



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

LIBRARY NEWS DECEMBER 2008

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

LIER'S MUSIC COMPANY

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, we were forwarded an email containing Ronnie Featherstone's interesting history of Lier's Music Company, together with eight photographs that a former owner found. I think our old-timers will find this history brings back fond memories of this great old music store that had it all—aisles filled with records, musical instruments, entertainment consoles, radios and televisions, or anything else to do with music and entertainment.



Photo No. 1

Ronnie Featherstone's history of Lier's Music Store:

A big "Thank You" to Dennis Malody, SBHS '59, for his search for photos of Lier's Music Store in San Bernardino. Thanks to Dennis, we now have these eight very rare photos of the store. I've

spent several years trying to locate pictures of Lier's Music Store, and there are certainly none around. Dennis, being a co-owner of the store for a period, managed to find these archive photos for us to enjoy.



Photo No. 2



Photo No. 3



Photo No. 4

Lier's Music Store originally opened up in 1924 at 511 W. Fourth Street (just west of E Street). Gene Lier and his partner by the name of Thew, opened as "Thew & Lier" Radio Co." Photo #1 shows their storefront. They sold gramophones, records and instruments. The store offered phonograph/radio consoles, and carried the brand names of RCA Victor, Philco, Majestic, and others (photo #6). Photos #2 through #4 show the Lier Radio and Television Co.'s floor displays. The consoles had TV cabinets with a whopping 10-inch or 12-inch television in them. The radio cabinets were fine finished furniture that complimented everyone's home back in those days. Once you purchased these fine pieces of furniture, Lier's had several 1930s delivery trucks to transport your purchase to your home (photo #5).

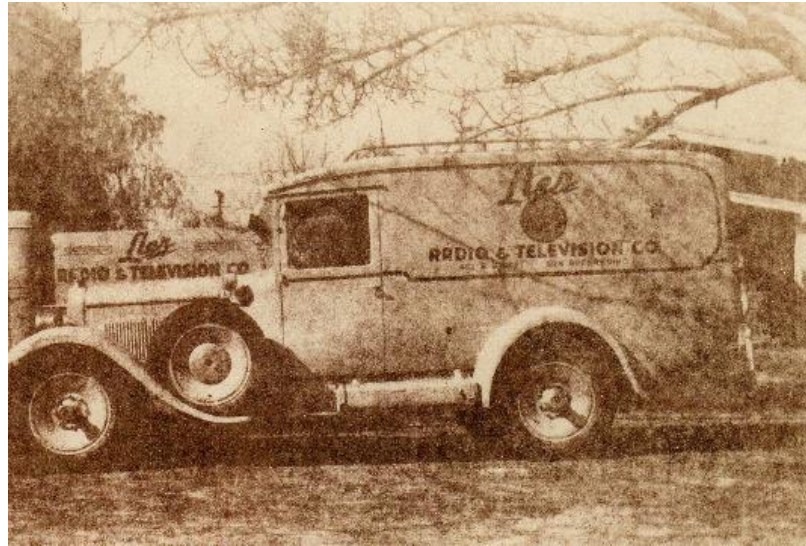



Photo No. 5

DRASTIC REDUCTIONS
on Used **RADIO**s and
PHONOGRAPH-RADIO COMBINATIONS

Double
Your
Radio
Pleasure



Enjoy Your
Favorite
Music on
Records

Here Are a Few Specials in Combination Models:

Majestic	32.95	Philco	39.95
RCA-Victor	39.95	RCA-Victor	42.95

THEW & LIER RADIO CO.
"Headquarters for Records"

511-515 - 4th Street Just West of "E"
San Bernardino

Photo No. 6

In 1937, Gene Lier moved the store to 452 N. E Street, where it stayed in business until 1998. Lier sold the store to Tom Draper in 1958. Draper is the owner that all of us Rialto kids remember most from late '50s and '60s. Long time Rialto resident Bill Barbour, who worked at Lier's for so many years, made going there such a pleasure, and thanks to him we have some great memories to treasure from our youth. Records changed from the 78-rpm format to 45-rpm and 33 1/3-rpm several years before rock songs hit the nation in the mid '50s. The new music genre took off, and the kids loved the 45's. "Rock 'n Roll" was here to stay.

Photo #8 shows the layout of Lier's Music Store in the late '50s. The booths were always full of kids listening in private to the latest 45's, and they purchased records in huge numbers. Hundreds of instruments were on display and were sold in large quantities. Even full-sized pianos were purchased and delivered. Music lessons were taught in the back rooms for all kinds of instruments. The store was the center of the most popular music of the era. Many music stores were popular back then, such as Braviroff's in San Bernardino.



Photo No. 7

In 1977, Jim Robbins purchased Lier's Music Store and it continued to be successful until it closed in 1998, due to the City Of San Bernardino Redevelopment Agency, which bought the property. Lier's survived the opening of the Central City Mall and Inland Center Mall, being as they were well known and extremely popular.

The business survived competition from other music stores and enjoyed a successful 74-year run, during which it provided music and memories for the whole Inland Empire. Between Tom Draper's and Jim Robbins' management, the store had in stock was the kids wanted, and teenagers from just about everywhere came to Lier's to spend some time choosing the next record

on which to spend their allowance. And you could play it, hold it, admire it, and buy it all in one trip.

Another one of my best memories of Lier's is a woman by the name of Mary Jane Zang. Mary Jane was the long time credit manager for Lier's. Everyone who ever bought an instrument from Lier's on the time payment plan, knew Mary Jane. She bent over backwards to make it easy for people to buy the instrument of their choice, with payments they could handle. Even top-name guitarists today, like Sammy Hagar and Rick Derringer, shopped and bought at Lier's on the payment plan, with Mary Jane working out the terms for them. Aerosmith guitarists, Tower of Power guitarists, and so many big band players also bought their instruments at Lier's. Full orchestra musicians bought their supplies at Lier's.

Everyone who played or was learning to play shopped at Lier's. Many took lessons at Lier's itself to learn or to improve their abilities. The store also supplied and sold huge speaker systems for shows, stage equipment, and a full compliment of theatre sound systems.



Photo No. 8

Lier's was not just a music store. It became an institution for music lovers—a learning center, and a gathering place for people who appreciated everything Lier's offered. What a great history it has, and what a huge amount of memories Lier's gave to us all over the years. Thanks again to Dennis Malody, an "Old School Rialto" boy who provided the history, and especially the very rare photos of Lier's Music Store, that made this story possible.

~Another Little Bit of History~

Ronnie

WATER TROUGH AT HERITAGE HOUSE

I have been scanning a portion of historian Arda Haenszel's "Famous File," and ran across this 1952 San Bernardino *Sun* article about Mr. Shirley Bright's donation of the water trough that now rests just outside the entrance to our meeting hall.

Historic Water Trough Carved From Chunk Of Colton Marble Presented to Pioneers



PRESENTS TROUGH—Shirley Bright, 317 Eighth street, rests on the edge of the watering trough which for years was located in front of the horseshoeing shop of John McCall at D and Court streets, and which Mr. Bright presented to the San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers yesterday. Cut into the Colton marble is the inscription "John McCall, Feb. 22, A.D. 1879, a horseshoe'er."

A historic watering trough carved from a chunk of Colton marble was dedicated to the San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers at a ceremony witnessed by 100 old-timers and their families at the log cabin in Pioneer park, yesterday.

The trough, from the 1870s until 1881, was situated in front of John McCall's horseshoeing business on the east side of D street near the present Court street intersection. The late Joe S. Bright, father of Shirley Bright, who presented the trough yesterday, bought the landmark and put it in front of his wagon shop at Third street near G street, where it remained many years.

TROUGH MOVED

Since wagons were replaced by the horseless carriage, the shop was closed and the trough was moved to the Bright home at 347 Eighth street, Mr. Bright's son related at yesterday's ceremony.

Accepting the stone basin from Mr. Bright was George Banford, president of the San Bernardino society.

The trough was set in a concrete base in front of the F street entrance to the log cabin.

Guests of honor at the presentation were George C. Blair, chairman of the park commission, who with Councilman Elmer Hoien was instrumental in arranging the presentation; Mayor C. T. Johnson, Councilman Harold G. Lord; Mrs. Grace Stopher, sister of Mr. Bright; Mrs. Bright, and John Talmadge, oldest member of the society. O. J. Fish was program chairman.

THREE INDUCTED

Following the presentation three new members were inducted. They were Caroline A. White, Walter S. White and Lelia Emma Kell. L. R. Hafen, Colorado State historian, and his wife, were guests at the meeting. He is on leave and is doing research at the Huntington library, Pasadena, on the "Old Spanish Trail." Mr. Hafen spoke on pioneer history and his wife gave a recitation.

Next Saturday noon a potluck dinner will be served. All members having birthdays in February will be honored. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Carr are planning the dinner and Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Davies will plan entertainment.

PHOTOGRAPHER WALTER FISS

Another part of Arda's file caught my eye: a page on photographer Walter Fiss. This is typical of her "Famous File"—the file has little bits of data on a wide variety of historical subjects, many of which appear to have no practical value, but at some later point help fill in a research project. In Dennis Casebier's latest publication, "Mojave Road Report No. 266" (October 2008), there is a report of a collection of ten thousand photographs donated to the Mojave Desert Heritage & Cultural Association. The photos were primarily by Yermo photographer O. A. (Orvie Albertus) Russell, but there are also many by Russell's mentor, Walter Fiss. Casebier writes that Fiss had a specialty of desert photos.

Arda had written down information gleaned from city directories in which Mr. Fiss was listed, which helps identify when he was in San Bernardino and what his business was (commercial photography). He was not in the 1928 directory, but was in the 1930 directory. I checked the 1930 U. S. Censes and found Fiss living in San Bernardino. He also appears in the California Death Index, born 25 April 1884 in Illinois, and died 29 December 1954 in San Bernardino.

An example of Fiss' work is the following photograph he took on September 29, 1950, the occasion being a dedication ceremony marking the Spanish Trail in Yermo. The Sherratt Library of Southern Utah University in Cedar City has the photo posted on their web site.



1950 Photograph by Walter Fiss

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