

THE STORY OF HERITAGE HOUSE

- From 1940 to Date -

By Lillian E. Miles

MY HUSBAND, W. F. Miles and I, Lillian E. Miles in the early 1940's bought the big old house at 772 N. "D" Street, which is now the historical building. We purchased it from Mr. E. O. Ames, who for years had been in charge of maintenance and custodial work for the San Bernardino City Schools. I had begun work for the San Bernardino City Schools in 1921. When we brought the property at 439 8th Street

in 1923 our back yards adjoined the Ames, but were divided by a tall plank fence.

Mr. & Mrs. Ames had married late in life and had no children, but when my son, Marshall, was small, Mrs. Ames was very fond of him and always had something to please a three year old boy. They made one of the planks loose in the fence so Marshall could have access to their yard, but he never went over. Instead he would move the plank and call, "Oh, Mrs. Ames, do you have a cookie, or raisins, or candy, or something for me this morning?" He sounded like a huckster and Mrs. Ames would come smiling out with some tidbit. They were lovely friends and Mr. Ames processed and often shared with us the best ripe olives I ever tasted.

The Ames rented rooms and each bedroom was equipped with a wash basin but the roomers shared the one bathroom. The Ames would not rent to anyone who smoked a cigarette.

Mrs. Ames became ill and died and not long afterward Mr. Ames took to his bed. He died after a long illness. Before his death he sold us the property at 772 D Street.

World War II was raging and the newly established Norton Air Base demanded workers of every caliber. Incidentally, our City Schools lost many of its employees for Norton paid much better than our schools could afford. Many of us who stuck by put in a fifteen hour day, believing that "the schools must go on." I had little or nothing to do with the rentals.

San Bernardino was ill prepared to accomodate the influx of service-connected people, and Frank decided to rent to them only. They were like birds of passage; they came and they went. We had people of every degree of culture and special graces. There was a community kitchen equipped with a large stove, electric toasters and two huge refrigerators. The women seemed to get along nicely except for Jewel, a small girl who spent all her money on clothes. From each dish in the refrigerator she took a very small portion and seemed to thrive on it. One girl bought a mouse trap and put a sign on it, "For the meddler with other people's food." This same girl had a small dog that she didn't feed. Frank, who could not bear to see anything or anybody hungry, began feeding the dog and thereby won its devotion. Wherever my husband went the dog attempted to follow. Frank would order it to go back; the dog would sit but when Frank started to walk again the dog would follow a half block behind, faithful as Mary's Little Lamb.

One woman who had been driving daily from Barstow to work at Norton rented a room and made a three-bed use of it. One person for eight hours, another for eight hours and a third for eight hours.

To add to San Bernardino's overcrowding population, General Patton was training men on the desert preparing them for the rigors of North Africa. When they had a brief pass the men flocked to "cool" San Bernardino. A good many wives came to San Bernardino to be with their husbands for even a day; 772 D Street had its share of such wives.

One delightful young woman came out as the bride of an officers who was training on the desert under Patton. She had never done a day's work in the kitchen in her life.

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