

Nick Harris

By Patrick Andre and Ryan Ellett

Nicholas Boilvin Harris was born in 1882 in Chicago, Illinois. His father, Carl C. Harris was editor of the *Chicago Daily News*. When Harris was fifteen his father died and Harris subsequently moved to Southern California. He worked for a time as an investigative reporter for the *Los Angeles Daily Journal* and *The Record* before he got a job with the Los Angeles Police Department on the sergeant's desk at their headquarters.

Nick Harris opened his private detective agency in 1906 and in the following decades he worked closely with the police to solve some very public crimes. In 1921 Harris was awarded a diamond-studded gold badge from the police for his help in solving the kidnaping case of Hollywood matron Gladys Witherell. During the 1920s and 1930s several two-reel films were made about his exploits. And beginning in 1923 Harris appeared weekly on radio to recount detective stories, typically with the mantra that "crime does not pay." His radio program *A Salute to the Law*, ran for 19 years until the end of 1942. In 1934 Harris briefly had a second program titled *How Detectives Work* on KECA, which discussed the scientific methods used to solve crimes at the time.

Harris was a Los Angeles mayoral candidate in 1929 and active in the civic life of Los Angeles. He was chosen president of the Southern California Association of Detective Agencies in 1931 and was also a member of the Lions Club, Elks Lodge, Mizpah Masonic Lodge, the Los Angeles Breakfast Club, and director of the Wilshire Chamber of Commerce. He was the author of the books *In The Shadows* (1923), and *Famous Crimes* (1933).

Harris married Mary Martin, the daughter of a Southern California oilman and they aren't known to have had any children. He died January 1, 1943, at the age of 61 due to complications of pneumonia after suffering a heart attack. Nick Harris' legacy lives on to this day with the Nick Harris Detectives and Detective Academy still training private investigators in Agoura Hills, California.