



# SANTA BARBARA

YACHT CLUB

## **W. Preston Butcher: 1924, 1930, 1931**

1891-1969

William Preston Butcher was a smart young lawyer who held a variety of legal positions over his lifetime. In his early professional life, Preston was appointed public notary by Governor D. W. Pierce. He worked as a litigator, then defense attorney, later served as city attorney and eventually he pre-sided as a Superior Court judge for Santa Barbara County. Dedicated to yachting, Preston eventually served three terms as commodore.

This young attorney had made a name for himself in 1925 during the “Tong Wars” in Santa Barbara. He was hired as a defense attorney – before the crime had even been committed! At midnight, two Chinese men shot the president of the rival joss house – in full view of 25 witnesses who were exiting a nearby theater in downtown Santa Barbara. After two suspects were found and arrested, Preston entered their “not guilty” plea on the basis of mistaken identity. In court, Preston had the defendants leave and then re-enter with eight other Chinese men. He marched the line-up before the witnesses who could not identify the assassins.

He joined the Yacht Club when it was reorganizing in 1919 and served three terms as commodore. Preston was elected in 1924, and then was unanimously elected six years later in 1930. This was followed by another term of office in 1931. The 1931 yachting season was inaugurated by the parade of the fleet and a Star boat race for the new El Encanto Trophy.