

FRED LUTHER HAMBLIN

RCBA President 1932

We know from records at the Riverside County Bar Association that Fred Luther Hamblin served as its president in 1932. Beyond that information, there are limited records about his practice of law in the local area.

CalBar records confirm that he was admitted to practice law in this state in January of 1915 and assigned Bar #6806. Previously, he was born on June 17, 1889 in Minnesota to Luther Scott Hamblin (1861-1936) and Ullarika Reia (Ludemann) Hamblin (1859-1933). No specific records exist about when the Hamblin family moved to the Southern California area.

His first mention in the local press was on August 31, 1916 in the *Los Angeles Herald* when it was reported that he was representing Laura Rhyman who had filed for divorce from her husband Robert Rhyman. Ms. Rhyman was described in the article as “discouraged” because her husband had disappeared and had left her with significant debts. The article further mentions that, despite her meager wages, she had slowly been able to satisfy the debts. Despite efforts to contact her husband, she had been unsuccessful and so had decided to terminate the marriage. There was not any further media coverage about this divorce.

Three years after his handling of this matter Hamblin married Helen C. Schilling of Los Angeles in 1919. A wedding announcement indicates that they were married at Central Baptist Church in the presence of 200 friends and family. It was noted that they were scheduled to honeymoon in Catalina and Big Bear and then go to Blythe to make their home.

By 1920, Hamblin figured prominently in City of Blythe legal circles because there is mention in the January 18, 1920 edition of the *Riverside Enterprise* that he was the City Attorney for Blythe. While he was in Blythe, he also served as a district attorney for Palo Verde Valley.

In a later article dated June 6, 1921 from the *Riverside Daily Press*, it was reported that he was part of a delegation from Blythe which was scheduled to meet with Riverside County Supervisors to discuss the construction of a new stretch of road from Blythe to the Colorado River. The article elaborates that a section of the road was impassable for three to six months a year due to floodwaters from the river. It was estimated that Riverside County was losing at least \$400,000 annually in tourist trade due to the impassable road.

Near the end of 1921, Hamblin had apparently decided to move to Riverside because an article dated September 24, 1921 in the *Riverside Daily Press* reported that the Blythe City Council had appointed Dean Edgerton as the new City Attorney to replace Hamblin who had recently relocated to Riverside.

Hamblin’s name was briefly mentioned in the press on December 10, 1921 when it was reported that he was defending Theodore Lawson who was accused on passing bad checks. Hamblin must have developed into a “bad check specialist” because it was reported in the July 6, 1922 issue of the *Riverside Enterprise* that he was representing W. H. Gray who had been charged with passing a fictitious check. Interestingly, the prosecuting attorney was Loyal Kelley who is another past president of the RCBA.

Other prominent local citizens such as L. B. Tibbitts and Eugene Best (of Best, Best & Krieger fame) are mentioned in the *Riverside Daily Press* dated October 31, 1922 when it was reported that Hamblin had

joined them in The Present Day Club which had been founded in Riverside in 1902. According to local historian Glenn Wenzel in his article in the *The Raincross Gazette*, this club was a literary and social organization which met the second Monday of each month with the understanding that “as man talks best when fed best each meeting will be held around the banquet table and, after the gastronomic feast, the evening will be devoted to the best, brightest and most brilliant ideas from the combined thoughts of those present”.

Hamblin’s name seems to have dropped out of local media coverage until January 11, 1934 when it was reported in the *Beaumont Daily Gazette* that he had been elected, along with Eugene Best and Robert Nelson, as one of the three trustees for the Riverside County Bar Association. This would have been after he had served as the president of the bar association in 1932. It should be noted that both Best and Nelson have also been past presidents of the association.

George Sarau, another past president of the bar association, faced off against Hamblin in case entitled *Woodman v. Pacific Indemnity*. Hamblin, along with local attorney Albert Ford, was representing Donald Woodman in a matter in which it was alleged that, while serving as a Boy Scout, Woodman was injured on February 9, 1931 while hauling rock for the construction of a fireplace at the scout barracks in Hemet. This case eventually became a “published” decision by the Court of Appeal on June 12, 1939.

Two years after the appellate court’s decision, Hamblin unexpectedly died on November 6, 1941 at age 52. An obituary in the *Palo Verde Valley Times* reported that he had died of a sudden heart attack. The obituary also noted that he has served as a “city police judge” for Riverside and, since 1937 was a deputy city attorney. He was also described as an expert on water rights and court decisions affecting this branch of law.

Hamblin’s wife Helen lived until 1970. She and her husband are buried in Evergreen Memorial Park in Riverside. The couple had three daughters: Mary Lou (1921-2015), Patricia Irene “Patsy” (1926-2011) and Betty Anna (Dunn). Patsy was involved in numerous organizations and, in fact, served as the Executive Director of the RCBA from 1988-1990.

Written by Bruce E. Todd.