

Oliver Vickery

FLORENCE -- NAME

CAL VF

August 11, 1969

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1427 WEYMOUTH AVENUE
SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA 90732

California VF.

Mr. Robert Knepper,
County Librarian
P.O. Box 111
Los Angeles, California 90053

Dear Mr. Knepper;

In response to your phone call, I am enclosing some very interesting references relative to the old railroad station of Florence, California.

These references were prepared by Anna Marie Hager, a foremost and recognized historian of the Harbor and of Los Angeles County. I have not heard from Mr. George Hugh Banning relative to this station, and our files at the Banning Museum does not contain, so far as I can determine, anything about the Florence Station or why it was named Florence. There are no Banning women named Florence from Phineas Banning's Family Tree. However, there is a Florence Banning who married Hancock Banning III, a great great grandson of Phineas. They live in Newport Beach, California, but this Florence has no connection with the Florence RR Station of Phineas Banning.

Please let me know if I may be of any further service relative to the life of Phineas Banning.

Sincerely yours,

Oliver Vickery
Oliver Vickery, Curator
Banning Museum (Wilmington)

CC Anna Marie Hager
CC George Hugh Banning.

SOURCE ITEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO FLORENCE, CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles in the Sunny Seventies: a Flower from the

Golden Land, by Ludwig Louis Salvator

(1929, Los Angeles, Calif. Jake Zeitlin, 188 pages)

X
Pages 2 and 183. The latter contains a good description of the township of Florence.

Traveler's Hand Book to Southern California, by George

917.949 Wharton James

(1904. Pasadena, Calif. 508 pages)

Chapter XXX, pages 349-354: "From Los Angeles to San

Pedro on the Southern Pacific Railroad."

Page 349: "Florence is reached..." description of area follows.

The Railway & Locomotive Historical Society Bulletin No. 97

October, 1957. Excellent article by Gilbert H. Kneiss,

Phineas Banning and the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railroad, pages 27-54.

(This contains references to Florence and Compton, expertly researched by Mr. Kneiss)

Westways, August, 1966. WATTS: A Legacy of Lines, by Pat Adler

Pages 22-25. Excellent article and expertly researched.

Mrs. Adler researched very thoroughly the files of the

Los Angeles County Records. Note her reference to the

map and field books of John Goldsworthy who surveyed the

entire area along the S.P.R.R., in 1874.

Florence was formerly known as Nadeau Station where Nadeau attempted to raise sugar beets but did not have the machinery to refine the beets. People using his sugar discovered their coffee turned blackish and very bitter.

Gold and Sunshine: Reminiscences of Early California, by

979.4 Colonel James J. Ayers. 1922, N.Y.

Page 260 good description of Florence and property of
Remi Nadeau

318-319 same as above but on the sugar-beet venture

City-Makers, by Remi Nadeau 1948, N.Y., Doubleday & Co.

Page 19: Birth of new towns...Closer to Los Angeles, the
village of Florence was laid out on the San Antonio grant...

Page 121 reference to Florence ~~Station~~ Station

FLORENCE-GRAHAM COMMUNITY

, an unincorporated area five miles due south of Los Angeles civic center, is bounded on the north by Slauson Ave., east by Alameda St., south by the Watts area of Los Angeles, and west by Central Ave. Derivation of the name Florence is uncertain. The northern portion, it is referred to as early as 1869 as a station of Phineas Banning's Los Angeles-San Pedro Railway at what is now Nadeau St. Graham, the southern part, comes from a station at Manchester Ave. on the Pacific Electric Railway Los Angeles-Long Beach route, named after a railway employee. Part of Don Antonio Maria Lugo's Rancho San Antonio, the area's first known settlers were reportedly two Negro homesteaders. The district is now primarily residential with some light manufacturing. The proposed Industrial Freeway and a main line of the suggested Rapid Transit District Los Angeles to Long Beach route would bisect the area north-south. Population (April 1969 estimate) is 45,648.

Robert R. Knepper 556-32-3058
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Huntington Park, Calif. 90255

Florence Apr 6 1937

All the facts contained in this article were secured from our files on Florence history.

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SINNESS

FLORENCE AREA ONCE BARLEY RANCHES

Three greenbacks were the exchange for one gold dollar in Florence shortly after the Civil War and during the early founding period of Florence's history. This item is recorded by Mr. Marcus Servott, who moved to California from New York and purchased property here.

This quaint fact and many others are contained in an old letter now the property of the Florence library.

A blacksmith shop, operated by J. A. Nadeau at the corner of Alameda and Florence avenue, was the local postoffice. Residents of Florence often received their mail edged in black—from contact with the blacksmith's pudgy and grimy hands.

S. P. RAILROAD

For transportation facilities there was the Southern Pacific railroad which took people into Los Angeles and Long Beach. A tiny railroad station served customers at Alameda and Florence avenues. There was no agent, but as the train came to a groaning stop the conductor climbed off and leisurely transacted the business and gave change for the fares.

Rock to build the San Pedro breakwater was hauled over this line as well as many lumber shipments.

Typical of the people who lived in Florence in the decades before 1900 was their attitude toward the soil they cultivated.

Barley was the chief crop grown, and that cared for in a haphazard manner. When the crop was good it was harvested, but when crops turned out badly, cattle were turned in to graze upon the barley. The soil was considered to be very poor and no gardening was attempted. And this upon land which has produced millions of dollars worth of truck gardening to the hardworking and thrifty Japanese gardeners who soon swarmed in and developed it.

A Mr. T. E. Clelland was the first to sink an artesian well for irrigation of his property. At one time this well furnished water to irrigate 200 acres of surrounding property. First store in Florence was established in 1883 as previous to that all trading was done in Los

Angeles, and a trip to the city for buying was a looked forward to event.

Did you ever use an Eucalyptus tree for firewood in your home? Believe it or not, from 1890 to 1895 eucalyptus tree growing in Florence was a major industry and formed a lucrative source of income for many land owners.

On the Clelland and Thatcher ranches at one time there were more than fifty acres of heavy growth of eucalyptus trees. A good sized tree would mature in five years time. Chopped up for firewood, the cords would be hauled to Los Angeles where they were gobbled up by home owners for firewood.