



1997



## Heritage Tales

The Memoirs of Janet Miles:  
San Bernardino 1901-1994



Part One



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# Heritage Tales



City of San Bernardino Historical &  
Pioneer Society



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Editor

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1997

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# **The Memoirs of Janet Miles: San Bernardino 1901-1994**

## **Part One**



*"The Way We Were"  
Early day resident, Janet Miles*

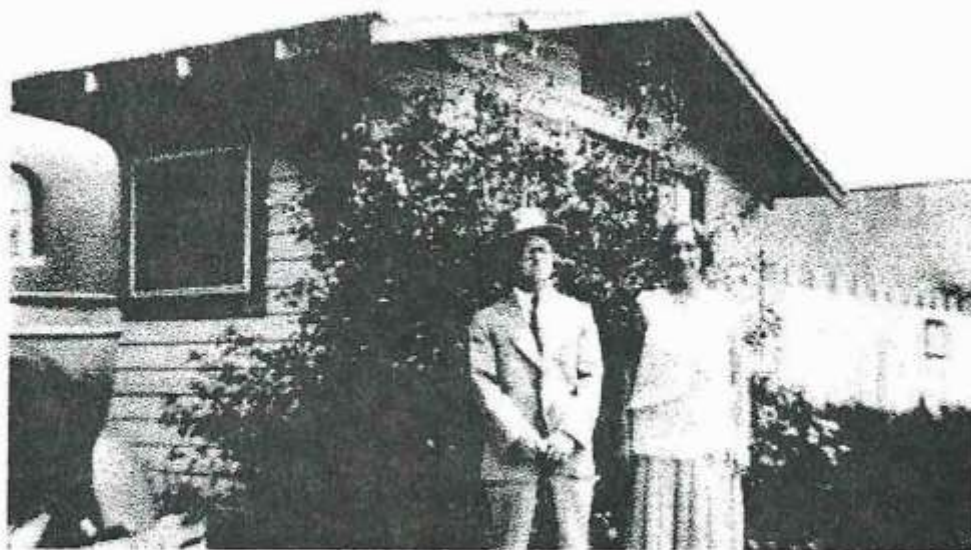
## About the Author

JANET MILES was born in San Bernardino April 5, 1901, on Good Friday to Theodore and Adelia Mills at home at 360 C Street. At that time the Mills also had two older daughters, Ada 21 and Helen 18. When Janet, the new baby, was about two months old, her mother died suddenly and on her death bed asked her own sister, Helen, who was 37, to raise her baby. Janet was raised by her mother's two sisters who doted on her—Aunt Sada (Sarah) Boyd Raitt and Aunt Helen Boyd. She grew up in the house at 860 F Street where she has lived all her life. Her father lived and worked in Redlands and came to visit every Sunday for dinner.

Janet attended Ninth Street School for four years, F Street School for four years and then completed her high school years at San Bernardino High School at Eighteenth and E Streets. After high school graduation she attended Longmire's Business College for one year. She continued to live at home with her two aunts until they passed away. Aunt Sada died in 1924 and Aunt Helen died in 1928. Janet was just 27 years old.

She had many friends, and worked diligently. She held office jobs at Nau Murray Wholesale Grocery, Parker Iron Works, B. L. Morgan Bolt and Screw Works, Recorder's Office and Security Title. She was married to Raymond John Coffey from 1930 until his death in 1938. She married Bill (William Denny) Miles in 1940 and was married to him until his death 25 years later in 1965. During her marriage to Bill Miles she was actively involved in the family bee business selling honey and supporting local beekeepers.

A few of her many interests in retirement have been gardening, music, travel and church activities. In addition



*Ray Coffey, Janet's first husband*



*Bill Miles, Janet's second husband*



to writing her recollections about San Bernardino since she has moved to Santa Barbara, she has also written a personal biography and family history that is very interesting.



Janet Miles 96 years old



## Acknowledgments

I WISH TO express my appreciation to my family for their support in helping me prepare my recollections of this San Bernardino history.

To my niece, Adabeth Holcombe, who has lovingly shared her home with me, and helps me in every way; to my great nephew, Roger Holcombe for his support and expertise in computers; and to his wife, Cheri, with whom I have spent many happy hours reminiscing, who has facilitated the editing and typing of this project. Final polish was given by my friend and neighbor, Kay Bailey, who was of great help in proofreading and manuscript suggestions.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of Nick Cataldo of the San Bernardino Historical Society. He was instrumental in publishing these recollections as an issue of *Heritage Tales*. For this I am very grateful. Thanks also go to Bonnie Petry of CSU, San Bernardino for her help in publishing this special issue. Special thanks to my good friends Arda Hentzel and Blanche Tompkins who have helped me with suggestions and encouragement along the way to publish what I have written for others to see through this window to the past.



*Cheri, Adabeth, and Roger Holcombe--my "support staff"*

# Introduction

THIS ORAL history is rich in descriptions of San Bernardino "the way it was" from 1901-1994. It is full of amusing anecdotes, stories about neighbors and friends, "the scoop" on historic business dealings, descriptive details of events, people, and traditions of days now gone by. You will meet many old time San Bernardino families and visit their homes, and businesses as you walk along the streets of San Bernardino in the early 1900s with Janet Miles as your guide. Relive those simple, heartwarming, yet often tragic times. Perhaps along the way you'll see someone you may have known, have heard about, or may even be related to! This book is a tribute to a dedicated San Bernardino resident with an extraordinary memory and great fondness for her life and all she met along the way in San Bernardino.

This history was done entirely from memory and any errors or omissions are completely unintentional.







Janet Miles, age 7, at Santa Monica beach in 1908



## **Chapter 1**

### **San Bernardino the Way it Was**

#### **The Santa Fe Railroad**

For over a hundred years, the Santa Fe Shops were the main stay of the city. These shops were located approximately from Third to Fourth and Fifth Streets and from I Street to M Street, Mt. Vernon on the west or even further as they grew. It was here the locomotives and coaches were brought for repair and servicing. There was a turntable for the locomotives, a huge tower needed for some operation, big buildings to repair coaches and handle freight, a rip track, a paint shop, a depot—you name it and it was these. Hundreds of men were hired to do the work. There was a local office force to accommodate the superintendent, the payroll, etc.

In the early days there were only a few women employed in the office. Two of the superintendents I recall were H. S. Wall and Mr. Armstrong, who was called "Sandy" behind his back. There was a small local hospital to serve the sick and injured. If more medical care was needed, they were sent into the Santa Fe Hospital in Los Angeles. Dr. Morrison was on the staff there. Dr. Haentszel was in charge of the local hospital for years.

The first depot I recall was located on the east end of the grounds where a group of palm trees now stand. When it burned, the present station was built. It was much more imposing. There was room for offices on the second floor and a "Harvey House" on the east end. A "Harvey House" was a dining room where passengers could go for meals at stops. They were careful who they hired to be a

Harvey Girl. It was an honor to be a Harvey Girl and they were always well groomed. It turned out that many of the Harvey Girls would marry the railroad men and they almost populated the western part of the county!

I think the railroad came into the Valley in the 1870s. There was a rivalry between San Diego and San Bernardino as to which city would be the service center. Did our location at the foot of the mountains help?

An interesting story is told about the railroad. Mr. Perris, a native of Australia, I believe, was an engineer hired to lay out the route. Another railroad was competing. They shadowed Mr. Perris and his crew of surveyors trying to find out his plans. He knew this and took his crew up the San Gorgonia Pass as though he was planning to cross the mountain there. Instead he went up the Cajon Pass, a better grade and a shorter route across the Mojave Desert.

The Santa Fe Railroad meant everything to San Bernardino. There was an apprentice school to train young men for a useful career. Businesses and families depended on the railroad for sustenance. Businesses located here because the railroad was here. Families came because there was employment. The voice of the railroad was heard in the making of major decisions affecting the city.

It truly was an economic blow recently, in 1993 - 1994, when the railroad decided to move its shops to Topeka. It seems that over the years equipment had naturally improved and perhaps did not need servicing as often. Now the railroad has returned to a degree. They are planning to use San Bernardino as a freight terminal for Southern California. One feature that has been restored is the steam whistle. For years and years this whistle told the people the time to go to work, time to eat, and time to close. It was really a part of our lives. When there was a big fire, such as when the lumber yard caught fire in the Santa Fe Yards, it



warned us. When the Armistice was signed, it helped us celebrate. We welcome the return of the whistle! This was accomplished through the dedication of a group of former employees who raised money and did the actual work of restoration. It cost \$78,000 to restore it.

## **The Schools**

In the very early days, there may not have been public schools. The ones I've mentioned were the Sturgis Academy operated by David Brainard Sturgis and his wife, and the Hicks Academy started by the Hicks family. The high school at the corner of Eighth and E was built about 1892 or 1893. The first grade school I attended was the Ninth Street School located at the northeast corner of Ninth Street and F. This has been previously described.

Riley School was located at the northwest corner of Base Line and G. The F Street grammar school has been described. There was an Urbita grammar school in the southwest part of town near Urbita Springs. It took care of pupils from that area. Mt. Vernon School was originally at the southeast corner of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Seventh Street and served the west side area. A second Mt. Vernon School was built at the northeast corner of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Ninth Street. This served the northwest section of town.

St. Elmo School was on Base Line and Waterman. Fourth Street School was in the 300 block of Fourth Street. I believe there also was a school in the foothills in the Lytle Creek area known as Keenbrook. Mill Street School was east of Waterman, a considerable distance on the south side of the street. It served the big southeast area.

The Catholic church operated its own school on the

church property located in the 500 block of Fifth Street. It was a private school and the teachers were nuns. It covered the first eight grades. Then the students entered high school. There was a school near Guadalupe Church on west Fifth Street. It served the west side and was active until a few years ago. Now there is a school on west Sixth or Seventh Street.

## **The Churches**

At the turn of the century, there was not as much tolerance between denominations as there is now. There was a clannishness about each church. Each denomination thought theirs was the only way.

The mainline churches built fairly near the business area. The Congregational Church was a rather small wooden building at the northeast corner of Fifth and D. The post office is now located on that property. Their first move was to a lot at the northwest corner of Ninth and E. The big Town Creek culvert was underneath. The land was filled in. In later years they had drainage problems. I believe this land was donated by the R. F. Garner family. The H. E. Harris family donated a pipe organ to the congregation in memory of their daughter, the late Pearl Harris Swing. A nice home for the minister was built at the rear of the church. It faced E Street. Later it was moved to the north side of Ninth Street in the 600 block and converted into apartments. Years later the congregation purchased property in the 2900 block, east side and erected their third building. It is complete with recreational hall, class rooms, offices, parking lot, etc.

The First Methodist Church I recall was at the northeast corner of Sixth and E. It was quite a large red brick



building. This congregation purchased property at the northeast corner of Eighth and Arrowhead Avenue on which to build an adequate building facility.

The First Christian Church was a rather ungainly wooden structure painted gray, I believe, at the northeast corner of Seventh and E. They sold this property to a company which leased their building to Safeway. The congregation purchased property at the northeast corner of Tenth and Arrowhead Avenue for their new building which was large enough to accommodate church services, class rooms, offices, etc.

The Presbyterians built their first church at the northeast corner of Church and E. It was a rather small building with one large room suitable for services and an adjoining room for classes. The manse was next door to the north. About 1907 this congregation built a new edifice on the property. The manse was moved to a lot about a block north to make room for a larger church building. This was a brown wooden edifice. A large window was on the west wall of the auditorium. The widow of David Brainard Sturgis donated a beautiful stained glass window depicting Christ in the temple at the age of twelve. It was lighted from the inside and served as a landmark memorial for many years. As business crowded in on this property, they purchased land on north D Street and erected a church complex including a church auditorium, recreational hall, chapel and parking lot. This move was made about 1958. The Sturgis Memorial Window was incorporated in the narthex of the church.

The Baptist congregation moved from their property at Fourth and G to the northwest corner of Tenth and G, the former home site of the H. E. Harris family.

The Catholics responded to the growth of the city in a different manner. They built smaller churches in the vari-

ous residential locations of the city. One of the larger edifices is at the corner of 25th and Arrowhead and known as the Holy Rosary. They have a church in the northwest end of town and one far to the north. Another smaller church is on Rialto Avenue west of Waterman. Guadalupe on west Fifth Street serves many Latino residents.

Another church comes to mind. The Spiritualist Church was located on the southeast corner of Arrowhead and Sixth. The backyard of the property was in Town Creek. The building contained an auditorium with living quarters at the rear where the ministers, mediums, or by whatever name they were known, lived.

I recall that during 1917 or 1918, several of our neighbors attended services there. It was either on Sunday evening or a mid-week meeting. Each person present was requested to put an object belonging to us on a small table up front. We were instructed to place it so it would not touch another object. I can't recall if there was singing or prayers preceding the readings. At that time the medium or clairvoyant would pick up the object, hold it for a short time, then deliver the message she received. I can't recall what I placed on the table, but my time came for a reading. The medium may have described the person she saw, but I can't recall. She did describe a room in a house where the windows were, that there were carvings of grapes on some of the furniture. This was all new to me, but when I told my aunts what she said, they told me it was a description of the living room in their family home in Nova Scotia. I can't recall whether the medium gave any of us personal messages of what to do or not to do. I believe a collection plate was passed. I'll never forget that time.

The Byron Waters home was a large, two-story house on the northeast corner of Ninth and D. When the property became useful for business, the house was moved to



Bunker Hill on Mill Street between San Bernardino and Colton. Eventually this house became the church building for the Greek Orthodox congregation, St. Elias the Prophet. It is so used to this day. Services and events associated with the church are held there sponsored by the Greek community in San Bernardino.

### **Additional Homes and Families Remembered**

To return to the Ninth and D corner, a large red brick house, maybe two-story, was located on the southeast corner. It was owned by the Hawes family. There was one son, Murray. I believe the daughter married Russ McGillvery who owned a saddlery located on the north side of Third Street between Arrowhead and D. I recall seeing a horse mounted on a platform that could be wheeled in and out of the store onto the sidewalk. Saddles, harnesses and similar articles, etc., were sold there.

The McGillverys built a lovely two-story home on the west side of D Street, next to the Colliver house, on D Street between Ninth and Tenth. There were beautiful trees in the yard. One of our neighbors who went to the Spiritualist Church services was Mary Stewart. I believe she was raised in Arkansas or Oklahoma. She married Watson Stewart who was a conductor on the Santa Fe. They had three children: Godfrey (known as "Brownie"), Helyn, and Jack. I played with Helyn. They built a nice home on the southwest corner of Berkeley and Eighth which still stands. Watson Stewart became too close a friend of John Barleycorn and lost his job, so Mary made the living. [This expression was used to describe a person who drank too much whiskey and became a drunkard.]

Mary Stewart was a lively, friendly woman full of

fun, and took it in stride. At one time, since she liked to cook, she opened a dining room on Third Street between F and G, but that didn't last too long. They continued to live in their home for a time, but I believe it was built on borrowed money, and they eventually lost it when Mr. Stewart's job was gone. Helyn became a newspaper woman. Brownie went to the mountains to live and had a business there. Jack died. Mary Stewart ran for mayor at one time, but of course didn't make it. Then Mary bought a home on 27th or 28th Street and lived there for years. Somehow, she was involved in a purchase of property in the country club area. She was not able to complete the payment on this and after a legal wrangle lost it.

The house immediately back of the Hawes' house on Ninth Street was rented by Margaret Dewar. She was a widow. She was a native of Nova Scotia. Her maiden name was Patrick. She belonged to the Presbyterian Church. She also was a friend of the Mills family and Aunt Sada and Aunt Helen. This cherished friendship continued as long as she lived. She was a beautiful woman with natural curly hair. Her eldest daughter, Elizabeth, married into the family that founded Mills College in the north. She was a graduate nurse. Another daughter, Margaret, married Clarke Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Victor Smith. They adopted two children. They named them Jack Smith and Jill Smith! Mrs. Dewar's son, John, married Eleanor Delour of French heritage, a well known, long time resident family of San Bernardino. Eleanor was familiarly known as "Toots" and worked at the courthouse for many years. This branch of the Dewar family lived on the west side of Arrowhead Avenue in the 800 block. Mrs. Margaret Dewar made her home with them until she died.

I recall a family named Speed, who owned a small farm on Ninth Street, I believe, east of Waterman Avenue.



It may have been a dairy farm.

Another family I do remember was the Ferre family. They owned land at the northeast corner of Waterman and Mill Street. My most vivid recollection of them was the beautiful flowers they brought to the graves of their loved ones in Pioneer Cemetery on Sundays. This was customary and gave people a chance to visit. Julia Ferre was a member of this family. She married Howard Shedden. They lived on the southeast corner of Mill and Waterman. He worked for the Gage Canal Company whose headquarters were on the banks of the Santa Ana River at Tippecanoe. Johnnie Ferre married and lived just west of the corner of Mill and Waterman. When this area became business property, Johnnie sold and went to Riverside to live. He passed away not too long ago.

Several families owned land on Mill Street east of Waterman Avenue. Tom MacFarlane married into the Wood family and was one of these landowners. I can't recall whether Tom was a plumber or contractor, but he was well known in the Valley.

## **The Evolution of Milk Delivery**

At first, milk was delivered with horse and wagons. We had our own cows and didn't use the delivery. Aunt Sada milked our cow, Betsy, brought the milk in, and put it in bowls in the pantry. This allowed the cream to rise to the surface where it could easily be skimmed off and made into butter. She sold milk to the neighbors. I delivered the shiny cans of milk; pints were five cents and quarts ten cents. But when Betsy died, I used to go to Bentien's Dairy. This was a Danish family that had a dairy farm. In the 1920s, a multimillionaire established Hollow Hill Farm. He

bought acreage in the hills south of town between Loma Linda and Colton and established a model dairy farm. It was as clean as your kitchen and he grew his own feed as he had a lot of acreage. The manager of the farm had a beautiful home down the street and he had a beautiful home on the hill. It was a showplace and one of the places you might go on a Sunday drive. They had their own trucks and delivered milk. I believe they charged twenty cents a quart of milk when others charged ten to twelve cents. There was another dairy on south Waterman Avenue as well as others in San Bernardino. Later milk became available in the stores.

### **The San Bernardino Mountains**



*Lake Arrowhead*

The San Bernardino mountains have always been attractive to the residents of the Valley, first because of timber, then mining. In later years, they were a haven from the intense heat of summer, and, still later, the snow sports. Early in the century, Dr. John Baylis bought a ranch he called Pinecrest and developed it into a resort. There were cabins



of various sizes, various types of recreation, and an apple orchard. It was a popular resort. As the years went by, small towns sprung up such as Crestline, Blue Jay, Bear Valley, and many others. Capitalists from the East purchased enough land to build a reservoir, Lake Arrowhead, and a new resort as well. Big Bear is a thriving community.

The greatest danger to the mountains was forest fires. There have been several enormous fires. There was one that raced from Cajon Pass to the Mill Creek. The Valley was covered with ashes. The mountains were denuded, which created potential flooding. In 1938, someone knocked over an oil stove in a cabin at Crestline and by nightfall, the Arrowhead Springs Hotel had burned and the fire was headed for northern San Bernardino. There



*Mt. San Bernardino, 1926*

were terrific north winds that pushed it towards town. No homes were burned then. A somewhat recent fire did burn homes in the north end of San Bernardino. Now, with more fire stations, the tankers, and more skill, the danger is still there, but not so potent.

## Earthquakes

The San Andreas fault runs along the foothills north of San Bernardino. There is a bulge in the earth above Highland near the Bristol Ranch. The hot springs at Arrowhead Hotel property are caused by the fault. The Blue Cut in Cajon Pass, so called because the earth here is a bluish-gray color, is on the fault. The rocks come tumbling down all the time. The highway engineers have built a high, strong wire fence to catch them and keep them from rolling onto the highway. This fault line may be one of the longest in California. It runs from the Gulf of Mexico northward and enters the Pacific Ocean north of San Francisco.

A small fault runs across the southern part of San Bernardino under the Valley College. There seems to be two kinds of earthquakes—ones that roll and ones that jerk. Sometimes their rumble may be heard before the shaking begins. They scare people out of their wits, but they only last a few seconds, although it seems much longer. I remember hearing one come when I was a kid about eight or nine. I was taking a bath, jumped out of the tub, and ran naked into the kitchen where Aunt Sada was ironing.

Another time I remember, I was running out of the house and running down the driveway. As I glanced up, I could see the walnut trees waving by the side of the driveway. Another time, one rumbled through at night. Aunt Helen and I jumped out of bed, ran through the dining room into the kitchen and out of doors. When we returned to the kitchen, we had to pick our way across the kitchen floor. A Pyrex tea pot had been thrown on the floor from the stove. I am sure the glass was on the floor when we ran out, but our feet scarcely touched the floor and we didn't get cut.

Another earthquake was strong enough to break

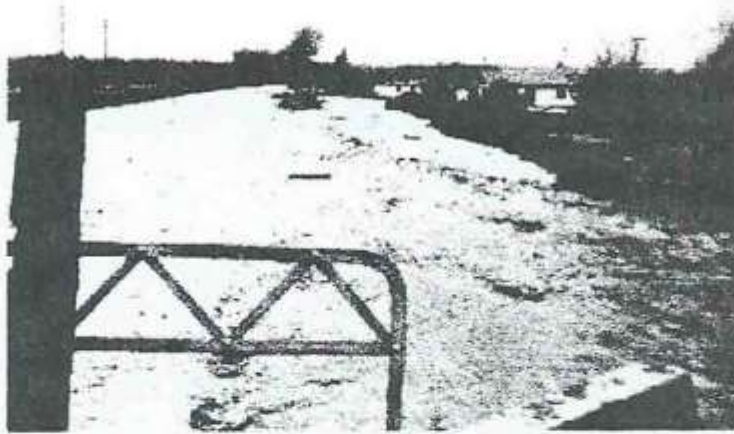


pieces of concrete off the Courthouse walls, break plate glass store windows downtown, etc. Once when I was at junior college, a quake came. I'll never forget the expression and change of color on the teacher's face. I also recall a strong quake that shook Hemet and San Jacinto and wrecked several buildings. We drove over to see the damage. We felt the one that did so much damage to Santa Barbara in 1925. The ones that measure two and three are not so scary, but when the very ground under one's feet shakes, it is frightening. However, I'll take earthquakes in preference to tornadoes, blizzards, and high water. It's all over in a matter of seconds or minutes.

## **Floods**

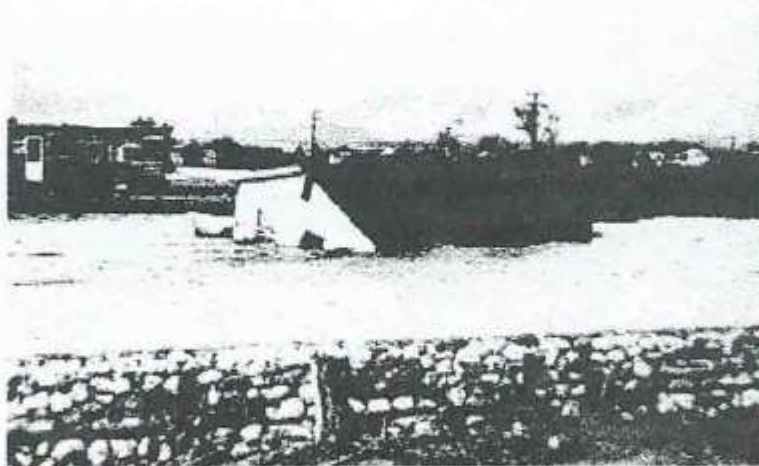
I remember two big floods in San Bernardino. The first one was in 1916. It rained steady, night and day for about a week. Even the small creeks were rushing torrents. All the bridges over at the Santa Ana River were out as were the ones between Highland and Redlands. These creeks were usually dry and our always placid Lytle Creek was a roaring torrent. This may have been the one that undermined the bank where it crosses Mt. Vernon Avenue. A house toppled in. I believe I heard a locomotive was overturned in the Southern Pacific Yards in Colton. Schools were closed for several days. I remember going down to Meadowpark to see the bridge across Third Street washed out. One or two ladies who worked at Cohen's Department Store could not get to their homes and we had them stay with us for a night or two.

Another devastating flood was in 1938. All the bridges were out. Bread trucks could not come in from Los Angeles. The big gas main was broken so no warming



*City Creek from Tippecanoe Bridge facing west, March 1938*

heat. We were lucky. We had a wood burning heater. The top was removable and we could heat water on top of the fire box. We loaned electrical appliances to our neighbors to help them have hot coffee and toast. Business was at a standstill and the schools were closed. I believe a lady was drowned in Warm Creek a mile or two east of town when she insisted on returning to her home to retrieve something.



*City Creek, 1938*

In the 1940s or 1950s, I believe there was a flood that melted a heavy snow in the mountains.

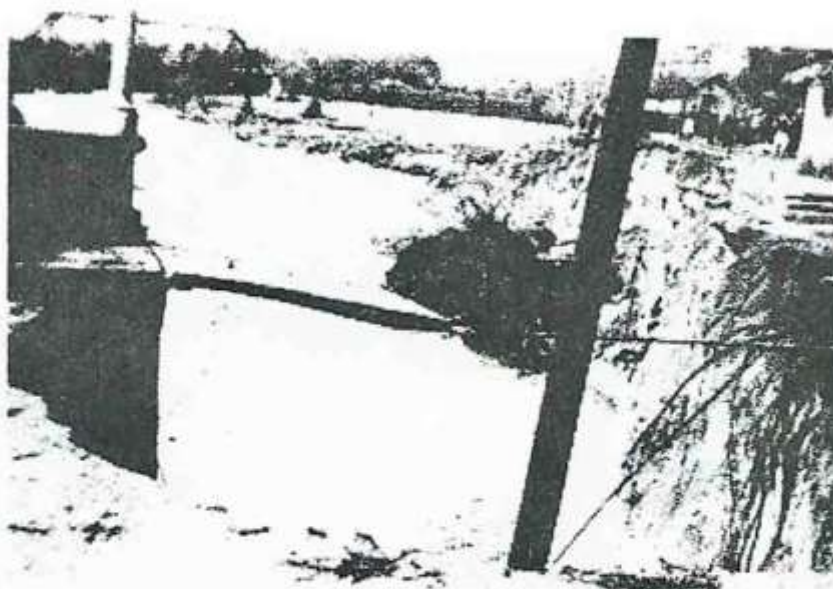


*City Creek near Cottage Gardens, 1938*



*Lytle Creek, 1938*





*Lytle Creek looking west on Mt. Vernon Bridge, 1938*



*Lytle Creek at I Street, 1938*



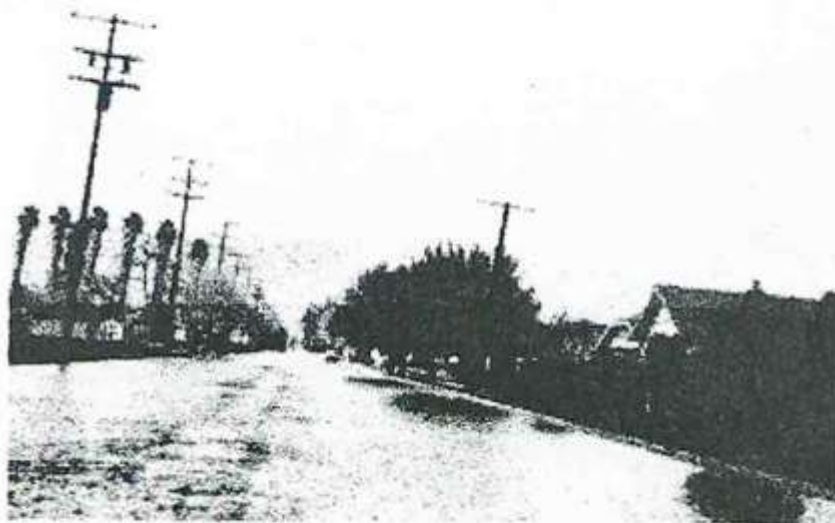
*Meadowbrook Park, 1938*



*South E Street looking north, 1938*

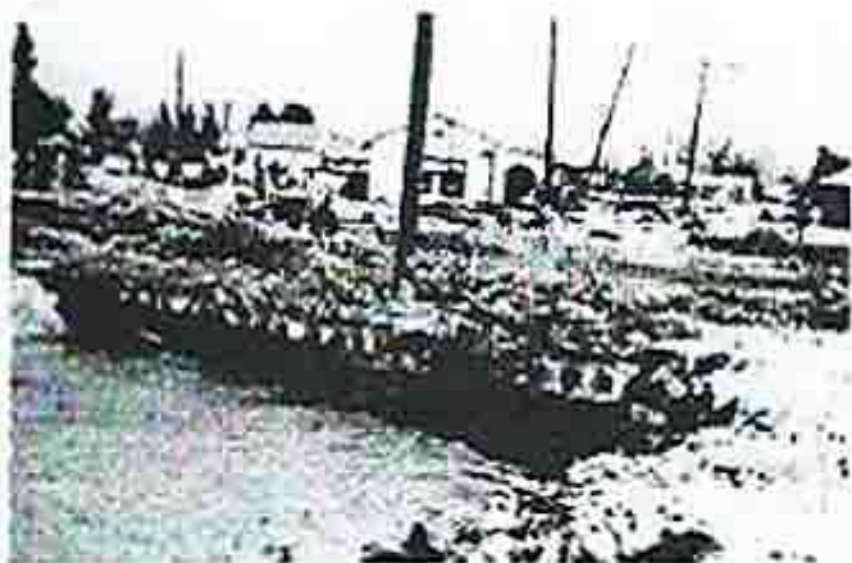


*Mt. Vernon at Rialto looking north, 1938*



*Sierra Way looking north, 1938*





*Lytle Creek at Colton Ave., 1938*



*East F Street, Colton, 1938*



*Southern Pacific Yards, Colton, 1938*



*Southern Pacific Yards, Colton, 1938*



## Winter Frosts

The heavy frosts in San Bernardino were truly a nightmare. These occurred in January to March generally. There was a terrible freeze in 1913. The orange industry



*Snowfall in San Bernardino at 860 F Street*

was ruined. In order to save their orange groves, the growers used smudge pots. These pots were filled with low grade oil and had tall chimneys. They were placed between the trees. When the frost warnings came, and the temperature would reach a dangerous point, the growers and helpers lit the smudge pots. Usually the air was very cold and still and the smoke generated rising from thousands of smudge pots filled the air with a pall of sticky black smoke, which later in the day settled over the Valley. Everything was covered. It filtered into stores and homes and did cause some damage. Bolts of goods in shops were often damaged. It smelled oily and greasy. When you woke up in the morning you might have a ring of black around your nose and mouth. My white cat, Tootles, had a dusting of it all over her fur and had to work hard to get clean. If you



*Janet and Tootles, 1929*

tried to just wipe it off, it smeared all over.

However, with the smudge pots, at least some of the crop could be saved. Of course there were protests. Smudge pots were improved to give off more heat and less smoke. Then wind machines were used to keep the air stirring and not allow the cold blanket to settle. With land development, the groves disappeared. The smudge problem was no more but smudge from the automobile created a more widespread problem—smog!

### **San Bernardino Culture**

In the field of art, San Bernardino was laggardly in building up organizations to sponsor music, painting, and dancing. It was a working man's town with few wealthy families who would sponsor such undertakings. Schools and churches were the main source of musical presentations. Such presentations came at Christmas time or near