



**City of San Bernardino
Historical and Pioneer Society
P.O. Box 875, San Bernardino, CA 92402**

LIBRARY NEWS FEBRUARY 2012

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

Our February newsletter features part two of “The Making of San Bernardino” by author and historian Nick Cataldo. This history is about the settlements that arose around the original one-mile-square Mormon community—small colonies that were “the building blocks of today’s City of San Bernardino,” as Nick phrased it. Just in case you missed it, last month we ran part one, which covered the City Creek, Timber, Mt. Vernon and Arrowhead settlements.

**THE MAKING OF SAN BERNARDINO
(PART TWO OF TWO PARTS)**

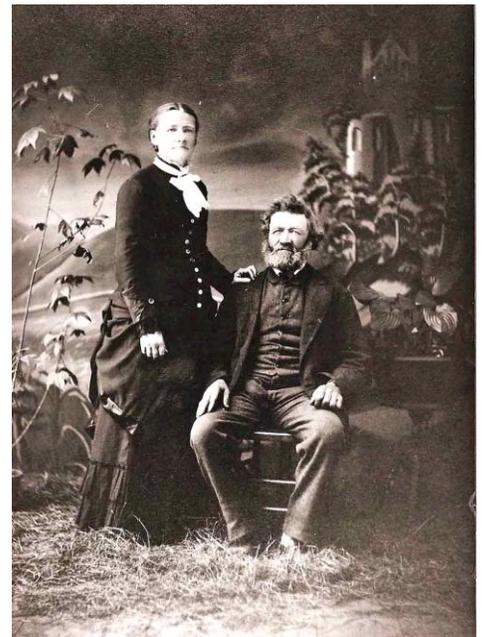
**By
Nicholas R. Cataldo**

IRVINGTON AND THE MEYER RANCH

With the arrival of the railroad during the 1870’s and 1880’s, the San Bernardino Valley provided opportunity-seeking land speculators the perfect magnet for attracting frustrated easterners fed up with the cold winters and humid summers back home. New communities were being promoted as a land of sunshine, orange blossoms, and healthful living. Among these opportunists was a company of Los Angeles capitalists incorporated as the Irvington Land and Water Company. In 1886, they bought up 2,200 acres of land in what is today the northwestern corner of San Bernardino for developing a community. The town site, one-half mile square and laid off in blocks of forty acres each, was to be named, not surprisingly, Irvington.

Unfortunately, the town never got off the ground. Perhaps it was the sometimes hurricane-like winds whipping through the Cajon Pass or the hard, granite-like soil that distracted newcomers from settling down. Whatever the reason, those cottages were simply not being built as the Irvington Land and Water Company had hoped for.

Meanwhile, in July of 1882, German native Julius Meyer and an investor named F. H. Barclay were deeded 2,450 acres adjacent to and west of the struggling Irvington from Henry Hancock, who was part owner of the old Muscupiabe Rancho. Meyer was deeded two-thirds interest and built a ranch house near the intersection of today’s Little League Drive and Belmont Avenue.



Julius and Mary Meyer

Whereas many a farmer became fed up with trying to plow this land only to find what seemed to be hundreds of rocks, Julius Meyer discovered that this hard soil was ideal for producing sweet tasting grapes. By the turn of the century, Meyer and his sons, Robert, Henry, Charles and Julius Jr., began buying out Barclay's interest and most of the land evolved into grape vineyards. A small wine cellar was built on his ranch.

But as corporate businesses and urban development mushroomed, a privately owned farm was neither as profitable nor desirable a lifestyle as it once was and the Meyers began selling out. The remaining portion of the ranch was bought by a man named Shinn during the mid-1950's.

DEL ROSA

The first farming developments in the northeast section of San Bernardino were olive groves during the late 1880's. The area was known at the time as the Mountain School District. But when the Kansas City Real-estate and Investment Company opened the Orange Grove Tract development and the Orange Grove Tract Del Rosa Township between 1890 and 1895, the groundwork for the "Del Rosa" community was set in motion.

The community's east and west boundaries were Loma and Mountain (today's Del Rosa Ave.). The north and south boundaries were Olive (now Lynwood Dr.) and Citrus.

Although the name Del Rosa soon became commonly used—the post office had been serving under that name since 1893—it wasn't until 1914 that the names of the school district and Mountain Avenue were officially changed to Del Rosa.



Del Rosa Oil Company

MAP

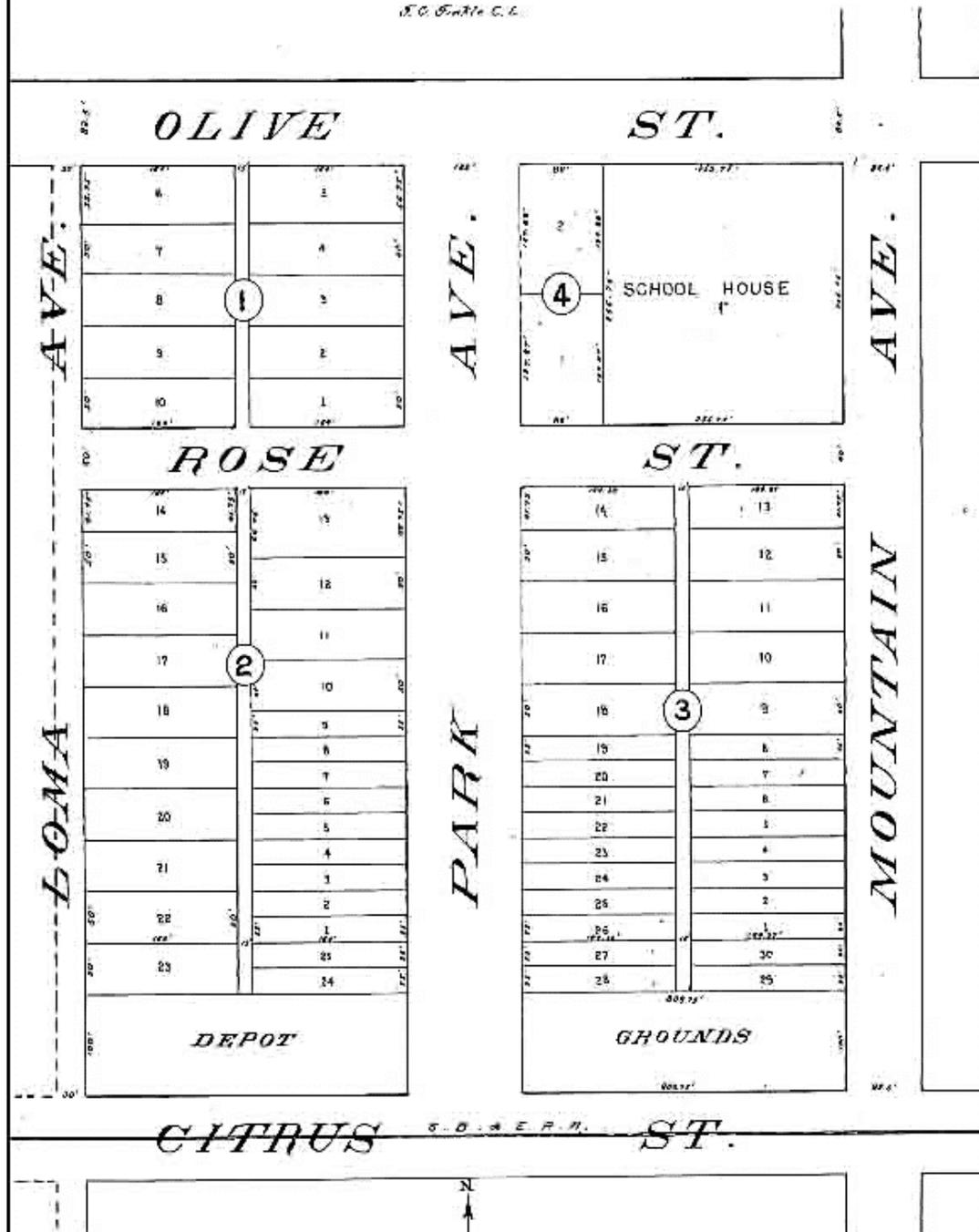
OF THE TOWNSITE OF DEL ROSA

BEING A SUBDIVISION OF LOTS 5 AND 6 OF
BLOCK 17 OF THE ORANGE GROVE TRACT AT
WEST HIGHLANDS

SAN BERNARDINO CO., CAL.

SCALE 100 FT. PER INCH

E. O. SMITH & C. L.



Two of the main street names in the original townsite of Del Rosa were later changed. Mountain Avenue is today's Del Rosa Avenue and Olive Street is now Lynwood Drive. The locations of the schoolhouse (which went to the 8th grade) and the railroad depot are shown on this 1895 map.

VALLEY TRUCK FARMS

During the 1920's a burgeoning population boom unfolded in Southern California. Los Angeles more than doubled in size and a number of its citizens hoping to get away from big town life ventured elsewhere.

Some of the Los Angeles Basin's African-American families looking for opportunities to farm settled on land southeast of San Bernardino, an area that became known as Valley Truck Farms. In 1926 a group of businessmen, incorporated as the Capital Company, bought this tract of land and subdivided it into one-acre lots. The community's unofficial street boundaries were Mill on the north, Tippecanoe on the east, Washington on the west, and Dumas on the south.

Actually, this had been the scene of a few scattered ranches dating back to at least 1856, the year that Mill School was erected near the corner of Waterman Avenue and Central. But as 81-year-old Herbert Rona, who moved into the area as a 5-year-old in 1934 pointed out, Valley Truck Farms evolved into a fairly spread-out community of 50 to 60 families. Some of the early residents were the Peevee, Hollaway, Obera, Green and Ward families. There was also a day-care center for preschoolers inside the home of a Mrs. Luper.



Mill School in Valley Truck Farms

During an interview in February of 2002, 93-year-old Espanola Larkin recalled that the community's "down town" was located near the intersection of Central and Waterman. Besides the elementary school, there was also a grocery store at that corner. Nearby St. Mark's Baptist Church was the first of several churches in this close-knit, Christian-influenced community.

Along with several other women, “Mama” Larkin (as family and friends called her) formed the Excel-All Club. In 1957, they established the first Black parade in San Bernardino. Their Lincoln Avenue clubhouse hosted children's plays, music functions, and Saturday night entertainment. From 1947 to 1960, Mrs. Larkin typed up and distributed door to door (with the help of her eight children) a monthly one-to-three-page newspaper called *The Valley Scroll*. Meanwhile, her son, Billy, started up a neighborhood jazz group. He eventually started up a professional band called Billy Larkin and the Delegates.

Over the years changes have occurred in Valley Truck Farms. Many of the longtime residents passed on or moved away. And Mill School was eventually rebuilt at another location on Central before converting into a Head Start/State Pre-School. Today Valley Truck Farms is included within the city limits of San Bernardino.



Dorothy Inghram (right) was principal of Mill School in Valley Truck Farms

As for the other aforementioned “building blocks” that now make up the City of San Bernardino:

City Creek Settlement is now part of Highland, while its neighbor to the south, Timber Settlement, evolved into what is now the property of the San Bernardino International Airport and Trade Center and Hospitality Lane business district.

The Arrowhead Settlement has long since been incorporated into the City of San Bernardino. The only namesake of the settlement that still exists is Arrowhead Suburban Farms, a 364-acre farming community in an unincorporated portion of San Bernardino’s north end. The land was owned and subdivided by M. N. and Roy Newmark in 1919.

Del Rosa became the northeastern part of San Bernardino starting in 1954, and for the next two decades

was one of the fastest growing areas in the city. Upscale housing developments are now inundating the former Meyer Ranch and the ill-fated town of Irvington, which collectively make up what is commonly known today as “Verdemont.” This is San Bernardino’s final frontier of available land for building, and is regarded as a crown jewel by its many residents.



The Verdemont Store in the mid-1940's



Lytle School in Verdemont, from an 1895 brochure

End of Cataldo History



PHOTOGRAPH PROJECT BY ALICE HALL

Once again Alice Hall volunteered to work on a photograph identification project. Among the many unidentified photographs we received from the city's Redevelopment Agency, there are 24 that appear to have been taken by a professional photographer—or, at least they were not just snapshots. These are large pictures, 11x14 inches, shot in full color, and almost all are mounted on a thick, white, cardboard stock. There were no dates or identification marks of any kind on either the photos or the mounts.

The photos are of industrial or commercial buildings, and Alice was able to date them to about 1980 or so. We were able to identify several by just sitting around the library and discussing them, and for some we went to Google Earth to verify our more questionable guesses. Alice then undertook to run down the location of the remaining structures. It was a lengthy process, as it turned out that the buildings are scattered all over San Bernardino—north, south, east and west.

As one example, Alice identified the picture below as the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Building at the intersection of Carnegie Drive and Hospitality Lane.



Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Building

This large, modern building demonstrates why "new" downtown is superior to "old" San Bernardino. It has easy access, is surrounded by extensive parking, and, as can be seen in the photo, is further enhanced by beautiful landscaping. Near at hand is shopping, restaurants, and lodging, with freeway access just a short drive away.

**MARK LANDIS WILL PRESENT A PROGRAM ON THE SANTA FE LOOP LINE
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2012**

The Loop Line, known in its early days as the "Kite Shaped Track," is the subject of this month's Saturday afternoon program. Mark has done a thorough job of research, one designed to satisfy even the most critical of railroad enthusiasts. He knows the line from its creation in the 1890s, to its decline and slow death over the subsequent decades of the 20th Century.

He has made a hobby of collecting Kite Shaped Track items—brochures, pamphlets, etc.—and has arranged these in a most colorful PowerPoint presentation. The height of the railway, and thus of its promotional flyers, took place in the Victorian Age, and the advertisements reflect this time period. He has added maps and photographs to both instruct and entertain.

The show will begin at 1:00 p.m. on February 11th, the second Saturday of the month. The place is the meeting hall at 796 North D Street, San Bernardino. Free parking and admission.

**JOHN MARNELL WILL PRESENT A PROGRAM ON THE
RAILROAD SURVEY OF 1867-68 IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2012**

Most history buffs know of the building of the transcontinental railroad by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads which culminated in their 1869 junction at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory. During this construction, the survey of a second transcontinental was underway, one by the Union Pacific-Eastern Division. Although more than one route was investigated, the company leaders let their preference for the alignment along the 35th Parallel be known in early 1868.

A reporter for an eastern newspaper accompanied the survey team and wrote back periodic accounts of its progress. Those letters pertaining to San Bernardino County were published by Tales of the Mojave Road Publishing Company under the title, *The Letters of Alfred R. Calhoun, Mojave Desert, 1867-1868* (Goffs, California, 2011.)

John Marnell edited these letters and designed the book. He provided photographs of the people and places along the route, and some of the photos are exceedingly scarce. John did extensive research on the people who are mentioned in Calhoun's missives, much of which, of course, falls outside the scope of the survey project. He has agreed to give a talk using this data with an emphasis on those persons connected to the City of San Bernardino, Cajon Pass and Mojave River areas.

John has arranged a PowerPoint show, which will begin at 1:00 p.m. on March 10th, the second Saturday of the month. The meeting hall at 796 North D Street, San Bernardino, is the place. Free parking and admission.

LAST MONTH'S FRED T. PERRIS PROGRAM

A word of special thanks to Roger Hatheway for his January presentation on the maps of Fred Perris. Roger and I co-narrated the program, however we did this without rehearsal and it so turned out we had different ideas about how to present the maps. Hilarity ensued. Actually, the audience members later said it was entertaining and enjoyable. An additional thank-you goes to Roger for donating some nice copies of the two major maps in his presentation: The City of San Bernardino (1854), and the subdivision of the Rancho San Bernardino (1857). These are in addition to other Perris maps he has previously donated.

Bill Payne, husband of SBPL California Room docent Sue Payne, donated numerous maps of the area that were published by the Automobile Club of Southern California, and all are in pristine condition. Some of these we already have, but they are in deplorable condition, and some we did not have at all. Thank you, Bill.

Also, Rialto historian Richard McInnes thoughtfully brought a copy of a Perris map that neither Roger nor I had seen before. Now that we have the map title and date, we will try to get our own copy from the Surveyor's Office.

124TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE SAN BERNARDINO PIONEER SOCIETY, HELD AT THE SANTA FE DEPOT

The elements conspired to put a damper on the January 20th celebration of the founding of the San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers. Nonetheless, all the attendees shrugged off the weather with good humor and enjoyed a great program provided primarily through the efforts of Steve Shaw, no doubt with assistance from the usual gang of helpers at the Santa Fe museum.

The impetus of the program was the loan of items handed down by William Frances ("Uncle Billy") Holcomb's descendants. Holcomb was a charter member of the Pioneer Society in 1888. He served as president and in several other offices. Chief among the items was Uncle Billy's gun. I don't know much about guns, but this one has a huge barrel, approaching cannon size it seemed to me.

Another item was a high-quality version of a famous photograph showing Holcomb and four other Pioneer Society members with their firearms. Because of the quality of the photo, Steve was able to crop and enlarge Holcomb's image and make a life-size cardboard cutout, so that it was easy to see the famous Uncle Billy holding the very gun that was on display.

Many members from the Billy Holcomb Chapter of the E Clampus Vitus organization were in attendance. This local chapter of E. Clampus Vitus was formed in the 1960s. The parent group traces its origins to the gold rush days of California. The members attended the celebration in their usual red and black garb, and many had their photographs taken next to the Billy Holcomb cardboard standup.

Members of the Holcomb family also came, and we discussed gathering information for what I call a "Big Book" of the family. This consists of one of those heavy-duty ring binders, one that holds hundreds of pages, and we fill it with whatever we can find on a pioneer San Bernardino family. The idea comes from a member of the John Brown family, who put together in a monster ring binder everything she could collect on John Brown and his descendants.