



ODYSSEY

CITY OF SAN BERNARDINO
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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EDITOR'S COLUMN

AROUND 1930, I became friends with Dr. F. M. Gardner's children, who lived on Sixth Street, between E and F Streets, next door to the Women's Club house. This fact, in itself, is of no importance historically, except I often walked past the northwest corner of Sixth and E Streets to reach the Gardner home and it was here that John Brown, Jr., lived.

Although he was in his eighties then, and I was only 12, he never failed to say hello when I walked by and he was in the front yard watering his plants and flowers. On many occasions he would invite me in (when he had other youngsters in the yard, telling them yarns) and I would join the moppet crowd, listening to some wild tales about he and his contemporaries adventures in early California and San Bernardino county.

I never realised then, or until many years later, that this man was one of the great pioneers of our county — who witnessed almost every important historical development from around the Civil War period to date. To me then, he was but a kindly, white-haired old man, who seemed to thrive on the friendship of others and who enjoyed thrilling a few wide-eyed kids with tales of derringdoe and bravery.

Since then I've often thought of John Brown, Jr., and wished I could have known, or been interested in, the past history of San Bernardino and our state. I could talk to him now, in retrospect, for weeks on end, and my questions would never cease.

But, unfortunately, I only knew John Brown for two short years. He died in 1932, there in his home, surrounded by his beloved relics, garden and city of San Bernardino.

At least I knew him long enough to gain an impression he made upon me then, as a child, that can never be erased.

...F.H.

