

September 21, 1916

La Habra Star, Page 3

### CALIFORNIA - ITS NAME, HISTORY AND EXPERIENCES OF EARLY DAY SETTLERS BY LA HABRA VALLEY RESIDENT

By Mrs. J. A. Akers

"California was named by Hernando Cortez from a Spanish Romance in which is mentioned a lovely isle named California, the land of precious stones."

The Spanish crusader is a splendid figure in history, force incarnate, cruel grasping, for two centuries a world conqueror ever carrying on the cross with a baptism of fire and the sword.

Desiring to people upper or Alta California, Spain gave over her rights there to the Franciscan Order of Friars for ten years, but the Franciscans held these rights undisturbed for half a century.

In 1769 Fra Junipera Serra founded the first mission near San Diego; then one mission after another was founded until twenty-one lay all the way from San Diego to San Francisco, each one day's ride from the next.

The padres always chose a garden spot with good view, capable of being well defended on the slopes of a fertile valley and near running water.

The Indians were in reality slaves but not cruelly treated—they were gentle and submissive and were encouraged to live around the Missions and help erect the enormous structures covering acres. Think of the work involved: Brick to be burnt, stone quarried and dressed, timbers brought in on men's shoulders for thirty miles down rocky canyons from trackless hills.

The padres brought olives, figs and grapes from Spain and raised cattle on the sloping hills around the missions. Thus, from the first, the missions were a paying investment, the revenue amounting even to \$2,000,000 some years.

But the end came to the power and peace of the padres when the Mexican government turned the missions over to General Santa Ana who ruthlessly repleated his treasures from them.

Dana in his "Two Years Before the Mast" gives an authentic and interesting account of his journeys up and down the coast after hides, but everywhere describes the coastline as dull, bleak, bare with almost no white population save a few Spanish families. Of Monterey alone he speaks approvingly, saying the buildings were white and roofs red, flowers grew there and a Presidio with a trim band of Mexican soldiers lent a stirring note to the town. This was in 1835.

Dana says Los Angeles was a pueblo with many cattle feeding on the plains around here. From her port San Pedro there was no other shipping point south save San Juan Capistrano and San Diego.

Freemont the Pathfinder raised the U.S. Flag in 1846 and at the end of the Mexican war the United States by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 became possessed of all land north of the Rio Grande.

Already Americans were moving west event into California but in 1849 when gold in startling abundance was found there began such an exodus as was never before seen. Every man wanted to go to California.

In 1849 fifteen hundred wagons bound for "Californy" crossed the Missouri River at St. Joe in six weeks. In 1850 four hundred fifty-nine westbound teams were counted in nine miles.

At its best this journey was almost unbelievable, at its worst, with Indian massacres, thirst, snow, tender-footedness and disease, it was one of the ghastliest highways in history. The 2,000 mile trip was a matter of four or six months. Children were born, people died, worried travelers quarreled and killed each other and yet the train struggled on.

In 1849 my Virginian grandfather came to California by boat down to the Isthmus of Panama, across it by stage, and then on another sailing vessel up the coast to San Francisco. This was far easier than the overland trail though it was a costly journey.

A young man of 24 he wandered about ever prospecting for a rich mine, ever finding gold enough to pay his expenses and when tired of mining he earned the \$2,000 necessary to buy 200 acres of flat valley land less than ten miles from Los Angeles.

In 1842 my great grandparents left Nashville, Tennessee, to seek better chances in the west. They put all their goods, including their horses and two young negro girl slaves, on a barge or large river boat and floated down the Cumberland River to the Ohio, then down the Mississippi to a point in Arkansas where they bought a plantation and stayed for a while. But the golden west still called and at least they reached Bonham, Texas, where many wagon trains for California were made up in those days.

Wagon after wagon rolled in and made camp. At last the day of departure dawned and one after another the big wagons set out in a long parade for California. Every night the leader called a halt at a fit camping spot. Slowly the wagons drove in and when the last was in place a great ring was formed with the horses in the center. Camp fires and the evening meal followed, then bed time, the armed men taking turns on guard.

So they passed safely through the desert lands and came at last to Fort Yuma where U.S. soldiers kept vigil over the Indians and outlaws.

Here they rested a day or two. Grandmother tells us here in her story of how a sack of cornmeal had mildewed and was set outside; of the Indians begging both the meal and large copper wash kettle. That they made a great kettle of mush and gathering around ate it before it was at all cooled by using pieces of chip for spoons. One horse died and at once became a feast for the gaunt Indians.

All these new things were very strange and queer to the children of the party and not forgotten.

Their mother had to make little boots for their great dog whose feet became very sore from treading so many days over the burning alkali sands of Arizona.

A ferry boat had been established at Yuma over the Colorado River and carried them across one wagon at a time with the horses swimming behind them.

On once more through dust and glare and heat until at last they reached El Monte. How blessed to see the river, grass and wild berry vines, the willow and snowy cottonwood.

Another short rest before the wagon train pushed on again for San Francisco.

But here our grandparents stopped as all became sick with typhoid fever. So fate settled them in Los Angeles County and there they stayed.

In 1873 my father came to San Francisco on the Union Pacific train from Massachusetts.

He was dashing and twenty-one, belted and armed like a cow-boy, full of the joy of life and out to see the world. After seeing civilized San Francisco he wished to come to Southern California. There was no railroad so with his chum he took the boat down to San Pedro. Off Deadman's Island the passengers were taken on a lighter and towed up to Wilmington where a short railroad ran to Los Angeles.

Where Los Angeles courthouse stands was a short brick pillar. There a weekly lookout was kept for the San Francisco steamer to round Deadman's Island. This was the great event of the week as from San Francisco came all the news, the mail, fresh vegetables, apricots, etc. Only wool and a little grain were raised around Los Angeles. In fact, all that kept Los Angeles going was the trade with the miners. It was a common sight to see a sixteen mule team with bars of silver-bearing lead ore all the way from Big Pine, Inyo County. The ore was sent by way of Wilmington to the smelter in San Francisco. Other similar trains were going out laden with supplies for the miners.

In 1870 water was piped to a few business streets in Los Angeles. All the rest received their water in open ditches or zanjas in care of the zanjero and many were the quarrels over the irrigating water.

The Chinese were coming in thick and soon began acting as house servants or laundrymen.

When California passed into the Union the titles of all old Spanish grants were kept, but little by little their owners sold their lands to Americans.

Orange County was covered by these grants, among them Los Coyotes La Habra and San Juan de Cahon de Santa Ana: These cover our La Habra territory. Later these passed into the hands of the Stearns Rancho Co. Water was unguessed at and this county was thought only fit for cattle, sheep and a few hogs.

Those were the great sheep days when the shearing was important. Bands of Mexican and Indian shearers, each under a captan, worked jealously for records. Each gang was fed by the ranch and the hours were never so long but what there were games, gambling and riding afterwards. In dry seasons the sheep were driven down to the marshy beach lands until the rains came again.

In 1877 was the great drouth and the feed disappeared and the sheep died by the thousands. There were never so many sheep again and new industries began taking their places. It is said of the great sheep days that the sharp hoofs of the sheep cut the dirt into dust so fine that great clouds of it blew out over the sea for miles.

In 1870 Los Angeles had a population of 5,000, of which 2,000 were white Americans. The plaza was then the center with low adobe buildings around it. The Pico house was the most imposing structure for 500 miles. The streets were dust in summer and knee deep in winter and the adobe land held great cracks and gullies. Where the High School now stands was Fort Hill, also the cemetery. At that time a friend bought a farm for \$100 and a sack of flour. This was at Jefferson and Main streets where Agricultural park now stands.

As early as 1875 a few German farmers settled at Placentia and raised some wheat. In 1876 the Southern Pacific line to Los Angeles was finished. Now the Pioneer society admits no one as a pioneer who came after this railroad was finished. They may call themselves early settlers or old-timers, but not pioneers.

Though I was born here as was my mother before me, I was taken to Massachusetts when a baby. I returned to California when I was five and spent the winter here, and again when nine, and at twelve came the third time to remain ever since. So my early impressions of Southern California are strong.

In those days the entrance through Fort Yuma was hopeless desert. At Yuma the remnants of a once powerful and brave tribe of Indians loved to lie in the sun, or offer arrows, trinkets and pottery for sale to travelers; and Indian boys ran races and turned cartwheels for pennies or tread water across the Colorado carrying bundles on their heads.

From Yuma for a long way was dust and yellow sand, later sage brush and the glistening, lance-like leaves of the Yucca or Spanish dagger. Ground squirrels scampered along the road, the land for miles was honey-combed with their burrows.

In some places the mustard stretched in golden masses for leagues, reaching higher than a horse's head; or the orange glow of the poppies lit the hills.

Welcome green marked the water courses, climbing grape vine, soft fringe of willows and twisted white-barked sycamore.

After the great bare plains how welcome was the green land of the valleys where never-ceasing artesian wells were flowing. How beautiful grandma's old southern home with porches overgrown with honeysuckle and purple jack bean.

"How lovely the morning with dewy roses, drone of bee and whir of jeweled hummer. How mournful the cry of the dove, how sweet the evening perfume of the orange blossoms, how new to us the fig and pomegranate orange, pink wreathed tamarack and weeping willow; the astonishing bigness of the deep blue ocean, the endless line of racing breakers, the generous burden of shells and gay sea weeds thrown at your very feet. Oh! wonderland of our dreams!

I rode with grandmother past the old Lugo homestead built of sun dried brick, its whitewashed garden wall, also of adobe, glittering in the heat. There proudly sunning himself upon it, that favored jewel of Spanish grandees—a bronze and green and blue peacock.

Before the peon's quarters on hard swept dirt floor reclined indolent Mexicans sleeping or eating water-melons. On the level fields hard-by, young Mexicans spurred sweating horses in mild races.

Grandmother knew all the neighboring Spaniards well and many were good friends of hers. In the time of the black smallpox scourge she met each funeral party at her gate with a pail of water for the hot and dusty mourners and many blessings were showered on her head. As you know, all but the sturdy pioneer women fled and locked their gates.

Again my mother and her sister with my little brothers and myself set out to go to Pomona, driving a span of horses as the custom was. Endless dust and heat, bare brown hills that looked as if they had never seen raid, not a house for miles. At last one big horse stepped in a squirrel hole and fell heavily. How those women dreaded lest the horse's leg was broken. But at last it was limping on its feet again, and we arrived in the handful of houses that was Pomona after dark and after straying into an irrigating ditch and being held up by a barbed wire fence. How we blessed the light that guided up to a friendly house where a man set us once more on our road now nearing the journey's end.

I told you how my Yankee father, so dashing and young, came by boat to Los Angeles and then set out to live with his chum in the foothills near Pomona. The boys got some bees and glowed with the proud sense of being almost Robinson Crusoes on their claim in the lonesome canon. This was in 1872. (??)

They went armed usually, and shot much of their living from the hills around them and underwent to little hardships for city boys. At last it was Christmas day and they sat down and began remembering what was going on at home, how good the turkey always tasted and the mince and pumpkin pies; what a day New England Christmas always was! At last they became so blue it was all they could do to keep from breaking down completely. Snatching their guns off their pegs off to shoot a few quail; but soon came back bluer than ever. "Who is that," exclaimed one. Two men were at their cabin, one stalking around the other sitting on the door step. They hastened home to find two boy friends straight from their Massachusetts' home, bring news and messages. So the blue Christmas turned at last into one of boisterous gladness.

You know how our rivers rage in winter. It was the same when my mother was a little girl living at Duarte at the mouth of the San Gabriel canon on winter. The two little girls were awakened by the terrific pounding of the raid and jumped out of bed only to scream as their feet splashed into water on the floor. The river had risen all around their low-built California house. Men came to the door on horseback to carry the family to safety. All rode away except the grandfather and grandmother who said the stream would soon go down, that the house was strong and they would stay. But before night the stream had become a torrent and horses could no longer swim it. At last, with much difficulty, strong men in a boat reached the place where the old people were standing on what piled-up furniture they could get together, knee-deep in water. The men took them out just as the last of the house collapsed and floated down the stream, all except one wall, sustained by the chimney which stood there erect after the flood with the pictures flapping idly in the wind, a lonesome token of a home that had been and was no more.

I have not told you of the sociability existing in pioneer days. News Traveled rapidly by word of mouth; men constantly on horseback though nothing of a few miles out of the way to carry a message. Besides, would not the visitors be welcome dinner guests and invited to stay as long as they wished?

And if my aunt in Pomona gave a housewarming why of course the children of one sister in Downey and another in Rivera were expected and came. Beds were made on the floor and any lack of accommodations merely increased the fun.

The Yankee boys on the bee ranch could dance and one could play the violin so of course were additions to all the parties. Sometimes all of the Pomona people drove and rode down to Downey and at once a country dance would be gotten up. So after a season of corn huskings and parties my father and mother married, one from the east and one from the west, just as before them. My mother's mother, born on the journey to California, married a young man from Vermont, who had answered to the lure of the golden west.

There is in El Monte a very old cemetery, one of the first in Southern California after the Americans peopled it. There on Decoration Day each year people come from far and near to clean up the old grave lots and renew living ties.

Having known so many of these people, becoming now alas! so very few, I have heard many tales of bravery, danger and hardship.

That women had many children, that they had care for only a few days after the birth of a child, and that not by a doctor, but by a willing neighbor, was but the common lot.

Flood and brush fires came then and with fewer people to fight them. Smallpox, typhoid and black diphtheria took their deadly toll. Disease and death came to the flocks and herds and decimated them.

One family with a babe and little children traveled to El Monte from Utah just in time to catch the rains and for days no one of them was ever dry: Yet all survived. One gritty woman told me that she went barefooted all one summer and fall because there was no money for shoes. Once there was no food at all but parched corn for several days.

My grandmother and family lived in Arizona for a time because her husband had a copper mine in the region where the famous copper mines of Jerome now are. As grandmother was expecting a little new arrival all the arrangements were made for her to return to California to her mother. "Just one more trip to the mines," said her young husband, "and I will follow you right in."

The day came for her to start, the big carriage with four horses was ready. A woman returning to California rode with her, her brother drove; English Billy rode just ahead on horseback to see that the trail was open and passable. One by one her neighbors bade her "God-Speed" and she went her way back to her mother; while they watched her with faces working with emotion, then turned to meet the men whom they knew were on the way bearing the dead body of the young husband-shot through the heart by Indians.

"But pioneer days were not all days of tragedy and sorrow. Hard days, but out of them came brave men and women who labored long and with their descendants so improved California that it began to be a garden sport of the world and people were attracted to it from all lands. We welcome everyone and believe you join with us in loving her and in believing good things of our land of sunshine and of flowers - our golden poppy land of California."

ALSO STORED WS: HIST-1

November 30, 1916

La Habra Star

## HISTORY OF LA HABRA VALLEY

As Read Before The Old Settlers Annual Picnic, October, 1899

MRS. W.J. HOLE, Historian

The Woman's Mutual Improvement club was organized by Mrs. E.F. Chaffee February 10, 1898. The First Old Settler Picnic was held under the auspices of the Club October 22, 1898, at the Martinez Grove on the Pomona Road. The officers for the first year were Mrs. Chaffee, President; Mrs. H. M. Little, Vice President; Mrs. F.R. Aldrich, secretary. The idea of having a yearly historian was brought before the club in the year of 1898-1899 and at the picnic in the latter year the first chapter was given. When the world first became acquainted with California through the early spanish explorations and on until the gold discovered in '48, the country was densely populated by Indians. Numerous relics of a crude nature that have been found in our valley and on the hills, show that where our orchards of oranges and lemons now grow and the sites of our beautiful and substantial homes, were once the camping and hunting ground of the Indian, here he lived that life so

dear to the Red-man, free from care and labor, subsisting on whatever could be found and procured without toil or exertion.

We learn from the Franciscan Fathers who established the San Gabriel Mission in 1772, that the Indians they found here were of a very low type known to us as the digger Indians. They lived in the small settlements, a little valley like ours would have a language of its own or at least a dialect, would be entirely distinct from any other settlement and have no central government.

On the establishment of the Mission of San Gabriel and San Juan Capistrano, the Indians were many of them gathered into these Missions, taught the Spanish language, also instructed in the art of tilling the soil and helped on the Mission ranches.

#### La Habra's Name

As to the name La Habra there is some uncertainty. It seems to have been an Indian name as it is not exactly the same as any Spanish word. Its meaning is not quite expressed by any word in our language. An old Spanish scholar in explaining it said, "Mountains on this side, mountains on that side, open place between, Sabe?"

As the country came to be settled by the Spanish and the land was obtained from the government of Spain in grants of large tracts, and after the independence from Spain was proclaimed and the Mexican government established, grants were given favored citizens of this government.

These were the ideal frontier times, instead of the naked, half-fed Indian, we find the dashing "Caballero" arrayed in all the splendor of his Spanish costume, armed with pistols and Bowie knives, astride his elaborately caparisoned mustang. This ranchero would own, perhaps, many thousands of acres of land, 10 or 20 thousand head of horses and cattle and lived like a Baron, delighting in bestowing liberal hospitality upon his friends or even upon strangers.

It was during this period along in the fifties, that our La Habra was used as an immense cattle range. Thousands of head of cattle roam over the valley and hills grazing on the luxuriant vegetations, and the landscape presented a picturesque view as the "Lasador who guarded the herds rode among them, arrayed in the unique costume of five hundred years ago in old Granada or Morocco." The days of the Basque sheep owner came years later.

During these stirring times our now peaceful valley was the scene of a wild mid-night ride of escaping criminals rushing over the hills to reach the Mexican border, or to hide in the vastness of the mountains farther south. Los Angeles was then the rendezvous of criminals from all parts of the world, and gambling, stabbing, shooting and kindred affairs were daily and nightly occurrences.

It was in 1851 that a gang of desperadoes attacked the Rancho de los Coyotes, (The old ranch house being but a short distance south of us, on the Emery place), the owner, one Ricardo, was bound and the place thoroughly sacked, the most valuable horses stolen and everything taken that could be carried off. Immediately, upon the departure of the robbers, Ricardo collected a band of Indians, rushed through La Habra, over the hills, and way-laid the gang at the pass of San Georgonio, and slaughtered the entire band. This is but one of the many similar scenes constantly going on in the neighboring communities. Money was plentiful, the cattle supply in the mining districts had been exhausted and the demand was high and prices high for the southern stock, so, \$50 gold "slugs" were as common as silver dollars now.

But be it said to the credit of La Habra that after searching all the historical records accessible and interviewing numerous pioneers, I did not find any account of a single outrage committed in our valley, so, the harmony and peace for which we are now noted, seems to have been unbroken in the past.

It was early in the '60s that Abel Stearns, who had figured extensively in the pioneer days of California, obtained from the various Spanish and Mexican holders the numerous large tracts of land lying in this part of the county, which they had secured by grant from the Spanish and Mexican governments years before.

In '68 a company was organized under the name of the Stearns-Rancho Company and bought from Abel Stearns the vast amount of land he had thus obtained, and which had since been known as the Stearns-Rancho lands. In this land Abel Stearns retained a one-eighth interest. Rancho La Habra then became a part of this company's possessions.

It was about this time that the first sheep were brought into the valley. A man from Anaheim, by name Rimpau, was the first to bring a band of sheep on the rancho La Habra.

Soon after D. Bastanchury arrived on the scene and his was the first house built on the rancho, which, with some improvements, is the same house in which he now resides. Until '78, Bastanchury reigned alone, but in that year the Toler ranch house was built. In '80 Mr. Sinsinena left the employ of Bastanchury and went into the sheep business for himself, built a house and came here as a permanent resident.

(To Be Continued Next Week)

December 7, 1916

## HISTORY OF LA HABRA VALLEY

Second Installment As Read Before The Old Settlers Annual Picnic, October, 1899

MRS. W.J. HOLE, Historian

Until eight years ago, in 90 or 91, no grain had been on the valley. Since then, each year has seen additional land brought under cultivation, until at the present time there is none of our valley land unbroken. In 91 and 92 Col. R. J. Northam set out the first orchard on the Rancho La Habra. At that time he planted some seventy acres in walnuts and oranges and erected the buildings that are now on his ranch at the east end of the valley and expected to make this his home, but later was caused to change his plans and build his residence in La Mirada.

Nothing further in the development of La Habra was done until the spring of 94. At that time Mr. Hole of Indiana was a tourist in California and chanced to find this garden spot, and with prophetic eye saw its possibilities.

In company with R. J. Northam, Link Beesley, R. B. Way and S. M. Barton, several tracts of land were bought from the Stearns- Rancho Co. and then began the aggressive movement in our history.

Several sales of land were made and at once homes were erected and the lonely sheep ranch became a thriving settlement. Truly the development has been wonderful. To a stranger who has not been through La Habra Valley for six years, the change seems nothing short of miraculous. Such growth, especially of the orchards, could be possible (*only*) in the best of soil and with a climate like ours.

Mr. S. W. Baldwin and family, who were the first to locate in the village of La Habra, arrived on July 4, 1894. At about the same time the large barn on the Graves ranch (now owned by Aldrich and Son) and the house of A. F. Berdine were built, but to the Berdine family belong the honors of being the first settlers of the new rancher colony. Mr. Berdine (*sic*) having completed his house and arrived from Santa Ana with his family the first week in Nov. in 94. Mrs. Berdine (*sic*) who was the first here, has also been the first to pass on before. In this same month T. P. built and occupied (*sic*).

In the last of the following month, December, 1st I.B. Varney and family became residents of the new settlement. About this time the English colony, headed by Arthur and Bernard Graves, began work on their ranch and occupied their barn. The sad death of Arthur Graves caused by an explosion in the Pinta Power Mills, brought deep regret to those who knew him.

In Aug. 95, Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Chaffee sought and found a home on our southern hills. L. M. Hodson, J. H. Smith, Oscar Baldwin and Horatio Landreth arrived in this year.

The 20th of Oct. 95, Mr. Coy became a resident of the El Dorada and at once opened a store and lumber yard. the following Jan. in 96, the Post Office was established with J. T. Coy as Post Master, and in Feb. a Star route was made with J. L. Morris as Mail Carrier. The business of our office being sufficient to justify it, we were given a Money Order office Oct. 1st in 99.

During the summer of 96 a small school was opened in the Austin barn and taught by Miss Newby of Whittier.

This summer saw the planning and building of the school house, which was completed in Sept. and in Oct. school opened in our commodious new building with Miss Newby again as teacher.

May and June saw the present residence of C. W. Gould built and his family moved to their beautifully located ranch in June.

During the summer of 96 the land company was dissolved and Mr. Hole continued the business alone, erecting a substantial home in the valley and becoming a permanent resident.

Among the early settlers were S. M. Smith, H. M. Little, J. Leuhm, Mr. Dawson, A. Arfwadson, A. Burner, J. Hobson, M. Keeler.

E. W. Bishop came in 1897, I. M. and F. R. Aldrich, and J. G. Launer in 98, J. M. Cusick in 97, Morris Cusick, 99.

T. P. Warne held the first religious services in the valley in 95, and in that same year the Friends Church in Whittier sent out their members and services were held in Graves quakers in the barn.

## HIGH LIGHTS FROM RECORD GOING BACK TO EARLY DAYS AS COMPILED FROM YEAR TO YEAR AND PRESERVED IN ARCHIVES OF LOCAL CLUB

Following is the history of the La Habra Valley, taken from the records of the La Habra Woman's Improvement Club, which was placed in the cornerstone of the new school.

"Mountains on this side, mountains on that, open place between, save?" the old Spanish scholar replied when asked the meaning of the name La Habra. The name is neither Indian or Spanish, according to a research made at the University of California, where it was decided the word implied "sheltered area."

### Early Days

In the early fifties La Habra Valley was used as a huge cattle range. Before the coming of the white man it had been the abode of Indians and during the life of the padres in California was part of the San Gabriel Mission district. In 1851 a gang of desperadoes attacked the Rancho de Los Coyotes, later known as the Emery place. One Ricardo, owner of the ranch, was bound and the place was sacked, the robbers escaping through the valley. Ricardo gathered a band of Indians and started after the outlaws. They were overtaken at the San Gorgonio pass, where Ricardo and his posse slew the entire band. Such were the first records. Search of the records and old timers' accounts show no outrages committed in La Habra Valley. In the early sixties Abel Stearns, who figures in the early days of California, obtained much acreage from the Spanish and Mexican grant holders and a company was organized, the Stearns Rancho Company. Rancho La Habra became a part of these lands. At this time the Basque sheepmen first appeared. M. Rimpau of Anaheim was the first to bring sheep into the valley.

### 50 cents per acre

Domingo Bastanchury soon followed and bought 4,000 acres, it is said at 50 cents an acre. The Bastanchury Ranch Company, a corporation of his sons, claims the largest citrus acreage in the world under one management, 2,700 acres being set to citrus groves. In 1878 Joseph Sinsenena bought 5,000 acres on the north side of the valley and went into the sheep raising business. In 1890-91 the first grain acreage was sown. In 1892 Col. Bob Northam of Los Angeles set 70 acres to walnuts and citrus trees, the first orchard. This was later known as the Williams Ranch where the third wildcat oil well was drilled on the floor of the valley, the two previous ones being the Des Moines and the Tri-State all dry holes. This now the J.D. Seivers Ranch and a handsome new home is built where the oil derrick might have been.

### Many New Settlers

In 1894 Willits J. Hole, in company with Col. R. J. Northam, Link Beals, R. B. Way and S.W. Barton bought several tracts of land from the Stearns Rancho Company and sold it in small tracts. This brought in many new settlers and numerous homes were erected and small orchards set out. In 1895 the first religious services were held in La Habra, conducted by the Friends Church of Whittier. In 1897, Rev. Swain of Fullerton organized a Methodist Episcopal church with 13 members. The first postoffice was established in 1896 with Z. T. Coy as postmaster and J. I. Morris as Star Route carrier.

In 1896 school was opened in the Austin barn at the corner of Cypress and Central with Miss Newby as teacher. The school house was built the same summer on the present site of the east side grammar school. Natural water sources were used until 1897-98 when many wells were sunk and windmills and pumping plants established. In 1898 the Ladies Mutual Improvement Club was organized, now known as the Woman's Improvement Club. In this same year the first old settler's picnic was held. These picnics were held annually for years and at each the new chapter of the valley history was read by the club historian.

### Fifty Houses

At this time there were 50 houses, 650 acres in deciduous fruit trees, a store, lumber yard, and blacksmith shop in addition to the school, postoffice and church. In 1899 the first Telephone was brought into the Lefingwell Ranch from Fullerton by the Sunset Telephone Company. There were four students in the Fullerton Union High School this same year. In 1902 several new families settled in the valley. The Edison Electric company brought in powerlines. The Pacific Electric railway made its first survey and the extension of the East Whittier Water Company lines were made in this same year. In the next year the water company completed its lines to La Habra. Since that time the company which has become the La Habra Water Company has built three lines through the valley and supplies water to ranchers and through the La Habra Domestic Water Company, the town for household use. The postoffice was discontinued in this year, a rural route from Fullerton giving mail delivery through La Habra.

## Named Streets

The first farmer's institute was held at the schoolhouse in 1903. the Farmers Club was organized at this meeting. The Woman's Club named the streets in this year and erected street signs in the valley. About this time the club also erected the old El Camino Real bell to mark the padres' highway through the valley. In 1904 a large acreage was planted to walnuts. The Cawston ostrich stockfarm was established on 80 acres north of Whittier Avenue. This later was purchased by the Ontario Investment Company and set to citrus.

The first church was erected by the Baptists in 1906. In 1907 the La Habra Vegetable Growers Association was organized. The year 1908 saw the coming of the Pacific Electric railway. The first packing house was built by the vegetable association this same year. At the completion of the railway the valley folks were guests of the Huntington people on a trip to Huntington Beach. In 1909 the 2nd M. E. church was organized, the first having been absorbed into the Baptist church. The La Habra Citrus Association was organized in 1910 as the citrus acreage having increased in acreage and growth, the first extensive orchard having been planted by the Sargent brothers in 1908, followed by many smaller groves.

## Few Clubs

Organizations at this time were Ladies Aid Society, the Woman's Club, the Farmers' Club, Friday Afternoon Study Club, Boys' Athletic Club, Beta Upsilon, Y. L. C. (a boys' club). The postoffice was re-established in 1911. From 1912 to 1914 saw the greatest development in town and valley up to that period. Buildings erected included a \$6,000 M. E. Church, the first unit of the citrus packing house, the first two brick buildings, a hotel and several smaller business houses.

The Standard took over the Murphy oil interests in La Habra and established the Coyote Hills District. A pipe line to El Segundo was built at this time by the Standard.

In 1913 came Southern California's "big freeze," La Habra suffered less than any other section. In 1914 the First Bank of La Habra and the La Habra Domestic Water Company were organized. In 1916 a fire department was established and equipped. In July the La Habra Star was started with A.V. Douglass editor and publisher. In 1915 the new school house was completed on the site of the old school, the old building being moved away and converted into La Habra's first apartment house. Auto bus lines through La Habra from Los Angeles to Anaheim were started. The Salt Lake made a survey.

## War Comes

In April, 1917 war with the Central Powers of Europe was declared, America flinging her flag to the aid of the allies. In May, 1917, Erwin Angus Davis, son of Mr. and Mrs. D. A. Davis, became the first boy to enlist his services for his country, other La Habra boys following rapidly. this little valley sent 84 men into the service of America and all but a few saw active service in France, but all were returned home whole. The valley turned out to a man to bid the boys farewell, giving them comfort kits and on their return welcomed them back with music and feasting and merrymaking. During this time no history was kept, the Woman's Club turning all its energies toward the work of the Red Cross. In the drives for funds, Liberty Loans and other aids the valley "went over the top" in each. Sugar records reveal but two or three families who attempted to evade the food restrictions, many volunteering their quota for candy to be sent the boys at the front. Christmas, 1917, boxes were sent by the Woman's Club to the servicemen, the Standard Oil remembers its servicemen also.

## Back to Development

Edwin E. Bishop, son of Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Bishop, was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant from the ranks for bravery under fire and Gerald Craig, son of Mr. and Mrs. Allen Craig, who fought with the valiant sixth marines, was awarded the Croix de Guerre. Liberty bonds sold totaled \$375,800. After the world war cloud lifted, La Habra again turned her attention to the development of the town. The demand for houses was so great that a dozen or so subdivisions were sold and many handsome homes erected on nearly every lot. Much acreage was bought in the North La Habra Heights by La Habra people. The sub-tropic farms established by R. L. Reynolds and the shipping of winter vegetables done on a large scale. Several new business buildings had been built on the north side of Central Avenue after this side of the street had been widened 10 feet.

The most important event of 1920-21 was the widening of Central Ave. by 20 feet when business houses were moved back, the sidewalks torn up and the street, curbs and walks rebuilt. When this was accomplished every available piece of property between Cypress and Walnut streets on Central avenue changed hands in a single day.

Today, July 6, 1923, when this history goes into the cornerstone of the third new grammar school to be erected in La Habra in nine years, the assessed valuation of property in the school district is \$4,157,640, the population being 3,250, with 617 pupils enrolled in the schools. there are three churches, Methodist Community Church, the Temple Baptist and the First Christian Church. Civic organizations include the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Men's Club, the Kiwanis Club, Hacienda Country Club, the Brotherhood, three card clubs, six needlework clubs, several church organizations, Boy Scouts, a re-organized fire department.



Three lines of travel include the Pacific Electric railway, the Motor Transit Company, and the Union Pacific, which, buying out the Salt Lake railway after the war, has just completed its line through the valley and has installed passenger service from Los Angeles to Anaheim. La Habra is on the state highway and is veined with paved boulevards throughout its length.

The bank deposits amount to \$660,457.51

The citrus fruit shipments for last year totaled 572 cars of 400 boxes each. there was also a large shipment of winter vegetables from the sub tropic farms in North La Habra Heights.

The town business houses include two banks, two drug stores, two hotels, two hardware stores, six meat markets, seven groceries, two clothing stores, four restaurants, twenty apartment houses, two cleaning establishments, two furniture stores, eight garages and auto sales rooms, service stations, public library, two milliners, a shoe store, two billiards, five real estate firms, blacksmith shop, theater, sweet shop, plumbing and electric shop, paper and decorating store, two lumber yards, bakery.

*NOTE: This history was repeated in the La Habra Star-Progress on July 31, 1963 (in the final edition before Freedom Newspapers took control of the paper) under the heading Valley History to '20s Retold. and with this note: ((Editor's Note: Just a little over 40 years ago, on July 11, 1923, the following early history of La Habra Valley appeared in the pages of the Star. This was almost two years before the city was incorporated. Whittier boulevard, then Fullerton Road, was lined with citrus trees from the outskirts of Fullerton to well beyond the county line to Whittier))*

*The story began ... "A copy of this history, compiled by the Woman's Improvement Club, is enclosed in the cornerstone of Lincoln School, which now serves as School District Headquarters. The story appears here as it first appeared 40 years ago, word for word ... and then picked up with "Mountains on this side..."*

*Also, the final five paragraphs, starting with "Today, July 6, 1923..." did not appear in the 1963 version.*

## January 20, 1975

**Daily Star-Progress  
50th Anniversary  
Special Edition**

LA HABRA - La Habra has always been a "progressive" valley and city, if by that it meant a place where citizen care about their neighbors, care about decency, law and order, and care about educating their children, honoring their nation, and giving a fair shake to their fellow man.

As far as "development" goes, that is another story.

Although this special edition of the Daily Star-Progress celebrates, on Jan. 20, the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the city; the 59th birthday of the La Habra Star; the 106th anniversary of Portola's expedition through the Valley in 1769; and the 136 years of Rancho La Habra, the actual development of "modern" La Habra has taken place only recently.

While there was a "boom" of sorts during the 1920s, the 1930s were quiet, Great Depression times in La Habra.

The forties, in the years of World War II, saw La Habra remaining a quiet rural village amid many citrus and avocado groves.

It was not until the fifties and sixties that land development, industrial development, subdivisions, commercial developments, and large growth of population in Orange County, saw La Habra thrust into a whole welter of new problems and opportunities which brought it to the conclusion of the 50 years of incorporation with honors as an "All America City."

Twenty-five years after incorporation, in the year 1950, the population of La Habra was only 4,961 persons.

Ten years later the population had swelled during the fifties more than five times, to a total of 25,136, in the year 1960.

La Habra's population in the year 1972 had increased to 44,200, a growth of some 20,000 in the sixties and early seventies. Today the population is estimated at around 46,000.

Esther Cramer, in her history, tells us that by 1925, the following establishments were operating: "Two banks, two drug stores, two hotels, two hardware stores, six meat markets, eight groceries, two clothing stores, four restaurants, twenty-one apartment houses, two cleaning establishments, two furniture stores, eight garages with service stations and some with auto sales rooms, a maternity home, two milliners, a shoe store, two billiard parlors, a jewelry shop, five real estate firms, a blacksmith shop, a beauty shop, a paper and decorating store, two lumber yards, a bakery, two concrete firms, a new dance hall, two dairies, a fumigating company, a variety store, an optometrist, and three doctors."

So enthusiastic was the boom of the twenties in La Habra, as in all of Southern California, that the population of 3,500 in 1925 was predicted as swelling to 10,000 by 1930.

La Habra did not reach a population of 10,000 until the mid- 1950s.

For La Habra Heights, where avocados and citrus were beginning to be grown in abundance in the twenties, the year 1925 was marked by two significant events - the completion of Hacienda road, and the building of the clubhouse for the Hacienda Golf Club.

Photos of the club that year show a very brown set of hills in the background, not the lush green of today, for the trees had only recently been planted.

The Hacienda Golf club had actually been organized in the year 1919.

The incorporation election for the city was held Jan. 12, 1925, and passed by 301 votes to 142.

The official papers arrived making La Habra a sixth class city on Jan. 20, and the first meeting of the board of trustees was held Jan. 23 at the Washington School.

The council was then called the board of trustees and the mayor was called president.

Dr. Evrit S. Boice was named first president, and the members of the board were G.E. Sutton, J. G. Launer, Walter Cooley, L.J. Wester and L.E. Smith. John G. Launer became the next president and was called mayor. "At his death," says Mrs. Cramer, "in 1929, Launer was eulogized as the Father of the City of La Habra," so active had he been in city planning, promotion and development.

*(ZIEBELL NOTE: Launer was not elected to the first council/board of trustees; he was out of town at the time of the election. There was a "stand-in" candidate who stepped down upon Launer's return and Launer was appointed to the board. (ALSO: another originally elected trustee resigned in the first month ..... Refer to CITYHOOD Section of the reference data book)*

Of some 55 citizens who served on La Habra city council since its incorporation (excepting the present council), only a handful are still living, and most of these accepted the city's invitation to be present Jan. 17 at the 50th birthday dinner.

Those present, or still living, are John Knudson, La Habra, J. W. Burch, La Habra, Fred Obluda, Challenge; Marcus Anderson, Brea; Fred Sifferman, La Habra; Dr. Emblen Cooke, Balboa; Robert P. Lawton, La Habra, Robert Lippert, San Francisco; Dean F. Shull, La Habra, William Hansford, La Habra, Bruce Ward, Glendale; John Pellerin, Jr., La Habra; Leonard Crapo, Logan; George Stringer, La Habra, and Louis Zuniga, with the U.S. Department of Labor (veterans affairs), Philippines.

Esther Cramer only traces the history of "civilized" La Habra Valley from 1769 to 1925, remarking at the end of her book that some day a detailed history of the next 50 years will be written.

She relies heavily on the bond volumes of the Star and commends one of the few detailed short histories of the city during recent decades. This was published at the request of the Star in the Corn Festival edition, July 19, 1951, and written by A. C. Earley.

He notes the Methodist church at First and Main is still in use in 1951, that Washington School is considered a "show place" by tourists, and that one of the major accomplishments of the twenties was to move buildings on Central - even the brick ones - back so that the street could be a four-lane instead of two-lane street.

Earley notes the formation of the Kiwanis club in 1922, which took over many duties formerly done by the Chamber, and worked alongside the Chamber. He notes, too, the formation of a sanitary district which resulted in the need to incorporate.

The ranchers on the outskirts did not want to annex to a city, which is the reason La Habra started as a very small city in area.

The building occupied by the Star when Earley wrote his history in 1951, at 213 E. Central, he tells us was "city hall" for eight years following incorporation in 1925. The police had a used auto, and later added a motorcycle. Two desks and typewriters started off city hall, and a jail and old fire engine (probably cart) were also accommodated on these premises. Scouts using them today (next to MacKinnon's Stationery) must here quite a few ghosts while sorting bottles in their ecology project.

The slow growth of La Habra is no where better reflected than in Earley's statement that a bond issue finally raised the \$15,000 for a fire engine in 1930, which also paid for a fire hall.

By 1951, the town has only two paid firemen, and has added another engine - "two years ago."

Earley's history certainly contradicts any La Habra citizens - if there are any - who like to claim the independent spirit of La Habra never relied on outside help or federal funds.

The entire first civic center of La Habra - the only significant development of the Great Depression - was build with federal aid. Two of these buildings are still in use - the city recreation department office, and the assembly hall, formerly Legion Hall. All these buildings, including the original city hall which was torn down in the sixties, were built with CWA (Civil works Administration) and SERA and WPA aid. This also included the library building of that day.

This civic center was of course replaced with the modern civic center of the 1960s, when a post office, police headquarters, and new library - as well as civic center - were building on the same location. It is interesting to quote Earley in 1975:

"The government programs were helpful in providing labor for low-cost-of materials jobs, such as the surfacing of streets and alleys. The city made application for many projects of this nature and most of the oiled streets were improved and re-surfaced and alleys in the rear of the business block were curbed and rebuilt. New water lines were installed in many sections of the city, and a real constructive work was accomplished.

"No one has criticized the work done by these agencies in this city, as the city sought out those projects which were worthwhile. If all government projects have been given the same thoughtful attention by local agencies as was given in La Habra, there would not have been so many protests of waste of public money.

Early remarks that, "Most people reading this article (in 1951) will remember the war years very vividly. The emphasis was all on winning the war. Factories needed workers and men and women were called to work. Companies organized bus lines to carry the workers to the war factories. Building was nearly impossible except in war areas, and investment in property was at a standstill. La Habra was no exception. Little or no building went on. the council organized the Civilian Defense project and placed L. E. Proud in charge as coordinator. the city was well organized and the different groups drilled in their duties. Campaigns for money for the USO, government bond campaigns, the Red Cross and other organizations were the order of the day. There was little cry "war slacker" in the area, for the whole city gave generously to all causes. the community had hundred of men in the armed forces, and there were casualties in the war zones, with the result that some of our sons never came back.

The city's first park, El Centro, was approved in 1946, and a bond issue of \$20,000 raised for it.

Then the boom times of the fifties and sixties came, and La Habra became immersed in, among other things, building schools for her kids. Most of the present 25 schools of the high school and elementary districts were built between 1950 and 1965.

the first high school outside of historic Fullerton Union High, where so many generations of La Habrans attended high school, was built in the city in 1954. Soon after the La Habra Host Lions volunteers to raise 425,000 to pay for a swim pool, the city's first.

Two high schools serving East Whittier, part of Brea, and a little of Fullerton, as well as La Habra, were built later - Lowell in 1961 and Sonora in 1966.

Altogether these three high school occupy 112 acres. They were part of a 120-year expenditure of some \$35 million dollars spent by Fullerton Union High School District to build seven high schools.

Some contrast to the \$15,000, only 20 years before, which had to be raised to build a fire station.

Many now living and reading these words in La Habra have participated in the building of modern La Habra, where the annual city budget has now risen to over \$7 million.

Schools of the fifties were given historic names - Rancho Canada, Tierra Rica, Las Lomas, Arbolita, Valencia, Starbuck, El Cerrito, Las Pasitas, El Portal and Walnut.

The school population peaked in 1967 at around 15,000 elementary students and has now declined to less than 10,000.

The three high schools serve, in round numbers, 2,000 students each.

A brief history of the city school district will be found elsewhere in these pages, written by Rick Beaubien, with the assistance of Superintendent Warren Kraft.

Extremely hard working and informed city councils beginning in the sixties and extending to the present day have been responsible for the building of La Habra's modern civic center complex, its efficient and dedicated fire and police departments and its progressive policy of park and recreation developments.

In the past decade the city made more progress in all these areas than in its entire history. The contributions of large companies, as well as smaller business houses, to all this progress has been a steady and enlightened one as well.

The city was fortunate to have the good work of City Administrator Howard Schroyer, who was instrumental in getting Fashion Square to locate here.

Equally fortunate it was to have the services of City Manager Lee Risner for the past five years in the period of the greatest growth, physically, the city has ever seen.

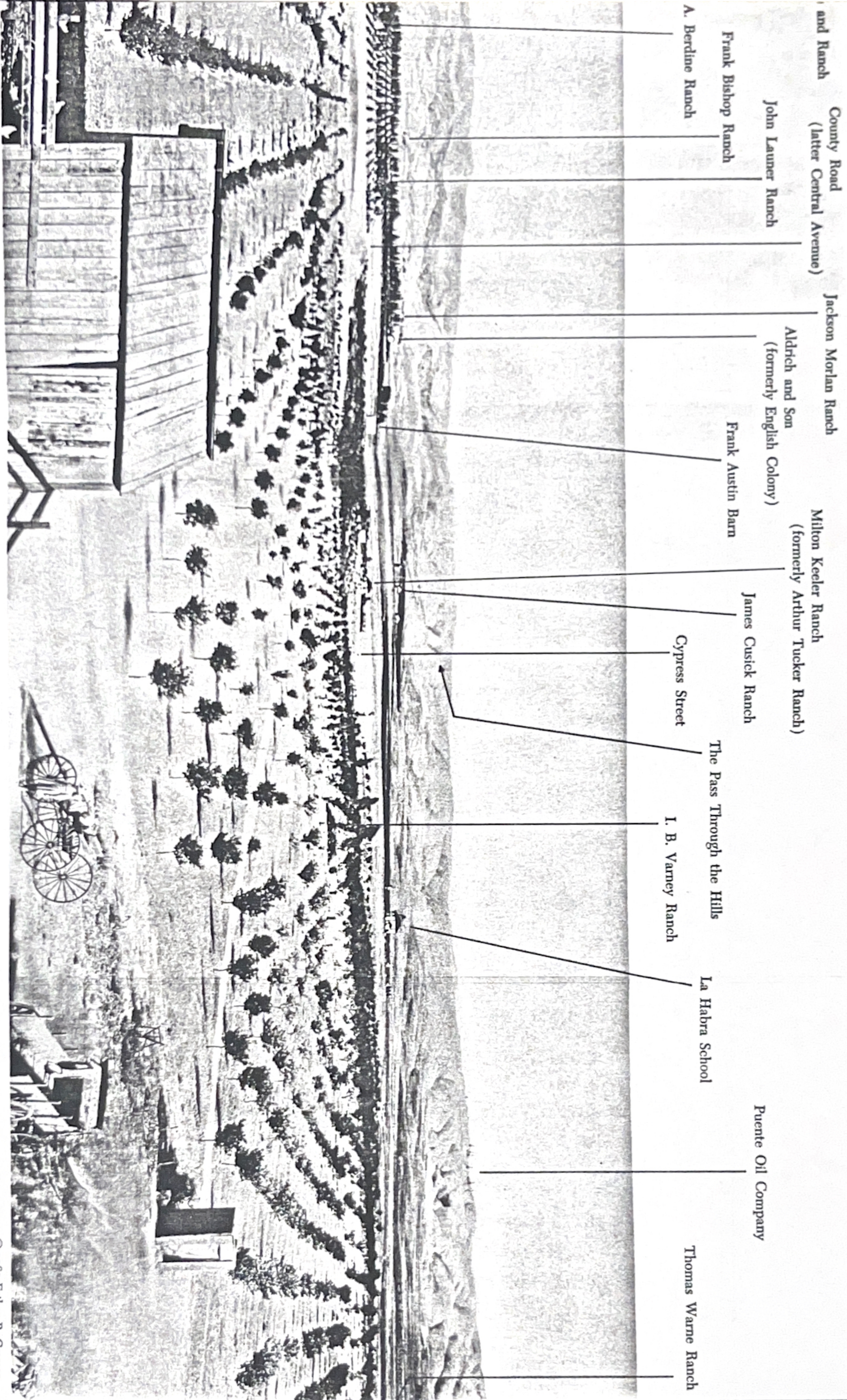
Alpha Beta, for which La Habra is home, and chevron Oil Field Research, one of its oldest companies, have contributed much to the city over the years.

Notable firms include Selectile, Orvin Engineering, Master Fence Fittings, Pomona Box, Nationwide Constructors Corporation, Meyer Industrial Properties, Kilian Fire Sprinkle Corp., Cal-Russ Construction Corp.,

Hydro-Dig, Inc., John R. Davies and Son, and Garbe Manufacturing - to name a few - and they continue to make their mark in the world of civic responsibility as well as business.

Three of the largest and most modern auto dealers in Southern California - Burch Ford, Steves Chevrolet, and La Habra Dodge - are located in the city.

Of special significance to all citizens is the celebration of the 50th anniversary at a time when a large portion of central downtown La Habra will be made into Portola Park, with appropriate museums and recreation facilities; and when the Bells of Freedom Carillon Tower project, to be dedicated on July 4, 1976, has been launched to observe the national bicentennial.



County Road  
(latter Central Avenue)

John Launer Ranch

Frank Bishop Ranch

A. Berdine Ranch

Jackson Morlan Ranch

Aldrich and Son  
(formerly English Colony)

Frank Austin Barn

Milton Keeler Ranch  
(formerly Arthur Tucker Ranch)

James Cusick Ranch

Cypress Street

The Pass Through the Hills

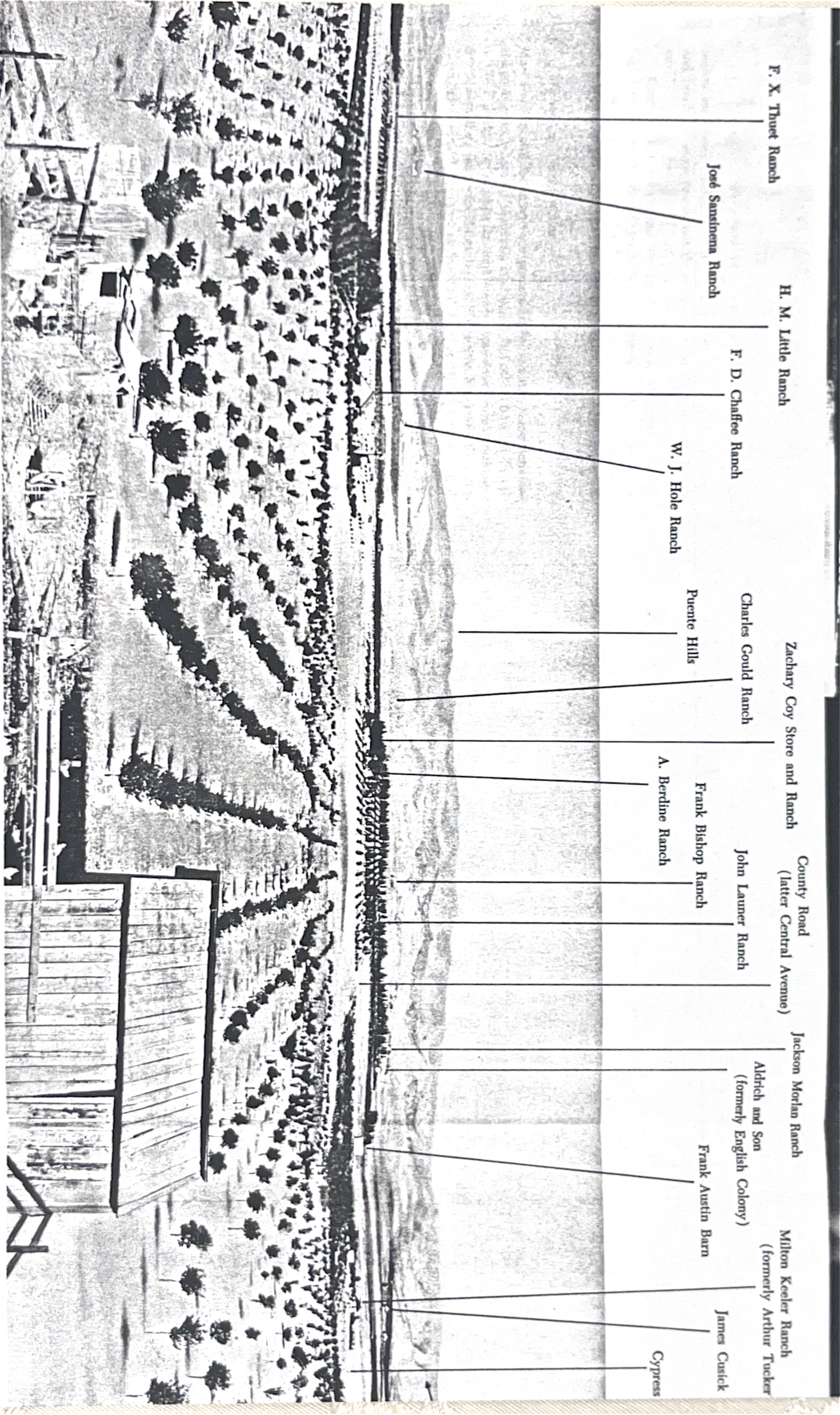
I. B. Varney Ranch

La Habra School

Puento Oil Company

Thomas Warne Ranch

... of the century, was commissioned by Jacob Leutwiler (with team at far left), great-uncle of the author. Jacob Leutwiler then forwarded the photograph  
... to settle in the Valley. The photograph was taken from the Martin Mulkey Ranch (south of Lambert Road, between Euclid Street and Cypress Street).



F. X. Thuet Ranch

H. M. Little Ranch

José Sansinena Ranch

F. D. Chaffee Ranch

W. J. Hole Ranch

Charles Gould Ranch

Puente Hills

Zachary Coy Store and Ranch

A. Berdine Ranch

Frank Bishop Ranch

County Road  
(latter Central Avenue)

John Launer Ranch

Jackson Morlan Ranch

Aldrich and Son  
(formerly English Colony)

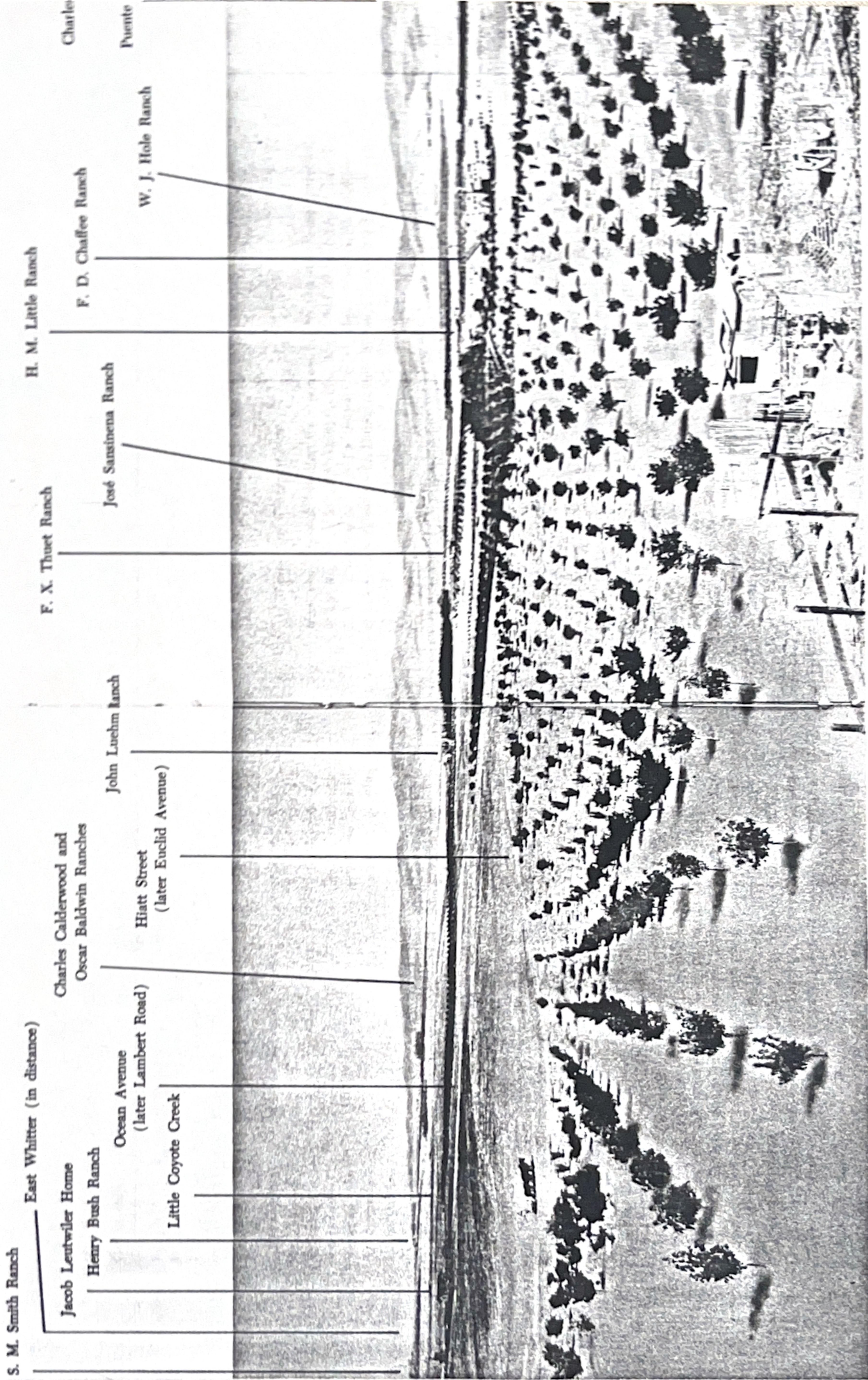
Frank Austin Barn

Milton Keeler Ranch  
(formerly Arthur Tucker)

James Cusick

Cypress

This photograph of the La Habra Valley, taken at the turn of the century, was commissioned by Jacob Leutwiler (with team at far left), great-uncle of the author. Jacob to Highland, Illinois, to encourage other Swiss families to settle in the Valley. The photograph was taken from the Martin Mulkey Ranch (south of Lambert Road



This photograph of the La Habra  
to Highland, Illinois, to encourage