

# CHARMS OF ARROYO SECO DESCRIBED IN HISTORICAL SKETCH

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Editor's Note: The following paper was read by Mrs. Edward H. Rust at a meeting of the History and Landmarks Division of the Woman's Club of South Pasadena, held recently in Arroyo Seco Park.

There may be a few people present who are not acquainted with our Arroyo Seco, and to such, what I have to tell may have the interest of something new; but to those of us who know and love this region, the story is never old, and we like to hear it often, and tell it to our friends. The name Arroyo Seco means, "dry creek," and you will agree with me that it is not a misnomer, though there were times before the building of the Devil's Gate Dam when, during the rainy season, the stream assumed the proportions of a river, and rushed madly down to Los Angeles, carrying with it everything in its path. Of course this cannot happen again, that is why this stretch of valley is particularly well adapted for a park. In Southern California we do not mind the lack of water in our landscapes, and so this Arroyo is ideal for our purposes. Twenty years or more ago, an association was formed in Los Angeles, whose object was to acquire the land in the Arroyo Seco for park purposes, and South Pasadena and Pasadena were asked to join in the movement. As I remember, Pasadena was not particularly active in the joint endeavor, but she has far outstripped South Pasadena and Los Angeles in gaining possession of the Arroyo which lies within her borders, and putting it to use. On May 8, 1903, President Roosevelt visited Pasadena and was taken for a ride about the city, and on seeing the Arroyo from the Scoville bridge to Columbia street, exclaimed, "What a splendid natural park you have here. Oh, Mr. Mayor, don't let them spoil that. Keep it just as it is." And Pasadena feels like that today.

Los Angeles, after a long struggle, has finally purchased her arroyo and has begun to utilize it. It is called Victory Park, just why, I cannot say, unless it is to signalize her triumph in carrying out her plans. South Pasadena has chosen to call her park by the name it has always borne, and we feel that the old Spanish name for this region cannot be improved upon. This arroyo was part of the land purchased by the Indiana Colony, which afterward became Pasadena. It was divided into "wood-lots," and these were included in the parceling out of the land. Every ranch owner had a wood-lot, and from the denuded state of much of the arroyo we judge the trees were used for firewood. The four acres of this beautiful grove were the last of these wood-lots in South Pasadena held intact, and were preserved from depredation and fire by the late George W. Glover, who owned the acreage to the east for many years. Later it was presented to the city by the present owner, Don C. Porter.

On the bank at this point (near the Y. M. C. A. club house) are the spring and oak tree which are historically known. The water trickled down through masses of ferns and vines, making a beautiful spot. And it was near the spring that the Garfias adobe was built. Dr. Reid in his history of Pasadena, calls it the Garfias Spring.

For many years a committee worked intermittently to acquire the Arroyo, and among those who were enthusiastic workers were Miss Jane Collier, R. D. List, Mr. Dieterle, Dr. Taylor, Mrs. Mumford, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Penfield, Mr. Porter, Mr. Filley, Mr. Whitmore, Mrs. Rust, and many others.

Finally, in 1923, the city voted a bond issue of \$100,000 to purchase the hundred acres of the Arroyo lying within the borders of South Pasadena. This land has all been acquired, except a few acres, which will soon be purchased.

A tree-planting day was celebrated April 30, 1927, to which everyone was invited. Trees were donated, and there was music and speeches. Two beautiful oak trees were dedicated to John S. McGroarty, who was present and gave an address. A tree has already been selected and will be named for Mrs. Elizabeth M. Mumford, who worked so long and tirelessly to obtain possession of these acres.

There are several interesting stories connected with this region, among them that of Don Manuel Garfias, who was chief of staff to Micheltorena, the last governor sent up from Mexico to upper California. He came to California in August, 1842, and in 1843 was married to Dona Luisa Albila, a girl of great beauty and belonging to a prominent and wealthy Spanish family. Garfias possessed birth and education, but had no money. The kind-hearted governor gave him 14,000 acres from the San Gabriel Mission grant, which included the present site of Pasadena and South Pasadena. This rancho was run by the young lady's mother, who stocked it with horses and cattle. The foreman lived in the adobe house, now known as Adobe Flores. It was built in 1839. Don Garfias was a soldier and politician, and as such was a failure as a rancher and a financier. In 1852-53 he built a fine adobe house on this land costing \$5000. It was one of the finest

adobes in the state, and he borrowed the money to build it and lost the land in consequence. Title to the property passed into the hands of Dr. John D. Griffin of Los Angeles, from whom he had borrowed the money. Garfias owed \$1000 interest, and offered to deed the rancho to Dr. Griffin if he would give him \$2000. Griffin did not want it, but to accommodate his friend, consented to take it. As before stated, the Indiana colony purchased part of this land in 1873, paying \$25,000 for it.

Our spring was the meeting place of Portola, the Spanish soldier, and the Indian chief Mamamovic, who is said to have had his lodge under the oak trees at this spot, and they smoked a peace pipe with Indian tobacco, in the year 1770.

The story runs thus:

Those of us who know the Mission Play remember that Portola and a company of soldiers marched north from San Diego, to find Monterey. It was on the return trip that the party lost its way in trying to find the Los Angeles river, which they had crossed in going north. They came too far east, and kept on through Glendale and lower Eagle Rock country to the fording place across the Arroyo Seco at Garvanza. The stream was swollen by the winter rains, and thinking it was the Los Angeles river they crossed over. On the east bank they found the Hahamog-na clan of Indians, who were friendly, and from whom they obtained dried meat, and meal made from acorns. We know all this from the diaries of the two priests who accompanied the party. It is not out of the realm of possibilities that bells were hung on the old oak tree at the spring and the Indians summoned to mass—only no mention of such an event is made in the diary of either priest. So our cathedral oak story cannot be verified, but if Father Junipero Serra had been with the expedition, it surely would have happened.

But we can be certain of this: that this ford was on a line of travel between San Gabriel and San Fernando Missions and those farther up the coast, and that Monterey Road in South Pasadena was a part of El Camino Real.

There is an old cement or lime quarry in the Lincoln Park hills, which was worked by the Indians, and its product was hauled in ox-carts (carretas) to the other Missions, and grain was carried from the missions to the north, to the Old Mill in San Gabriel.

The early settlers will recall a road which descended the bank down into the Arroyo near the Ogtrich Farm, and crossed the stream at a point where the Arroyo widens out. The road on the other side is still in existence, though unused at the present time. It climbs up to Pasadena avenue in Garvanza, about opposite the public library. This ford is now approached from the east by Arroyo Verde Drive. Right here, undoubtedly, was a part of the road between the Missions of San Gabriel and San Fernando, and as it came through South Pasadena it followed along what is now Monterey Road, until it reached Diamond avenue. Mr. Rust ploughed up a piece of it in 1883, which ran diagonally across his father's land to the southeast, crossing the lot occupied by the Woman's Club House; and Mr. Sutton claims a piece on his lot on Oak street. It certainly was going in the right direction to reach the Mission, and the family was told it was the road leading to San Gabriel.

So, if we can't tell the story of the Cathedral Oak, we have these others.