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# ODYSSEY

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VOLUME 13 NUMBER 3

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## DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF FRED HOLLADAY

### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

San Bernardino lost one of its most noted historians on November 7 when Fred Holladay died at the age of 73 after a long illness. A former president of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society and editor of the society's publications-HERITAGE TALES and ODYSSEY-Holladay also had a weekly newspaper column in the San Bernardino Sun entitled "Making History."

A well known authority on the Earp family, Holladay was born in Oklahoma in 1918 and moved to San Bernardino, California a year later. After attending Sturges Junior High School the Holladay family moved to Roseville-about eighteen miles northeast of Sacramento. Upon graduation from Roseville High School, his family moved back to San Bernardino.

Holladay's first job was working as a clerk for the Pacific Fruit Express in Colton, then as a printer with Lockheed Corporation during World War II. After the war he worked as a deputy recorder with the San Bernardino County Records Office and as a clerk for the county



San Bernardino City Hall  
Third & D Street 1901

superior court. He was a long time member and officer of the Eagles Lodge 506 in San Bernardino, serving as its secretary for 33 years.

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# ODYSSEY

is an excursion into the exciting history of the san bernardino valley ~

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Fred Holladay

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### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Holladay is survived by his wife, Charlotte; a sister Beatrice Stoeffler of Anaheim; two sons, Fredric of San Bernardino and Richard of San Diego; seven grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

This issue of ODYSSEY, which includes 6 of the more than fifty articles from his "Making History" column, is dedicated to the memory of Fred Holladay.

Plans are under way for historical trips and events during the remainder of 1991 and for 1992 which will be open to all members of our society as well as their guests.

### CHRISTMAS TEA

Although a specific date has not yet been made, the Heritage House docents will be hosting the second annual "Christmas Tea", in the month of December. Last years's event was well attended, and the consensus was "Let's do it again!"

We will find out the exact date prior to the December 5 meeting, so if you are interested in attending please come to the meeting or give me a call.

### ARROWHEAD HOT SPRINGS TOUR

Sat., March 14, from 1:00 P.M., John Lowe, a member of Campus Crusade for Christ for more than 20 years, will once again be our host during the two hour "easy" walking tour of one of the most historic as well as beautiful sites in San Bernardino County. Touted as a health resort back in the 1860s and later as a popular retreat for Hollywood celebrities during the 1930s, Arrowhead Hot Springs has been the international headquarters for Campus Crusade for Christ since 1962.

John has assured us that although the "tour" is scheduled for only two hours, those in attendance are welcome to stroll through the grounds for the remainder of the afternoon. And be sure to browse inside the beautiful hotel as extensive renovation of the interior has produced an absolutely beautiful blend of exquisite carpets, wall covering, and light fixtures.

Those interested in attending this event have a choice of either driving up to the entrance of Arrowhead Springs

Continued on Page 3

(drive up Highway 18 a short distance and turn right, next to the Old Waterman Canyon Road turnoff) at 12:45 or meeting at the Heritage House parking lot at 12:30 P.M. We will carpool from there for those who wish to do so.

If you have any questions please call me at 887 0567

Nick Cataldo



**HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS**

The meetings during the next five months are as follows:

**7:00 P.M., Thurs., Nov. 7**  
JOHN TYE, President of the Mohave Historical Society and collector of several hundred variations of barbed wire, will give an interesting presentation on "The History of Barbed Wire."

**3:00 P.M., Wed., Nov. 27**  
DIRECTORS MEETING

**7:00 P.M., Thurs., Dec. 5**  
WALTER MUIR, will present an enlightening look into the life of his grandfather-the famous naturalist and explorer, John Muir.

**7:00 P.M., Thurs., Jan. 2**  
NO MEETING

**3:00 P.M., Wed., Jan. 29**  
DIRECTORS MEETING

**Thurs., Feb. 6**  
CHUCK PALMER, long time Sun columnist and local television personality will entertain us with "Out of the Past to You"-a look at Hollywood celebrities who have either lived or visited San Bernardino.

**3:00 P.M., Wed., Feb. 26**  
DIRECTORS MEETING

**7:00 P.M., March 5**  
FRANCIS J. JOHNSTON, local author and historian will present a slide show lecture on the "Bradshaw Trail"- an old stage coach road that was in operation in the 1860s and 1870s.

**3:P.M., Wed., March 25**  
DIRECTORS MEETING

**EDITOR'S COLUMN**

On Thursday, November 7, 1991, Fred Holladay became part of the history he loved to write about. In his editor's column in ODYSSEY, September 1980 he said...."of course there is so much finality about death. In a few short years after death one's name is forgotten, except to a few who are still alive and loved him, and, rich or poor, it makes no difference, we all return from whence we came. But one of the grants to the living is the chance to honor the dead....."

I met Fred for the first time in 1979. Someone mentioned about an historical society that not only collected history of our valley but had also began publishing articles and stories along with photographs. I joined soon after that so I could be sure of receiving all the copies of ODYSSEY, and as Fred Holladay, the designer and editor said, "The excursion into the exciting history of the San Bernardino Valley."

Fred Holladay made the history exciting, not only by his writings but the encouragement he gave others to write and record their own knowledge of history of our valley, and he printed the articles in a professional manner, in a form everybody would be proud to keep.

I was always interested in writing and in history. Fred encouraged me to combine the two subjects and write about the things I knew and enjoyed. I was only seven years younger, and he could easily say, "There is no time like the old days, when you and I were young."

Due to family illness it was 1984 before I could devote the time to the subjects of writing and history. I searched out Fred Holladay and would occasionally meet with him at his office at the Eagle's Lodge. We would discuss writing and history, and he always had time for that, no matter how busy his schedule was. It was not difficult to see that he believed that the writing of history was a form of literature to be enjoyed, not merely assimilated, that the truth of history at its best was an art as well as a science. It is history which extends our experience to all past ages and contributes to our improvement in wisdom as if they had actually lain under our observation.

Of course, he well understood that it was not just his work. He was merely the overseer. ODYSSEY and HERITAGE TALES

Continued on Page 4

were the work of the men and women who make a publication rise or fall by their voluntary efforts. But always such volunteers need guidance and a catalyst. Fred Holladay was that, the energy behind the work of collecting our past.

It is my fervent hope that we of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society continue the fine publications that came from the work of a dedicated man who firmly believed that the main function of an historical society is the accurate recording of our past for future generations to enjoy.

Fred once spoke to me about the measuring-line for just and accurate history he wanted for the ODYSSEY, "If anyone can use it well, then I have not labored nor written in vain."

I believe that to be true.

Russ McDonald



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# Big Red Cars were a way of life in the Southland

SUNDAY, November 30, 1986 The Sun /E5



**Making  
history**  
Fred Holladay

San Bernardino has always had the ability to change with shifting tides.

Hence it was one of the first Southern California cities to run "steam dummy" locomotives over inter-urban lines during the 1880s, and among the first to employ a local streetcar system at the turn of the century.

Local businessman R.W. Button initiated two of the new railroad lines from 1886 to 1888 — the Southern California Motor Road,

running between San Bernardino, Colton and Riverside, and the San Bernardino & Redlands Railroad. Both operated behind a storefront on the south side of Third Street, between E and F streets. It was converted by Button into a depot with a ticket office and waiting room attached.

Three years later, the little station was officially dubbed the "Union Depot" after the San Bernardino, Arrowhead & Waterman Railroad extended service from its Seventh and Sierra Way terminal to the downtown location.

Suddenly, San Bernardino became a commuter's paradise, as Santa Fe competed with Button's dinky lines by running its own trains to Riverside and Redlands. By 1891 the motor line's ledgers were awash with red ink and Button was forced to sell his rolling

stock and depots at Riverside, Redlands and San Bernardino to the Southern Pacific, giving them a foothold in all three cities.

Southern Pacific operated the motor lines until 1904, not knowing then, of course, that they would later form an integral part of the eastern section of Pacific Electric's vast empire.

In 1905 the Southern Pacific tore down the Union Depot, and replaced it with a striking Mission-style structure, built of bricks stuccoed with plaster — a configuration it would retain for the next sixty-odd years.

Local streetcar service was inaugurated in 1902 by the San Bernardino Valley Traction Company, operating out of its own car barn two blocks east of the Southern Pacific depot. Its passengers

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E4/ The Sun SUNDAY, November 22, 1987

# Children captivated by pioneer's tales

## MAKING HISTORY

By FRED HOLLADAY

Children of famous persons rarely attain the stature of their illustrious parents, but one notable exception was John Brown Jr., the eldest son of the mountain man who helped found San Bernardino County in 1853.

One of young Brown's childhood experiences — a chilling account of his narrow escape from Indians, due to the "sublime courage of his devoted mother" — reads like a page torn from one of the popular dime novels of the day.

It all happened when his father and fellow mountaineers sent a pack train to Taos, N.M., loaded with buffalo robes and beaver pelts for sale or trade.

For some unexplained reason Mrs. Brown accompanied the party, along with her baby son. On the way they were attacked by a band of Apache Indians, who captured the skins and killed several traders.

"While fleeing on horseback," the account continued, "some of the men shouted to Mrs. Brown, 'Throw that child away or the Indians will get you,' but the faithful mother indignantly exclaimed, while endeavoring to escape as fast as the fleet horse could run with her, 'Never. When that baby is thrown away, I will go with him.'"

Fortunately, they escaped when they reached a deep ravine and were able to hold off the Indians.

I, for one, can vouch for the story, since I heard it told by Brown himself in 1932, only a few months before his death.

For several years I walked by his house, on the northwest corner of Sixth and D streets, where he had lived since 1857. I passed it while on my way to visit Dr. F.M. Gardner's children, who lived a block and a half further west on Sixth, facing Pioneer Park.

I knew little of Brown, other



John Brown Jr.  
Defended Indian rights as attorney

than he was a kindly old man who usually sat in a chair in his front yard, surrounded by rose bushes, plants potted in coffee cans and several children, whom he entertained with thrilling yarns of the past.

After we were acquainted and he invited me inside, I became as fascinated as the others with his fabulous tales, which always seemed to contain a moral lesson somewhere before the end.

Yet, because of the ignorance of youth, during the two or three years I knew him I never realized I was talking to a man born 13 years before the Civil War, or one who had played such an integral part in the early history of our valley.

It was only many years later, after I became interested in local history, that I discovered his role and regretted the lost opportunity to ask him so many questions about the past.

Brown was a log cabin baby, having been born in one in 1847 on the banks of Greenhorn Creek in Huerfano County, in what is now the state of Colorado.

He was carried across the plains by his parents in 1849, reaching Salt Lake City on July 4 of that year, and Sutter's Fort two months later. It was there that the elder Brown and his mountain cronies tried their luck in the gold fields without much success.

In 1852, the Browns migrated to San Bernardino and moved into the newly erected Mormon stockade, where they were neighbors to some of the San Bernardino Valley's other prominent historical figures — Sheldon Stoddard, Captain Jefferson Hunt and Edward Daley.

Young Brown attended his first school in a tent pitched inside the stockade, and fondly remembered his teachers, William Stout and Ellen Pratt. Although he was only 5 then, he also recalled seeing a balloon ascension inside the fort — something I would have liked to ask him about many years later.

The Mormons moved to Yucaipa in 1854, where they farmed and raised cattle. In 1857, though, Brown's father, after engaging in a bitter dispute with Mormon leaders over who owned his land, returned to San Bernardino and moved into the Sixth Street house.

After young Brown graduated from St. Vincent's College of Los Angeles and the Santa Clara College, he returned to San Bernardino to teach school. Several years later, after serving one term as the county superintendent of schools and presiding over the board of education, he served a one-year stint as city attorney, whetting his appetite for the legal profession. He studied law under local attorney Horace C. Rolfe until he acquired enough knowledge to hang his shingle.

Brown became an outstanding lawyer, known for defending the aged, poor and oppressed, regardless of their ability to pay. Raised by a father who espoused the same virtues, young Brown attained many of his father's characteristics, including an inherent belief in the brotherhood of man and love of his country.

His father, in fact, was so enamored of the stars and stripes that he rode horseback to Fort Tejon in 1853 to pick up a new flag, unfurling it during the first Fourth of July celebration held in San Bernardino. His son was truly cast from the same mold.

Brown also championed several Indian causes — unpopular

and considered untouchable by most attorneys of the day — and was soon regarded as a friend by countless members of the Serrano and Cahuilla tribes.

In one case, he argued the rights of Indians who were forced to move off Warren's Ranch,

where they and their ancestors had lived for centuries. Although he lost the case and the Indians were moved to the Pala Reservation, it added to his growing reputation as an advocate of civil rights.

In 1888, Brown joined his father and several other argonauts to found the San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers, a mutual admiration fraternity of men who had immigrated to California no later than 1849. He served as its secretary for the next 44 years.

Brown loved to visit the mountain areas, and although he maintained a cabin near Strawberry Peak, he often pitched a tent in other parts of the mountains, where he entertained many of his fellow pioneers.

As one of his friends, Paul W. Ishbell, wrote shortly after Brown's death: "He loved his valley and the purple peaks behind it. You could locate his camp by looking for the American flag,

which he insisted upon hanging between the two trees nearest his tent.

"When he was in town, you could generally locate him in a schoolhouse, where the children affectionately believed him to be the one and only Santa Claus. He

gave quizzes, told stories of the Old West and entertained and helped them whenever possible, always keeping before them his own fine patriotism.

"... Not long before his death, the school board sent for Uncle John, and at a meeting in which they were naming a new junior high, presumably Arrowview, it was his suggestion that they honor him."

But Brown turned them down "as he was not dead yet."

Alas, the opportunity never came up again.

**Fred Holladay is president of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.**

## Testy temper forced S.B. settlement leader from power



### Making history

Fred Holladay

When a large contingent of Mormons left Salt Lake City for Southern California in March 1851, they were headed to found a new settlement — San Bernardino.

The group numbered 150 wagons, almost 1,000 head of oxen, horses and other livestock, and 437 men, women and children.

To avoid drawing too heavily on desert springs at any one time, the party was divided into companies of 50 wagons. Two were commanded by Capt. Andrew Lytle and Joseph Matthews, while the third was led by an ambitious young man named David Seely.

Seely had been this way before. In 1849, he had traveled from Salt Lake City to the San Bernar-

dino Rancho, and remained there for three weeks as a guest of Jose Maria Lugo, before moving on to the California mines to seek his fortune.

On this trip, after a harrowing journey across the arid desert, and down the almost impassible Cajon Pass, it was Seely's company that entered the valley first. The party arrived at the pre-selected campsite in a sycamore grove at the southern end of the pass on June 11, 1851.

Seely was highly regarded by the Mormon hierarchy. When he was elected president of the new stake at the church's first conference, held only a month after arriving at their new home, it appeared that the elders' faith in him was justified.

Unfortunately, like so many other gifted men, there was a flaw in Seely's character: He was cursed with a violent temper, and his inability to control it got him into hot water on more than one occasion.

SUNDAY, July 12, 1987 The Sun

Perhaps it was a hereditary trait. Seely's father, a shipowner in Canada, was a rabid follower of the Reform Party during the ill-fated rebellion of 1837, when David was only 17.



David Seely

Temper cost pioneer his position

When the Canadian government feared the elder Seely would help the rebel leader, William Lyon McKenzie, flee to the United States aboard one of his vessels, they had the ship dismantled.

Highly incensed, Seely moved his family to Burlington, Iowa, where young David went into shipping — transporting freight from steamers and conveying it over the Des Moines rapids.

He married a Mormon woman, Mary Pettit in 1846, converted to her faith, and started out for Salt Lake City, arriving there in 1847. Then came his first trip to San Bernardino and the subsequent Mormon trek of 1851.

Before surrendering the presiding officer's chair to Seely at the church's first conference, Apostle Amasa Lyman made what became a prophetic speech, inasmuch as Seely was concerned, urging church members to settle any differences within the church and not carry them to courts of law.

But Seely was to live and learn the hard way.

After Mormon leaders purchased the San Bernardino Rancho from the Lugo family, the colonists erected a stockade to defend themselves from possible Indian attack and, for more than a year, lived inside this 700-by-300-foot enclosure.

In the interim, crops were planted. The first grain field, some 1,300 acres in size, lying between Little Mountain and Waterman Canyon, was cultivated. In addition, tracts for summer crops and vineyards were planted, with Seely obtaining 50,000 cuttings for the latter from the San Jose Rancho, near today's Claremont.

In the fall of 1852, Mormon

Capt. Jefferson Hunt was elected to the California Legislature as one of two assemblymen from Los Angeles County, to which San Bernardino then belonged.

In 1853, Hunt introduced a bill to form San Bernardino County from the eastern portion of Los Angeles County. The bill passed. Two Mormons, Seely and Henry G. Sherwood, along with Independents Isaac Williams and John Brown Sr., were named as commissioners to adjust financial problems rising from the formation of the new county, and to arrange a special election to choose its first officers.

Seely was elected to serve as the county treasurer at both the special and regular elections, attesting to the faith shown in him by both factions of local society.

Earlier the same year, as continuing church president, Seely delegated a large company of brethren to build a wagon road into the mountains, to haul lumber for the first wooden houses built in San Bernardino.

That summer, Seely and his brother, Wellington, erected a water-powered sawmill at a site later named Seely Flat, in honor of its developers.

Most of the trees in Seely Flat were sugar pine — a soft, white wood, straight-grained and ideal for finish lumber. It sold in Los Angeles for \$80 per 1,000 feet.

During those early, happy years, Seely became the high man on the totem pole. Admired by all for his spotless reputation and civic accomplishments, it seemed he could do no wrong.

Then came a series of incidents, all caused by his uncontrollable temper, that shocked even his staunchest admirers.

The first occurred in October

1854, when the High Council met to adjust "a difficulty" between Seely and another mill owner, Charles Crisman. The cause and scope of the dispute was never revealed.

The next altercation came June 23, 1853, when he had a heated argument with merchant Lewis Jacobs, picked up a stick and beat Jacobs over the head. Seely was summoned before a special church conference, where he confessed to endangering Jacobs' life and begged for forgiveness. Although the church forgave him, he was removed from its presidency.

Yet another shocking incident apparently came about as the result of some longstanding feud between Seely and Moses Martin, builder-owner of the historic adobe that recently collapsed in Seccombe Park.

In 1861, Martin filed a declaration of homestead on the adobe and was living there in blissful ignorance when, 29 years later, Seely filed an affidavit stating the homestead was illegal because Martin had another wife living in Northern California.

As a result, Martin and his "local wife" split up, and he was booted out of the house.

Except for temper tantrums, though, Seely was a distinguished member of society. He served as a county supervisor several times and helped to organize the local pioneer society. When he died, on

May 24, 1892, he was eulogized for what he had been — a great pioneer, county founder and civic leader.

**Fred Holladay is president of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.**

## OUR FRED

By Arda Haenszel

So we say good bye to our good friend Fred Holladay. This should be with a slight sense of guilt, for we expected too much of him. Serving as our president and also our editor of ODYSSEY and HERITAGE TALES, along with his job at the Eagle's Lodge, his weekly column at the SUN, and his personal obligations, were physically just too much of a load for him to carry. But he loved doing it. He loved being

recognized and consulted as a local historian, and he was a good one. And he loved the association in the historical society with friends of similar interests and goals.

I sort of wonder if now there may be something greater in store for him to look forward to. Will he at last meet the spirit of Wyatt Earp? Will he find out what made Judge Knox so "hard"? Will John Brown Jr. remember talking to the little boy Fred who used to come by his old home at 6th and D Streets?

We wish for him peace after his long ordeal, and a happy trail into unlimited history.

E6/ The Sun SUNDAY, November 15, 1987

# Forgotten schoolhouse invokes warm memories

I didn't start attending school until I was nearly 7 years old, and might never have gone if the neighbors hadn't started wondering out loud why I wasn't attending classes.

Since I was the only boy in our family, and a latecomer at that—my two sisters were 11 and 14 years old when I was born—I had been spoiled rotten. I didn't want to start school when I reached the age of 6 and, as usual, my mother let me have my way.

But, after nosy neighbors threatened to notify the local authorities about my dereliction, my mother dressed me in my Buster Brown outfit and registered me at the new Lincoln School, at the corner of Base Line and B (now Mountain View Avenue) streets.

As my mother had already taught me how to read, write and cipher, I was skipped from first to third grade during my first week. By then, having overcome my

earlier reservations about the merits of mass education, I was living the life of Riley, hobnobbing with the sons and daughters of wealthy residents living in the north end of San Bernardino.

Then, suddenly, the situation changed when a letter arrived from the school board stating I could no longer attend Lincoln because I lived in the wrong school district.

Since we resided on the corner of Seventh and Pearl (now Pershing Avenue) streets, I would have to attend the Fourth Street School, a rundown building three blocks away in the downtown area.

What a letdown it was. Where the Lincoln School, built in 1921, was modern in every respect and surrounded by a lovely lawn and numerous shade trees, the downtown school's landscaping consisted of a few acres of dirt.

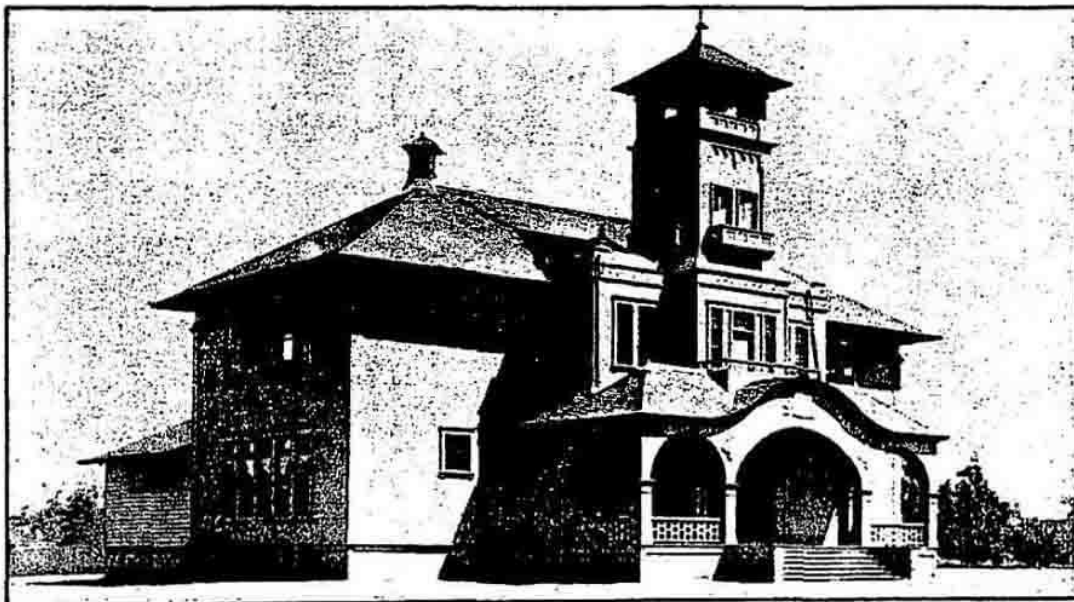
The old Victorian structure



**Making history**  
Fred Holladay

had been built to hold far fewer students than the 486 attending during the 1926-27 term. According to records, there were two teachers for each grade, first through sixth, and one for kindergarten, making 13 in all. That figured to about one teacher for every 38 students, which caused all sorts of disciplinary problems.

Most of the teachers, however, were experts in wielding rulers and, as a result, many unruly students sported bruised knuckles much of the time.



STEELE'S PHOTO SERVICE

The Fourth Street School, pictured here in 1912, rested in what today is San Bernardino's downtown.



Air-conditioning was non-existent in 1926. Most schools were lucky to have one or more old-fashioned fans hanging from the ceilings, with the blades turning in slow, easy circles.

We did, however, have something unique to watch between classes. All during 1926, a new courthouse was rising on Arrowhead Avenue, immediately east of the school, on the site once occupied by the old Mormon stockade. We watched its construction with anticipation as it rose higher each day. When it was finally completed in 1927, we listened to the dedication ceremonies from our schoolyard across the street.

Although the names and faces of most of the teachers at the Fourth Street School have faded from memory, I still recall two.

The first was the formidable school principal, Grace Stofer. A dignified, sober-faced woman who personified authority, a summons to her office, in our impressionable young minds, was tanta-

mount to being sentenced to the electric chair.

The other was Ruth Grinnell Fowler, the district music supervisor. Almost everyone has fallen in love with his or her teacher at one time or another, and I was no exception. To this day I still think of Fowler with the utmost affection, and it is hard to describe the strange feelings engendered through puppy love as this ethereal young woman floated by my desk on her weekly visits to the Fourth Street School.

Years later, Fowler played piano for the community sing at Redlands Bowl concerts. Although I once went on stage and spoke to her again, and the old

feeling returned with her nearness, I knew she didn't remember me. To her, I was but one of the thousands of children she taught during her career.

As the 1926-27 school year drew to a close, word came that the old Fourth Street School was slated for demolition. A new

school named Jefferson was under construction at the corner of Sixth and Mountain View, and many of the Fourth Street students would be attending class there the following term.

When the students learned the structure was being torn down, all were sorry to hear the news, even though most of us had made fun of the school during the year. We were, however, happy to be rid of our rigid principal.

When classes opened in the fall of 1927 at Jefferson, all attended the obligatory assembly. As a hush fell over the youthful audience, out walked our new principal, beaming at her squirming charges. It was the formidable Grace Stofer.

Fred Holladay is president of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.

E4/ The Sun SUNDAY, May 10, 1987

# S.B. pioneer mother braved hardships for family



## Making history

Fred Holladay

The yellowing pages of history contain innumerable tales of individual courage. Few, however, are more compelling than the quiet, desperate battles often fought by pioneer mothers to help their families survive.

Some bore a dozen or more children, only to lose many to childhood diseases. Others went hungry to provide loved ones with a few extra scraps of food.

San Bernardino pioneer Jerusha Bemis was one of those brave mothers, rearing a family of 10 children and suffering the death

of three — one infant and three older children.

Bemis was capable of making a meal of corn bread and wild greens during hard times, and could load the table with tasty food even when she had little money.

Her life was filled with love not only for her kin, but also others in need of help or sympathy. If they were hurt or sick, all the more reason to pamper and take care of them.

Born in 1799, she was 25 — considered an old maid — when she met and married Alvin Bemis in 1824. She bore him 11 children between 1828 and 1844, having her last child at the age of 43.

Alvin Bemis joined the Mormon church shortly after it was founded by Joseph Smith in upstate New York. In 1838 he moved to Kirtland, Ohio, the small town chosen by Smith as his headquarters.

Bemis arrived there shortly after the local Mormon-owned bank went under, mainly because of a severe financial panic in 1837. Although Smith and many of his followers left Kirtland following the

bank failure and headed for another Mormon settlement in Missouri, Bemis stayed.

By the following year, virtual civil war had broken out in Missouri. Mobs terrorized Mormon colonists by burning, raping, pillaging and murdering. Thousands were driven from the state, while Smith and his leaders were imprisoned for six months, charged with treason, before being allowed to flee.

When the Mormons fled to what they thought would be utopia at Nauvoo, Ill., Bemis decided to follow them.

Jerusha was pregnant with her last child at the time, so the family paused for a few days in Michi-

Continued on Page 10



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gan, where baby Jerusha was born. They were continuing on to Gainsville, Iowa when disaster



AL HANCOCK

Jerusha Bemis  
19th century pioneer mother

struck. Alvin Bemis suddenly became ill and died. The baby also passed away a few weeks later.

Although it was Alvin's dying wish that they complete their westward journey, Jerusha and her 10 remaining children, distraught and without money, were forced to stop. Luckily, the three oldest boys scared up a few ill-paying jobs to put some food on the table, otherwise the family would have been destitute.

After spending three years living in poverty at Cainville, they moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, hoping to improve their fortunes. Then, a stranger suddenly entered their life. He was a handsome young man from Ohio named Joseph Hancock, who had stopped at the river town while on his way to Salt Lake City to visit an uncle.

Joseph met and fell in love with Bemis' eldest daughter, Nan-

Continued on page 11

cy Agusta, and after a short courtship they were married. With Hancock on board, family fortunes improved dramatically. Before both families left for Utah in 1850, two children were born to the happy couple.

The Bemis and Hancock families remained in Utah until 1854, when they decided to move to San Bernardino. Their wagon train followed the Mormon Trail through Nevada, along the Mojave River to Ayon Pass, then over the Cajon Pass and down its canyon into the San Bernardino Valley.

They first camped at Metcalf's Pasture, on the banks of Lytle Creek, west of present-day Mount Vernon Avenue and southwest of the Santa Fe depot. It was a favorite stopping place for many pioneer families at the time.

A short time later they built a home on West Fourth Street, along the east bank of Lytle Creek, and were living there when the great flood of 1862 hit. After several days of heavy rain, water that normally ran down Lytle Creek's west branch broke

through the east bank above Ninth Street, pouring down the small stream that flowed past the Bemis house. It washed away a large portion of land as well as

part of the house.

The family then built a home on Fifth Street, where Bemis lived the rest of her life.

Shortly after arriving in the valley, Bemis' daughter, Harriet, married Richard Thomas Roberds, forging the final link in the Bemis-Hancock-Roberds family chain, perhaps the largest in San Bernardino.

Such joyous events helped Bemis enjoy a happy, tranquil existence in San Bernardino. But personal tragedies lay ahead.

The first occurred when her son, Nephi, along with two other men, was killed by Indians on March 25, 1860. The three bodies were brought to San Bernardino and given the largest funeral seen in the town to date. Nephi left a young wife, Ana McGinnis Bemis, who later gave birth to a stillborn child.

Eight years later, another son, Samuel, was killed by a bear near the Talmadge sawmill in Little

Bear Valley after returning from hunting deer with his brothers, Charles and Edwin.

Bemis never quite recovered from that final tragedy, for she was more subdued after Samuel's untimely death. Then, on Nov. 6, 1872, she became seriously ill.

For the next six days, Nancy Hancock remained at her bedside, trying in vain to pull her through the illness. On Nov. 12, 1872 the pioneer mother quietly passed away. She was laid to rest in Pioneer Cemetery beside Nephi and Samuel.

According to family historian Al Hancock, the 50th annual gathering of the Bemis-Hancock-Roberds clan will be held at San Bernardino County Museum May 17 at noon. Bemis will be remembered then, along with Hancock, the man who popped up when the Bemis family most needed help.

**Fred Holladay is president of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.**

## BIG RED CARS Continued from page 4

had the option of paying their fares and entering cars inside the building or attending stage shows next door at the Unique Theatre (later named the Rialto) before returning home.

The streetcars were an immediate success. The first line ran from Base Line and D Street to Colton, via Mt. Vernon Avenue. A second ran east on Seventh Street to the Pioneer Cemetery, while a third one carried fun seekers from Third and E Streets to Urbta Springs.

The Valley Traction system also acquired the Harlem Springs road, extending it to Highland by connecting it to the cemetery line and the Redlands Street Railway. Both lines cut deeply into their competitor's passenger revenue.

Meanwhile, one-time Southern Pacific president Henry Huntington had been building and buying streetcar lines all over Southern California since 1901 with the view of linking them together to form a far-flung transportation network called the Pacific Electric Railway Company.

It was Huntington who made the Valley Traction directors an offer they couldn't refuse. In 1907 they sold out to the Southern Pacific Company and by 1911 the line had been absorbed by the Pacific Electric.

All Valley Traction operations were immediately switched over to the Southern Pacific depot and after Huntington's firm moved in, it was renamed the Pacific Electric Station.

During its heyday, from 1920 to 1940, the Pacific Electric Railway boasted over 1,000 miles of trolley lines and ran 2,700 scheduled trains daily. The system stretched from Redlands to Santa Monica, east to west, and from San Fer-

nando to Balboa, north and south.

As Pacific Electric historian Spencer Crump wrote, "The Pacific Electric's interurbans, affectionately called 'Big Red Cars' by passengers and system employees, were as familiar from 1902 until their departure in 1961 as the smogless skies and waxy green orange groves which made Southern California beautiful."

The local Pacific Electric Station, besides containing the usual ticket and lunch counters, postcard racks and walnut benches, had one distinguished feature — a large, stained-glass window, bearing the Pacific Electric logo.

As a patron emerged from the building's rear door he entered the loading area where streetcars of varying dimensions were drawn up close to the station; awaiting passengers bound for destinations all over Southern California.

Some were fast. Several times daily express trains left San Bernardino on non-stop runs to Los Angeles and they covered the 59 miles — from ramp to ramp — in 59 minutes.

For over a decade I rode Big Red Cars out of the local station to Redlands, Riverside, or Los Angeles. And what an exhilarating feeling it was, to go flying down your own private thoroughfare, with bells clanging and wheels clattering and the wind blowing through your hair.

It was also a comfortable trip, Continued on Page 12

# I'LL MISS FRED

By Alan Hensher

The death of Fred Holladay leaves a gap in my life. I had known Fred since 1979, while I was writing my first booklet, Ghost Towns of the Central Mojave. I had seen an article he had written in Odyssey about one of the discoverers of the mines at Ivanpah and wrote for a back issue. Fred promptly replied, I joined the historical society, and we soon got together. That was just like Fred: always willing to help others.

Indeed, Fred always gave of himself. When I ran into some problems while indexing the mining news in the San Bernardino Guardian, one of the county's pioneer journals, Fred went over to the county archives and read the original files. When I was about to write an article on the mining town of Vanderbilt, Fred showed me a valuable file of the Needles Eye and then dug up two long-forgotten townsite maps.

Whenever I was with Fred, I felt I was part of a larger family. Our talk would touch upon many subjects: the progress of our work or his boyhood days

in Roseville or his interest in the Earp family. Fred would sometimes ask me to write an article for Odyssey or Heritage Tales. Sometimes we would have lunch together. Or we might visit people and places around town: the county recorder's office, the historical society's house, Steele Photo Service, or members of the historical society.

Even from his hospital bed, Fred kept going: once, without hesitation, he was able to point out the exact location of those obscure maps of Vanderbilt.

By then, I had begun writing again, a guidebook called Ghost Towns of the Mojave Desert. After many delays, my book finally appeared in November. Alas, Fred died the next day.

I'll miss Fred: his work has become a part of my work, his life a part of my life.



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sitting on well-padded, mohair-covered seats with ice water dispensers and rest rooms at the back of the car.

Yet it would all come to an end. Freeways, buses and automobiles all helped kill the street-car, along with the Pacific Electric's unwillingness to upgrade its equipment and trackage. Unfortunately, freight also garnered more revenue than passenger service.

By 1938 all local trolley lines had been abandoned except the original Valley Traction line to Colton. Pacific Electric buses took over the various routes until 1953, when their passenger operations were absorbed by the Metropolitan Coach Lines.

Big Red Cars returned to service during World War II, serving as troop carriers throughout Southern California. Bus travel was at a premium too. Tires and gasoline were rationed and thousands of commuters rode the bus

as the next best thing. Buses often ran with passengers jammed in like sardines and standing up in the aisles.

After the war ended, the situation returned to normal. Other bus lines replaced the Pacific Electric ones behind the depot — from the Mountain Auto Line, Highland-Patton Lines, Pickwick Stages, Regional Transit District and Greyhound Lines. The station was booming again with new faces and new places to go.

But it all came to an untimely end with the advent of the Central City Redevelopment project in 1967. All of Third Street came tumbling down under the wrecker's ball, including the venerable old Pacific Electric Station, by then operating under its final logo — the Greyhound Lines.

**Fred Holladay is president of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.**

E4/ The Sun SUNDAY, November 9, 1986

# Renaissance S.B. doctor rarely was in



**Making history**  
Fred Holladay

It would take a palette filled with many colors to paint an adequate portrait of Dr. Oliver Meredith Wozencraft — San Bernardino's renaissance man.

Although personifying the classic Southern gentleman, soft-spoken and educated in the arts and other amenities of the genteel life, that demeanor concealed a darker side which, when blended with alcohol, turned him from a mild Dr. Jekyll into a murderous Mr. Hyde.

Wozencraft, who was born in Ohio in 1814, graduated from St. Joseph's College at Bardstown, Ky., with a medical degree and hung his first shingle at Nashville, Tenn.

A short time later he married Lamiza Ann Ramsey and moved to New Orleans in 1848, arriving shortly before an outbreak of cholera ravaged the city.

Assigned by local officials to the slum area, Wozencraft worked day and night among the sick and dying until his own health broke. To recuperate he decided to seek a change of climate and, leaving his wife and three children behind, joined a group bound for California.

As it turned out he left one pest house for another. Upon reaching Brownsville, Texas, the doctor found that town also devastated by cholera. Still ailing himself, he sought to avoid the situation by crossing the Rio Grande river into Matamoros, Mexico. But Brownsville residents, learning of Wozencraft's arrival, begged him

for help, and he couldn't refuse. With the assistance of an old army surgeon, he again fought the disease, using prescriptions found ef-

fective in New Orleans. After the epidemic ended, he continued his journey.

After crossing the Colorado River at Fort Yuma, the party headed out into the desert on what Mexicans called the "Journey of Death." It took three days to pass the 100-mile mark and, as Wozencraft later wrote, "The heat was so intense on the last day two of the men failed. I got off my mule to assist them, but found myself unable to assist them or myself."



STEELE'S PHOTO SERVICE

## Dr. Oliver M. Wozencraft

They finally made the crossing after a companion backtracked eight miles to obtain water. Wozencraft later learned the river occasionally overflowed its banks, aimlessly flooding the desert. Why not, he thought, utilize the wasted water by directing it into a network of gravity-flow canals to irrigate the desert, thereby turning it into rich farmlands? It was a vision that would finally consume both him and his fortune and cause his death.

Wozencraft continued on to San Francisco and then the tent city of Stockton, where he resumed his practice. That summer he became a delegate to the state's

first constitutional convention, held at Monterey on Sept. 1, 1849, where records show he spoke some 35 times in open debate.

The following year Wozencraft traveled to Washington, D.C., where he and two other men, Re-

dick McKee and George Barbour, were appointed Indian commissioners for California.

The trio faced a desperate situation as they headed for Indian country, trying to pacify tribes whose property had been overrun by gold-crazed miners who vandalized their homes and spoiled their food supplies.

It was during one of Wozencraft's peace-finding trips into the Shasta district that he found an Indian baby abandoned in the brush and brought her home as a present for his wife. Named "Shasta," she served the family as a servant for many years.

As the commissioners had decided earlier on, it was "cheaper to feed the Indians for a year than fight them for a week."

Although they signed many humane peace treaties with tribes all over California, their accomplishments raised furious protests in Washington over the large sums of money expended and the granting of good farmlands and mineral rights to "heathen savages." The government flatly refused to allot any more funds or pay the commissioners' wages.

Wozencraft finally returned to Washington, resigned his commission and bombarded Indian commissioner Luke Lea with paperwork until he received his salary.

Returning to San Francisco, Wozencraft wasted little time mourning the loss of his position. He entered politics, promoted nationwide telegraph systems and railroad companies and often traveled about the country, hyping his interests. But such trips strapped his finances and he always seemed to be short of funds.

In 1857, the Wozencrafts moved to San Bernardino, purchasing the former Amaza Lyman

residence on Arrowhead Avenue. For the first time the doctor had time to plan his river irrigation project.

Armed with numerous charts, maps and technical data, Wozencraft initially pleaded his case in Sacramento. The Legislature deeded him 10 million acres west of Yuma to hold his experiments. But in order to secure full title the federal government had to grant him rights to the same acreage.

For the next three years Wozencraft haunted the halls of Congress, drumming up support for his cause. He was just beginning to make headway when the Civil War intervened. Temporarily stymied, he packed his bags and left, determined to bring up the matter again after the war was over.

Back in San Bernardino, an event then occurred that shocked his friends around the state.

On Nov. 15, 1862, he went to Judge Henry M. Willis' house to settle a debt. According to the

judge, Wozencraft was drunk.

Willis later told a reporter how Wozencraft forced his way into the house, insulted his mother and was ordered to leave. As the doctor left he invited the judge to settle matters outside.

Both men were armed and, after trading insults, went for their weapons. They fired at each other several times before bystanders wrenched their guns away. After the smoke cleared it was clear Wozencraft had suffered wounds to the left arm, breast and side, while Judge Willis had been struck in the hip.

After recovering, Wozencraft tried to get his bill through Congress in both 1876 and 1878, but failed. As usual, his lobbying efforts cost money the doctor could ill afford, and he was forced to sell the old family home in San Francisco to remain solvent.

Yet he wouldn't give up.

In 1887, he traveled again to Washington, this time a man of 73,

with a faltering step and hair streaked with gray. Later that year, sick and penniless, Wozencraft was forced to take up residence with a charitable friend in Washington. He died there on Nov. 22, 1887.

His body was returned to San Bernardino and buried in the above-ground family vault in Pioneer Memorial Cemetery. In 1980 the sepulcher began crumbling and it was torn down for safety reasons. The bodies were reburied at the same site with the original markers set in concrete over the remains.

Early Colorado River canals followed almost the same route proposed by Wozencraft and they made the Imperial Valley one of the greatest food-producing regions in the world. His vision had come to pass.

**Fred Holladay is president of the City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.**



—(Photo by Curt Armstrong)  
Left to right: President Fredric Holladay and Oliver F. Lauszard of the Arrowhead Stamp Club showing some of the special cachets carried on the first helicopter air mail flight from Los Angeles to San Bernardino to Igor Sikorsky, developer of the unusual craft.

A small, rain-drenched crowd stood in the shelter of a hangar at Morrow Field, anxiously awaiting the expected arrival of the first helicopter

to carry official U. S. Airmail from Los Angeles to San Bernardino, Calif., just after 12:00 P. M. on December 1, 1947.

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