

Farm life in Eagle Rock told by pioneer

By Mrs. Ray Murdock

(Fifth in a series of old time memories of pioneer Eagle Rock residents as compiled by Eleanor Zimmerman.)

I caught my first sight of Eagle Rock in October 1886. We had hired a horse and buggy in East Los Angeles and driven to Eagle Rock for dinner with the Brierley family.

We had come from Rhode Island, due to mother's ill health to the valley which was surrounded by greasewood covered mountains.

After dinner father decided to buy seven acres and farm it. He had an iron molder and knew nothing of farming, but friendly neighbors advised and helped. We had to remove the greasewood and we built a small house on the hill. We moved in (during a storm) before it was complete.

Father went back to his trade in a foundry in Los Angeles, when money was needed for food, trees to be planted, horse and cow feed, taxes and wells which were always caving in. He drove seven miles each way with a horse and two wheeled cart. There was no bridge across the arroyo, near Ave. 35, where he crossed it, and he had to ford the stream. During storms he could not

cross and father often could not be at home until after the storm.

School In A Barn

In 1885 Cromwell Galpin had let the community use his barn as a school. The next year the school house was built. The first teacher was Miss Hutchins, who boarded with the Greens, one mile away. There were 14 families in the valley in 1886—Parker, Brierley, Frackelton, Green, and Goode, on the north slope. On the western hills were the Backus, Wickerd, Brown, Binkley, Knowles, and Stevens. In the south central were Wooley (and another name unknown).

In the eastern end, was the home of an old English couple named Townsend. Townsend Ave. is named for them, and is the only street with the original name. There were only two east-west streets — Old County Road (now Colorado) and Sycamore (now Yosemite). The main north and south street was called Central (now Eagle Rock Blvd.) There was also a short street north from County Road to the Brierley and Frackelton homes called Peyton Ave. (now Loleta).

All water came from wells with windmills and tunnels from which water flowed to the houses.

Everyone attended the Congregational Church. The minister, Mr. Cash lived in the Los Feliz hills and drove a horse and buggy, fording the Los Angeles River. The valley people were very poor and paid mostly in produce.

Pillow In Middle

Christmas was always celebrated in the school house. Mothers met and made red tarleton stockings, edged with buttonholed stitching, and filled them with candy bought in Well's Candy Store in Los Angeles, and with nuts and popcorn.

A large cypress tree was cut and set up in the school building and popcorn strings, candles, and gifts hung on it. Santa arrived in a home-made red

suit with a pillow in his middle.

The chief way of making money for the church, was socials, strawberry ice cream, oyster stew, festivals. Everyone brought dishes and silverware, and carried lanterns, to light the way home. The first wedding, was Viola Knowles, and Milton Brown.

Every summer we all went to Long Beach, and the women and children spent a few weeks or a month. We pitched tents in the sand and carried water from a nearby house. The party gathered at three a.m. and hitched horses to already packed wagons and began the trip. We stopped at the Willows for lunch, and covered the 33 miles by night. The worst was getting through the sand to the beach. Everyone pushed, and loads were lightened. The Long Beach camping trips, lasted until 1896, when two members drowned in the rip tide.

Near Sparkletts was a standpipe and the artesian well flowed heavily all year. South of Occidental College, near York, was an old adobe in ruins, said to have been an early signal tower of the Spaniards.

Early Railroad

In the late eighties, a steam railroad was built from Townsend, Ave. to Garvanza. The tracks were removed a few

years later. About 20 years later, street cars came to Eagle Rock. When the car line from Eagle Rock to Glendale was built, old settlers were invited to ride the first trip, but the road up the now Beaselo hill was so narrow, laborers had to go along with the car and chop down the hillside, so the car steps could get by.

Occasionally we had picnics in old Santa Monica Canyon. It was a long hard trip and we did not get home until midnight. On one of these trips, while we were away, (July 4th); the first grocery in Eagle Rock owned by Jim Watson (on Central, near where Merton now is) burned down. Groceries then, had to be bought in Los Angeles, or in a small grocery in Verdugo.

In the late 1880's, two Frenchmen in Rockdale had a vineyard called Frenchmen's Vineyard. At the same time, a Mr. Stewart had a small house in Eagle Rock Park. A miner had a gold mine in Eagle Rock Canyon. Wild roses, wild black berries and raspberries, tiger lillies, and wild grapes grew in profusion in the canyon.

Before the railway, in 1906 there was an Eagle Rock Stage, to Ave. 60 in Highland Park. It was a three seated surrey, with two horses, driven by Mrs. James Kincheloe's brother.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mrs. Ray Murdock (nee Elena Frackelton) is the daughter of John and Katherine V. Frackelton. A street in Eagle Rock and a scholar ship fund in Occidental College bears their names.

Mrs. Murdock came with her parents to Southern California in September, 1886. They moved into their house in Eagle Rock Feb. 4, 1887. She has lived here continuously since (74 years).

A lemon tree in her yard was planted 70 years ago by her

father. There are now four generations of the family, three of which went through the schools here.

Mrs. Murdock taught for two years in the first school of Eagle when it had but two rooms. She was the principal for one year. For many years she taught in other Los Angeles schools.

The accompanying story is taken from the valuable album full of rare pictures of the early days of Eagle Rock, and notes of the area which she compiled.



WAY BACK WHEN—The thriving little "metropolis" of Eagle Rock as it looked on a sunny day back in 1907. Familiar Security Bank building was the community landmark, with the old Eagle Rock Sentinel in the foreground.

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