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April 14, 1983

Mr. Jack Smith  
Los Angeles TIMES  
Los Angeles, CA

Re: Vermont Square Library

Dear Mr. Smith:

Your column commemorating the seventieth birthday of the Vermont Square Branch of the Los Angeles Library (March 27, 1983) took my brother, Jevne S. Rohman of La Canada, and me back more than sixty years (1919-1922) when our family lived in the area.

More importantly it took us even further back in the lives of our grandparents, L. E. (Lewis Eugene) and Ida S. Shepherd. It was shortly after the turn of the century when our grandfather acquired the acreage, then in Los Angeles County, that is now bounded by Vernon Ave., 48th Street, Vermont and Normandie Avenues.

As a real estate developer, he formed the Southwest Land Company with himself as president, subdivided the acreage, granting parcels of land to the County for a park, school and a right-of-way which brought the yellow cars of the L. A. Railway up Vermont Avenue to 48th street and westward towards Normandie and Western Avenues. It was the Vermont Square park which was chosen as the site for one of the first, if not the first, library to be given to the public by Andrew J. Carnegie.

Our grandparents came to Los Angeles in 1887, bringing with them our mother, the late Ruth Shepherd Rohman, then an infant of six months. Our grandfather, a hard worker and a strong believer in individual enterprise, established himself in business first as a merchant, eventually owning and operating several general stores in communities like Downey. He travelled between his stores by horse-drawn cart. Eventually he sold the stores and bought the acreage on Vermont Avenue and became a realtor. After the Southwest Land Company had sold the lots in Vermont Square, about 1913, he retired briefly.

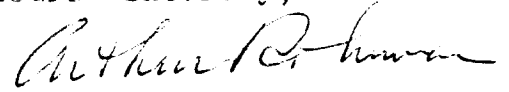
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Retirement proved onerous to him, and he became a vice-president of the Guarantee Trust and Savings Bank (at Fourth and Spring, I believe). This bank was merged into Security First National Bank (now Security Pacific National Bank) and he served as a director of that bank until his death in October, 1936. As you might guess, he was not a fan of FER. Our grandmother survived until 1946, being born before the Civil War and being alive when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

I join with you in commemorating the Vermont Square Library. The books that I borrowed enabled me to follow the adventures of Tarzan, fight the battles of the Civil War, attend West Point as a plebe, explore the dark forests of the Belgian Congo in pursuit of that huge, ferocious, man-eating monster, the gorilla, as I then thought it to be.

The other day, when I was in LA, my brother and I drove out to the Vermont Square Library and talked with Librarian Bob Gualtieri. We had an enjoyable visit, and he gave us copies of a history of the library. He asked us to give him anything we might be able to develop towards adding to this history. Accordingly we are sending him a copy of this letter together with a contribution in memory of our grandparents.

Yours Sincerely,



  
Jevne S. Rohman