

Wilmington History

Drum Barracks

Wilmington & Long Beach 'Rapid Transit'

Camels

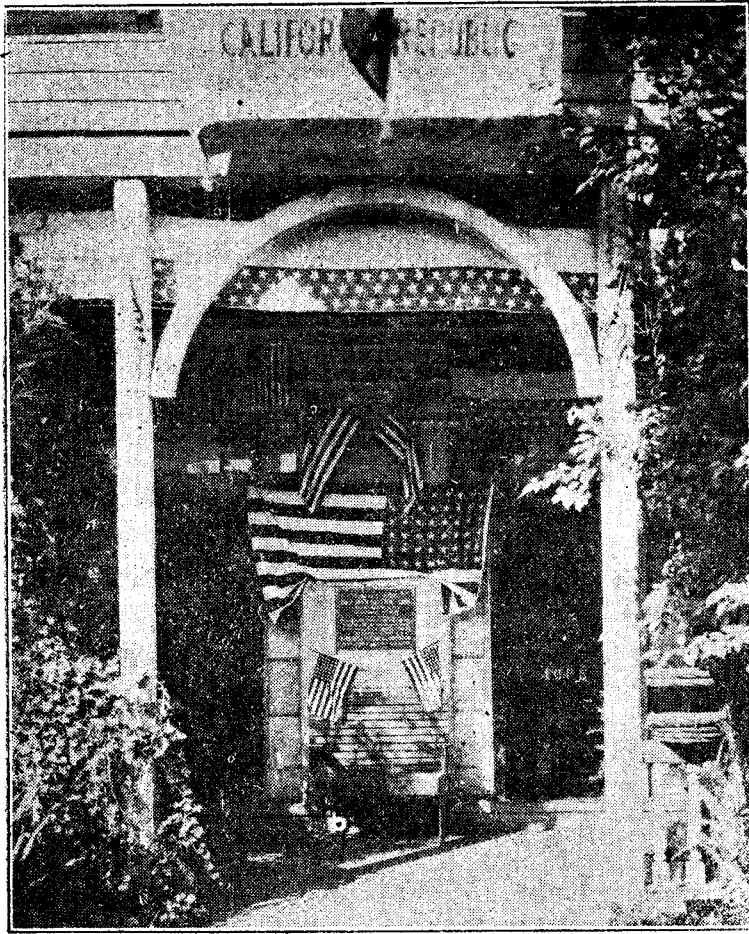
Wilmington

Reference

Wilmington Pioneers Gather

Reminisce Colorful Days of Past Periods

Drum Barracks Is Scene



DRUM BARRACKS—As it looked at the pioneer celebration on September 23, 1930. The plaque which appears on the front door of Drum Barracks is an exact bronze replica of the insignia which designated this old landmark the official headquarters for the U. S. Army during the Civil War. It was the army headquarters for the West and many of the noted army officers of those days were stationed here.

Wilmington, Aug. 20, 1923.—One of the most enjoyable gatherings of pioneers of Southern California occurred at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Keaveny, 1051 Cary avenue, Wilmington, in the historic and romantic Drum Barracks.

View Early Scenes

There were thirty guests present, and the forepart of the evening was devoted to a stereopticon exhibit of old historic pictures showing the evolution of Los Angeles from the adobe Mexican town of less than 3,000 to the modern city of nearly a half million. Views of San Pedro, Long Beach and Wilmington past and present were also shown.

Three Pioneer Soldiers

Among the guests were three soldiers who served at the Barracks during the stirring days of the Civil War. Judge W. H. Savage of San Pedro, former Quarter Master Sergeant; Capt. A. M. Le Baguerre of Hollywood, formerly of the First Cavalry; Judge Melrose of Santa Ana all who remember when Wilmington was a metropolis of a harbor with a population of 6000 including soldiers, at a time when Los Angeles had little more than half that number. At this time there was no Pasadena, Alhambra, Hollywood. San Pedro was a town of 4 houses; neither did Redondo, Santa Monica, and many of our thriving cities exist.

Wilmington P. O. in 1858

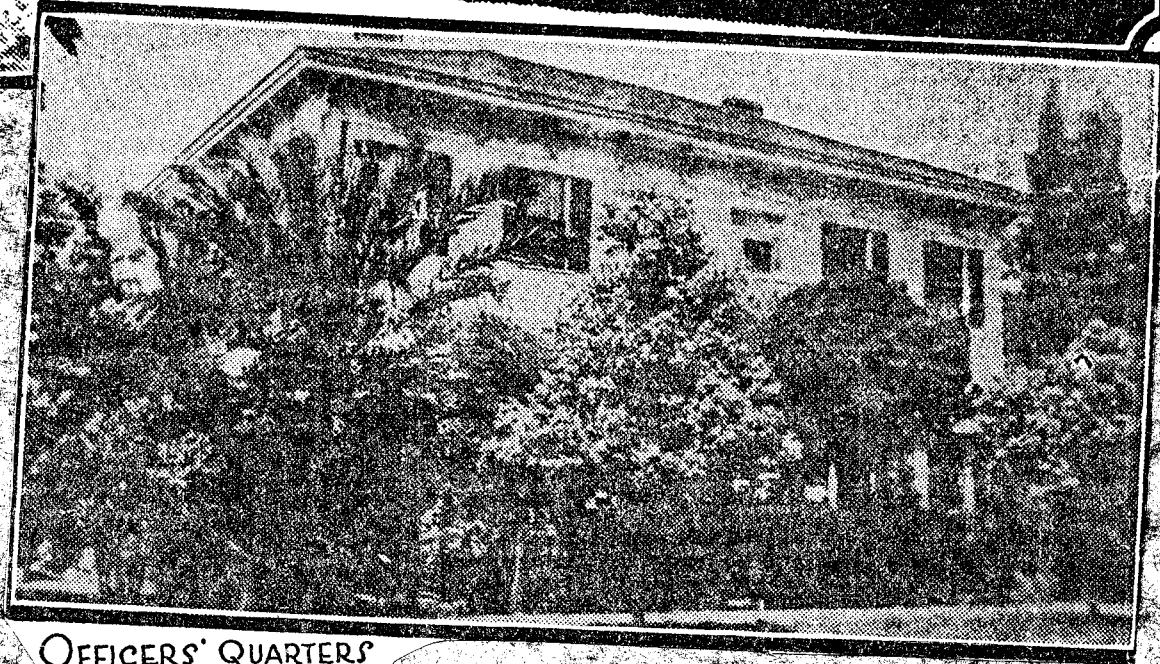
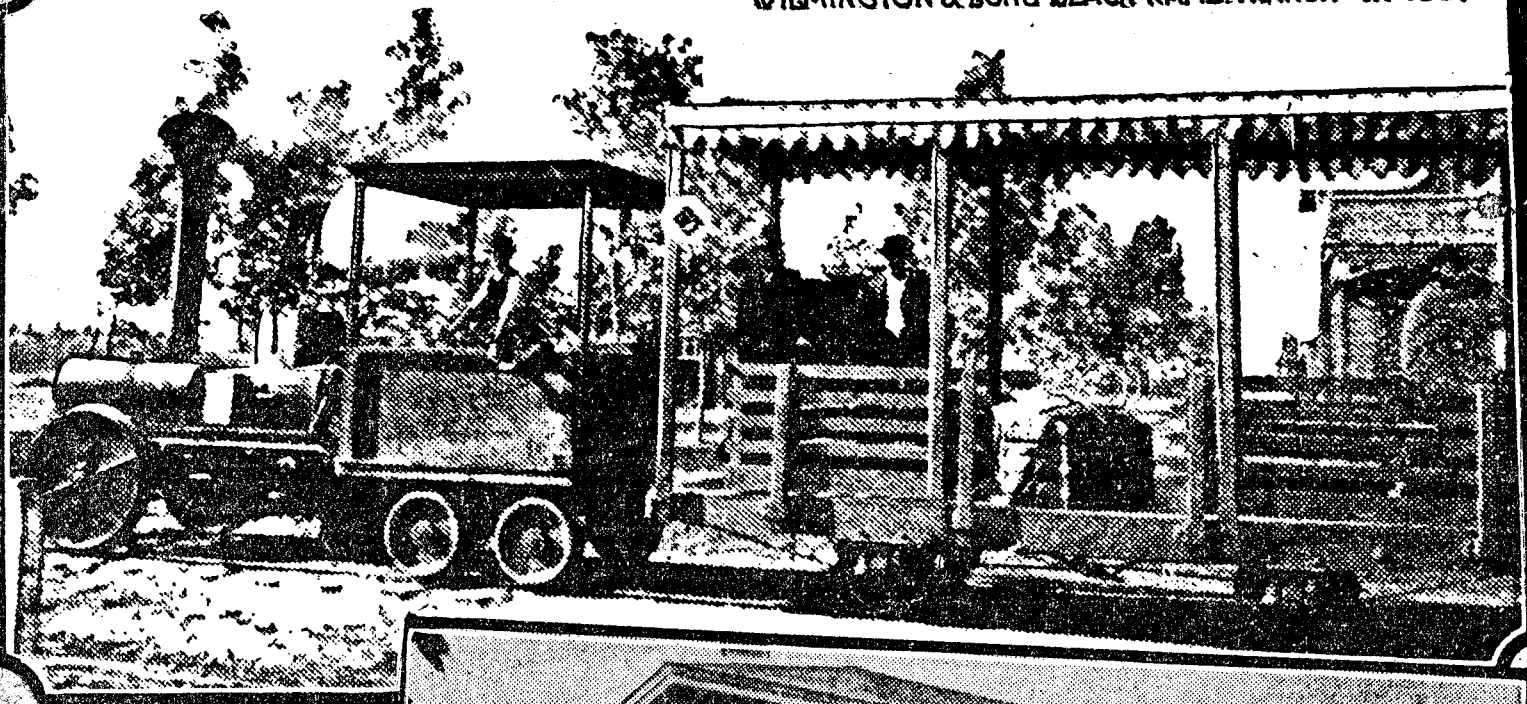
The handful of scattered ranchers and cattle raisers in surrounding settlements came to Wilmington for their mail and money orders, to attend church and lodge, to buy their groceries and dry goods and at that time the surrounding country was a huge pasture, covered with wild mustard and cactus. The historic Drum Barracks, oldest building in the harbor district (named in honor of Quarter Master Gen. Drum) is a large, white, colonial building with green vines centered in a grove of stately palms, cypress, eucalyptus trees with giant rose covered arbors and surrounded with flowers. Material for this building was brought around

Cape Horn and erected in Wilmington in 1862. It consists of 14 large rooms with a large old-fashioned fireplace and was the terminus of the first telegraph in the southwest. Here the United States troops and wagon trains were assembled before their expeditions into the interior states to suppress the marauding bands of Indians, long before the dream of railroads. The barracks consisted of officers and men's quarters, guard house, powder magazine and military hospitals. Over the main entrance on an archway of cypress there is the following inscription: "Officer Quarters, Drum Barracks, 1862-68, U. S. Army Supply Depot for Southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico, U. S. Department of Southwest."

The Old Oaken Bucket

At the center of the patio in the rear of the house is the old ivy-covered well sheltered by a moss-grown rope where hangs the old oaken bucket. Many old relics have been well preserved here, also a rare collection of historic pictures. The Barracks were abandoned after the submergation of the Indians and the land returned to the donors by the acts of Congress. Some of the officers stationed here at one time or another were General Drum, Whittier MacGruder. The two Generals Winfield Scott and Henry Hancock, Capt. Phil Sheridan, of the famous poem "Sheridan's Ride," also Lieut. Hunt, first husband of Helen Hunt Jackson, who wrote her celebrated story "Ramona." Lieut. Hunt furnished his wife with many accounts of the white man's injustice to the Indian which she later wrote into her book.

WILMINGTON & LONG BEACH "RAPID TRANSIT" IN 1887

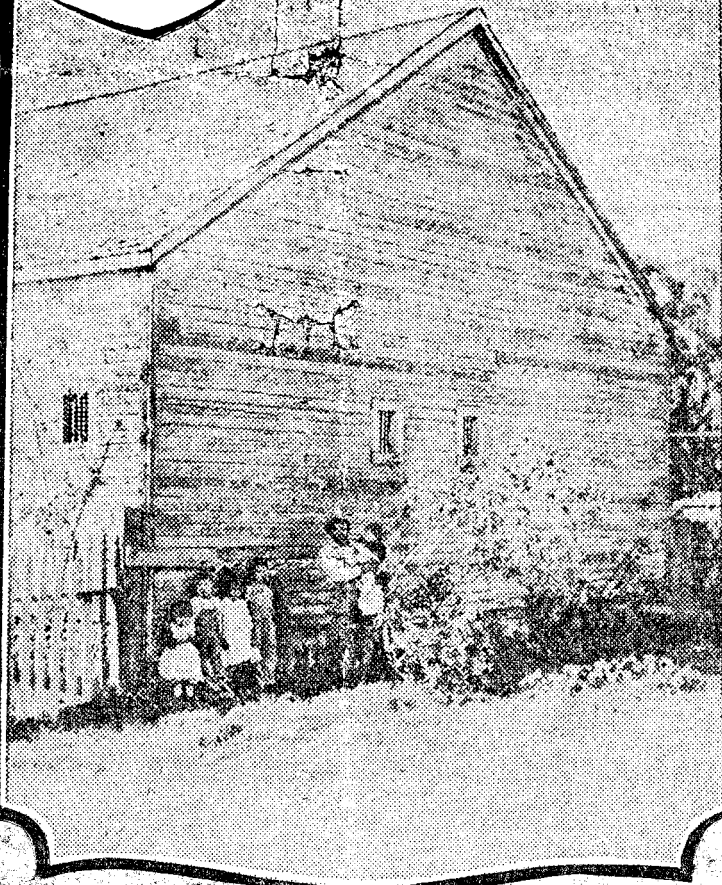


OFFICERS' QUARTERS
DRUM BARRACKS
1862-68

WILMINGTON

HISTORY

GUARD HOUSE,
-DRUM
BARRACKS,
1862-68



Bronze Tablet for "Barracks"

Hundreds of people interested in the past history of Wilmington and its harbor will congregate at the old Barracks, now the present home of T. F. Keaveny, 1053 Cary avenue, Sunday, October 2, when the Native Sons and Daughters of California will place a bronze tablet in front of this historical building. The Native Sons and Daughters will be assisted in their ceremonies by several other Historical Societies of the State and vicinity, including Los Angeles, Long Beach, San Pedro and others. Many other Pioneer Societies will be present and the Chamber of Commerce will do much of the preparatory work, erecting a stage, and arranging hundreds of other details preparatory to making this one of the big affairs in the history of Wilmington. The Boy Scouts will assist and the program will be of inestimable value to them from an educational vantage. The Fort MacArthur Band will be there to furnish spirited music and everyone attending will carry away a fund of knowledge that could not be had in any other way. It will be a great day for Mr. Keaveny, who has labored for a decade in compiling correct data relative to the early history of this city and her port.

MARCH 14, 1928

ECHOES from the Old Drum Barracks of 1862

*When the Camel Cavalcade, antedating
the Pony Express, carried Pacific Coast Mail
from Salt Lake and Denver...~*

By MARY M. SCHERER.

SURROUNDED by trees and shrubs which make it a beautiful garden spot, the old Drum Barracks, which were built at Wilmington in 1862, stand today a stately reminder of early Southern California history. The building was constructed in the days when Wilmington, with a population of 6000, including soldiers at the fort, was the metropolis of the district and when Long Beach was still an undeveloped ranch.

With the barracks at this time stood a guardhouse, a military hospital and a powder magazine, two of which are still standing. The officers' quarters, which is generally conceded to be the Drum Barracks, is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Keaveny. The guardhouse is being used by Japanese as a stable, the military hospital building has been removed and the powder magazine is now part of a merchant's shop.

Wood which went into the old Drum Barracks was brought around the Horn and stands as new and sturdy after sixty-four years as the little bungalows which have sprung up beside the big building. There are fourteen large rooms in the structure and in several of the rooms wide open fireplaces stand as reminders of the heating methods of early California days.

The barracks were constructed in Wilmington because of the ease with which water could be obtained there compared to conditions in San Pedro, where the men first camped. Early in 1860 and through 1861 Captain Phil Sheridan had charge of the army post stationed in San Pedro. The men were housed in tents and were forced to travel miles for water. Early in 1862 the fort was built at what is now designated as 1053 Cary Avenue. Water from the river, now known as the Los Angeles River, was flumed to the fort and the building was made the headquarters for the United States Army in the Southwest.

Troops and supplies were landed in San Pedro from around the Horn and marched to the fort in Wilmington, from which they were detailed to smaller forts in Arizona and other border States.

The barracks were abandoned after the subjugation of the Indians in California and the land given back to the donors by an act of Congress, but during the years when troops occupied the establishment such men as Major Henry Hancock, Winfield Scott Hancock, Sheridan and Lieutenant Hunt, first husband of Helen Hunt Jackson, who immortalized California through her "Ramona," had charge of the men and supplies there.

As the Drum Barracks was the head fort for the Southwest, the population was constantly shifting, but the barracks housed from 2000 to 6000 men at all times and offered shelter for their animals as well.

During this time also and before the Civil War, Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, ordered the purchase of eighty camels from Egypt and Arabia. These animals were brought from their native lands with their native drivers and were employed in carrying mail and Government supplies from the Wilmington fort to points east, as Salt Lake and Denver. The desert spaces between the Pacific Coast and these cities was successfully passed through by the camels.

With the coming of the pony express the camel caravan was abandoned and the camels turned loose. Miners in the sandy spaces of interior California often report glimpses of these camels' descendants.

While this fort hummed with activity, the surrounding country was deserted and quiet. Los Angeles was a tiny village, with Mexicans and miners as its principal inhabitants. San Pedro boasted six houses and Long Beach was still a ranch. People from the country drove into Wilmington to receive their mail, attend lodge and buy supplies for their homes.

Wilmington's harbor, at the time of the city's importance, was not yet developed and offered inducements to only the smallest crafts, as San Pedro's channel was deeper and vessels found docking there more convenient.

As Long Beach assumed the proportions of a city, near 1887, a rapid transit railway was established between Wilmington and the new city. This railway had its Wilmington terminal at Thenard Station, in East Wilmington, and extended over the slough along the route now taken by the Southern Pacific Railway into Long Beach.

The little engine puffed along at a rate which seldom exceeded ten miles per hour and when slight hills along the way were encountered passengers and crew were forced to get out and push the train over the difficulty.

It was succeeded by the South-

ern Pacific Railway.

The officers' quarters of the barracks, which now constitutes the only section of the old fort which is in good repair, stands almost the same as it did in the early days. Mr. Keaveny, who has made a study of early California history for the past twenty years, has gone to great lengths to preserve the old structure, which stands as a compliment to the carpentry of California pioneers.

In the suite occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Keaveny are several pieces of furniture which were made to be used in the old fort. There are several large chairs, with seats twice the size of present day chairs. There is a cabinet standing well above the average individual's head, which bears beautiful carving, the work of patient hands during the pioneer days.

Before the fireplace, which holds an important place in the wide living room, are two old andirons which were originally used there. Before the door, at one side of the porch, is an old-

fashioned boot scraper, worn now by the pressure of the feet of these men who acted in the forming of history in the United States.

At the rear center of the old house is a patio, luxuriant with a growth of ferns, shrubs and flowers which give it a quaint, old-fashioned air and which is crowned by the presence of a real oaken bucket which still hangs in the well. True to the old adage, there is soft green moss clinging to the lusty brown sides of the old bucket and when it is raised and lowered into the dark recesses of the well a hollow clanging echo rises to the listener's ear as the wooden sides scrape the stones of the well.

Dim lights from old iron lanterns, which were hung before all the entrances to the old fort, still gleam out at night, through the care given them by Mr. Keaveny.

It is a majestically beautiful old house, fragrant with the memories of a young country which hang about its massive and high-ceilinged rooms like a tangible presence.

WILMINGTON

HISTORY

MARCH 14, 1922

DRUM BARRACKS MADE LANDMARK

With Boy Scouts from Wilmington troops acting as Color Bearers of the National and State flags, Judge W. Savage unveiled the tablet that will mark Drum Barracks as one of the Historical Landmarks of United States and California, at the ceremonies held yesterday afternoon when a large crowd of Native Daughters and Sons were present, many old time residents of Wilmington and representatives from the History and Landmark Society of Los Angeles.

Mrs. Hazel Raines, president of Rudicinda Parlor No. 230 N. D. G.W., presented Mrs. Margaret Savage Devers, who with Mrs. Florence DeDodson Schoneman, acted as chairman. Mrs. Devers spoke briefly concerning the preservation of landmarks, stating that the money with which to purchase the tablet had been provided by the Rudicinda Parlor No. 230 N. D. G. W.

P. J. Picherie, president of Wilmington Chamber of Commerce spoke briefly concerning early Wilmington days. James Mee, president of the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce, when introduced, acknowledged that he was proud of the fact that his forefathers were Wilmington pioneers and that his father was at one time at Drum Barracks.

Mrs. Florence De Dodson Schoneman, State president, with her mother, Mrs. Rudicinda De Dodson and Mr. De Dodson from San Pedro were present. Mrs. De Dodson being presented from the platform.

Fort McArthur Band furnished the music, a detachment from Fort McArthur Artillery fired a salute in memory of those whom in days gone by had been stationed at Drum Barracks, the bugler sounding taps.

Chaplin Hunter from Fort McArthur, represented the Secretary of War and the Navy, replacing Captain Fisher who was called away and unable to attend. Chaplin Hunter spoke of the necessity of making historical sites so that they may not be lost.

Presentation of the tablet was made by Mrs. Grace Stormer, past Grand President of the Native Daughters, who is also Manager of the Women's Department of the Bank of Italy, Los Angeles. Thomas F. Keaveny, whose home is Drum Barracks and through whose kindness the house was thrown open for inspection, accepted the gift of the tablet.

Inscription on bronze tablet:

In memory of the Historic past of this building and the importance of its association with early American history in California, Rudicinda Parlor No. 230 N. D. G. W. placed this tablet Oct. 2, 1927.

Officers Quarters

1862 Drum Barracks 1868
Supply Depot Department of the Southwest U. S. Army.

Marguerite Kaveney who was in charge of the program, arranged to take the guests on a trip to see the old Powder house and the old jail. Many availed themselves of this privilege. An item of interest was the square headed nails used in the construction of the old jail building, which is fast falling into decay. An effort is being made to preserve one of the doors of the old jail which are of very heavy timber and the bars placed in a manner quite different from those of today.

The Boy Scouts had a part in the program, giving the Flag Salute and singing America. All day the Scouts were on duty assisting as guides on the streets, directing visitors to the Barracks, and showing the visitors the Powder House and the Jail.

Judge Savage in a short talk told of his days at the Barracks, sixty-one years ago Jan. 6th, he came to the Barracks, and sixty-one years ago it was his first child was born at the Barracks. Altho in the eighties, Judge Savage, in a happy way, told of his experience. Telling of receiving just yesterday a letter from the government stating that for his duties with the 52nd U. S. Artillery, (serving in Arizona among the Indians) he had been granted an additional \$50 per month pension,

and the Judge said, to make it good, the check accompanied the letter. After the war, in 1874 Judge Savage told of going to work for Phineas Banning on his lumber wharf at a wage of \$2.25 per day and how he studied law at night.

An item of interest to all was his story of the incorporation of Wilmington. It took four weeks to get the papers ready to send to Sacramento to file, then, because Long Beach had an eye on Wilmington, and in order to beat their papers, Judge had them charter a special train and got to Sacramento first and filed paper for incorporation of this town, Wilmington.

Mike Collins, a former member of Los Angeles City Council, brother of Mrs. Ronan, well known, was introduced, George H. Peck, and John Sullivan, the only living man who run on the first railroad out of Wilmington, each gave a short talk, in fact the assembly was turned into a regular reunion of old friends. Wm. F. Durr, Past President of the Native Sons, San Pedro was one of the speakers.

By the ceremonies yesterday, Wilmington is given National and State wide publicity as the location of one of the historical landmarks of our country.

Guard and Powder House Still Stand

—Sep. 22, 1933

The old Guard House, which is one of the units built by the United States Army at the time Drum Barracks was built, still stands on Barracks avenue, just south of K street. The powder house with its thick walls and massive door was used later as a refrigerator for a meat market, now of historic fame, but its dilapidated windows and gapping doors stand open as an open invitation to tramps.

—Wilmington's 75th Birthday—

Building of Drum Barracks Debated

Some authorities attribute the establishing of Drum Barracks to Indian troubles but an equally important purpose was to assist in the Civil War and to subdue Secessionists.

WILMINGTON HISTORY

OCT. 3-1927

Water Conducted From L. A. River

The founding of Drum Barracks carried with it many improvements for Wilmington. In order to obtain water for the Barracks and for the town, the government contracted with Banning to build a flume and ditches to conduct water from the Los Angeles river. On April 1, 1864, the Governor of California approved an act which empowered Banning to construct a Dam across the river at a point about three miles north-east of the Dominguez Ranch houses. Later it was discovered that water could be obtained more economically from wells at a depth of about ten feet.

—Wilmington's 75th Birthday—

September 22, 1933

U.S. Army Units Established Here During Civil War

At the outbreak of the Civil War the United States Government became interested in establishing military headquarters in Southern California, because of considerable Southern feeling around Los Angeles. Wilmington was well situated to combat such influences. Col. Banning sold two tracts of land to the government for \$1 and Wilmington became the headquarters for the Union Army, department of the Southwest. This included the territory of Southern California, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico. The lumber for the buildings was brought around Cape Horn from the Charleston Navy Yard. The cost of erecting the buildings was over a million dollars. Drum Barracks which now stands in stateliness in the center of our residential district was one of the units. In fact the headquarters were stationed in Drum Barracks and was in command of Gen. Drum. The building is now owned by Thomas F. Keaveny and is one of several buildings which served as officers quarters.

—Wilmington's 75th Birthday—

SEPT. 14-1923

Ancient History of Drum Barracks in Wilmington

(Reprinted from an article published in 1923.)

One of the most enjoyable gatherings of pioneers of Southern California occurred at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Keaveny, in the historic and romantic Drumm Barracks, Wilmington, Saturday evening, where a party of thirty guests enjoyed a stereoptical exhibits of old historical pictures, showing the evolution of Los Angeles from an adobe Mexican town of less than 3000 people to the modern city of nearly a million.

The exhibit was given by Judge Ellis, of Los Angeles, who explained the pictures in detail. Views of San Pedro, Long Beach and Wilmington, past and present, were also shown.

Among the guests were three soldiers who served at the Barracks during the stirring days of the Civil war.

Judge W. H. Savage, of San Pedro, former quartermaster sergeant; Captain Juan J. De La Suerra, of Hollywood; Judge Richard Melrose, of Santa Ana, all who remember when Wilmington was the metropolis of the harbor, with a population of 6000 including soldiers, at a time when Los Angeles had little more than half that number. At this period there was no Pasadena, Alhambra, Long Beach or Hollywood. San Pedro was a town of four houses. At that time Redondo, Santa Monica and many of the thriving cities of this section of California did not exist.

Ranchers at Church

The few scattered ranchers and cattle raisers from the surrounding settlements came to Wilmington to attend church and lodge and buy their provisions, which included often wet as well as dry goods to and get mail and money orders.

During that period the surrounding country was a huge pasture covered with wild mustard and cactus. Drumm Barracks, oldest building in the Harbor district, named in honor of Quarter Master General Drumm is a large white colonial building with green blinds set in a grove of stately palms, cypress and Eucalyptus trees with giant rose covered arbors and surrounded with flowers.

The material of this building was brought around Cape Horn and was erected in Wilmington in 1862. It consists of fourteen large rooms, with large old fashioned fire places. There the troops and wagon trains were assembled before their expeditions into the interior states to suppress the marauding bands of Indians, long before the dream of railroads.

APRIL 2, 1928

Camels Once Carried Freight

The maintenance of transportation across the Colorado desert was a perplexing problem in the southwest in the early days of American occupation on this coast.

To General E. F. Beale, then connected with the western division of the war department, it is reported, came the idea of employing camels. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, acting on Beale's report, succeeded in securing an appropriation of \$30,000 to provide the animals. Thirty-three were brought in Constantinople at one time and later another group of 44 were purchased. They were brought on an American transport to Indianola, Texas, and in February 1857, were herded across country to Albuquerque where they were divided, some being sent to San Antonio and the balance distributed further westward.

They made the first appearance in Wilmington in 1858, carrying supplies between Fort Tejon and Fort Defiance, New Mexico. Although Beale extolled their virtues, the records indicate that they were not an unqualified success. Both the soldiers and the army mules were prejudiced against them, not without reason it is related, for they were a perverse and contrary lot that fled from their drivers on every favorable occasion. Each animal was packed with 1000 pounds of supplies and could travel from 30 to 40 miles a day, it is said. They were finally disposed of at auction at Benicia. Beale, it is reported, bought some for use on his Tejon ranch. Another group was purchased by Frenchmen who used them in transporting salt to Virginia City, and another herd was taken to Arizona and employed in packing ore from the Silver King mine to Yuma. The last of the animals it is believed, perished in 1891 near Harrisburg, Arizona.

The camels were multiplying in numbers and experimentation continued in trying to test their value. One expedition crossed Texas, New Mexico and Arizona to the Colorado River and the successful performance was highly commended by the officer in charge, Lieutenant Edward Fitzgerald Beale, later brigadier general and ambassador to Austria under President Grant.

By 1860, the United States Army had established a caravan system in the Southwest, comparable to the most efficient chain of communications in the Oriental deserts. Between Texas and California every military post, of any significance on the main highway had been supplied with camels. Lieutenant Beale, who was in charge of their distribution, had taken twenty-eight of them as far as Drum Barracks, near Los Angeles, to become the western terminus of the Texas-California Camel Route.

Most of the army officers to whose care the camels were entrusted failed to show any enthusiasm for the experiment. Many of the beasts were allowed to remain idle and as a result they became difficult to manage when they were needed. Civilian firms had, however, begun to see their value as pack animals and an organization was formed in San Francisco, known as the Camel Importing Company to introduce them for use in western mines.

The company sent an expedition to the high table lands of Central Asia and brought back twenty Bactrians. Most of these were marched overland to Nevada and employed in packing salt to the silver mines. They consistently covered fifteen to twenty miles a day and carried 600 pounds without any difficulty. Their packer, L. Metral of Virginia City, Nevada, boasted of their superiority to mules even over steep trails.

Just as the camel experiment showed its greatest promise it was dealt a death blow by the Civil War. Major Wayne whose enthusiasm was chiefly responsible for their introduction, resigned his commission and became a major-general in the State forces of Georgia. Congress became too occupied with more serious matters than camels. The army officers at Camp Verde were too anxious to get into action to bother with the experimental farm.

Shortly after war was declared the Confederates seized Camp Verde but their new charges proved a

burden to them. Some of the camels simply wandered off on the plains. Others broke away. Some of them were recaptured in Arkansas and turned over to the Department of Missouri, but the Union forces could find no use for them and sold them at public auction.

After the war, the Federal Government took Camp Verde back. Forty-four camels still remained at their station. The Government held a public auction and sold them to Colonel Bethel Coopwood at \$31 each, who sold them to zoos and menageries.

As late as May, 1903, the San Antonio Express speaks of having observed in one of the midway shows, exhibited in that city, a camel with a U. S. brand and the counterbrand of a successive purchaser.

The pack camels in Nevada fell into disrepute at the same time. As long as they remained on the private trails and came into contact with no other animals, they proved satisfactory, but as soon as they came face to face with horses and mules on the public highways, the familiar scenes of the Texas plains were duplicated. Horses ran away, mules turned over their wagons and the dockets of the courts of Nevada became crowded with damage cases resulting from the presence of camels in its midst. The legislature finally passed a law prohibiting their appearance on the public highways.

Most of the Nevada camels were taken later to Arizona and turned loose. One pair was reported to have been placed on a ranch in Carson Valley and its prolific fecundity became familiar topic of conversation in the seventies. They were said to have increased to 26 in a few years. No use was found for any of them for they were all turned loose in the Arizona desert later.

The camels in California passed out of existence shortly after the Civil War but not until they had made their influence felt through the Southwest. Hi Jolly had gone to Los Angeles to take charge of them until their ignominious end.

Some of the older citizens of Los Angeles, particularly if they belonged to the German Society of those days, still remember the time when Hi Jolly rode a big yellow cart drawn by two Bactrians into Sycamore Grove, in the Arroyo Saco, and broke up a picnic. Halters, vehicles, bottled beer, wienerwurst and all sorts of German delicacies scattered in all directions and most of the party had to walk home.

All sorts of weird and impossible tales have grown up about these camels in Arizona. Today their ghosts still haunt certain peaks and canons. Along the edge of the desert, it is gravely told, that wandering up and down, always keeping away from inhabited sections, an old prospector who has lost his reason leads three camels, on which he has packed a fortune of nuggets. Some Arizonians believe that many of the creatures wander about even now in the uninhabited wastes of that State and that there is a herd no far from the delta of the Colorado in Mexico. Several years ago, one hunter reported seeing a red camel in the wilds of the desert with a saddle on his back to which was lashed a human skelton.

The United States Government has nothing to show for the camel corps of the Army except a few crumbling stables at old Camp Verde, west of San Antonio, and the bones of one of the beasts at a California post, which now rest at the National Museum of Washington.

WILMINGTON
HISTORY