

Feb 22 1977

MEMORIES OF SAN DINAS

By: HAZEL HAMPTON

When I came to San Dinias in 1911 the dust was deep on Bonita Avenue. We lived on Ames' Ranch, where Mrs. Dunning now lives. The Neher Block was just finished and Mr. Amos Neher had a grocery store there. Later he ran a contest to get a name and slogan for the store and came up with "Nip and Tuck"; we nip the prices you tuck the profits. They sent a soliciter (John Offield) around to all of the customer's homes in the morning to find out what groceries they wanted and delivered them in the afternoon.

Just east of the Neher Block was the two storied house that now stands on west Bonita, next to the building where the San Dinias Press, then called the San Dinias Eagle was printed. Mrs. McMullin had a rooming and boarding house in this building. The meals were served family style and if you remember "Shorty" Poole (the unwashed), just picture him standing up and reaching across the table for anything he wanted. Then there was a small building where "Uncle Ben" did watch repairs. The First National Bank was on the corner of Exchange place and the rest of the block was vacant.

West of Monte Vista, then called Depot Street, was the building now a hardware store. At various times it was the post office, dry goods store, etc. There were apartments over head. There was an old woman, Mrs. Beamon who lived there and had a very pretty grand-daughter, Myrtle Blake, whom she watched like a hawk. She would walk to meet her as she came from grammar school, carrying a whip in case any boys were walking home with Myrtle. One morning when the dry goods store had advertised a sale, a large crowd gathered on the corner before the store opened. Mrs. Beamon objected to the noise and opened her window and dumped the contents of her pot onto them. One day for some reason she undertook to whip Jess Whitted. If you remember Jess, you may well know that he took the whip and used it on her.

If anyone needed anything besides groceries they took the street car from the depot on San Dinias Avenue, near where the post office now is; rode it to Lone Hill and transferred either to Pomona or to Los Angeles. San Dinias was "dry" (local option), so many people took the street car to Los Angeles and brought home their own liquor.

I walked from Ames' Ranch to Bonita High School, where Damien High School now is, and would have walked further to go to school. La Verne was then "Lordsburg"; no school busses.

The town was surrounded with orange and lemon groves and during the blooming season the air was heavy with perfume. The orange and lemon houses were the main source of employment for packers and pickers. I worked in the orange house when they hired sixty packers during the packing season and we got lots of outside workers, "Fruit Tramps" we called them.

No one of Mexican extraction was allowed to live north of first street. I remember years afterward hearing Mrs. George Rogers very indignantly complaining that a Mexican family had moved in next to her on Second Street, -"Right on the front of the lot".

The fruit packing houses built the cement houses west of Acacia Street for the families of Mexican pickers, but it was many years before they would hire Mexican packers. There was also an orange house, the Randolph Packing House, on the Southern Pacific track, but it burned and was never rebuilt.

The school was on Cataract Street and there were Methodist and Baptist Churches and also a Catholic Church which was on Acacia Street. Later the Community Church was started on Fourth Street and then transferred to the corner of Third Street and San Dimas Avenue. The Christian Church was built on Monte Vista Street and after having been burned was rebuilt on East Juanita Avenue.

One of the biggest changes is that we never had to lock our doors then. I lived on North Cataract near Allen Avenue for many years and I never owned a key. I worked in the post office and then go to see my mother who was alone while my brothers were in the army, and go home late at night and go into a dark, unlocked house with no fear. Zip and Jack and Manette were all working swing shifts in plane plants.

One of the main differences was that you could always see the mountains on a clear day and a woman or girl could safely walk anywhere she wished in town or country.

Puddingstone Canyon was a beautiful canyon with a little creek and a falls with a swimming hole below.

For a long time the "City Fathers" didn't want San Dimas to grow. The Orange Products plant wanted to locate in San Dimas, in fact started here, but the Water Company would not supply them with water or a way to dispose of the refuse so it located in Ontario and has provided lots of jobs there.

There was a family moved in next to us while I was a girl at home. The woman came over and asked Mother where the Fritter trees were. Mother asked what she meant and she said she was told back in Oklahoma that fritters grew on trees in California and dropped off into pools of honey.

When we came here there were lots of tent houses; floors with walls built up about three feet and canvas on top; no running water or sanitary facilities.

Furthermore, the theatre was not started in the late 1920's and if it ever was called the "Blue Bird Theatre" I do not recall it. I do not know for sure when it was started but it was there in 1913 because that is where I met Zip. The article (historical plaque) is correct about the piano playing. I went to dances in the hall in the Fisher Building for several years. Both the Modern Woodmen and Royal Neighbors lodges met there. The building also was occupied at other times by a variety store, bowling alley (duckpins), a restaurant and also a livery stable.

I guess progress is inevitable and good but I go such a long way back. I vaguely remember the Spanish American war, the first phonograph I ever saw, the first automobile and motorcycle, the first motion picture (I stood up in a tent to watch the one reel picture), the first telephone and electric light.

San Dimas was a nice little town to grow up in. I was nearly sixteen when I came here.