

# Mrs. Anna Wagner Recalls Growth Of V-M District

When Western avenue was a cow path . . . when all land south of Pico was farm land . . . and it took an hour to ride into town by horse and buggy if the roads were good, Anna M. Herberger came to the Southwest.

That was in 1887, two years before she married John Wagner. At that time orange orchards spotted the landscape at Thirtieth and Main streets and much of the population of Los Angeles lived in temporary tents.

Settling down on a farm land consisting of 90 acres at Manchester and Western avenues, given to them by Wagner's father, Michael Wagner, the young couple started building what now is known as The Great Southwest.

By 1892, they had added 160 acres to the original 90. Twelve children, all still living, were born to the couple; Mrs. Amanda Ronk, Sister Viviana now in a convent, Otto Wagner, Irene M. Homan, Joe M. Wagner, Anna V. Casper, Peter Wagner, Martha K. Funk, Cecilia M. Gullede, Leo Wagner, John A. Wagner, and Adalaide A. Wagner. All were born at the old home site at Western and Manchester.

Still living in the Southwest are Joe Wagner, 1102 West Eighty-fifth street; Mrs. Ronk, 1625 West 107th street; Otto H. Wagner, 8927 Byrd avenue; Adalaide Wagner, living with her mother at the present home, 1100 West Eighty-fifth street; and Anna Casper, at Eighty-ninth street and Van Ness avenue.

Mrs. Wagner, living in one of the Southwest's most beautiful homes at 1100 West Eighty-fifth

street since 1926, can recall the start of the growing Vermont-Manchester business district:

"There was a train track on Vermont avenue going to the beaches. I guess it would be called a train track although it was known as a 'dummy line' then. There was a train stop at Vermont and Manchester avenues, and the district grew around that."

Recalling the days when he three older children had to go to Twelfth street to school, Mrs. Wagner told of the start of Michael's church and school.

"We decided, that is the owners of the farm land around here, that we should build our own school. That was 38 years ago. John and his two brothers, George and Michael Wagner, were instrumental in building the school and church. They suggested naming it St. Michael's in remembrance of their father, Michael Wagner. After the completion, mass was said, and the church now still standing was started. Thirty-five children then were in school."

When asked how it felt to watch a city grow from a small colony into one of the world's largest cities, Mrs. Wagner said, "I guess I always was too busy caring for

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my children and improving the Southwest to notice it. But the Southwest has just started to grow. In another 50 years it will be almost unrecognizable.

Still continuing on the old home site at Western and Manchester avenues, where the Wagners lived until moving to Eighty-fifth street 19 years ago, are Otto and Joe Wagner, who have a gas station at the corner.

Most of the 150 acres at Vermont and Manchester avenues were disposed of in 1922 when the land was subdivided.

In recalling the old days, Mrs. Wagner remarked that few people would remember when the May company was called the "Peoples Store" and was located at Temple and Spring streets. It then was called "Hamburgers" before receiving the present name.

Also recalled were the Japanese gardens covering part of what now is termed the Southwest . . . and Strawberry park, although, as Mrs. Wagner put it, "I never did see a strawberry."

John Wagner, who died in 1934, was affiliated with the State bank and in the Knights of Columbus, Third degree.

The Wagners were married in St. Joseph's church, downtown, which was reached by horse and buggy in an hour if "the roads weren't too wet and it was a good day."

Still to carry on the Wagner name are 20 grandchildren, two of whom are in the service, Jack E. Wagner and Dick Wagner, sons of Otto Wagner.

Anna and John Wagner helped build the Southwest, watching farms subdivided, saw homes going up, and business districts spring out of nowhere. Many years they worked to make the Southwest what it is today, and it is people like them that will go down in history as the builders of a great nation . . . taking their small corner of America and molding it into a thriving and beautiful city.