

LOS ANGELES CITY PLATES

by
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In researching the evasive Los Angeles City plates, I was to learn quite a bit about city and county bureaucracy as applied to ordinances, rules, and regulations. All of these play a big part in the history of the L.A. City plates. This is due to the fact that the city plates have been under the control of both the City and County of Los Angeles.



On September 10, 1980, portions of the County of Los Angeles Solid Waste Ordinance # 11886 became effective in the City of Los Angeles. This ordinance is

applicable to those firms which collect residential and/or commercial refuse; construction/demolition debris; or are located, or operate in the City of Los Angeles. This ordinance requires a permit for each solid waste collection firm, and a separate permit for each collection vehicle. Along with the issuing of the permits, the department issues the city plates. No fees are charged for the plates, however, but annual permit fees of \$41 would increase to \$240 with implementation of county control.

Prior to the September, 1980 ordinance, the plates were under control of the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Maintenance (Street Use Inspection Division).

The origin of the plates can only be traced to about 1957, as that is the earliest any employee of the city office can remember them being issued.

After talking to the heads of both city and county offices, I did learn that very few historical facts are available. When each year's issue expired, the plates were disposed of



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and forgotten. All details were lost in the quagmire of city and county paperwork.

While this is discouraging to plate collectors, a number of interesting facts were assembled, using the information available from the two offices. This information should shed a little light on the elusive L.A. City plate.

1- The city plates are found on private company owned disposal trucks that are used to transport solid waste in L.A. city, and unincorporated county areas.

2- Issuance of the plates required that each truck be inspected and approved for a permit.

3- "Loose control" by the city, as described by the Environmental Protection Agency, resulted in the responsibilities being shifted to the county Department of Health Services. This signaled the beginning of the end for the city plates.

4- As far back as anyone contacted can recall, the annual change of the plates varied by truck, as inspections were performed and the truck certified. The date on the plates only showed year of issue. Some could even have a valid plate as late as September of the following year!

5- For the past ten years, the plates were manufactured by the Dixie Seal and Stamp Company of Atlanta, Georgia. They were awarded the contract by being the lowest bidder for the 1000 plate minimum order per year. The highest numbered plate actually issued was #928, in 1980. All unused plates are returned to the firm for melting down.

6- When the plates expire, they become the property of each individual company to do with as they please.

7- Numbers are issued in sequence based on inspection date. A truck issued number 1 in 1980, could receive number 645 in 1981.

8- Colors varied annually, and they were chosen so as not to blend with the California plate colors. They were also chosen at the disposition of the chief inspector.

9- The future of the L.A. City plate is very clouded. It is believed that the 1982 issue will be the last, being replaced by the County plate with annual stickers (at right).

10- The city plate is considered a burden by the county, so the 700 or so trucks carrying the city plates will be joining those that carry the county plates, thus preserving the mysteries of the city plate from plate collectors!

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Colors.....

pre 1964...?

1964 Yellow/Red

1965-1969...?

1970 White/Olive Green

1971 Red/White

1972 Orange/White

1973 White/Medium Blue

1974 White/Pumpkin

1975 Blue/Yellow-orange

1976 Blue/White with red rim

1977 White/Red

1978 Black/Orange

1979 White/Green

1980 Black/White

1981 White/Black

1982 Black/White *

*Note...this is the first time the
colors were reused with less
than a five year seperation.

ed. note... If any of you have these
plates in your collection please let
either Dave or myself know the year
and the colors. We would like to
have more information than is given
here. There is a lot more to know
about this issue.
