POPULATION GROWTH AND CHARACTERISTICS

Too much consideration cannot be given in any survey of Metropolitan Los Angeles to the growth and characteristics of its diverse and ever-increasing population. The causes for this tremendous growth are not difficult to discern and may be classified, if somewhat loosely, as follows:

1. Climate and numerous advantageous physical factors lending themselves to recreational purposes appealing to tourists and retired persons.

2. Economic opportunities – a tremendous factor particularly in the years preceding the great depression of the 1930's.

3. Lower cost of living – particularly attractive to persons with small, fixed annual incomes or pensions.

4. Liberality of California Welfare and Pension plans – most attractive to indigents from less favored areas.

5. Endless publicity given to advantages of Southern California both by intentional and planned advertising programs such as those fostered by the "All Year Club of Southern California, Inc." and other endowed promotional organizations, and publicity received through gratuitous, word-of-mouth advertising by those who have been here and returned to other sections of the country. In this latter respect, the motion picture industry, though not always intentionally, acts as one of the best publicity mediums for the area that could be devised, displaying the beauties of the area for all to see and drawing to the community each year thousands of "movie-conscious" persons eager to penetrate this fairy-tale world of make-believe.

6. Importation of various racial groups for special purposes, viz: Chinese coolies to work on the railroad, Mexicans for farm labor, etc. This practice has been largely discontinued although stories have been circulated and never satisfactorily disproved that much of the immigration from the dust bowl was actually encouraged by the farmer-cooperatives of California in the hope of getting cheap, transient labor for their harvests. In any event, this importation factor is but minor in the explanation of the phenomenal growth of Metropolitan Los Angeles.

7. Lastly, (and a cause of decreasing importance) the natural westward drift of population in the United States.

Examination of Table 9 Appendix page 9 will give a vivid picture of the growth of this metropolitan area in comparison to that experienced in other metropolitan areas of comparable size, and in the United States as a whole. Since 1850 Los Angeles has maintained a more rapid and continuous growth than any other metropolitan area, with only Chicago and Detroit approaching its rate of increase, although Miami, Florida, a much smaller community, has in recent years surpassed Los Angeles in rate of growth.

The population of Los Angeles has doubled once in about every eight years, although there have been wide variations as between inter-censal periods, and the greatest growth was experienced between the close of the World War in 1918 and 1930. From 1930 to 1936, the estimated annual rate of increase in the area has been well below the average long-term rate of growth established between 1900-1930. However, the return of economic activity in 1936 ushered in a new period of growth and the population increase since January 1936 is estimated at well over 200,000 persons.

It is logical to assume that Los Angeles has reached the peak of its growth and is attaining its maturity. The rate of natural population increase (excess of births over deaths) has been consistently low as is revealed in Tables 11-12, Appendix Pages 11-12. In the years 1900 to 1906 and again in 1919, deaths actually exceeded births in the community. It is therefore apparent that virtually the entire increase in population has been due to immigration from other states. This factor is of primary importance in attempting to analyze the probable future growth of population, for should the heavy flow of immigration cease in the future, the phenomenal growth of