

HISTORY OF THE RECREATION AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROJECTS

IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY FROM JANUARY, 1933 TO DECEMBER, 1935.

~~Compiled~~ by

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Pioneering in the field of the social sciences is a unique and precarious distinction. To the men and women of Los Angeles county, its elected and appointed officials of government, its employees in several departments and its civic leaders, belongs the distinction of being first in the United States to cope with the economic and social menace of the depression by mustering the most potent factor of the depression itself, the training and experience of its hundreds of unemployed white collar citizens, into the service.

Rapidly developing into a county-wide movement, it became a march of the constructive and swiftly organized forces of recreation against the devastating inroads of juvenile delinquency. Three years of retrenchment in appropriations and budgetary allotments to the established recreation and delinquency prevention departments had resulted in curtailment of facilities and personnel at a time of the greatest need.

Unemployment and forced idleness had thrown a tremendous burden on the organized recreation systems of the county, out of all proportion to the funds at their disposal with which to carry it. Even normal progress and growth to meet public demands were impossible. Voices were raised in protest and appeal but were met with fiscal records of an appalling depletion in taxes. The desperate answer of controllers and boards was, 'Cut! Necessities come first.' And so the situation was deadlocked; the menace of delinquency increased and public morale approached a condition of public hysteria.

The Los Angeles County Probation Department, in the front line of defense with its kindred agencies, was making a desperate stand under the handicap of curtailed budgets. It raised warning signals of a serious nature. From years of experience in coping with delinquency problems, it pointed out that the situation was getting out of hand. Its reports indicated that the home, which must bear the brunt of un-