

LOYAL CLAIRE KELLEY

RCBA PRESIDENT 1920

On January 16, 1919, Congress ratified the 18th Amendment which prohibited the production, importation, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages. The passage of this amendment was in response to a growing concern by primarily religious groups who felt that the consumption of alcohol resulted in a decay of public morals and health. Some local communities had already implemented bans upon alcoholic beverages even before the amendment was ratified.

Around this same time, Loyal Claire Kelley was making a name for himself within local Riverside County politics and law enforcement. Kelley, who was born on February 24, 1884 in the village of Carey, Ohio, had been elected as the Riverside County District Attorney in 1918. He had previously been appointed as a deputy district attorney in 1914 and he was also serving during that time as deputy city attorney (apparently, one could serve in both positions back in those days).

Since Kelley's tenure as Riverside County District Attorney coincided with the passage of the 18th Amendment, as well as prior community efforts to eliminate alcohol, local newspaper accounts of his activities highlighted his war on the county's bootleggers. For example, the May 9, 1918 edition of the *Riverside Daily Press*, included an article about Jose Frigosa, who was arrested for carrying 200 quarts of beer and a quantity of wine and whisky in his automobile. It was noted that Kelley was going to be prosecuting Frigosa under the "new" prohibition ordinance, which had been passed by county supervisors. The matter was going to be the county's first test case about whether the bootlegger's automobile itself could be impounded and sold under the new ordinance.

Another article, dated August 4, 1920 in the *Riverside Enterprise*, describes Kelley and Sheriff F. P. Wilson as leading a raid upon Riverside's Chinatown, which resulted in the arrest of 18 men—White, Mexican and Chinese—for having bales of lottery tickets, opium pipes, and "hop." The raid was part of a campaign by the county against gambling and "kindred pastimes."

Yet another article describing Kelley's war on the alcohol trade appeared on August 8, 1921 in the *Riverside Daily Press*, when it was noted that he had directed raids which resulted in the arrest of three bootleggers in Indio.

Regarding Kelley's earlier history, his parents Albert and Helena had moved the family from Ohio to Corona in 1890 when he was six years old. In a later article, which appeared on June 26, 1942 in the *Desert Sun*, it was noted that he had been a "pioneer citizen of Corona." This article mentions that he had attended all of his grade school and high school in a "one room school house" which later became known as the Lincoln School on Victoria Ave. He eventually worked his way through law school and was graduated from the University of Southern California (USC) in 1910. He completed additional courses at Stanford University and then he was eventually admitted to the bar in 1911.

Kelley started practicing law in Corona before moving his practice to Riverside in 1912. He married Neva Alberta Campbell on November 28, 1912. By 1914, he had been selected as a deputy district attorney and, in 1915, he was also appointed as deputy city attorney. By 1918, he went into private practice with O.K. Morton and Jerome L. Richardson in a firm known as Kelley, Morton & Richardson. An article dated May 17, 1918 in the *Riverside Enterprise*, described them as "three of Riverside's best known young lawyers."

This same article also mentions, however, that Kelley was running for the position of the Riverside County District Attorney (which he eventually won that year). In an advertisement in the *Riverside Daily Press* (08/20/1918), in support of his candidacy for District Attorney, it was noted that, while serving as deputy district attorney, he had handled 180 felonies, 900 misdemeanors and 90 juvenile matters. A later article dated September 3, 1921 in the *Riverside Enterprise*, indicates that he was earning a salary of \$2,500 as the Riverside County District Attorney.

The esteem which he achieved with the local bar also resulted in his being chosen as president of the Riverside County Bar Association in 1920 (*Riverside Enterprise* dated January 17, 1920).

Kelley ran for a second term of office as Riverside County District Attorney in 1922, and was again elected. During this second term of office, he continued his prosecution of illegal bootleggers and whisky peddlers.

An article describing Kelley's continued war on the alcohol trade appeared on April 29, 1922 in the *Riverside Daily Press*, when it was reported that detectives in his employ had arrested seven bootleggers and located three stills of "bootleg booze" in Corona.

Eventually, however, the country decided that it had enough of a prohibition upon alcohol and the 21st Amendment was ratified on December 5, 1933, which then resulted in a repeal of the 18th Amendment. It was the only time in our country's history that one amendment was used to terminate a prior amendment.

By 1925, Kelley had resigned his position as Riverside County District Attorney to enter into private practice. However, his skills of prosecuting criminals resulted in his being appointed as a "special prosecutor" in the infamous "Wineville Chicken Coop" trial of 1925. In that case, notorious serial killer Gordon Stewart Northcutt was convicted of murdering numerous minors and he was ultimately sentenced to death.

Upon Kelley's return to private practice, he partnered with Hayden L. Hews in the firm Kelly & Hews with an office in the Citizens National Bank building. He continued representing prestigious clients throughout the remainder of his legal career.

Kelley eventually passed away on May 15, 1950, and is buried in Olivewood Memorial Park in Riverside.

Written by Bruce E. Todd