

# Independent

SOUTHWEST EDITION

## Wagner Clan Pioneered SW Development

**Heritage of Area Rich in Progress From Early Days**

Woven into the colorful, vibrant history of the Southwest is the life story of Anna Herberger and John Wagner — the saga of Southwest Los Angeles, a section which first began to develop under the forceful hand of the Wagner clan.

Anna Wagner, spry and witty at 81, turns back the calendar with not a little regret. But her eyes sparkle when she recalls the yesteryears in telling the Southwest's heritage.

Her tale begins 64 years ago when Michael Wagner brought his family from the Midwest to the City of the Angels, then but a tiny pueblo. In a newly purchased horse and buggy, with sons John and Michael and daughter Anna, now Mrs. Anna Thill of West 87th St., they toured the Southland. They decided their new home was to be the vast wasteland of the Southwest.

Through the heat, dust and overgrown mustard weeds the Wagners saw a future which they started to carve with 320-acres of land in the area which is today approximately Manchester and Normandie Aves. Within a year Wagner had increased his holdings to 1000 acres—in the area now bounded by Crenshaw Blvd., and Vermont Ave.

Anna Herberger arrived in the Southland in 1887—a year important in local development through the extension of the Santa Fe Railroad to Los Angeles and the nationally publicized real estate boom.

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Right of Way

SANTA BARBARA

VAN NESS

SPINNING

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The young miss, attractive and of strong German stock, met John Wagner, and after a horse-and-buggy courtship between the city and country, they were married at St. Joseph's Catholic Church on 12th St.

The bridegroom had been given 90 acres of land to farm for himself on which, before their exchange of vows, they built their home—Manchester and Western Aves. today—which was to become the hub of a wheel which was constantly turning more rapidly each year toward the development of the great Southwest area.

The Santa Fe arrival in 1887 brought thousands of new inhabitants to Southern California. The city itself began to surge forward—to the South—toward the isolated agricultural community the Wagners were building.

In 1892, John Wagner purchased 160 acres of land and shortly afterward built a two-room school, the first in Southwest history, on a site near where Manchester meets Vermont. Two nuns traveled from St. Joseph's Church to teach the children. They rode on a privately owned "dummy" line which ran from Jefferson Boulevard and Grand Avenue to Redondo Beach, along a route that is now Vermont.

Wagner became dedicated to civic progress, joined the chamber of commerce and businessmen's association upon their inception, and with his brother, Michael, built St. Michael's Church and square. The Southwest pioneer died in April, 1934.

While the southernmost portion of the Southwest was developing, pioneer families were settling in what is now the area bounded by Santa Barbara Ave. and Florence Ave.

Louesa and Magdalena Wildason, now of 1344 W. 58th St., were members of one pioneer family in this area. Their father moved from the Midwest to California to settle on a 40-acre farm bounded by Normandie, Budlong, and Slauson Aves., and 54th St. A few years later, in 1900, the Manual Arts High School was built in this area—first high school of the Southwest.

The Southwest, a young part of a comparatively young city, is almost a town to itself. It is predominantly an area of homes of solid citizens, neither rich nor poor. It is an area which has grown as much in the last 20 years as any comparable section of land in the nation—a modern section with its individual shopping centers, its cultural life, and its thousands of families.

Through what not long ago were open fields flow the traffic arteries—Broadway, Figueroa, Vermont, Western—carrying the elements of industry and progress, fulfilling the promise that the Southwest held for its pioneers of more than half a century ago.

## Busy Time

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