



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

## LIBRARY NEWS APRIL 2008

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

### Historic Tours of the San Bernardino Area “Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear”

#### April 12th Tour: Pioneer Cemetery

The April tour will be at Pioneer Cemetery on Saturday, April 12th, and will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the Heritage House on Eighth and D Streets. Nick Cataldo will be our guide. I’m not sure what he has in mind, so I’ll be surprised along with everyone else.

Pioneer Cemetery was founded in 1857 through the purchase of a lot from Lyman and Rich for the purpose. If you would like to do some brief reading on the subject, Arda Haenszel wrote two compact histories about the cemetery that appear in our Society’s *Odyssey* publication. There is a one-page story in the September 1979 issue, Page 42, and a two-page story in the May 1990 issue on Pages 10 and 11.



Office at entrance to Pioneer Cemetery

Actually there are two other cemeteries in that immediate vicinity. The Home of Eternity Cemetery, which is a Jewish burial ground, fronts Sierra Way and is adjacent to Pioneer Cemetery on the northwest boundary. Those wanting some historical background are referred to the 1933 book entitled "The Pinkos: Jewish Chronicle." We will be able to see this cemetery over the fence, but there will not be time to visit. And it deserves a separate tour anyway, since many of the city's founders and leaders are buried there.

The other cemetery is located on the south side of Seventh, across the street from the southerly entrance to Pioneer Cemetery, and it will be referred to here as the Seccombe Lake Cemetery. This is the city's oldest cemetery, and was brought to the public's attention most recently in 1989, when construction equipment uncovered some graves. There were numerous newspaper stories regarding the discovery, and City Parks and Recreation commissioned several professional archaeological studies of the site, which the city owns. However, there is one study that stands out, and it was not prepared by an archaeologist, nor even by a professional. This particular study is a Master's Thesis by a history student, Kevin B. Hallaran, entitled "The Seccombe Lake Park Burials: A Pioneer Cemetery in San Bernardino, California," Department of History, University of California, Riverside, June 1990.

Hallaran researched, in great detail, the parcel where the bodies were found. He obtained ownership records going back to the 1840s when the Lugo family received the Rancho San Bernardino grant, through the time when Mormon leaders Lyman and Rich bought the ranch, and then through the various owners who bought Lot 4, Block 4 of the Rancho San Bernardino. He refers to other studies that eliminated the possibility of the skeletons being Indian, Spanish/Mexican or Chinese. He checked maps, photographs, and records from various far-flung libraries, and came up with an amazing history of this single parcel of land. Amasa Lyman and Charles Rich bought the rancho from the Lugos in 1852, and established a Mormon Colony. There were several burials in Seccombe Lake Cemetery prior to the establishment of Pioneer Cemetery in 1857, and Hallaran utilized a manuscript by Leo Lyman to cover this period. Lyman's manuscript was later published under the title *San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community*.

The first owner to live on the property was Jacob Casteel (also spelled Castile), along with his family (1858-62). Hallaran discusses the Casteels and their association with the Mormons. This section is interesting for those who study the Mormon period, because it is likely that the Casteel family came with the first, or one of the first, wagon trains from Salt Lake City, even though they do not appear on the 1852 San Bernardino census. Also, although the deed is dated 1858, the Casteels may have been living there for a number of years. The property is east of Sierra Way and thus outside the original town boundaries. The town (or city) map was surveyed and recorded in 1854, but the remainder of the Rancho San Bernardino was not mapped until 1857.

To take another example of Hallaran's study, he spends several pages describing the ownership by the Garner family – Moses and Hannah Garner and their descendants – who bought the property in 1874 and held it until 1928. He gives biographical data on both Garners, where they were born and how they came to San Bernardino, and then discusses the land parcel during their ownership. It appears that the Garners' home was built directly over where the bodies were later discovered. At one point, some time after the city acquired the property in 1928, the site was used as a dump, and hence the graves were all covered with deep layers of garbage. The location of the cemetery was pinpointed in an 1883 publication, *History of San Bernardino and San Diego Counties*, as being directly under the Garner home.

One item of interest is that the area was well known during the pioneer period for its high ground water. Caskets were often lowered into water in some sections of the cemetery at certain times of the year. The site just south of the Garner home was a boggy area known as Garner's Swamp, now called

Seccombe Lake. As an historical aside, I believe that there was some confusion created over the name when, in 1904, a story about Fort San Bernardino appeared in Ingersoll's *Century Annals of San Bernardino*. A drawing of the fort's location on Page 132 shows a stream coming from the west and is titled "Small ditch from Lytle Creek." A couple of pages later the text reads, "Within the Fort, a stream of water was brought for domestic purposes through a ditch from Garner's Springs or Lytle Creek." There was, in fact, a Garner's Springs fed by Lytle Creek, one named in the 1850s after a different Garner family, and it is located across from the Santa Fe Depot, south of Third Street and east of Mt. Vernon Avenue.

The Garner's Springs/Lytle Creek site is miles away from the fort and a ditch from this location would have been a hugely time-consuming endeavor. The springs and artesian flows from the cemetery site are just hundreds of feet upstream of the fort's location and the drainage practically ran naturally towards the fort. All that was necessary was some minor diversionary work. It is my belief that the writer of the Ingersoll article (and drawer of the fort) confused the springs feeding Garner's Swamp at the cemetery site with Garner's Springs located several miles away.

Hallaran writes of the Arrowhead and Waterman Railroad Company, which connected San Bernardino to Harlem Springs in the Highland area. The company's rail yards and headquarters were at the corner of Sierra Way and Seventh Street, and the rail line passed through the Lot 4 property.

At any rate, Hallaran's study is important and especially impressive coming from a student. It tires me out just thinking of all the effort that went into this work. For example, there are 14 pages of bibliography and 156 very interesting footnotes.

We probably won't be spending much time visiting the Seccombe Lake Cemetery on our tour, as there is nothing to see. It is all grassed over. No matter – there is plenty to keep us busy at Pioneer Cemetery.



**Headstones in the old section of Pioneer Cemetery**



**Toppled tombstones show vandalism is still a problem at Pioneer Cemetery**

### **Chamber of Commerce Beautification Award**



An award and plaque for “Excellence for Maintenance of Existing Structure and Landscape” were presented to the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society during a Chamber dinner on January 31, 2008. It seems as if this category might be made to order for our Society, because our Heritage House, and the accompanying museum/meeting hall and grounds, are in such remarkable condition. This is due to the maintenance work by President Steve Shaw and Vice President Allen Bone.

The photo on our website conveys this pretty well, although you can't tell that every blade of grass is neatly clipped and every tree and bush likewise manicured to perfection. Steve and Allen also clean the restrooms, mop the floors, vacuum the carpets and generally keep the structures and grounds in the same pristine condition as that in which firemen would keep their station house. A nice touch in the last few weeks was the planting of California Golden Poppies around the *metates* and *manos* that line the sidewalks near the library and rear of the house. Some of these have bloomed already and add a lot of color to the area between the two buildings.



**1891 Queen Anne house – Historical and Pioneer Society Headquarters**

## **Donations to the Society**

The Historical and Pioneer Society has been receiving some good publicity lately, and this has resulted in donations of some real treasures by the descendants of several long-time San Bernardino families. Within the last month there have been various donations which, when taken together, have to be the greatest influx of items in many decades. The quality of these items is impressive, and all readers of this newsletter are urged to view them at the Heritage House/Museum at Eighth and D Streets.

### Hopson Donation.

Paul and Helen Hopson recently donated a file of items related to Helen's great-grandfather Fred Perris, the celebrated Santa Fe Railway (and California Southern Railroad) surveyor and civil engineer. The collection contains letters dating back to the 1880s, three maps, several photographs, and a manila folder filled with newspaper clippings. Adding these to the few items we already had in our library, we now have the start of a nice file on Perris and his descendants. Perhaps the gem of the Hopson donation is a railroad map entitled "California Southern Railroad and Connections." It covers the Southern California area and is drawn to a scale of 18 miles equals one inch. The map is a blueprint, 15" x 17" in size, and has been cut into rectangles and glued onto a piece of linen. This allows the map to be folded into a small size, making it very portable and at the same time protecting it from tearing. The map is probably between 100 and 120 years old, and is still in very good condition. It is most likely scarce; at least I cannot recall seeing it in any of the excellent books on the subject. The picture below shows the rectangle that includes the San Bernardino area.





**Santa Fe clock**

### Steve Portias Donation

Steve inherited a set of guns from his father James, who passed away about 18 months ago. These firearms originally belonged to charter Pioneer Society member William F. (Uncle Billy) Holcomb. James was a gun collector and therefore knowledgeable about the value of establishing a gun's "provenance," which is the train of ownership going back to the original owner. He wrote a chain of ownership going from Billy Holcomb to a well-known San Bernardino car collector, dentist George E. "Doc" Shafer (1895-1972), and thence to chiropractor William F. Zempel (1889-1964), from whom James bought them in 1953. Steve said his father was a civil servant for the federal government, but outside of work he earned somewhat of a reputation for himself as a scholar on guns, particularly those made by Winchester and Colt. The guns came with James Portias' handwritten letter of provenance, and signed by him.

There are seven guns in all, and James wrote a brief description of each one. For example, the description for gun No.1 is "Morre [Moore?] & Co. double-barreled shotgun, cap & ball. Engraved 'laminated steel' on the barrel. Originally factory engraved with checkered deluxe stock. Most likely a flintlock conversion to percussion. Early 1800's." Gun No. 2: is described as a "Hex barrel flintlock conversion to cap & ball, with set triggers, brass trigger guard, with wooden push-cleaning rod. Long distance rear sights, early 1800's."

All seven guns are believed to have been made from 1840 to 1860. There are three cap and ball single shot rifles, three cap/shot shotguns and one double-barreled cap/ball half stock engraved. Most have the

hexagonal barrels that were the style at the time. Even though these guns are well used, they will make a fine addition to our existing collection of about a dozen firearms (rifles, shotguns, and one handgun).



**Uncle Billy Holcomb's Guns**

### Don Sheets Donation

Don Sheets gave us some ephemeral items, such as a letter appointing him to the Junior Traffic Patrol in 1940, signed by patrolman Doug Mecham, and an exhibitor card from the 38th National Orange Show (1953). Don also donated some large photographs of railroad trains, professionally framed, and these will be part of the display in the museum at the Santa Fe Depot. This museum is jointly sponsored by the San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society and the San Bernardino Railroad Historical Society.

The donation includes a 1960 photograph (shown below) of Dale Gentry's reduced-scale locomotive and passenger train. Gentry was an early Ford dealer, owner of the California Hotel, and proprietor of the Hart Bar Ranch in the mountains, just to name a few of his endeavors. He also owned Old Woman Springs Ranch east of Lucerne Valley, where he maintained about a mile of railroad track and entertained his guests with train trips around the grounds. He shipped the train to San Bernardino for the duration of the Orange Show, and tracks were laid around the lake at the Arrowhead entrance specifically for the purpose.

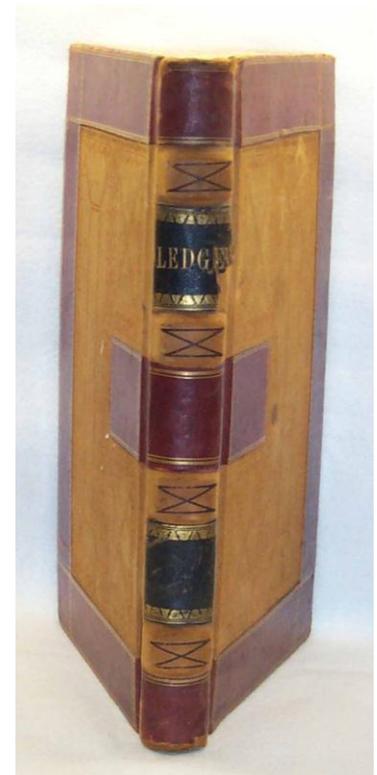


**Dale Gentry's reduced-scale train at the Orange Show – 1960**

### James Metcalf Bell Donation

James Bell donated quite an assortment of items, among them an early ledger from the 1880s, family papers, letters, tax receipts, billheads and other ephemera. Included are two photographs taken on a platform erected for that purpose in front of the Santa Fe Depot, the occasion being the 1910 Centennial celebration. There is a package full of negatives of family members, and we will try and get those printed out and identified in the near future. One oddity is a small portable desk with a foldout writing surface and pockets for pens, pencils, ink and paper, etc. Sort of a 1900 version of a laptop.

The Metcalf family, originally from England, moved to San Bernardino in the winter of 1852-53. They came from Australia and brought to San Bernardino the seeds from alfalfa, which became one of the major crops of the area, and later of Utah. Much of the memorabilia donated comes from Hugh Thornton (brother of Bell's grandmother), who settled in Rialto in the 1880s. There is a ledger that belonged to Hugh which is in very good condition, as can be seen from the picture. The journal is a records book for a business he had there. It was perhaps a feed store or grocery; Mr. Bell was not sure which. It has a lot of names in it and should be of interest to those doing late 19th Century research on Rialto.



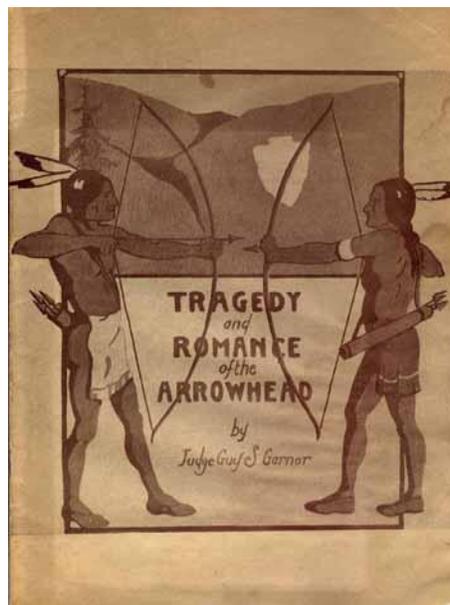
**Thornton's Early Rialto Ledger**

## Carol Lee Cato and Beverly Bingham Donation

Carol and Beverly are cousins of Vice President Allen Bone. They donated several San Bernardino books and booklets, some quite rare, together with copies of two dozen newspaper clippings relating to the Pearson, Lawrence and Worley families. The books include the 1910 Centennial publication *From Desert Land to Fairy Land*. Just about the entire town got caught up in the Centennial fever, and the book has so many photos of people on the myriad committees that it is virtually a pictorial Who's Who of 1910 San Bernardino. This book is desirable and pretty scarce, so it is nice to now have an original in our library. President Steve Shaw had previously scanned his copy and Tom Marek placed it on the City's website. <http://www.ci.san-bernardino.ca.us/about/history/centennial/default.asp>

An even scarcer publication is *Souvenir of the Festival of the Arrowhead*, which details a celebration that took place in 1908. This is a special edition of the *San Bernardino Sun*, consisting of about 55 pages printed in a 10" x 14" format. It too has many photographs of people and events of the period. This is not to be confused with a publication entitled *San Bernardino Festival of the Arrowhead Souvenir Program May 19-23, 1908*. The latter is the program that was reprinted by First Federal Savings & Loan in 1981. The Festival of the Arrowhead and the 1910 Centennial celebration each lasted a whole week, and were followed the next year by the 1911 Citrus Fair at the National Orange Show, which shows that San Bernardinans appreciated festive events.

Another rare booklet in the donation is *Tragedy and Romance of the Arrowhead*, written by Judge Guy S. Garner and published in 1942. Garner was the grandson of Ellis Ames, who served as San Bernardino's second district attorney in 1856. Garner was born in San Bernardino in 1876 and moved to the Highgrove area in Riverside County where, at the time of publication, he had spent 29 consecutive years as a Justice of the Peace. The story of how the Arrowhead was created on the mountainside was told to Ames in 1856, but it wasn't until 1942 that Garner discovered it in some papers he had inherited. This makes it one of the oldest, if not *the* oldest, legends of the Arrowhead.



**Rare booklet by Judge Guy S. Garner**

One of the more recent booklets is simply entitled *San Bernardino, California*, published by Windsor Publications in 1969. This book has several stories/advertisements about historical San Bernardino businesses. Many of these enterprises go back decades and harken to a time when the city was very much a working community. Windsor did a similar treatment with Walter Schuiling's book, *San Bernardino: Land of Contrasts*, which included a good section on businesses at the back of the book. In both books the coverage is more complex than simple advertisements, in that they give a history and personal touch to local establishments.

Other Cato/Bingham donations include two glasses etched with an ornamental design around the upper rim and the words “Santa Fe” just above the center. These were given to a relative upon his retirement from the railway a number of years ago. There are also four 1948 buttons from the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen.

### William Starke Donation

At the regular Society meeting in March, William Starke (pronounced “Starkey”), a descendant of August and Frances Starke, donated some items that came from the Starke Hotel, a well-known local hostelry. William’s ancestors moved from Petaluma to San Bernardino and, in January of 1868, bought San Bernardino’s first hotel from the current owners, the Pine family. In 1870 the hotel name was changed from Pine’s to Starke’s, and the establishment, located on Third and Arrowhead, was a major institution for several decades. The stage stop for San Bernardino was at this intersection, so it was a very busy place and ideal for a hotel.

Chief among the items in this donation is a gold-weighing scale that used to sit behind the check-in counter at the hotel. William had the scale placed in a plastic display case and dated the item to 1875. At that time it was common to be paid in gold dust. The Starke donation also included an inkwell and a rather unusual bottle.



**Antique Gold Scale – circa 1875**

## **Librarians Meet at Santa Fe Depot**

The Feldheym Library staff and the docents of the Arda Haenszel California Room have a monthly meeting on the third Wednesday of each month at 3:00 p.m. For their March meeting the location was moved to the Santa Fe Depot, where Steve Shaw and Allen Bone gave them a tour of the facility, and showed them the large room where our Society and the Railroad Historical Society will jointly sponsor a museum. The Historical and Pioneer Society and the folks in the California room are close; all the docents and staff who were at the depot belong to our Society, and many Society members spend some time at the California Room. In April of last year we met jointly at our Heritage House on Eighth and D Streets.