

# GRIEF EMBERS

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population of the city left, it drove real estate values down to practically nothing. Many cases are recorded where a producing farm which had been improved for six or seven years complete with a farmhouse, barn and fencing, sold for a wagon and team of oxen. This

attracted the meaner element from El Monte, who already had a nasty reputation for laziness, troublemaking and worse. The good citizens of the town felt threatened by these newcomers, and it must have been a terrible time for the Negro population. They were able to see it through, however, as the census records show.

Grief and Harriet Embers owned some property in town, three lots on what is now "I" Street, south of Mill. Grief worked as a farmer and day laborer, according to the census records, and as long as he was alive he provided his family with the necessities of life. In 1870, he listed his assets as \$1000 in real estate and \$100 in personal property.

On October 8, 1873, Grief Embers died of natural causes. His obituary appeared in the local newspaper three days later. It gave a brief outline of his past and ended by declaring he was "respected by all who knew him."

# FOURTH OF JULY

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Finally, a notable 4th of July observance was recorded for 1860 at Holcomb Valley. Placer gold having been discovered there by William F. Holcomb the year before, a settlement had quickly grown in the upper valley. Lacking a flag, the miners persuaded Mrs. Jed Van Duzen, wife

of the town blacksmith, to make one. "For her patriotic efforts," wrote Holcomb in his Reminiscences, "we named the place Belleville in honor of her little girl Belle."

One of several communities to develop in the valley during the gold rush, Belleville in 1861, with three precincts and more than 300 votes, became the largest voting township in the county, outdoing even San Bernardino itself. The 4th was observed that year by the raising of a liberty pole and American flag by a group of 100 Union men, defying the predominantly Confederate residents. Today the broad mountain meadow is practically empty, and a Forest Service sign marks the site of Belleville.

# EDITOR'S COLUMN

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our front yard and wads of paper flew for a quarter block or so. For years I kept finding pieces of the maxi-cracker in the neighborhood.

Fireworks were finally outlawed by self-styled "safety-first" advocates and other assorted kill-joys. Perhaps several young children were injured each year shooting off pyrotechnic marvels, so the curtain fell on one of history's more glorious eras.

But to those who lived in San Bernardino during those early fourths -- they'll never forget the thrill they felt when they emerged from their home that day, lighted punk in hand and the odor of gunpowder in the air.

--F.H.

