

Wagners Play Colorful Role In Local History

Early Real Estate Transactions Make Interesting Comparisons

(This is the first in a series of articles tracing the colorful history of the great Southwest.)

Wild mustard fields stretched for miles in every direction from Vermont and Manchester in the late 1800's. It was then that Michael Wagner, a native of Germany, came into the Southwest and purchased a plot of land for \$8000.

The land, now bounded by Eighty-third street, Manchester, Vermont, and Normandie avenues, was valued in 1927 at \$2,500,000.

The agreement worked out for its purchase is an interesting document: "Received of Michael Wagner \$300, gold coin of the U.S.A. as part purchase money which said land I this day sold to said Wagner for \$8000. Said purchase price to be paid as follows:

\$1700 paid on or about September 1, 1892 . . . that is, \$1300 cash and \$400 barley at \$1 per 100 pounds, to be delivered at any time after this date and balance to be paid the Security Savings Bank and Trust company of Los Angeles on or before January 1, 1893, without interest. Interest on

said balance of \$6000 at the rate of 9½ per cent to be paid L. F. Quinby. Deed and title to be given upon full payment of first \$2000 and possession to be given on or before November 1, 1892. Title to prove good and clear, if not, then deposit to be refunded."

Wagner lived at Normandie and Manchester avenues with his family of three sons and two daughters, the owner of several hundreds of acres of land.

When his son, John, married Anna M. Herberger in 1889, he gave the young couple 80 acres near Crenshaw boulevard and 10 acres at the southeast corner of Western and Manchester. Later on, John bought 160 more acres near Crenshaw and 80 acres at the northeast corner of Century

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—Roberts Studio

WAGNER HOME: Beautifully landscaped white concrete mansion that sprawls over approximately three lots at 1100 West Eighty-fifth street was erected by the John Wagners 22 years

ago as their family residence. Mrs. Wagner, who now is nearing her eightieth birthday, still makes it her home. Wagner died a number of years ago.

HERE'S MORE ABOUT

WAGNERS

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boulevard and Western avenue.

Mrs. John Wagner, who is now nearing her eightieth birthday and lives in the sprawling concrete family home at 1100 West Eighty-fifth street, remembers the "Dummy" line, a sort of electric train that made four trips a day from Redondo to the Jefferson and Grand intersection. From there the Wagner children walked with other youngsters to Twelfth street where St. Joseph's Catholic school was situated.

The "Dummy," which goes back some 50 years, used to let passengers off any place they desired. Mrs. Wagner recalls how one evening on the trip home the conductor forgot to let her children off so he took them home for the night. There were no telephones in those days. It was a worried mother who sat and waited for the dawn.

Hay and grain were the principal products grown by the Wagners. Toward World War I, they added lima beans but whatever was grown was dry farmed . . . they depended on the rains for their water.

As the Southwest began to grow and population with it, a 2-room school house connected with St. Joseph's was built at the corner where Sureway Drug now is and nuns were sent out to teach the first eight grades.

In a few years, the residents decided they wanted a church and so started St. Michael's whose history dates back 40 years.

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The first church in an enlarged form, now is the Vermont Avenue Church of Christ, on the Pepperdine college campus. Where the rectory now is, a frame school was built. Eventually, it was torn down and a stucco rectory and concrete school went up. The 2-room local extension of St. Joseph's school was bought up by the public school system and transferred to what is now Ninety-fifth Street school, Mrs. Wagner related.

On the northwest corner of the Vermont-Manchester intersection was then built a frame store that housed the Clark Drug store. It was replaced with a 60x130 2-story brick building that still stands. The Wagners aided in the building of the Knights of Columbus hall at 1131 West Manchester avenue. John Wagner became known as the father of Manchester Heights council, Knights of Columbus.

Another large Wagner undertaking was erection of the 2-story brick building at 8511-15 South Vermont avenue. Scheinbaum's Dry Goods store, at that time the only place Southsiders could buy dry goods, was there.

The Wagners still own the north side of Manchester avenue from Vermont west to the alley. They own the land upon which Station H postoffice is situated, and formerly owned the property where the J. C. Penney store is today.

On the southeast corner of the V-M intersection, for years synonymous with Henderson's Market, at one time was a 2-acre lake or mudhole, as Mrs. Wagner prefers to call it, on which youngsters put rafts.