

## "Those Good Old Days" by One Who Can Really Tell It

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*Yorba Linda Star October 17 1947 page 1*

Yorba Linda, when I first saw it in 1910 was brown hills, cactus, sage brushh [sic], ground squirrels, trap-door spiders, soaring buzzards--and very beautiful. More beautiful perhaps than it is now. Now the clear line of the hills is obscured by the groves, by the heavy growth of the windbreaks. It is a little, on coming back, as if the simplicity and directness of a known and loved figure, say the Venus de Milo, were Mother Hubbard of the thousands of citrus and avocado trees.

Then, in the "good old days," the days that retrospect always make golden, we the children of Yorba Linda could lift our eyes to unobscured horizons: Saddleback to the east; the northern foothills surging upward in a brown wave; south the shining ribbon of the Santa Ana (in those miraculous days of childhood rivers had water in them); westward the black oil rigs laced mysteriously against the setting sun. Great riches for the imagination!

The Santa Ana wind in those days was an elemental force. It came up the gap of the canyon, a solid wall of air with no windbreaks to stop it. The enormous tumble weeds [sic] (everything was of course bigger in those days) bounded ahead of it uphill as well as down. The Janss Investment Companies Signboard (Fine Homesites, Abundant Water, Fertile Soil, Easy Terms) fell on its face. Fords, were there any other cars in the golden days? had their tops turned wrong side out. Insecure shingles, insecure buildings, even, bade their home bases farewell. The Santa Anas in those days were exciting, untamed, something for a child to pit his strength against--or to make use of. On our way to school we children lifted our coats over our heads and were thus blown along over the brown hill like slightly denser tumbleweeds.

In those first days there was no water in Yorba Linda, no harnessed water that is, docilely led here and there by the pipe lines. We brought ours by barrel and wagon northward from the Anaheim Water Company's store at Atwood. Later the pumps went down, the pipe lines were laid and presently over werrbox lips and through the openings of the many standpipes water flowed, the water which transformed the barley fields into orchard land and, sewed the seams of the green Mother Hubbard; made placid and shall I say suburban, what was once wild and spare and tawny. It [sic] write with nostalgia, of course, for the vanished landscape of childhood, and as, too, a resident of northern California where there is perhaps, though I would never breathe it to a northern Californian, an unnecessary plenitude of green growth.

We had then, as now, the winter rains in Yorba Linda; but then without the present blanketing of orchards the growth they brought was remarkable. Grass swept across the hillsides like green fire. Reservoir Hill was carpeted with yellow violets. On Sunday afternoons in Spring the young people went there to pick them. There was plenty for all--we went home with double handfuls of yellow velvet, velvet alive and fragrant. Who among the children of those days was not on Reservoir Hill in the spring? Bemises, Kaubs, Pikes, Holloways, Truebloods, Logsdons, Walkers, Kinsmans, Gilman, McDavids, Ryans, Vettors, Buckmasters, Bartons, they were all there. There were other flowers, of course, and on other hills. Wild onion, which early children of Yorba Linda for some reason called teakettle stems, and gathered in arm length clusters. Indian paint brushes, baby blues eyes, Mariposa lilies, lupine. In Yorba Linda in the early days no one had to wait for heaven to claim his bed of flowery ease, they availed him on every hillside.

Some weeks ago I drove through Yorba Linda with two young nephews, residents of the metropolis of Whitter. After the fashion of nephews and urbanites they exclaimed loudly as we went through the business section, "But, where's the town?" For me there was plenty of town, perhaps too much. In a Southern California which threatens to become one large city the virtue of Yorba Linda might be, it seems to one remembering its old time beauties, to remain the one green oasis, the one shaft of non-carbonized air, the dwelling place of the last yellow violet south of Bakersfield.