



County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

SUPERVISOR HARRY M. BAINE

Term: 1932-1934
District: Third
Date of Birth: Dec. 18, 1884
Death: March 29, 1945

Harry M. Baine served as county supervisor for one term. He was appointed by the governor to the seat on May 31, 1932 to replace J. Don Mahaffey, who died while in office.

Baine was born on Dec. 18, 1884 in Texas, where he grew up and attended public schools.

He later moved to Los Angeles, where he established himself as one of the leading merchants in the area.

In the 1920s, Baine came up with the idea to increase Christmas sales by naming Hollywood Boulevard "Santa Claus Lane." He and fellow merchants chipped in and bought two reindeer to draw a sleigh on wheels down the famed thoroughfare, with Santa piloting the vehicle with a different celebrity each night. Merchants also decorated the sidewalks with live Christmas trees and huge papier-mâché Santa heads poking out of cardboard chimneys.

In 1928 the event was named the "Santa Claus Lane Parade" to showcase Southern California's "star city." Actress Jeannette Loff was the first starlet to ride with Santa and greet all of the shoppers.

During the rest of the year the reindeer were cared for by county parks employees and stabled in a barn at Hollywood Boulevard and La Brea Avenue, which was open for the public to view. In 1929 Los Angeles Mayor John C. Porter officially christened Hollywood Boulevard "Santa Claus Lane."

Two years later a truck-pulled float of Santa and his workshop replaced the reindeer. By 1932 the one-sleigh act had turned into a full-blown parade, with bands and equestrians. Comedian Joe E. Brown served as the first grand marshal. The live Christmas trees formerly used along Hollywood Boulevard were replaced with 16-foot-high, 750-pound metal trees, each with 160 lights. Tinsel wreaths bedecked the lampposts, each bearing a photograph of a celebrity participant, including Claudette Colbert and Gloria Stuart. (Decades later, the latter portrayed the elderly Rose in the 1997 film "Titanic.")

Baine's promotional stunt to boost holiday traffic has turned into an enduring Los Angeles tradition and is now one of Hollywood's most popular events – the Hollywood Christmas Parade.

In 1932 Baine's success in business and marketing was followed by his appointment to the county supervisor's seat. After leaving public office, he went back to the merchant business.

On March 29, 1945, Baine died. He was 60.

His legacy lives on in the form of the Baine Building, located at the corner of Hollywood and Whitley Boulevards.

Sources: experienceLA.com; Los Angeles Times, Nov. 26, 2006.