

## *Chapter 2*

# ORIGINAL DISTRICTS FORMED

There was no great resistance to passage of the County Sanitation District Act in the State Legislature. At the time (1923) the Act was thought by most legislators to apply to Los Angeles County quite specifically and would have little, if any, effect upon other areas in the State. Pomeroy probably fostered the same thought. Indeed, in 1923, there was little reason to believe that other metropolitan areas in California would be troubled by lack of sewerage in the foreseeable future, at least to the extent that was anticipated in Los Angeles County.

The new law assigned to the County Board of Supervisors the duty of forming County Sanitation Districts. The law required that the resolution of intention to form the District should contain, among other features, a description of the proposed District boundaries or a statement of its area. In two of the proposed Districts under consideration in 1923 and 1924 it was easy to meet this requirement but in the others a great deal of study was necessary. For instance in the case of District 4, the area to be included could be none other than the full extent of a small county island, entirely surrounded by Los Angeles and Beverly Hills with disposal of sewage to the Los Angeles system. In the case of South Bay Cities Sanitation District the District area was obviously limited to Bay Cities on South Santa Monica Bay shore and

small portions of county territory in the neighborhood. Sand hills to the east of the cities and lack of any sewerage facilities east of the sand hills effectively established the eastern border of the District, while the new, and presumably adequate, sewerage works of the City of Los Angeles plus the City's willingness to treat and dispose of the South Bay sewage, adequately defined the extent and boundaries of the Bay Cities District.

Defining the extent and limits of the other larger districts was not without its difficulties. All of the many relevant factors entering into a determination of the extent of a large sewerage area were present in each and, while no cost estimates were required to be furnished to the Supervisors prior to submission of their resolution of intention to form the District, such were required for comparative purposes in arriving at the proper area to be considered as a unit, or District. Additionally it was necessary to be reasonably sure that the need for adequate sewerage was recognized by influences within the proposed District and that there would be as little as possible lack of harmony in Districts affairs, once the District was formed. Unfortunately there was no provision in the District law, at the time, for funds for financing the cost of such investigations. Fortunately other means were at hand. Their application to the problems faced at the time is not without interest.

Again it may be emphasized that the U.S.G.S. maps prepared by U.S. and County forces almost concurrently with inception of the Sanitation District plan, were of such importance to the plan that it is difficult to imagine how it could have gotten off the ground without them. These maps not only supplied all of the basic data required for a preliminary reconnaissance of sewer grades and appropriate routes, but also District boundaries, distances and elevations (the latter adjusted to a single datum plane). Had the proponents of the Districts been confronted with the necessity for making any significant part of the surveys required in their preliminary investigations and comparisons the early promotions could have dragged on for years without some other adequate means of financing than the District Act offered.

Financing investigation of the Districts was achieved in two ways. Beginning in early 1924 Warren, at that time in charge of

the storm drainage department of the County Surveyor's office, employed a limited number of engineers to assist in design and construction of projects initiated under the Drainage District Improvement Act (DDI) of 1921. For this purpose he was authorized to employ some individuals not classified under County Civil Service. It is likely that both Warren and the County Surveyor (his boss) appreciated that there was considerable work and investigation ahead in connection with the County Sanitation Districts for which no specific financial support had been arranged and that it would be necessary for the county to supply the technical help required at its (the county's) expense. This, it was thought could best be done by utilizing Warren's storm drainage staff to help as needed in the pending Sanitation District preliminaries. Following this course of action four engineers assigned to assist in storm drainage were also engaged for a material part of their time in the Sanitation District study.

Another very important contribution to the cost of preliminary investigation and planning in the Sanitation Districts was the use made of the Improvement Act of 1911, as applied to County Improvements. Under this law the county forces were authorized to conduct investigation in, and prepare proceedings for, local sewerage construction. At any stage in the proceedings the project could be abandoned for cause and the cost up to the time of abandonment absorbed by the county. Although it was unnecessary to present an estimate of the cost of improvements in a resolution of intention to form a Sanitation District it was necessary in making comparison between possible alternative plans; furthermore, once the District was formed a fairly precise estimate of cost was needed upon which to base a bond election. Use of the C.I.D. Act of 1921 permitted the investigating engineers in Warren's staff to divide each proposed Sanitation District into potential Improvement Districts and in the investigation of the latter, coupled with predetermined factors and methods of sewage treatment and disposal, to prepare comprehensive plans and estimates for the trunk sewers and disposal facilities of each Sanitation District under consideration. Once the plan and estimate for each was completed the local C.I.D. proceedings were abandoned.

Barring limited operation and maintenance funds in South

Bay Cities Sanitation District, which probably became available in late 1924, the Sanitation Districts were without funds of their own until sale of bonds in Districts 1, 2 and 5 in June 1925. A joint administration agreement, to which all active Districts were signatory, was probably invoked to carry the limited staff salaries for April and May, 1925.

It seemed necessary to relate the foregoing financial difficulties and arrangements, and the relation of the engineering employees engaged on District work to their job, in order to point out that records covering this phase of Sanitation District development in Los Angeles County are unavailable, except for the memory of two or three former District employees who have not yet passed on and the daily log, or diary, kept by Rawn who was employed by the county in April 1924, appointed Assistant Chief Engineer of the Districts in May 1925, succeeded Warren as Chief Engineer and General Manager in 1940 upon Warren's death, and retired in December 1958. This record, professional in content has been drawn upon to furnish factual data, and refresh memory for parts of this story, and to supplement recorded data elsewhere.

It was obvious to the most casual observer that if the area (some 550 square miles) was to be sewerred on a regional basis, sewage would need be concentrated in the southerly reaches of the area. Dealing with it there, or at intermediate points, could await determination of the best plan available under the circumstances. Additionally obvious was the fact that time was of the essence and that even though a full and complete program and plan could not be developed immediately, certain elements in any scheme selected would be sufficiently similar to all others under consideration as to effect relative costs very little. This had the final effect of determining District boundaries on factors other than final method of disposal, and allowed adapting the District areas to drainage possibilities and community cooperation. Importance of the time element rested in the Districts' need of money and the inability to get any until the Districts were formed allowing the Districts' Directors to authorize a two cent levy on District property or float bonds for construction funds.

Warren took advantage of this to define the boundaries of all of the Districts under consideration at that time and submit to the



CHIEF ENGINEER AND CONSULTANTS AT WHITE'S POINT — The Chicago firm of Pierce, Greely and Hansen was retained to report on the feasibility of the Districts' plans and to assist, if required, in the R/W condemnation proceedings for White's Point. Pictured left to right: Pierce, Warren, and Greely.

Board of Supervisors the information needed in the Board's resolutions of Intention to form the several Districts. District South Bay Cities was formed in late 1923 following a formation election held in the area for that purpose. Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were formed in 1924 and Districts 6 and 7 (both later dissolved) were formed in 1925 as was District 8. All Districts were formed without protest and, except for South Bay Cities, without election.

Concurrent with the investigation requisite to defining District boundaries, a good deal of attention had been given to methods and means of treatment and disposal of District sewage. The choice, of course, was either complete treatment with disposal of effluent to storm drains or flood control channels, or primary treatment only, with disposal of the plant effluent to the ocean. The comparison had all of the questions and perplexities usually attendant upon such a choice, however, the conclusion

reached was that the area could best be served by an infallible system incorporating removal of the grosser suspended solids from the sewage at works situated on shore, leaving to the ocean waters the job of final purification.

Topographic features, heretofore described, limited access to the ocean for disposal of sewage to three possible routes; (a) an outfall through the Los Angeles or Long Beach Harbor, to discharge seaward of the breakwater, (b) a large diameter line atop the westerly breakwater to discharge seaward near the end thereof and (c) a tunnel under, or a pump system over, the Palos Verdes Hills with discharge offshore from the south shore thereof. Of the three only one, (c), appeared possible. To build through either Long Beach or Los Angeles in order to reach Harbor waters required the unanimous consent of the City Council of the city through which the sewer was to be built and, although it is not believed that either Council took official action in the matter, it was well understood that neither City would consent if petitioned. Thus the choice was limited to reaching the south Palos Verdes shore without encroachment upon public property in either Long Beach or Los Angeles.

Having decided upon a plan, or plans, for treatment and disposal of sewage from the several Districts under consideration and having delineated the area and boundaries of such Districts, it was required that an engineering report and plan for each District be presented to the respective District Board of Directors for public hearing and approval. The estimate of cost accompanying the report formed the basis of a bond election designed to provide funds for construction of the necessary works. Plans for Districts 4 and South Bay Cities provided disposal, under contract, to the system of the City of Los Angeles. Plans for Districts 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8 were developed anticipating that the sewage of all of these Districts was to be collected into one location, treated there in a jointly owned and operated plant, and discharged to sea through jointly owned facilities. Obviously in such a plan, economy would result in the ownership and use of jointly owned trunk sewers.

Although there was no provision in the District law specifically authorizing joint action in the ownership and use of facilities, such action was deemed proper by District Counsel and

accepted as appropriate by the District Boards. Successful bond elections were held by Districts South Bay Cities, 1 2, 4 and 5 between September 1924 and June 1925. District 8 voted bonds in April 1929 after losing a try in January 1926. Districts 3, 6 and 7 failed to authorize elections and 6 and 7 later dissolved.

With five Districts financed, and another impending, the Districts were ready to separate entirely from the County Engineer's Department and organize their Joint Administrative and Engineering Authority. This was accomplished in March 1925 on the fourth day of which month, A. K. Warren, to no one's surprise, was appointed Chief Engineer and General Manager, and instructed to organize a staff of permanent District employees. A number of the events which occurred in the year or so preceding establishment of the Districts as an independent office and which had a pronounced bearing on the future of the Districts seem worth a little comment.