

San Dimas Historical Society Fall Meeting - November 7, 1986

San Dimas - The Early Years

Speaker, Don Pflueger

Introduction: Born in Covina, Don Pflueger has always been interested in this area's history. His honors thesis at Pomona College, a history of Glendora, was published in book form in 1951. A similar book on the history of Covina appeared in 1964. From 1970 to 1984 he edited the quarterly journal of the Pomona Valley Historical Society, "The Mt. San Antonio Historian". Don was a charter board member of the Glendora and Covina historical societies and has just completed a three-year term on the Board of the Historical Society of Southern California. Between 1952 and 1983 he was a member of the history faculty of Cal Poly and is currently writing a history of the university.

"It's true that we're going to have a centennial celebration coming up, not from the standpoint of the original settlement of San Dimas, but of its being subdivided into lots and these sold to people during the boom of the 1880's. San Dimas fits into the pattern with many of the other foothill communities that grew up at the time that the Santa Fe came through. So I thought that for this evening what we would do is get a little background. Some things that you probably all know about, but perhaps it will help you put things in context.

If you want to go really way back in time, we have to consult the geologists. They tell us that this area here was once under water. Our mountain peaks were once islands. This is kind of hard to fathom, but in some of our mountain canyons they have found fossilized fish skeletons. As the water gradually receded, the landscape began to take form. In terms of other physical phenomena around us, you know that we have the earthquake faults. The San Andreas Fault that runs along the mountains above us, which is an extension of the Coast Range. Then feeder faults, or tangential faults, that extend down into the valley areas, the most prominent one being in this area, the San Antonio Fault, that criss-crosses our valley in a diagonal direction, roughly from Mt. Baldy, down through Claremont and Pomona, heading toward the beach areas. That fault has not been active in centuries, so there is a little basic concern about it. It happens to run right through the Cal Poly Campus, and we know precisely where it is. I told my students each year on the beginning of California history that our classroom was less than fifty feet from an earthquake fault. That was very true, but not a fault that we need to worry about. The faults out in the San Bernardino are ones that people should be a little concerned about, perhaps. It comes down from the Cajon Pass and where the Freeways cross, there are two faults that also cross. So it's probably a good idea to step on the accelerator a little when you get to that stack of freeways.

Getting back to our own area - There is some dispute today about whether the Indians were our first inhabitants. Those of you who might have been out to the Calico dig east of Barstow have had your minds stretched quite a bit. How many of you have been out there? I'd urge the rest of you to go out there sometime and draw your own conclusions as to whether or not there was prehistoric man out there. Presumably that is true and down in this area also. We do know that the Indians were here, all over the place. And many of you who were former citrus growers, perhaps have found, as we did in our citrus grove in Glendora,

Indian artifacts. When I was a boy about 7 or 8 years old, my Dad came in one day with a beautiful Indian bowl, which, by the way, we still have. Indian bowls and metates have been found in many, many places. Where you find a concentration, though, and not just an occasional one, you are perhaps on a site of what was later called a rancheria, or a settlement of some sort. And we have several of these in this area. Unquestionably there was some sort of settlement of Indians, a rancheria, at Mud Springs. I took an archeologist over there once, a professor of archaeology that we hired at Cal Poly, and he scratched around a bit and said, yes, there were Indians here. What told him that, I don't know. He could determine in little fine grains of gravel, little pebbles, that Indians had been there. We were excavating for a building over at Cal Poly, our Science building, several years ago, and two lovely Indian bowls were brought up, found at a depth of about 4 feet.

We know that there was a concentration of Indians approximately where the Masonic Home is in Covina today. Over 200 bowls were found there. The citrus grower who owned that area used to give them to guests who came to his home on Sunday. So these bowls all disappeared and we don't know where they are. Al Fages in Pomona who lives near the Casa Primera unearthed years ago a very beautiful bowl under his oak tree, not far from Ganesha Park. In fact, the graves of 4 or 5 Indians were found in the Ganesha Park area. Archaeologists exhumed the bodies, or bones, and found some jewelry and a few other things from these very primitive Indians. There's only one book out on our local Indians, by a woman named Bernice Johnston and its called The Gabrielino Indians of Southern California. It was published by the Southwest Museum about 15 years ago. It tells in greater detail about the Indians of the Pomona area.

So we know there were Indians. But they were pretty well gone by the time that the first Anglos arrived. Not entirely so, though. There were still a few Indians in the El Monte area when the first white settlers came in there in 1851. Mr. and Mrs. Garey, after which Garey Avenue in Pomona was named - when they first came into El Monte the Indians brought them an assortment of dried weeds. Mrs. Garey put them in a frame and that framed picture of dried weeds is in the Phillips Mansion here in Pomona today. A lot more could be said about the Indians, but we should pass along. Except to say that the last Indians in this area were probably on Indian Hill in Claremont. Interestingly enough, they were not local Indians. They were Indians that came up from San Luis Rey Mission and worked on the ranchos during the last days of the cattle era here in this area.

Back to Mud Springs for a moment. There are two markers involved there. One was put up by the Pomona Valley Historical Society when Genevieve Walker was active in the Society. There is a more recent marker that was put up when the road changed slightly, and this new marker doesn't say very much. As you know, it said on the marker that Mud Springs was the site of an encampment by Juan Bautista DeAnza in 1776, '74 and '76, I think he made two trips into the area. And then at a later time, was the camping spot of Jedediah Smith in 1826. Once something appears in bronze, it seems to be there forever, in the sense that noone questions it. But I think it's a good idea to look at the diaries again of both DeAnza and Jedediah Smith to determine whether this was really the likely place. We know that

Mud Springs actually was a favorite watering hole way down to the days that the citrus growers pumped so much water that the water table fell and the springs, of course, dried up.

Jedediah Smith came through from the Salt Lake area in 1826 and his expedition was significant because he opened up the overland route to California from the East. Of course other mountain men were soon to follow. Among those was Isaac Williams, who settled on the Rancho Chino. He deserves a great deal of credit as he was one of the first Anglos in the area and for making the Rancho Chino extraordinarily prosperous. He was one of the few mountain men who came to Calif. and unlike Jedediah Smith and others, he stayed here and developed the land.

A few years later the first party of people came here with the idea of actual settlement - these were not trappers and fur people - they came here to settle and to get into the cattle business. The first party coming overland was that of Rowland and Workman who came in 1841 and ultimately settled on the Rancho La Puente, an enormous grant of land that extended all the way from the West Covina-La Puente area almost to the San Gabriel Mission. They soon had an active farming operation, both in terms of fruit and other kinds of grains, as well as running enormous herds of cattle.

The Rancho era of California is the one that we associate with the romantic era of our past. So let's look at this in terms of our own area here. The grant of land on which we're located at this moment is part of the grant given to Ignacio Palomares and Ricardo Vejar in 1837. Palomares brother-in-law was Luis Arenas and he was granted the Rancho Azusa in 1842. Pretty soon they teamed up and the three men then became each a third owner in the entire San Jose and Azusa ranchos. They petitioned for and received what is now the Glendora area which was called the San Jose Adicion and that then was incorporated as part of the larger ranching operations. Arenas after only two years, sold out to Henry Dalton. Henry Dalton became the owner of this huge grant of land which he said was so large that he could stand on his hill there in Azusa and his ranch extended as far as he could see in all directions. He also collected ranchos as some people collect butterflies and had ranchos extending on into the Pasadena area.

We have here in our own vicinity an old adobe that many of you are familiar with. That is the Carrion Adobe which Genevieve and Harry Walker deserve a lot of credit for having saved from absolute destruction. Harry bought it for Genevieve and gave it to her as a birthday present. This adobe was built in 1863. The land itself was a gift from Palomares to Carrion and consisted of 340 acres, which was a relatively small plot of land. That also included Mud Springs, apparently.

With the passage of time Palomares and Vejar and Dalton got into squables and they divided their land. Dalton kept the Azusa Rancho and the San Jose Adicion which includes Glendora. That area roughly north of Holt Avenue in Pomona went to Palomares, and that south of Holt went to Vejar. That extended roughly from Chino on the south around the hills to Walnut on the west. So they were still very large ranchos, after they were split up.

Back in the San Dimas area once again, the first settlers of San Dimas were Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Clancy. I think perhaps this is where Genevieve Walker's scrapbook will be of tremendous interest in identifying these early residents and the history about them. These people settled in Mud Springs in the early 1860's. They sustained themselves by getting a contract to supply hay or grain to the Army as troops passed through the valley. This would have been at the time of the American Civil War. The California Home Guard or whatever its equivalent was in that day and age, was passing through the area quite frequently. California did not actually take sides in the Civil War, in the sense of sending troops either to the North or South, but we had a lot of men in uniform traipsing about the State. It was Dalton's land that they were on, and apparently, the Clancy's got into a squabble with Dalton and this seems to have the reason they gave up the small cabin that they had and moved to Los Angeles, in 1870. Before that happened, however, the stagecoaches started to run through, and those that went between San Bernardino and Los Angeles stopped at Mud Springs. Conceivable, the Clancy's were able to become something of a stage stop. Not a stage station as such, where horses were changed, rather a place where people were able to get fresh water and perhaps food.

The 1860's were pretty dour times in Southern California, simply because of three years of terrible drought. There just was no rain at all, cattle died like flies; there were even stories of cattle being run off the cliff at San Pedro to put them out of their misery. In any event, the cattle industry suffered a tremendous set-back, and it never really did come back afterwards. Even though prices for beef were enhanced by the Gold Rush up in central California and our cattle were sometimes drive to that area, nonetheless the drought more or less ruined the industry. In the early 1870's, fencing laws were passed, and this also inhibited the open-range cattle situation that we had before. I urge you all to read Robert Glass Clellan's Cattle on a Thousand Hills, which treats of this period in our history, and is very, very good.

The old San Dimas name which you all know, is that of the Teague family. They came overland in covered wagons, in 1865. C. P. Teague and his wife and 8 children. After several years in Sacramento, they came south in 1878, lived for a while in Mound City, which was a development that Henry Dalton had going in trying to subdivide his Rancho Azusa. Then they came over to Mud Springs. Only a chimney remained of the Clancy home, and the Teagues built a lean-to against it. They raised both grain and sheep.

David Teague planted ten acres of oranges on Cienega Ave. east of San Dimas. His first child, Elmer, was the first American child born in San Dimas. David C. Teague helped to organize the San Dimas Orange Growers Assn. and at various times helped organize two banks in town.

His younger brother Robert M. Teague left an even more indelible mark on San Dimas by starting what became the largest citrus nursery in the world. Starting in 1889 just as citrus began to take hold as a result of greater availability of water, the nursery grew in to a thriving business. By the turn of the century he was producing a quarter of a million trees a year. The demand for new trees peaked just before the first World War, from 1910 on. Many of the trees were sent to the far corners of the earth. We had a terrible freeze in the year 1913, which was a tremendous set-back to the citrus growers. Teague had some labor problems and had to hire foreigners. On one occasion the Mexicans got into a scrap with the Hindu's.

Before we get on with the story of citrus, though, we ought to back up to the boom of the 80's, when the Santa Fe first came through. The story on the completion of the Santa Fe is a little bit confused. Because of the completion of the Union and Central Pacific at Promontory Point in Utah, and all the drama involved in driving the golden spike up there, we have the idea that wherever the last spike is driven into the track marks the completion of the track. That wasn't quite the case in what happened with the Santa Fe. The Santa Fe was an interesting company. It started out hauling cattle from the American Midwest, to Chicago, and then kept pushing forward, and of all things, it arrived on the Pacific Ocean first, down in Guaymas, Mexico. Then they came into San Bernardino, across the Cajon Pass, and from there they purchased the California Southern Line which ran between San Bernardino and San Diego. So their second arrival at the Pacific Coast was at San Diego. Then their third effort was the one that was so influential in the history of San Dimas, putting a line through from San Bernardino to Los Angeles. Once again, they had some help in that there was already an existing line. It was simply a matter of purchasing the old Los Angeles-Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley railroad, which by this time had gotten out almost to the Azusa area. I think that building the bridge across the San Gabriel River held things up for a while. In any event the Santa Fe people bought out that railroad and then starting pushing eastward to San Bernardino. They hooked up there in Azusa and that's where the last spike was driven, as far as I can determine.

But they couldn't run trains over it until they did some repair work in San Dimas. They had to put in something called "angle iron", insofar as I can determine, this is something that is used as a brace on curves. This was on the first curve of the Santa Fe west of San Dimas. So two weeks after the last spike was driven, the angle iron arrived from the East, was put in, and then the first train went over the track. That first train carried coal, would you believe, from San Diego to Los Angeles, by way of San Bernardino. The second train carried the officials of the Santa Fe Line. They wanted to make an inspection of their trackage and they, of course, went on to Los Angeles. That's as best as I can determine, the story locally of our Santa Fe line. This was in April and May of 1887, so during our celebration next year, we should pay homage to the Santa Fe and all that that meant to the development of the Foothill communities including San Dimas.

This was also the beginning of a time that is frequently called the "Boom of the 80's". If you haven't already done so, try to find and read a book by Glenn Dumke, former chancellor of the State University system, who did his doctoral dissertation on the topic and the book was published by the Huntington Library, The Boom of the 80's in Southern California. It's a marvelous book, with some nice pictures incidentally, of the old Lordsburg Hotel. The 'boom of the 80's' simply means that there was a real estate boom the likes of which we've never seen before or since. People now could get on the train in the East and come all the way to Southern California. Not by way of San Francisco as they had to do earlier. This made it easy and with the completion of the Santa Fe, the two lines, Santa Fe and Southern Pacific got into competition and the rates were very, very low. Some folks say they were so low that it was only a dollar from the East to Los Angeles. Other people have questioned this, and apparently there's no way to prove the story one way or the other.

In any event, the fare was low. I recall reading the Diary of a man in Glendora who shipped a half carload of farm equipment from St. Louis to Glendora for \$7.50. So you can see that rates were ridiculously low. So, people got on the train to see what Southern California was all about. They came here in enormous numbers and bought land at terribly inflated prices. The realtors got here first and set out towns along the tracks and went into the sale of city lots as well as agricultural property.

The story of the demise of the rancheros is a long and rather pitiful story. It was one actually, of more or less confiscation of the land of those who couldn't prove one way or the other that they were legal owners of the land by American definitions. That's again a long involved story that I don't want to get into here.

There was created what was called, the San Jose Ranch ~~Land~~ Company. This was a land development company. The agent locally in San Dimas was a man by the name of E. M. Marshall. In addition to selling town lots in San Dimas, he also ran the local hardware store and one of the local citrus groves.

There were many other communities developed at the same time along the tracks of the Santa Fe: Claremont; Palomares, which later became known as North Pomona, and is an integral part of Pomona today; Lordsburg which was developed by a realtor named I. W. Lord; Alosta, and Glendora, which later merged to become one community; and there were other towns both east and west.

The community of La Verne was located on N. Damien Ave. where a hotel was built in anticipation of the railroad. But the railroad changed its route and the hotel was left stranded. It later became the David and Margaret Home about a mile or so south, and many other buildings were moved to San Dimas and Lordsburg. About 1910, the community of Lordsburg changed its name to La Verne. This leads to some confusion, and when you read about early Lordsburg and early La Verne, you have to keep in mind that these were originally two communities.

A man by the name of T. E. Gore became the Santa Fe agent and also planted 10 acres of citrus. In 1889 the Santa Fe station was completed in San Dimas. Not too many of these old railroad stations remain, unfortunately. In the 1950's they replaced a lot of the old stations with modern ones and this is most regrettable for most of these old stations were architectural masterpieces.

The San Dimas Hotel, which stands today as the San Dimas Mansion restaurant was built by the San Jose Ranch Company. One of the larger investors in that company was M. L. Wicks. His name crops up in other towns, also. He was involved in the development of Azusa, for instance, at the same time. The Hotel was completed just as the boom ended, and it never had a paying guest. In fact, Mr. Gore refused the Hotel as a gift. The Company sold 40 acres of land to a Mr. Carter and they palmed off the Hotel on him, with the land. The story goes that he accepted the challenge, bought furniture for all thirty rooms in the Hotel. He sold it to Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Walker who saw in the building the possibility of a very fine residence. Of course, the Walker family kept the building and still own it. It is one of the architectural gems of Southern California.

I. N. Walker came to San Dimas and purchased 1,000 acres, putting his son Harry in charge; the land was in and around Puddingstone. They raised apricots and prunes, but lost their shirts because there was no market. It was then they planted citrus, mostly lemons, but had mixed results with that in the early days. I had the opportunity to talk to Harry Walker, almost 40 years ago, and he told me that he planted lemons, and when the first crop came in, he picked them, took them down to the Santa Fe, put them on a boxcar. He had about half a carload. Then he, himself, got on that boxcar with his lemons and headed east for Chicago. When he got out in the desert someplace, the lemons started to rot, so he had no choice but to dump the lemons and take the next train headed West. He came back to San Dimas, pulled up his lemon trees, replanted wheat, and the next year the refrigerated car was invented and the citrus industry flourished.

Another early pioneer, whose granddaughter is with us this evening, was James A. Johnstone who came from Ontario, Canada, like Geroge Chaffey, over in the Ontario and Cucamonga area, in the early '60's. He returned with his family in 1890 and planted 80 acres of oranges. He built the Johnstone block in downtown San Dimas, which is still in the family. His son, W. A. Johnstone hauled oranges to Claremont, but later helped found the San Dimas Orange Association. He founded the city's first bank, lumber company, San Dimas Water Company, and San Dimas Fruit Exchange. He was twice elected to the State legislature, being particularly influential in state water law. George Chaffey, I might add, helped to originate many of those laws as well. With that as a background he was the first president of the State Water Commission. He was later named as chairman of the Civil Service Commission's Division of Purchase and Custody. At one point, he was acting Speaker of the Assembly.

It's hard for those of us who grew up during the age of citrus to realize that even before citrus we had a diversified agricultural picture here. I mentioned that Harry Walker had the various grains, Wheat, barley, oats, but then deciduous fruits were popular throughout the entire area. Oftentimes these fruits were dried. Glendora and many other places had a dryer, where the fruit was taken and dried in the sunlight, then shipped to the East. The creation of the refrigerated car on the Santa Fe made it possible for all sorts of fresh produce to be shipped East. Strawberries and other kinds of berries were planted, oftentimes between the rows of early citrus trees that had not yet become profitable. The early growers were interested primarily in 'cash crops' until the citrus became profitable.

Pomona was once called the Olive Capitol of the United States, long before it became prominent for citurs. Olives were also planted elsewhere.

The Southern Pacific arrived in 1895 - a spur line originating in Bassett, coming through Covina and San Dimas and rejoining the main line in Pomona. This saved Covina and helped San Dimas by providing competition for Santa Fe. Incidentally, T. E. Gore was the agent for both railroads, (though not at the same time.) The Station on Cataract burned to the ground sometime before 1910 and a new one was built. This second station burned in 1955 at a time when I lived a couple of blocks from it on the Johnstone Ranch.

Then came the Pacific Electric. The Southern Pacific electrified their line that ran through Covina and told San Dimas that if it



wanted the streetcar service it would have to provide the right-of-way. W. A. Johnstone headed a committee that raised the money and bought the land. The line branched off at Lone Hill, headed north-easterly, crossing San Dimas Avenue at Fourth Street, where they ultimately built a very attractive depot. The Line continued on up into San Dimas Canyon. There was a rock quarry up there that provided road-bed materials, gravel and so forth, for the company and also for some of our early highways. The citrus growers used the line for such things as hauling of fertilizers and smudge oil. Presumably there was Sunday passenger service to San Dimas County Park, but I have never been able to confirm it. The San Dimas Canyon Park is one of the oldest, if not the oldest County Park. Later on, the PE used the former Southern Pacific spur line, and still later, there was bus service instead of the Big Red Cars. An era had passed.

The Citrus Industry was synonymous with San Dimas. It started in the 1880's and '90's, and extended on down almost to the present, and I guess there are a few groves around even yet. Certainly the period from 1890 to 1950 was the era of a half-century of citrus, that was the number one income-producer, not just locally, but for the entire state of California. It's only in the post-World War II period that it was dwarfed by the aircraft industry, electronics and some of the things that we know in our own day and age.

The history of citrus is something that is terribly complicated. It's not been really well-done yet by the historians. We need more research and especially more writing on that age of citrus, not only from the economic standpoint, but from the standpoint of the cultivation of the citrus tree. What I think has been grossly overlooked is the social history of the people engaged in that particular business. The story of the Washington Navel orange is well-known. Oranges were carried westward from China to the Middle East, then to North Africa and southern Europe, thence to the Caribbean, Mexico and Brazil, then to California. It was planted at the San Gabriel Mission - they were seedlings, sour and seedy. The first grove was planted where the Los Angeles Depot is today. After the arrival of the railroad in 1876, citrus was planted in various places, the seeds and/or small trees coming from a variety of places. J. E. North discovered that oranges could be grown inland and put Riverside on the map by diverting the Santa Ana River to provide irrigation. Eliza and Luther Tibbets figure in the story of the navel orange, seedless, large, juicy and sweet.

Less well-known is the story of the Valencia orange, which was promoted by A. B. Chapman, an L.A. nurseryman who imported seeds and/or trees, probably from Valencia, Spain. (The name 'orange' comes from Oran, N. Africa.) The Valencia was promoted by C. C. Chapman (no relative) who went around trying to get the growers to give up the Mediterranean Sweets and the St. Michaels and all the other kinds of oranges and to concentrate on the Valencias. This is the summer orange from which we still get our frozen juice. Valencias seemed to do very well in this area, although San Dimas enjoyed a reputation for being best for lemons. Charter Oak had lots of Valencias, and lots of navels, too.

Citrus was grown almost everywhere in southern California, the major consideration being lack of winter frost, the availability of water, and overcoming of a myriad of obstacles ranging from insects to the means of marketing.



There are subtle differences between oranges and lemons. Lemons are more subject to frost than oranges and tend to prefer a sandy/rocky soil rather than the rich loam found in valley floors. San Dimas was an excellent lemon location as were Glendora and Claremont and other foothill communities. Year in and year out, lemons probably paid better than oranges; orange prices tended to fluctuate wildly.

The San Dimas Lemon Growers' Assn. built the largest lemon packing house in the nation, and that means the world. It was managed for many years by C. E. (Curly) Groniger who ultimately became manager of the Sunkist Exchange in Glendora, an association of packing houses. His place was taken by W. E. (Bill) Temple who still lives in the area.

The Industry fostered a way of life that has yet to be adequately described or analyzed. I regret to say that Cary McWilliams in his book, Southern California Country, has lots of derogatory things to say about citrus growers in the sense that they exploited Mexican labor and all that kind of thing.

The Freeze of 1937, plus the depression set the stage for many growers to look elsewhere for investment and employment opportunities. WW II helped the industry, but after the war, prices sank, land values increased, and Los Angeles was looking for bedroom communities. Quick decline wiped out many orange growers in the Covina area and elsewhere. Subdividers made attractive offers to growers about the time that increased taxes and smog began to bring on other discouragement. Even before WW II some growers next to busy roads noticed that fruit was smaller and some blamed it on auto exhaust. The 60's and 70's saw the arrival of many new industries, especially service industries for the new population.

(Don Pflueger closed by reading the following poem and article.)

"AN IDEAL" by Mrs. J.D.H.Browne, Pomona, Cal., in Land of Sunshine,  
Volume I, No. 3, August, 1894

On a table-land,  
With the mountains north,  
and south the sea,  
Our home shall be.

Its walls shall rise of the quarried rock,  
Each goodly block  
Spotted and veined with spar like snow--  
Wrought aeons ago.

Its rooms of the mountain pine shall be,  
That lordliest tree,  
Carven and smoothed so fair and fine,  
To show each line.

Wide doors to welcome many a guest,  
North, South, East, West;  
Large windows that shall frame the sea  
And the majesty  
Of the peaks that flush in the afterglow  
With their crowns of snow,  
And the purpose shadow that abides  
In their rifted sides.

Climbing tendrils and clustering leaves  
Shall deck the eaves  
And roses, crimson-lipped, shall sign  
As the breeze slips by  
And bears to the softly-shadowed rooms  
Their faint perfumes.

There an immortal grace shall stand,  
From the old "Art land",  
Visions in marble wrought to teach  
What the soul can reach;  
And there the wise of every age  
From the deathless page,  
Shall show of all things deep and high  
To the searcher's eye,  
And give of all things great and good  
For the spirit's food.

There will we gather those that are  
In lands afar,  
Loved and longed for many a year,  
To be always near.

Great pines upon our velvet lawn  
Salute the dawn,  
And bend their heads with mystic signs  
As the day declines.

Our olives in long vistas gray  
Shall softly sway,  
And orange groves with spheres of gold  
Their wealth unfold.

Down in the valley fair and green,  
In shadow and sheen,  
Scattered and clustered, now and then,  
Lie the homes of men.

And spanning all, serene and high,  
The sunlit sky  
Rests, like the hollow of God's hand,  
O'er sea and land.

Bigelow, C. H., "San Dimas, La Verne and Charter Oak." Out West, Feb., 1903

"... Don Ygnacio Palomares retained his interest, which was after his death distributed among his heirs, who sold to other parties, and still retain some valuable holdings. Some years later it was deemed necessary to obtain a complete abstract of the Rancho San Jose at the request of the attorney for the Palomares heirs, and it took six men ninety days to make the translations of the Spanish documents into English and properly complete the work. It is one of the longest abstracts in the world, and fills 38 volumes, which are on file in the Court House of Los Angeles County.

In 1877, the United States Government confirmed the original grant and issued a patent to Palomares, Dalton and Vejar. Francisco Palomares, a son of Ygnacio, in 1879, was the owner of 5,000 acres of land, comprising La Verne, part of Lordsburg, and a portion of San Dimas. At this time land in the upper San Gabriel Valley was of little value. It is related that Francisco, some years previous, had mortgaged his 5,000 acres for \$7,000. The date of foreclosure drew near, and after repeated efforts to sell or borrow, in Los Angeles, he determined on a trip to San Francisco, hoping to find someone "foolish" enough to speculate in Los Angeles County property. He visited banks and real estate dealers, offering his mortgage for sale. The almost invariable answer was, however, "we do not handle mortgages in Southern California."

At last he succeeded in interesting a Mrs. de Soto, who purchased 600 acres for \$4,800. This sale marked the beginning of a new era for the San Jose ranch. While from 1880 to 1886, the development consisted of only a few hundred acres planted to wheat and barley, yet slowly, but surely, its latent possibilities were beginning to be appreciated.

The portion of the Upper San Gabriel Valley known as San Dimas, La Verne, and Charter Oak is a typical Southern California ranching section. The aim of this article is to truthfully picture a developing California farming district.

After the boom of the '86-'87 a few stragglers were left on the San Jose ranch. Some because they could not realize enough on their holdings to get away and a few because they believed in the valley despite the scarcity of irrigating water.

The San Jose Land and Water Co. had succeeded in developing a small amount of water in the San Dimas Canyon - a few inches also being available from the "Mud Springs". All told, however, there was not enough obtainable to provide for 500 acres of land. As a result, La Verne was depopulated and San Dimas existed as little more than a name on the Santa Fe time card.

In 1887, H. C. Mace planted an orange orchard in Charter Oak and hauled irrigation water in wagons, from the springs two miles distant. About the same time, several ranchers attempted the cultivation of deciduous fruits and olives. None of these ventures met with permanent success on account of the scarcity of water.

At this time the prospects of the old San Jose ranch might have been very fittingly summed up in one word - "none". Some four years later a few indomitable spirits determined to make one last effort to secure water for irrigation. They procured a well-drilling outfit, and the result of their labor was water in abundance at a depth of 80 feet. From that day until the present, the development has been steady and substantial.

There are four distinctive features of this valley which merit mention: 1 - Absolute freedom from frosts, 2 - Abundance of water, 3 - Soil suited to either lemon or orange growing, 4 - a population made up of educated progressive people.

The first of these is worthy of more than passing note. The winter of 1901-2 was one of the most severe that California has known for 20 years, yet scarcely a leaf was curled in La Verne, San Dimas or Charger Oak. In fact, so favored has this strip of country been,

that it is known as "The Frostless Belt." When water was first discovered by drilling, the pessimists said "only a pocket." The reverse is, however, the case. One of our western rivers, with the bottom on top and top on the bottom is undoubtedly the source of supply. That the fountain-head is not local is proved by the fact that in spite of three consecutive dry years the flow has not decreased. The oldest wells have been lowered, in some instances, a few inches, in some three to four feet, in others not at all.

The following incident will help throw light on the nature of this supply. About four years ago a number of ranchers determined to drill a test well to a depth of 300 feet. At the 70-foot level they encountered water gravel and continued in practically the same formation for the remaining 230 feet. Today this part of the San Gabriel Valley has one of the most abundant and cheapest supplies of water in the West.

The major portion of the ranches are owned by people of comparatively little means. One particularly striking feature of California ranch life is here most admirably featured, i.e., the social side. A number of literary and horticultural clubs provide for the studios, while tennis, amateur photography, etc., offer relaxation to mind and body. In this part of the world, the farmer has time to play. Did you ever arise at 3 a.m., go out and waken the stock in order to feed them? Did you ever shuck corn with the thermometer trying to crawl into the bulb? Did you ever have to break ice in the old washpan just outside the kitchen door before you could wash your face in the morning?

If you have done these things - and repented - you will appreciate the difference between ten hours a day on a California ranch where the air is always soft and balmy, where old dame Nature is always smiling, and the 16-hour farm day "back East", with half of the year a round of rain and wind and sleet and snow, and the other half, fierce blinding, stifling heat.

Although comparatively new as a citrus region, 500 cars of lemons and oranges were shipped last year. These figures are not startling. "Significant" is the better word, because not more than one-third of the acreage already set out is in full bearing. Then, too, there are many acres of practically raw land awaiting the plow and grader.

One striking feature of this region is, that while land is comparatively cheap and much remains to be put in orchards, the ranchers as a rule seem to believe that it is better to do a little well, than much ill.

Right here a few facts regarding methods of marketing fruit are not amiss. Ninety per cent is handled cooperatively. San Dimas supports a Citrus Union and a Lemon Association, with a combined membership of 126. A certain sum was raised by sale of stock, packing houses built and equipped, and the net profits divided pro rata. Charger Oak also has a cooperative packing house conducted on a like plan.

San Dimas and Charter Oak divided the honor of receiving the highest price per box (\$15.50) paid to any California grower last year. I say divided, because, although raised in San Dimas, the Valencias in question are close enough to Charter Oak for the lighter winds to waft their fragrance over that particular district.

Someone has said "every town in the Southwest lays claim to having the biggest something in the world." The upper San Gabriel Valley is no exception to the rule. Their "biggest" is the San Dimas Nursery. When one considers that this stock is raised entirely in the open, with the exception of "seeds" (young trees in the lath house), we must believe in the verity of the "Frostless Belt."

Two transcontinental railroads traverse the valley - the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe. Distant but 28 miles from Los Angeles, with an electric railway in process of construction, San Dimas never expects to become a large city.. Ideally located as it is, however, the grim old Sierra Madres on the north, the green San Jose hills rolling away to the South, and the giants of the San Bernardino range on the East, the San Jose ranch is destined to become more beautiful with each passing year. The gray patches of undeveloped land will give way to the green and gold of orange groves.

Additional and more pretentious country homes will be erected. A few years, and Governor Alvarado's gift will be known the world over as one of the most lovely spots in the "picture State.""