

Where are old names?

By Oran W. Asa, Publisher

How many readers of this newspaper know where the districts known as Annandale, Garvanza, and Hermon are?

Some readers will know, of course, because they have lived here a long time. But many will not.

Well, North Figueroa Street above Burbank Junior High used to be known as "Annandale." The area around North Avenues 63 and 64 was "Garvanza" and South Avenue 60 and Monterey road was "Hermon."

These are beautiful names with lots of tradition behind them, but today they are virtually extinct because somehow they got lost in the rush we sometimes call "progress."

What really happened?

That portion of what we now know as North Figueroa Street from York Boulevard north was originally named "Annandale Boulevard." It succumbed to the Figueroa name in the early 1930s when local leaders launched a movement to extend the Figueroa name "from the mountains to the sea." In a quick, almost overnight move, they persuaded the City of Los Angeles to drop the name "Annandale," to do away with the name "Pasadena Avenue" which ran from York junction to the Santa Fe crossing and the street name "Dayton Avenue" which extended from that point to the Los Angeles river, and rename all three sections "North Figueroa Street."

BOGGED DOWN

As it turned out, the big Figueroa extension plan bogged down when the county and state refused to extend the street beyond its terminus at Hill Drive in Eagle Rock, and then a few years later the state pre-empted that portion of North Figueroa Street through Elysian Park and incorporated the right-of-way into the Arroyo Seco Freeway — and then later changed the name of the Arroyo Seco Parkway to “Pasadena Freeway,” the latter move being at the insistence of interests in the City of Pasadena.

We have, indeed, had a rash of name-changes in our day out here in this part of Los Angeles.

Garvanza, too, is a famous old name from early Los Angeles. It was the first settlement in this part of what is now Highland Park. It came into being in the 1870s — nearly 100 years ago — and a lively little city grew up at what is now the corner of York Boulevard (formerly Pasadena Avenue) and Avenue 64, with a town meeting hall, a school, railroad station, and many stores. It too, had pretty well disappeared by the 1930s simply because the City of Los Angeles had filled in the open spaces and the little community lost its identity to an aggressive Highland Park. The name “Garvanza” survives only on a short residential street

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changed to “York Boulevard” in the years around World War I — and with this the area was upgraded and developed into what we now see as a street of many businesses and a main traffic artery for this part of Los Angeles.

York Valley has been blessed with many things, one of them being an aggressive Chamber of Commerce for many years. And it, too, is not likely to get the “Annandale” and “Garvanza” treatment.

What about Highland Park?

(In our next installment, to be published next Thursday, August 28, we will talk about Highland Park, its past, its present, and its future.)