

might have become California's first and only House speaker.

Burton is best known in California for reapportionment, a process he dominated for 20 years. His most accomplished – or egregious – remap came in 1981. He took a congressional delegation of 22 Democrats and 21 Republicans, added two seats and drew new lines for 28 Democrats and 17 Republicans, handing House Speaker Tip O'Neill one-quarter of all the new seats the Democrats would win in 1982.

In domestic policy, Burton's legislation raised the minimum wage and extended it to millions of uncovered workers. He passed an important Black Lung bill, despite having no coal miners in his district. Controlling dozens of House Democratic votes – he once bragged he could round up "110 votes to have dog shit declared the national food" — he traded higher subsidies for cotton to get food stamps for striking farmworkers.

Taking over an obscure Interior subcommittee after his leadership loss, Burton protected more federal wilder-

ness land than all congresses before him combined. That included Mineral King in the Sierras, the Santa Monica Mountains and Channel Islands and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. After his death and in his honor, Congress passed his California Wilderness Act, which preserved nearly another 3 percent of the state's entire land mass.

"If politics is an art," one eulogist said of him, "no artist painted with a more deft touch ... Phillip Burton lived with an intensity and a fury of the sun itself. He was consumed by the fires of his own brilliance." 🏠



Phillip Burton at work

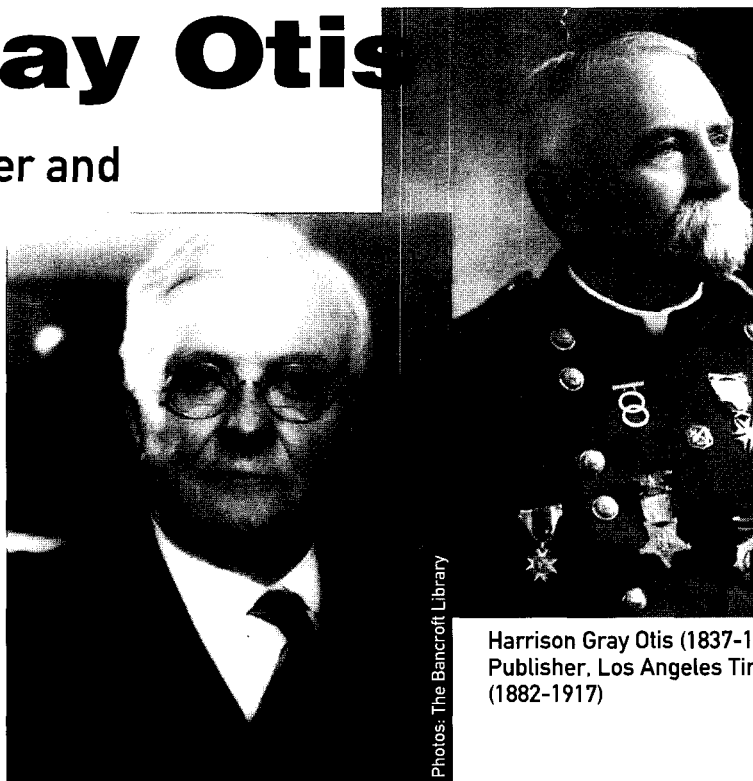
Harry Chandler and Harrison Gray Otis

Working in tandem, Harry Chandler and his father-in-law, Harrison Gray Otis, nurtured a union-busting, water-rustling, fortune-making enterprise, never shying from wielding their mighty creation, *The Los Angeles Times*, as a tool to shape L.A.

By Max Vanzi

Unlike his hot-tempered, union-busting father-in-law who preceded him as publisher of the early *Los Angeles Times*, Harry Chandler didn't pick fights in public, or even write for the paper. He set out to amass an empire. He succeeded beyond imagining.

The dynasty that brought to prominence California's mightiest newspaper wasn't content to practice mere journalism. By the time the Chandler family surrendered its



Photos: The Bancroft Library

Harry Chandler (1864-1944)
Publisher, Los Angeles Times, 1917-1944

Harrison Gray Otis (1837-1917)
Publisher, Los Angeles Times (1882-1917)

century of editorial control in the early 1990s, much of L.A.'s landscape lay as Harry Chandler shaped it. The origins of freeways, aerospace, Hollywood and the march of suburbia, all carry the Chandler imprint, all propelled by money, guile, political king-making and, when it came to water, that notorious fleecing of the Owens Valley.

Two other Chandlers would follow Harry at the head of the *Times*, his son Norman and later his grandson, Otis. But they weren't the dynasty's empire builders. That nameplate belongs at the beginning, to Harry Chandler and his combative father-in-law, Harrison Gray Otis.

General Otis came to California out of the Civil War, bought *Times* shares, did battle with a partner and took sole control in 1882. Along with boosterism for his town, revealed in the pages of his prospering paper, Otis nurtured a visceral hatred of organized labor. With rifles and shotguns kept handy on the premises, he editorially blasted unions as "a monstrous tyranny," and bullied city politicians into banning union picketing.

With labor tensions running high in October 1910, powerful explosions at the *Times* downtown plant gutted the building and killed 21 employees. "Oh, you anarchic scum," wrote Otis.

By then Harry Chandler had come to the *Times*, married the boss's daughter, and worked his way up to general manager and publisher-to-be. Both men wanted the same things for Los Angeles, fast growth and unfettered business, but they differed in method, as their respective reactions to the *Times* bombing illustrated. With the union-affiliated perpetrators in custody, Otis wanted "the sons of bitches to hang." Chandler wanted confessions in return for jail time, thus denying labor the martyrdom that would come with a state execution. Chandler prevailed, and a once-robust Los Angeles labor movement all but disappeared.

As general manager and publisher in later years, frugal, soft-featured, moralizing Harry Chandler—a throat-cutter in a business deal—by all accounts became the richest man in Southern California if not the West. His wealth was calculated in the hundreds of millions. By the 1930s he owned more than 2 million acres of city, suburban and agricultural lands, some spilling into Mexico.

He advertised Southern California across America, attracting selected newcomers to fill the housing tracts he created. He set up land syndicates, dummy corporations and trusts to heap up more investment capital for incipient airplane, rubber, oil and tourist industries.

His classic deal remains the watering of the San Fernando Valley, by which Chandler and a syndicate of business pals realized a profit of \$100 million as new homes and towns sprang up across the once arid city outskirts. They did it by buying cheap, and keeping secret the deal cooking at the time in 1904 to import water from the Owens River Valley in the eastern Sierra. Landowners, snickered out of their water rights, watched their verdant valley become a desert.

Just as ruthlessly, Chandler co-opted the political arena, using mainly surrogates on the *Times* staff as instruments of his will.

The Herbert Hoover White House publicly acknowl-

edged its gratitude to *Times* Washington correspondent Robert B. Armstrong, who pursued, in tandem, Harry Chandler's interests and those of the president. At City Hall, meanwhile—they still relate this one in the *Times* city room—reporter Carlton Williams would stride into

Along with boosterism for his town, revealed in the pages of his prospering paper, Otis nurtured a visceral hatred of organized labor.

City Council chambers giving signals, thumbs up or thumbs down, on how council members should vote. Conservative members routinely complied.

In all assessments of the "bad paper" era at the *Times* with its right-wing vitriol and slanted news, the most fully formed of Chandler's alter egos was political editor Kyle Palmer.

Both journalist and political fixer, Palmer became the state's pre-eminent Republican czar through most of three decades ending in the late 1950s. To his handiwork is ascribed, in large measure, the rise of Earl Warren and the fall of Goodwin Knight as California governors.

Harry Chandler relinquished control of the *Times* in 1941, but his brand of political power would live on for a time, firmly in the grip of Palmer.

Palmer quickly spotted the possibilities of the young Richard Nixon, coaching, some say inventing, the candidate who, starting in 1946, would win House and Senate seats, destroying with red-baiting smear tactics opponents Jerry Voorhis and Helen Gahagan Douglas.

Finally, in 1960, the *Times* holstered its high-powered guns for more noble pursuits. By then, following Harry and after him the more moderate Norman Chandler, the way was cleared for Otis Chandler to become publisher. Athlete, surfer, car fancier—a man for changing times—fair-minded Otis Chandler changed the *Los Angeles Times*. Palmer retired; Nixon got tough coverage and felt betrayed. Given vast new reporting resources, the paper joined the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* as among the best in the country.

Today, though, none of Harry Chandler's descendants holds sway over the content of paper, either for good or for ill. Corporate interests have taken over, and no return to the past seems likely. As a senior editor, Noel Greenwood, would tell worried colleagues as the Chandler century at the *Times* ended, "Otis has gone surfin' and he ain't coming back." 🏠



Cesar Chavez, 1927-1993
Founder, United Farm Workers

Photo: Rich Pedroncelli

Cesar Chavez

His eyes opened by the sudden poverty of his youth, Chavez, inspired by the beliefs of Gandhi, lived a life of sacrifice while carrying a banner for California's working poor.

By Gregory Rodriguez

The combination of his family's painful loss of stability and the indignities of farm labor inspired him to fight for justice. At age 19, he joined his first union, the National Agricultural Workers' Union, which, like its predecessors, would ultimately fail in its struggle to strengthen laborers' rights.

In a 1967 speech to United Auto Worker President Walter Reuther and other labor leaders, Chavez explained why past organizers had failed to successfully unionize farm workers. He placed the blame on the long-standing practice of romanticizing and patronizing poor people and ethnic minorities. Chavez believed that an advocate could not help anybody whom he pitied or in whom he had no faith. He also said he learned in a biography of Mohandas Gandhi that "one should never ask people to do things he couldn't do himself."

In that spirit, Chavez insisted on living a life of sacrifice when representing farmworkers, who were undoubtedly the most powerless, worst-treated members of the California work force. He believed that one had to live in poverty to understand the poor.

For 10 years prior to working with farm laborers,

Cesar Chavez rose to prominence in the 1960s, but he cannot properly be called a man of his time. His campaign to organize and improve the working conditions of farm workers may have dovetailed with the broader movement for civil rights in America, but his approach to social issues was probably more medieval than modern. Rejecting the constricting ideologies and ethnic nationalism of the era, Chavez preached a universal message of human dignity and morality, and resorted to age-old, faith-based strategies to combat contemporary injustice.

Born in Arizona in 1927 to an entrepreneurial, land-owning family, Chavez first experienced the severe hardship of migrant farm work when his family lost its 160-acre farm and several businesses when he was 11 years old. After attending more than 30 schools, Chavez dropped out in the eighth grade to help his family earn a living. In later years, the labor leader would look back fondly at the time his family owned land and contrast it with the bitter poverty of their years as itinerant laborers. One winter, the Chavez family was forced to live in a tent in Oxnard, California. When their parents could not make ends meet, Cesar and his brother would collect and sell the tinfoil from cigarette packages left along the highway.

Chavez believed that an advocate could not help anybody whom he pitied or in whom he had no faith.

Chavez worked as an organizer for Saul Alinsky's Community Service Organization (CSO) in San Jose. Alinsky's pragmatic grass-roots organizing philosophy and Gandhi's ideal of nonviolent protest were formidable influences on