



County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors



SUPERVISOR JOHN ANSON FORD

Term: 1934 - 1958
District: Third
Date of Birth: Sept. 29, 1883
Death: 1983

John Anson Ford served as county supervisor for six terms. He was elected in 1934, 1938, 1942, 1946, 1950, and 1954.

Born in Waukegan, Ill. on Sept. 29, 1883, Ford was the son of a Presbyterian minister who moved from parish to parish in the Middle West during Ford's youth. Ford graduated from Beloit College in Wisconsin, where he met and married Lois Goldsmith. They remained married 67 years, until her death in 1975.

Ford taught high school history in Beloit for two years and later became a reporter and columnist for the Chicago Tribune. He was an assistant editor for "Popular Mechanics" magazine for four years, and subsequently became a newswriter for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.

Ford came to Los Angeles in 1920 with his wife and young son, John Arnold, who later became well known in California as a singer with the San Francisco Opera and producer of the "Pilgrimage Play" in Hollywood for many years. Ford owned and operated an advertising and public relations firm in Los Angeles for a number of years. In 1927 he served on the grand jury formed in the aftermath of the C.C. Julian scandal. In 1934 Ford's experience in business and governmental affairs led to him being elected county supervisor. He served six consecutive terms.

As supervisor, Ford helped cope with the poverty and joblessness of the Depression years. He fought against city corruption during the Shaw administration, running unsuccessfully in 1937 to unseat the corrupt mayor. In 1943 Ford oversaw the formation of the County Human Relations Commission to cope with racial bigotry, and helped establish the Department of Senior Citizen's Affairs.

He supported welfare reform, racial integration, and the improvement of cultural institutions. He helped sponsor the revitalization of the Hollywood Bowl, the development of the State and County Arboretum; the restoration of the East Los Angeles State Park, which changed Olvera Street from a dirty old alley into a cultural and historical landmark; and the development of Descanso Gardens as a public botanical garden park. Ford initiated the county's toy loan program with a \$100 appropriation; before he left office in 1958 40 branch toy libraries manned by volunteers loaned more than 9 million rehabilitated toys, the repair work done by indigents working out their relief budgets.

Credits included being a member of the Mt. Hollywood Congregational Church, Death Valley

Forty-Niners and the Adventurers Club.

The Pilgrimage Play Amphitheatre in Hollywood was renamed the John Anson Ford Theatre in 1978. Ford wrote a memoir about his career called "Thirty Explosive Years in Los Angeles County," published by the Huntington Library in 1961.

Ford died in 1983.

Sources: Who's Who in California, 1955-56; L.A County Records.