



Charles Preisker



Charles "Leo" Preisker graduated from Santa Maria High School in 1903 and was class president and valedictorian. Spurned on by his father, Thomas Preisker's example, Leo worked hard at a young age. He worked for a year at the Union Sugar Company earning money so that he could attend law school. He graduated from Hastings School of Law in 1907. Leo worked for the law office of Gray and Cooper in San Francisco until returning to Santa Maria to practice law with his father, who had suffered an illness. Leo Preisker served as city attorney (as did his father) for Santa Maria from 1915 to 1920.

In addition to law, Charles Preisker had a long and distinguished career as a politician. In 1910, he was elected to a term in the Assembly. In 1915, California's Governor Hiram Johnson appointed Preisker to the Board of Supervisors, a post he held for nearly 30 years. He served as chairman of the board for 22 of those 30 years. With the advent of the automobile, Charles is credited with seeing the need for decent roads in the Santa Maria Valley and implementing the construction of the improved roads. At the time, Santa Maria had only muddy, rough dirt roads used largely by horses and wagons. After the floods of 1911 and 1915, Preisker began laying the groundwork for flood control in the Valley by taking his crusade to Washington DC in 1940 to convince the Bureau of Reclamation of the need for a

dam.

After the 1925 Santa Barbara earthquake, the Santa Barbara County courthouse was destroyed, and Preisker was instrumental bringing about the building of the current Santa Barbara County courthouse in Santa Barbara which is now known as one of the most beautiful and elegant courthouses in the world. Outside the door to the Mural Room stands a picture of Charles Preisker as a tribute to his ingenuity, inspiration, and determination in bringing to fruition the building of Santa Barbara's beautiful courthouse. He retired from the practice of law on January 31, 1951, and passed away on May 6, 1966.



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Did You Know?

This plaque is displayed outside the door to the Mural Room at the Santa Barbara Courthouse, honoring Leo Preisker for his many years of service on the Board of Supervisors, serving on the Board from 1915 to 1943, and as chairman from 1925 to 1943.

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