

# The popular Old Virginia once a famous ostrich farm

It would require a patron with a lively imagination to picture the Old Virginia restaurant, 119 Pasadena Ave, with its urbane atmosphere, as a spin-off from an ostrich farm. That, nevertheless, is the case.

One of the oldest dinner houses in the San Gabriel Valley, the Old Virginia has steadily become one of the most popular restaurants in this area. Many are familiar with the past history of its building as told by management, but for the benefit of those who are not, we would like to reprint it here.

The building now occupied by the Old Virginia has a unique past. The room which is the main dining room was the main showroom for ostrich plumes. Yes, the Old Virginia was once part of the world famous South Pasadena Ostrich Farm.

## AMAZING BUSINESS

This amazing business was started by Edwin H. Cawston in 1881 when he went to Natal, South Africa and paid \$6000 for 52 full grown ostriches. He chartered a sailing vessel, the Swedish KRONA, to bring his purchases to America. And many were the problems that had to be met.

In 1911, Mr. Cawston sold his world-renowned business for a reputed \$1,250,000. In 1934 the farm closed down, with only a few of the birds left. Since then the land has been subdivided and now homes and industrial buildings, including the

Old Virginia, occupy the former ostrich runs.

All that remain today besides memories are the picture postcards, the painted ostrich eggs and other souvenirs that were bought by the thousands of visitors. Yes, and perhaps an occasional proud ostrich plume gathering dust in grandma's attic.

## OSTRICH FARM

Indeed, an interesting history though it is difficult and requires a lively imagination once inside the elegant and luxurious interior of the Old Virginia to envision an ostrich farm.

the name ... "Parisian Night". Sounds intriguing, doesn't it? We will be looking forward to hearing more about it.

CAWSTON OSTRICH FARM  
(Ostrich Farm)

May 7, 1964

Hollywood NEWS HERALD



THE OLD VIRGINIA—It certainly requires quite a bit of imagination to picture an ostrich farm where this popular restaurant now stands, but that was the case just a few short years ago. The unique business was terminated in 1934 with the hand of progress stepping in to subdivide the land for homes and industrial buildings.

**During my school years in Glendale, it was a treat to go the Ostrich Farm in South Pasadena. Can you tell me what happened to that farm and where all those beautiful birds went?**

**G. M., Palms**

The South Pasadena ostrich farm, which was founded in 1886, was the ancestral home of almost all American ostriches. Edwin Cawston, chartered a ship to bring a herd of about 50 birds here from Africa and, because ostrich plumes were the last word in fashion during the "Gay Nineties," the farm prospered until the early years of the 20th century. In 1935 the farm merged with the California Zoological Gardens. At that time only about 30 birds remained in the pens that once accommodated 1200.

*Herald Examiner 10-11-71*