

An oral interview of

Mrs. Dewey (Ruth) Briggs

1331 Covina Blvd.

San Dimas, California

by

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Subjects to be discussed will be

Family Background

Remembrances of San Dimas Upon Arrival

The Citrus Industry

Any Transportation

Early Residences

(N.M.) Name of parents and where the family previously lived.

(R.B.) I grew up in Schenectady, New York, I was born in 1903 and raised there. I came to California in 1922, and to San Dimas with my husband Dewey, whose really right name is Robert, in 1953, from Compton.

(N.M.) What brought you to San Dimas?

(R.B.) We had very dear friends up here that we had known in Turlock in earlier days. My husband farmed up there. And their daughter married a man named Cordner Gibson who was the Dean of Cal Poly Campus when it was in San Dimas. They naturally located here and they asked us one Sunday for dinner. We were really intrigued with the countryside. We liked it very much. We moved up here in 1952. (This all approximate.) They lived on the Kellogg campus of Cal Poly. He was later transferred to San Luis Obispo.

We were in the poultry business in Compton and asked the Gibson's to look for property for us. It (the area) was beginning to subdivide around us and we had roosters who made noise too early in the morning, so were getting very, very nervous. That is why we were hunting to make a change. We sold our house and bought Judge Fields place. (N.M.) This house that we are in now, once belonged to Judge Fields. (R.B.) Correct. One of the Real estate ladies that we met stated that this house was built in 1914. It is a craftsman's cottage.

(N.M.) When you bought the house was all the acreage included?

(R.B.) Oh, yes, we bought all the acreage with the house. My daughter, Mrs. Philip West, built the lovely house over there. They took two of the ten acres. After my son graduated from S. C., he went to Indonesia as an engineer. When he returned he bought three acres. It was sort of a family deal. When they sold, they made a profit.

(N.M.) When you bought the ten acres in 1952, was it all in oranges? And did Judge Fields take care of the oranges?

(R.B.) Judge Fields was very ill and Mrs. Fields was anxious to get rid of the 10 acres. He wasn't too anxious, but it was getting to much for him. And it was a blessing for us to get it. We have always loved it here. We decided that we would have poultry as we had in Compton. We only had layers, no roosters. Just the eggs. We took out, where Kimberly Street is now, the trees to make room for the equipment for the laying chickens.

(N.M.) I know that the tract of houses were built in 1964, because I bought one, and was one of the first buyers. So what happened from 1953 to 1963?

(R.B.) We had the poultry then. Mr. Hansel, who was a builder, and my husband were getting a bit tired, and things were changing a bit around, so when Mr. Edward Hansel, approached us we had had a couple others who had wanted to buy, but, I told my husband, (it was kind of silly), but I would like to have a nice little house with fireplaces and nice shingle roofs. They make a better appearance. Mr. Hansel built that kind of house. So that's who we sold to.

(N.M.) He actually built 28 or 30 homes. I counted them once. All on the property that was once owned by Judge Fields. (R.B.) Yes.

(N.M.) When you came to San Dimas, do you know how many people were here? (R. B.) I don't know. In fact, we didn't know anyone. My husband is a native son of California. He was born in the Compton area. His grandfather came from the East.

(N.M.) Schools! When you came here you had two children, Mildred and Rob. Were they in school in San Dimas?

(R.B.) No, no. Rob had already graduated and was an Engineer for Union Oil. And Millie was already married to Mr. Phillip West, a geologist and Engineer for Edison. They had Subinna, who is now Mrs. Russ Sullivan in La Verne.

(N.B) Did you get active in any of the clubs or activities here?

(R.B.) No, I helped my husband; a lot to do, keeping the books and etc.

(N.M.) Did you actively work the groves?

(R.B.) (Yes, it really wasn't a profitable thing, but it did pay for it's self. You know, they have to be irrigated every month, you know that I was never really informed on all that. It also needed the ground turned over. These were oranges.

(N.M.) Did the oranges go over here to be packed in the San Dimas Packing House? (R.B.) I think we did, because that was the only place.

(N.M.) Do you have any memories of that? (R.B.) No. (N.M.) Other than they were all cut down in 1963. (R.B.) Yes, when we subdivided. (N.M.) When they took the trees down, they left the trees in the field at the end of the street, which is Greenhaven now. It was the most wonderful orange wood. Ten years we used to cut up the wood for firewood. Orange wood burns so beautifully. Lovely, lovely firewood.

Transportation! Do you remember the red cars coming through? (R. B.) No

The line was still there but they had discontinued the cars. The line was still there. That bordered on the West of our acreage. The trains were always in back, which now is called the Metrolink.

(N.M.) Early residents. Did you have neighbors? (R.B.) Yes, across the street, the Knudson's lived. He had the Paticake Bakery in Covina. They had two lovely daughters. They used to baby sit with Sabrina. Mrs. Knudson's husband died and she remarried and is very happy. The next house was the Anderson's. later where the Snyder's bought. Snyder's moved in after we did. That is the "IN and Out" Hamberger owners, Esther and Harry Snyder. The Anderson's moved down to the Avacado Country. I was never very club minded. I should have been, but didn't. But I did have my church.

(N.M.) Next week you will be 96 years old, and you still live in the house that you moved into in 1953, which is 47 years ago. You are a pretty long time resident of San Dimas. In 1964, when I came the population was only 6 thousand, so it had to be less than 6 thousand when you moved in. (R.B.) Mrs. Crestwell lived where the drive-in church is now, which is the Life Bible College, a lovely lady, very genteel. There was nothing between she and the Knudson's. (N.M.) The trailer park and the San Dimas Hospital is there now. (R.B.) Across the street from the Hospital was a big, big avacado grove. The kids used to play there and had such a good time.

(N.M.) I was going to ask you about Briggs Point. Which is named after your family. It is immediately in front of this house. There was some talk as to why it was named Briggs Point. It was because some of the land was donated by you and your husband originally for the realignment of Covina Blvd. (R.B.) Covina Blvd. was a very direct line, no turns or anything. But I understood they were thinking of joining Badillo with Covina Blvd. That was when it was started. Badillo was in at that time. Another thing when we would come home from shopping, our driveway was directly off Covina Blvd. The garage opened to the South. Most garages open to the North off Hansell Lane.

(N.M.) What are your most vivid memories of San Dimas and what happened here. (R.B.) Of course I have always loved San Dimas. It was unique. It was just real old fashioned Western Town. Coming from the city of New York, I loved all of this stuff. Mr. Lloyd Rouse had the Feed and Grain. He and dad would enjoy talking with all the men there, leastwise they would chat. That's about all, as I say I was busy.

(N.M.) At the maximum, how many layers, chickens did you have here? How many dozen eggs did you process? (R.B.) I guess we had 4 or 5 hundred. Would that be scensable? Isn't it terrible that I did not know more about it? We would ship to the San Gabriel Egg Company. They would leave those big cartons. Dewey had a boy that would gather the eggs. Nowadays, they would have thousands of chickens.

(N.M.) I noticed on the West side of the house you have an avacado tree.

(R.B.) When we first moved here, we had two huge avacado trees on the West side of the house. We were told that they were two of oldest trees in the valley. They produced so prolifically that we would sell at least 300 dollars worth a year. There were so many that we couldn't eat that many. (N.M.) Anyway there are four avacado trees left. Are they producing lots of avacados? (R.B.) No, not much. Mr. and Mrs. West had a sprinkler system put in. They are supposed to be watered, but with the terrible heat they are not producing. More fall off than can be harvested.

(N.M.) The great big tree South side of the house?

(R.B.) Do you know that I was home visiting in Schenectady, and my sister had this tree like this, so I brought a slip of it. I brought home a slip, that is what you see. This tree shades the entire back yard. It is huge. Very very thick and healthy looking. It is an Eastern tree and costs a lot each year to get it pruned, thinned and shaped. It just makes this back yard and cools it down.

This concludes the interview with Mrs. Ruth Briggs.