

The long siesta ended in the Valley of the Highlands

GARVANZA

(Fourth in an exclusive series about places and persons of Northeastern Los Angeles.)

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The long siesta ended in the summer of 1885 when shining steel tenacles probing northeastward from Los Angeles reached into the Highlands. The Los Angeles & San Gabriel Valley Railroad skirted the Arroyo bringing an influx of tourists and settlers to the new town of Garvanza, "only four and one half miles from Los Angeles."

Subdividers Came

Garvanza, named for "garbanzos," the Mexican peas that grew there in wild profusion, was the first settlement in the Highlands. It was situated in the area north of York boulevard on the western bank of the Arroyo, extending north and south along the present Avenue 64, then called Mountain Avenue.

The town was subdivided into building lots by two brothers, Ralph and Edward Rogers, sons of the pioneer mother Tempe Sarah Ann Rogers. Sarah Ann with her husband led one hundred families in 1867 from Denton, Texas to Southern California. The settlers crossed over the Santa Fe trail in covered wagons, braving the devastating desert heat and marauding Indians. Six months later when the adventurous pioneers reached the western edge of Arizona they built rafts and crossed the Colorado River into California.

The Big "Boom"

The modern growth of Los Angeles began with the real estate boom of the 1880's. The railroads took an active part in bringing new residents to Southern California. Since the value of their government-grant land holdings depended upon the extent of settlement, the railroads offered "bargain rates" from eastern points to California. Once during the "booming eighties" a railroad sold one-way tickets from Kansas City to Los Angeles for five dollars!

Highlands Lured Them

The tourists were attracted at once by the gentle, undulating valleys north of the Los Angeles river. There were massive liveoaks, sycamores, babbling streams and grasses in the nearby Arroyo that threaded its course northeastward along the hills. After the coming of the railroad in 1885, the little town of Garvanza grew rapidly. Soon there were 22 houses, and by 1887 the population had increased to 500. Residence lots sold then for \$400, with business sites priced at \$1500. A few years later when the inevitable "bust" followed the "boom," and the rubble of shattered dreams dragged wearily through the "lean nineties," the same lots were offered for \$100 apiece with few takers. Ten acres in the nearby Highland Park area were foreclosed during the depression of the 90's at \$300 an acre. The same property today is valued at approximately one and one-quarter million dollars. The grazing land that once comprised the present Garvanza district, York Valley and Highland Park was sold originally for a dollar an acre. In the 1880's, the valley settlement was concentrated at Garvanza. As late as 1887, in adjacent Highland Park on the south there were only three houses.

Tallyho

Five trains on the L.A.&S.G. Valley stopped daily each way at the small Garvanza station which was the first stop outside of Los Angeles. The Sierra Madre stage, a tallyho coach carrying mail and passengers between Los Angeles and Pasadena, made daily stops at Garvanza Villa, a plush tourist hotel built in 1886 by Hepburn and Company. The tallyho, drawn by four horses, usually two white and two brown, once a day on its way to Pasadena braked to a halt with its dozen passengers in front of the ornate Villa.

Sheep Country

Before its transformation from grazing land to settlement, the Highland Park region was "sheep country." At one time more than 15,000 woolies in a single herd munched their way over the broad acres. The old Pasadena avenue site of Occidental College was a sheepherder's camp and the present Eagle Rock campus was then a sheep-shearing corral. Before the tranquil siesta days ended, the mail stage rolled through what is now Highland Park without passing a single building along the way except a slaughter house just off the main road, a site now occupied by the Highland Park Ebel Club.

Prophecy

In 1890, three days before she died, the staunch pioneer mother, Sarah Ann Rogers, drove with her daughter, Mrs. Sarah Royer, through the Highland hills. They stopped at a point overlooking Los Angeles, then a city of 50,000.

The grand old lady turned proudly to her daughter and said: "Sarah, that town down there will someday spread from the mountains to the sea. It will become one of the greatest cities in the world!"