Farnum, "Memorial Coliseum," 4-5; "Community Stadium for Los Angeles Assured." *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 5 (Dec. 9, 1921): 12.

19. Schiesl, "Politicians in Disguise," 103; "Who's Running Los Angeles Anyway?" *Bulletin of the Municipal League of Los Angeles*, 3 (Jan. 1924): 5.

20. "Who's Running Los Angeles," 5.

21. *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 11, 1923; *Southern California Trojan*, Nov. 9, 15, 1923; "Secret Session on Stadium Scheme," *Bulletin of the Municipal League of Los Angeles*, 8 (July 1929): 3; "The Proposed Extension of Contract," *Ibid.*, 8 (Aug. 1929): 2-3.

22. "Who's Running Los Angeles," 5; Price v. Sixth District Agricultural Association, 201 Cal 502 (1927).

23. Farnum, "Memorial Coliseum," 6-7.

24. *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 6, Apr. 12, 17, 23, 1929.

25. Roy Knox to George E. Cryer, typescript (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Municipal Reference Bureau, May 1, 1929), pp. 1-4. For the city council's reaction, see *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1929.

26. *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1929.

27. Minutes. L. A. City Council, 206 (May 31, 1929), 300-02; *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1929.

28. *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 13, 1929; Edgar Wilson, "Colleges and the Politics of the Coliseum," *City and County Employees' News*, 6 (Sept. 1, 1947): 2.

29. *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1929.

30. *Ibid.*, July 23, Sept. 14, 1929; "League Opposes Extension of Coliseum Contract," *Bulletin of the Municipal League of Los Angeles*, 8 (June 1929): 4-5; "Secret Session on Stadium Scheme," 3; "The Old Coliseum Contract," *Bulletin of the Municipal League of Los Angeles*, 8 (Aug. 1929): 2; "Proposed Extension of Contract," 3-4.

31. *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 19, 1929.

32. *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 16, 21, 22, Dec. 18, 26, 27, 31, 1929; Jan. 10, July 6, 11, 16, 25, 29, Aug. 12, 25, 26, 1930.

33. Dick Schaap, *An Illustrated History of the Olympics* (New York, 1975), 196-98; Farnum, "Memorial Coliseum," 7-8; *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 6, 27, 1932, Jan. 14, 25, 1933; Minutes, L. A. City Council, 238 (Dec. 30, 1932), 67-69.

34. *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 4, 24, June 3, 1933; Ellis McCune, *Intergovernmental Co-operation in Recreation Administration in the Los Angeles Area* (Los Angeles, 1954), 63.

35. Benjamin A. Okner, "Subsidies of Stadiums and Arenas," in Roger G. Noll, ed., *Government and the Sports Business* (Washington, D.C., 1974), 325-26; Mark S. Rosentraub and Samuel R. Nunn, "Suburban City Investment in Professional Sports," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 21 (Jan.-Feb. 1978): 393-414.

36. Ralph Ketchum, *Intergovernmental Cooperation in the Los Angeles Area* (Los Angeles, 1940), 5, 46-47; "Municipal Stadium in Cleveland," *Architectural Record*, 71 (Jan. 1932): 37-38; "Stadiums," 198; Joseph R. Hickey, "San Francisco's New \$450,000 Stadium Financed by Memorial Gift and Municipal Funds," *American City*, 40 (March 1929): 140-41.

