

OUR LADY in the Beginning

The story of the foundation and the original settlers—all that is known of a certainty—of *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora, la Reina de los Angeles*

By PHIL TOWNSEND HANNA

Drawings by Maynard Dixon

Pictorial map by Dillon Lauritzen

THE genesis of *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora, la Reina de los Angeles* is almost as obscure as the legendary beginnings of Venus, who, the myths recount with brevity and a sad lack of detail, sprang full-blown from the sea. The chroniclers of antiquity, overcome no doubt by the transcendent charms of the Roman goddess, failed to note at length the circumstances of her advent. And they may be forgiven. But the foundation of Los Angeles was a much simpler matter, of the greatest historical importance, and was consummated at a time when every priest and military chieftain in New Spain was something of an historian. It might be expected, therefore, that a circumstantial description of the achievement would have been preserved. And it may have been made, and thus far has escaped the vigilance of the professional historians. But the known facts about the origin of Our Lady, in this year of 1931, are regrettably sparse; more so than for any like incident in the kaleidoscopic annals of the Southwest.

When Los Angeles was established we do not know conclusively; there is some doubt as to the identity of the first settlers; and the ceremonies attendant thereto, in the absence of a factual account, have been contrived out of sheer romance. Of two things only may we feel at all sure—that the city was founded some time between September and the end of December, 1781, and by as lowly and heterogeneous a company of souls as ever assembled for a similar enterprise.

By common consent and in the absence of any indisputable data to the contrary, September 4, 1781, has been accepted rather generally, as the date of the founding of Our Lady. And on this date, this year, will be observed the 150th anniversary of the city's beginning. But as the fiesta proceeds, bands blare forth, and bunting flutters in the whilom breezes, there will be those among the celebrants who will remember that it may have been another day and another month that Los Angeles came into being.

There are no eye-witness accounts of the signal event—at least none have revealed themselves so far. There were no reporters hovering about to record the circumstances; no moving picture camera men, of course; no photographers with their myopic and sinister black machines. There may have been a grey-robed friar pres-

ent, but if there was he seems to have failed to register his impressions in the florid chirography of the period for the benefit of posterity. And should even one of the hardy little band of first settlers have appreciated the high potential drama in which he was participating and have

In APPRECIATION

IN THE PREPARATION of *Our Lady in the Beginning, and the painting of the foundation of Los Angeles, which appear in this issue, Touring Topics is indebted to many of its friends for aid and counsel. Shrouded in mystery as the signal event is, the attempt to re-create a rational and authentic picture of it, free from romanticism as well as iconoclasm, has involved much diligent research and developed no few difficulties. Deprived of the assistance so generously given by so many, the task could not have been achieved at all. Without committing any to the conclusions expressed, the editors acknowledge most heartily and gratefully the advice and labors of and the documents and materials furnished, by the following: Dr. Herbert E. Bolton, Joseph J. Hill and the staff of the Bancroft Library; Sr. Martin López, director of the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City; Everett Perry, Susanna Ott and Laura Cooley, of the Los Angeles Public Library; L. E. Lampton, of the Los Angeles County Clerk; Nellie Van de Grift Sánchez, Henry R. Wagner, Mrs. A. S. C. Forbes, Lyndley Bynum, Thomas Workman Temple II, E. Palmer Conner, of the Title Insurance and Trust Company; Louise Pinkney Sooy and Margaret Mackey, authors of *Fiesta and Siesta Days, now in preparation; Marguerite Eyer Wilbur, and Vernon Tate of the Library of Congress.*—THE EDITOR.*

ected to chronicle what transpired, his desires would have faced forthright frustration, for not one of the colonists who first raised the Spanish flag over Los Angeles could read and nor one could write.

In recreating the *mise en scene* of the founding of Our Lady we know very little, and of that little we can't be very sure. Of the reasons for the founding of the pueblo and the events that immediately preceded it there is ample information.

California missions, of which there

were eight at that time, and the three presidios of San Diego, Monterey and San Francisco, were requiring more and more in the way of foodstuffs and supplies from Mexico, and the transportation of these was becoming an acute problem. Moreover, Alta California held great promise for the future and the province must be colonized. Colonists, it was known, were a valuable factor in supporting the works of the Fathers, and too, through cultivation of the fecund fields and valleys of the rich new land, these colonists would be able to furnish many of the basic needs of the missions and presidios. Governor Felipe de Neve, acting upon the instructions of Teodoro de Croix, *comandante-general* of the Provincias Internas de Occidente, therefore, proceeded with preliminary arrangements for the foundation of the pueblos of San José and Los Angeles.

San José was founded in 1777, with nine soldiers from the presidios of Monterey and San Francisco and five settlers who had come to California in 1776 with Juan Bautista de Anza, but there were no colonists available for the pueblo of the south. Captain Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, who had led the first detachment of the land expedition from Lower California to San Diego in 1769, and who later accompanied Portolá in his quest for Monterey, was dispatched by Governor Neve to recruit settlers in Sinaloa and Sonora for the establishment of Los Angeles, a new presidio at Santa Barbara, and the contemplated missions of San Luis Obispo and San Buenaventura. Neve, in the interim, had composed his famous *reglamento* or regulation of 1779 for the government of presidios and pueblos. In this it was provided that each colonist was to be granted a town lot and a tract of land for cultivation; each was to be paid the sum of \$116.50 for the first two years in the new land and \$60 a year for the next three years, the payment to be in clothing, and other necessary articles at cost prices. Each colonist, too, was to be furnished at the outset with the necessary livestock, implements and seed, which were to be repaid within five years from the products of the land. The colonists were to be entitled to community use of other government land for pasturage and as a source for wood and water. And, finally, the colonists were to be free from taxation for a period of five years. These arrange-

ments constituted virtually a five-year contract between the government and the colonists, and Rivera was authorized to offer them to prospective settlers. These are interesting in themselves, but they have a *supra* interest in virtue of the fact that they furnish us valuable evidence, as we shall see later, in support of the fact that Los Angeles may have been founded on September 4, 1781.

By agreement the colonists were required to sell to the presidio exclusively "the surplus products of their land at fair prices to be fixed from time to time by the government in accordance with market rates in the southern province," the "southern province" doubtless being Baja California. The colonists, too, must be constantly prepared for military service of an emergency character. There were certain other restrictions but none of any great importance. The colonists were required to improve their property by the construction of permanent domiciles and irrigation ditches and could not mortgage their lands, nor kill or dispose of their livestock except in such a fashion as would insure its increase. A certain amount of community work in the building of dams and irrigation canals, streets, and roads, a church and government buildings was required, and in the cultivation of royal lands, from the sale of the products of which municipal expenses were to be paid.

Rivera was ordered to recruit twenty-four settlers and fifty-nine soldiers with their wives and families, and a suitable complement of horses and cattle to augment mission, pueblo and presidio herds. He actually secured in Sonora and Sinaloa forty-two soldiers and fourteen settlers and these departed from Mexico in three divisions. Rivera, with the bulk of the soldiers, left Alamos, Sonora, in April, 1781. Reaching the Colorado River at Yuma, he encamped with seven soldiers to give the livestock a rest, sending the balance of the company to San Gabriel overland, where they arrived safely and in good order on July 14.

Meanwhile the rest of the recruits, consisting principally of the settlers, left Alamos under command of Corporal José Zuñiga, proceeded to Santa Bárbara Bay,

at the mouth of the Mayo River, and crossed the gulf to Loreto in Lower California. Shortly after March 12, the settlers embarked again in launches, passed up the gulf to San Luis Gonzaga Bay, just east of Santa María Mission, and thence proceeded overland up the peninsula to San Gabriel. Two of the original band of fourteen settlers had deserted, and one remained in Loreto, thus leaving but eleven families to journey northward. The ancient documents are mute about what must have been a trying and uncomfortable journey, but the settlers negotiated it, arriving safely at San Gabriel on August 18. The only record we have of this journey is an old account book showing what supplies were advanced to each of the colonists.

Meanwhile disaster had visited Rivera and the priests at the new missions on the Colorado. The Yuman chief Palma who had been so friendly and of such assistance to Juan Bautista de Anza and the colonists he brought overland from Sonora to establish San Francisco, five years before, had now become hostile. Rivera arrived at the Colorado late in June. He was still there on July 17, when a group of Yumas descended on the tiny mission station of San Pedro y San Pablo, slew the Fathers Diaz and Moreno, Sergeant Vega, and the bulk of the soldiers and settlers, made five men and all the women captives, and burned and destroyed the buildings. At the same time, another band of savages attacked the remaining mission, Concepción, killing the commander of the guard and a corporal, the only soldiers there at that time, but sparing Fathers Francisco Garcés and Juan Barreneche.

On the next morning the savages returned to the east bank of the river, where Rivera was encamped, and attacked his company. Despite the spirited defense put up, the soldiers, including Rivera, finally perished before the clubs and spears of the barbarians. With Rivera and his men disposed of, the Indians returned to Concepción in the afternoon and killed Garcés and Barreneche. In all, forty-six Spaniards were slain in the massacre. But Garcés—of all men—to be slain; Garcés who had wandered alone among these remote Indian tribes for ten

years, who had feasted and fasted with them, slept in their rude shelters, treated them for physical ailments and sought their spiritual salvation, given them beads and trinkets, and even shown them his banner depicting the horrors of sin and the beauties of virtue.

One wonders if Palma, as he led his pagan hordes upon the Spaniards, wore "the uniform with coat and breeches of shiny blue cloth with similar buttons, and a vest of fine scarlet cloth trimmed with gold braid" that the Viceroy Bucareli had given him on his visit to Mexico City with Anza five years before. One wonders if his thoughts drifted for a moment to the gorgeous pomp and circumstance that surrounded him when he had begged for Christian baptism and been led before the high altar of the Cathedral of Mexico and anointed by the prebendary of Durango, *in nomine Patris, et filii, et Spiritus sancti*. One wonders if priestly skulls cracked beneath the cane that King Carlos bestowed upon Palma in recognition of the Indian's friendship for the Spaniards. One wonders, too, how attentive the administrators of the Colorado settlements had been to the royal command to protect Palma "in the peaceful possession of his rule and chieftainship." The reasons for the Yuma massacre are obscure. Bancroft asserts upon his own authority that the Spaniards usurped the choicest lands of the natives, and flogged and put Palma in the stocks, much to his humiliation. This may or may not be true. It is not improbable. It it were true, the revolt is not to be wondered at. The arrival of Rivera and his band of more than 900 animals which rapidly consumed and destroyed the mesquite trees along the riverbanks, which hitherto had furnished food to man and beast alike, doubtless hastened the conflict.

The aborigines throughout America felt a proprietary right to the natural products of the earth. Wherever and whenever civilized peoples contacted them they resented uninvited appropriation of such common and plentiful things as wood and water. When the intruders, as in the case of the Colorado affair, ravished the Indians' food supply, their hostility is not remarkable. Moreover, the Yumas, saving perhaps



Palma, had never accepted the Spaniards, their new ways and new faiths, unreservedly. Father Pedro Font, who studied the Yumas with considerable penetration and sound observation in 1775, warned that "these people are not repugnant to subjection to the law of God and of our sovereign" but "in view of the inconsistency of the Indians I think it will be necessary to have a rather large presidio, in order



that respect for our arms may restrain any outrage which they might attempt while we are establishing control over them."

The Yuma massacre was a serious blow to the Spaniards. Rivera had experienced difficulty in recruiting settlers and soldiers for the new province. News of the tragedy could hardly be expected to encourage future immigration and it may have furnished a cause for delay in the founding of Los Angeles. We shall see.

The colonists destined for Los Angeles reached San Gabriel from Lower California on August 18, where they camped a short distance away from the mission on account of a prevailing epidemic of smallpox. Eight days later, on August 26, Governor Neve issued his *Instrucción para la Fundación de Los Angeles*. Within a day or so after Neve issued his instructions, he learned of the disaster on the Colorado. He may have countermanded his orders. Father Zephyr Engelhardt, historian of the Franciscan order in California, thinks he did. At any rate, he sent a company of soldiers against the Yumas immediately. Los Angeles may have been established on September 4 and Neve been so occupied with his campaign that he failed to record the event in his voluminous correspondence with General Croix, commander-general of Internal Provinces. We do not know. Any one or all of these circumstances may explain the total absence of reliable information about the foundation.

It is hard to believe that no report of the foundation of the city was made at the time, but if it were made, it has not yet come to light, despite diligent research among all likely archives. The only documentary evidence extant is the *Instrucción* issued at San Gabriel on August 26, and a highly important document, the *Padrón*, or census, of Los Angeles, dated at San Gabriel, November 19, 1781. The author of this states that Our Lady "was founded the 4th of September, 1781," and at the time of the census (presumably some time

early in November of 1781) the settlers were living in houses "plastered with mud." This is the only official record referring to the establishment of the city, and thus becomes of great moment.

If we had the original of the *Instrucción*, issued at San Gabriel on August 26, or a copy, today, it might throw some light on the aggravating matter. But we have neither the original, nor is there any known complete copy. An incomplete copy exists in the Los Angeles County Clerk's office but it is of little value in establishing of the circumstances of the settlement. The original—a part of the Spanish Archives of California—in the keeping of the United States Surveyor-General at San Francisco, was destroyed in the fire of 1906. The historians Hittell and Bancroft worked from these archives. Bancroft copied the *Instrucción* and included it in the document collection that later made up the Bancroft Library. Some time later the *Instrucción* was stolen—torn bodily from a book of records! Where it reposes now, of course, only the conscienceless knave that purloined it knows. And so has vanished Our Lady's Magna Charta.

It is interesting to note that while Hittell and Bancroft had access to the same documents and sources of information, and they were equally capable historians, Hittell asserts that Our Lady was established on September 1, and Bancroft declares equally confidently that the date was September 4. The records seem to have been quite as vague then, as later conjectures have been fanciful.

We do have one contemporary account of the founding, but it adds confusion to the annals rather than clarifying them. It occurs in Palóu's *Life of Father Serra*. Engelhardt bases his belief that Our Lady was not established until December, 1781, on Palóu's short reference, and supports his fancy with the problematical induction that the Yuma massacre, which might have been taken as a symptom of a universal revolt of the savages, the lack of soldiers occasioned by the massacre itself, and the subsequent campaign against the Yumas, which drew heavily upon the slight military establishment of California for manpower, dictated a policy of caution to Neve and caused him to countermand his order of August 26. However true the latter may be, Engelhardt, in his zeal to create Palóu as a competent witness, makes a slight error in his translation. Chronology the event, Palóu remarks that the colonists "under the guard of a corporal and three soldiers founded the town . . . a últimos del año de '81." Engelhardt translates Palóu's "at the end of the year of 1781" as "in the last days of December, 1781." The "end of the year," as a matter of fact, may have been any time within the last quarter, or even in September.

Engelhardt's contention is supported from another source, the journal of Eugene Duflot de Mofras, who visited Los Angeles in 1841. The French traveller, who recorded his observations so meticulously, states unequivocally: "The settlement was

Our Lady of the Angels was founded toward the end of December, 1781, by order of the Governor of California, Don Felipe de Neve, who had brought some Spanish colonists here from Sonora."

Mofras gives no authority for this statement, but he doubtless talked to descendants of the original settlers. For that matter, some of the first colonists may still have been alive, for he made his visit but



sixty years after the founding and there were youngsters among the founders.

In addition to the *Padrón* there is another bit of evidence favorable to September as the date of the beginnings of Our Lady. This is the *Repartición de Solares y Suertes, 1786*, an official report of the proceedings attendant upon the final granting of title to pueblo lots and fields to the first settlers. The proceedings, conducted by Don José Argüello of the Santa Barbara presidio, consisted in the confirmation of titles and cattle branding irons. This occurred on September 4, 1786, or precisely five years after Bancroft asserts the city was established. Recalling that the royal regulation for the settlement of California pueblos involved a five-year contract with the colonists, this formality may indicate that Our Lady was actually settled on September 4, 1781, five years previously.

The evidence is complicated and confusing. On the one hand is the *Padrón*, the *Repartición*, and the undocumented testimony of two professional historians, both of whom worked from the same sources, yet not agreeing exactly, in favoring a date in September. On the other hand is one contemporary observer, another credible witness, and impressive and circumstantial evidence in support of a later date, probably December. A reasonable doubt, therefore, may be said to exist about the September date. What the date actually was we shall never know with certainty until documentary evidence more formidable than any hitherto disclosed reveals itself. Somewhere there must be a letter from Neve to Croix, or a report from Croix to the Viceroy, detailing the events, that will ultimately clear up the matter.

The site for Our Lady has been noted by the peripatetic missionary father, Juan Crespi, on his notable northward journey with Portolá from San Diego to Monterey. On August 2, 1769, the party passed through "a spacious valley" and halted "not far from the river, which we called

"Porciúncula." Crespi named the place in honor of Our Lady of the Angels of Porciúncula, whose feast had been celebrated the day previous. It was in the church dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels of the Porciúncula, in Italy, that St. Francis is said to have gained his jubilee, or a year of remission from the penal consequences of sin. The feast of this ecclesiastical figure is thus an especially notable day with members of the Franciscan order.

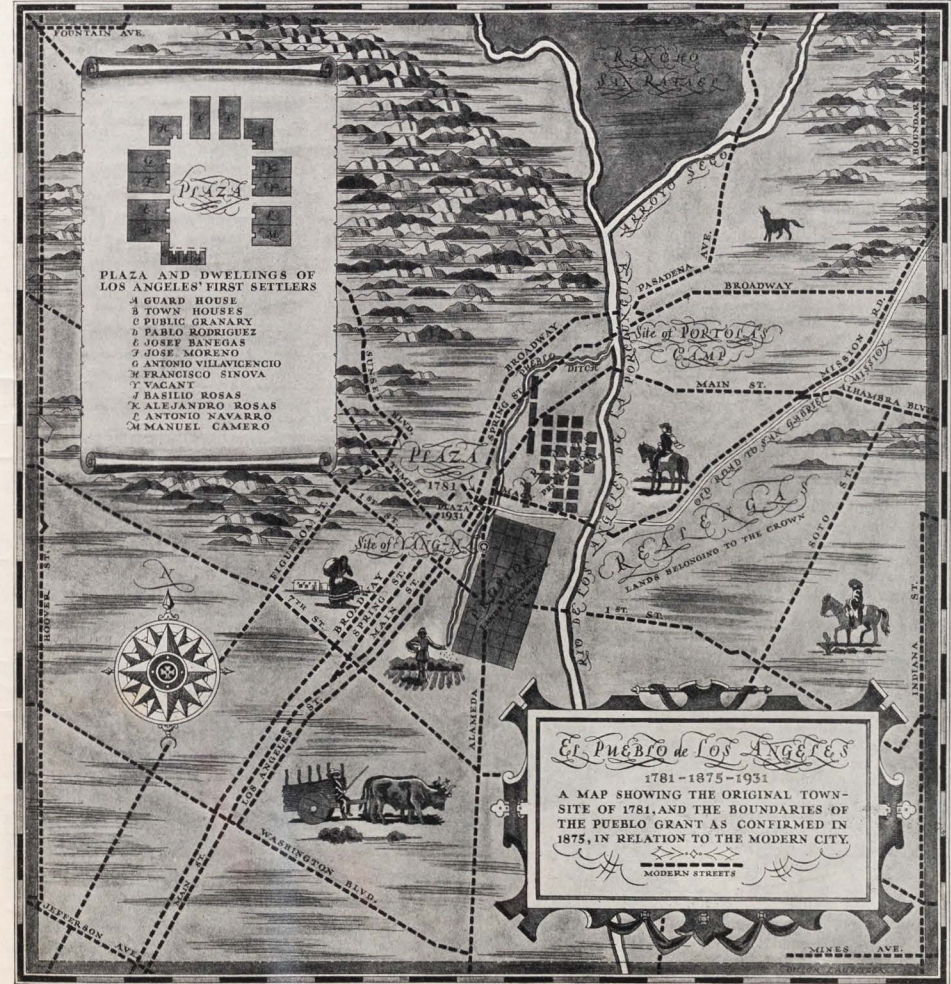
Crespi wrote that "this plain where the river runs is very extensive. It has good land for planting all kinds of grain and seeds, and is the most suitable site of all

that we have seen for a mission, for it has all the requisites for a large settlement." He observed, too, "a large vineyard of wild grapes and an infinity of rose bushes in full bloom." No later citizen ever employed more glowing terms to describe the setting of Los Angeles than did this enthusiastic padre. "All the soil is black and loamy, and is capable of producing every kind of grain and fruit which may be planted." Has any Twentieth Century realtor, with all the adjectives at his command, ever produced a more provocative sales argument? I doubt it.

It was into this charmed valley, with its

wild roses and grapes and fecund land, that the eleven first families of Our Lady came eventually to settle. Writers cognizant of the intrinsic drama in such an event, in the past have been disposed to disregard probabilities and invest the ceremonies attendant upon the founding with a panoply of pomp and liturgy. The sentimental approach of many historical writers—all out of proportion to the facts—is exemplified by this popular account of the affair:

"At dawn on the morning of September 4, 1781, the colony of settlers for the new pueblo, accompanied by an escort of sol-



diers and friends, left the Mission of San Gabriel. It was a picturesque caravan. In that age every act of importance was carried out with all the pomp and ceremony possible for the leaders to provide. The civil and military officers were grand in their uniforms brought from Spain, the guards were businesslike in their leather jackets and defensive arms; the padres were attended by Indian acolytes and the settlers brought their women and children in the picturesque *carreta* along with the household goods. The party arrived at the banks of the Río de Los Angeles de Porciúncula as the sun began to cast long shadows. They forded the river and formed a procession. First came Sergeant José Anton Navaree, or Navarro, carrying the image of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels, then followed Corporal José Vanegas with the Holy Cross and Señor Luis Quinteros bearing aloft the banner of Spain. Then came Governor de Neve, the two priests, Father Antonio Crusado and Father Miguel Sánchez, attended by Indian acolytes. The guards and friendly Indians came next, and then the settlers with their women and children. Approaching the arbor where an altar had been erected, mass was said, speeches made, and finally each man was allotted his home plot of ground, the guard was stationed and camp for the night was made. Thus was the City of the Angels ushered into existence, amid old country pomp and aboriginal simplicity."

It is highly improbable that Neve was present at all, and we have no record of any priests being in attendance. If there were, their part in the affair must have been restricted to the bestowing of a simple blessing. If the sun had begun to "cast long shadows" as the writer quoted declares, they could hardly have said mass, for a mass can't be said after one o'clock in the afternoon under any circumstances. Knowing that every available soldier was engaged in the campaign against the errant Yumas, Palóu's assertion that the forty-four first Angelinos were accompanied only by a "corporal and three soldiers" becomes credible testimony.

Moreover, the settlers had concluded a wearisome journey up the wild and desolate peninsula of Baja California. However imposing an appearance they had made on departure from Loreto, they

couldn't have been but a very drab and ragged band when they reached San Gabriel. Were they resolved to put themselves in festival attire at San Gabriel, this, too, would have been impossible, for even the necessities of life, there and then, were lacking, and one can't believe that gala costumes were at hand for even so potentially meaningful an event as the establishment of Our Lady.

And finally, had local conditions been even more propitious, it is quite incredible that the colonists, by their very nature, could have been at all imposing. They were not grandees, nor *dons*, it must be remembered, but *peons* of a low caste—*paisanos*, or countrymen in the truest sense—brought to California to till its fields and herd its cattle, and not engaged to lend color to the embryonic society by their beauty, wit or wisdom. They were the common human stuff that is the elemental basis of every frontier civil establishment—the pioneers whose labors were designed to make habitable a fair land for an even fairer society.

WHO were the first citizens? Fortunately, we know this with a reasonable degree of certainty. The Spanish archives reveal their names and many engaging facts about them. Though the Spanish archives do not agree with the mission archives of San Gabriel in numerous particulars, they are supplemented and given a remarkable similitude of accuracy by the documents of 1786 that confirmed the first settlers' titles to the pueblo lands.

The eleven first families, we are told, consisted of: José de Lara, Spaniard, 50, an Indian wife and three children; José Antonio Navarro, mestizo, 42, a mulatto wife and three children; Basilio Rosas, Indian, 67, a mulatto wife and six children; Antonio Mesa, negro, 38, an Indian wife and two children; Antonio Villavicencio, Spaniard, 30, an Indian wife and one child; Alejandro Rosas, Indian, 19, and an Indian wife; José Baneagas, Indian, 28, an Indian wife and one child; Pablo Rodríguez, Indian, 25, an Indian wife and one child; Manuel Camero, mulatto, 30, and a mulatto wife; Luis Quintero, negro, 55, a mulatto wife and five children; José Moreno, mulatto, 22, and mulatto wife. It is difficult to consider so humble a company in a romantic light, but it is a func-

tion of history to relate fact unadorned by fanciful interpretations or fictitious suppositions. However much these simple folk lacked in grandeur of position or manners, they possessed the hardihood and stamina of that slave morality which has builded empires since time began, as Nietzsche has observed.

It is not difficult to reconstruct the scene of the founding of Our Lady, if the event be considered in a rational objective fashion, free from idealistic romanticism. The caravan of forty-four settlers, four soldiers and animals, doubtless departed from San Gabriel after an early mass, said by Fathers Cruzado and Sánchez, then the pastors of the mission. The cavalcade was a large one—a hundred mules or more and not far from fifty humans when we include the settlers and their soldier escort. Women and children and some of the men were mounted; the others walked herding the ever recalcitrant animals. Upon the balance of the mules was packed the scant worldly goods of the settlers, lashed to the sawbuck-like saddles with ropes, in the form later to be known as "diamond hitch" and to survive for many a century.

Leaving the mission, the party followed the old *camino* still known as Mission Road, crossing diagonally through the present city of Alhambra, proceeding north of the Midwick Country Club, skirting the southern border of Lincoln Park, thence in Aliso Street, fording the Los Angeles River in the vicinity of the Aliso Street bridge, and on to the site of the Plaza; following, in brief, the easiest trail between the two points, a trail discovered and followed by the wild beasts for endless ages before.

The site for the pueblo had been selected before the settlers arrived, and the plaza, *propios*, *realengas*, *solares* and *suertes*, roughly laid out. Neve's *Instrucción* of August 26 had provided: "The site where the pueblo is to be established shall be marked out, on land slightly elevated, exposed to the north and south winds. . . . Measures shall be taken to avoid the dangers of floods. . . . The four corners (of the plaza) shall look towards the four cardinal points, for the reason that said streets being prolonged in this manner from the plaza shall not be exposed to the four winds, which would be a great inconvenience." The *suertes* or private fields

were to be 200 *varas* square (the *vara* in California was 30.24 inches) "on account of this being the size of a tract of land generally employed in planting one bushel of corn." Building lots were to be twenty *varas* wide and forty *varas* long. Furthermore, each settler was to receive "two *suertes* of land susceptible of irrigation and two *suertes* of land not susceptible of irrigation." It was further ordered that "the front of the plaza looking toward the east shall be reserved to erect at the proper time the church and government buildings, and other public offices."

WE HAVE no accurate map of the tentative grant. The area, as finally confirmed by President U. S. Grant, August 4, 1875, comprised an almost perfect square, nicked only on its north side by the "V" formed by the junction of the Arroyo Seco and Los Angeles River, which became part of Rancho San Rafael. The south boundary was on a line with Mines Avenue; the north boundary on a line with Fountain Avenue; the west with Hoover Street, and the east with Indiana Avenue.

Within this area was located the plaza, the limits of which may be said to be approximately as follows: "The southeastern corner of Upper Main and Marchessault Streets for the southern or southeastern corner of the square; the east line of Upper Main Street, from the above named corner one hundred *varas* in a northerly direction, for the east line of the square; and the northern line of Marchessault Street for the southern line of the square."

The plaza comprised a parallelogram roughly 500 feet long and 200 feet wide, slightly northwesterly from the present plaza. The settlers' lots and an area for government buildings faced on three sides of the plaza and a portion of the fourth. The southeast side ran roughly parallel to the present Alameda Street, which occupied a low depression in the terrain, and thus provided an ultimate route for the *zanja madre*, or main irrigation ditch, of the pueblo. Between Alameda Street and the present Los Angeles River were located the *propios*, or municipal lands, and west of the river in what is currently known as Boyle Heights were the *realengas*, or royal lands upon which the settlers were required to exert a tithe of labor to support the pueblo government.

South and east of the Plaza, in the vicinity of Alameda and Commercial Streets, was the site of the Indian village of Yang-na, and north and east, near the present North Broadway bridge, the location of Portolá's and Crespi's camp of 1769.

To the plaza the company proceeded. It was probably mid-afternoon and the chaos and confusion of arrival and the ensuing ceremonies must have been great. There were the mules to be unpacked and tethered that they might not stray from their new home. And the women and children must be disposed of while the men proceeded with the formalities of locating their domiciles. The town lots and fields had been assigned by lot, before the colonists left San Gabriel, and the corporal's duty probably consisted in locating the individuals in the new pueblo, the ancient Spanish ceremony of putting a colonist in actual possession of his land. Some obscure priest, of whom we have no knowledge, may have extended a simple benediction, or an unsung soldier have planted the flag of Spain.

Following such simple ceremonies as may have been held, the settlers doubtless set to the task of devising rude shelters, brush wickiups, at first, followed by wattle houses, and, eventually, the white-washed adobe which has always distinguished Spanish colonial architecture. The colonists' first need was protection from sun and rain, and housing for their meagre goods, and they wasted little time in arranging this, and in the tilling and sowing of their fields in that "black and loamy soil" of Crespi's—the soil that one day was to make California fruits known even unto far-off Cathay, and California vintages the peer of any with which civilized man was acquainted.

Dusk falls about the unscarred plaza. A score of camp-fires wink in the falling gloom while toil-touched hands beat tortillas upon sun-bronzed arms. Horses and mules nibble contentedly in the virgin pasture, and little children laugh and cry at their simple games. The colonists are possessed of their lands and tenements. On the west side of the plaza are settled the families of Rodríguez, Baneagas, Moreno, and Villavicencio; on the east side, Alejandro Rosas, Navarro, and Camero; on the north side, Basilio Rosas, De Lara, Mesa and Quintero.

From near-by Fort Hill, Indians from

the village of Yang-na, or a stalking wild creature may have gazed upon the scene, curiously and wonderingly. Our Lady at last is started on that progressive path that sweeps all wild things—men and beasts—before it, substituting civilization and its debatable attributes for the simpler ways and virtues.

Our Lady prospered from the outset, but not without those always necessary adjustments in the social fabric, which confront a new community. Before a year had elapsed, Lara, Mesa and Quintero had been banished from the pueblo as unfit; in 1785 José Francisco Sinova, who had been in California for some time, applied for admission to the pueblo and was taken in on virtually the same terms as the original founders. Antonio Clemente likewise seems to have entered the colony some time between 1781 and 1786. By 1786, when Argüello confirmed title to the pueblo lands, the male adult population had diminished to ten, of whom seven were original settlers. The star of Our Lady's destiny had not yet begun to manifest itself, but despite vicissitudes and travail it showed no signs of vanishing.

SUCH is the story of the foundation—all of it that we know—of the foremost city on the Pacific littoral of these United States, and one of the first four cities of the republic. From humble and obscure beginnings has emerged, like a beautiful butterfly from a rough chrysalis, a metropolis of phenomenal achievements and magical promises. There is both devastating irony and high drama in the fact that forty-four common laborers, none of whom could read or write, founded a city that within 150 years should come to be recognized as one of the greatest centers of cultural advancement in the known world. But it's a fact and there's no parallel in history for it. We may be proud of the span of our achievement indeed.

It would be interesting to trace the destinies of the *pobladores* if we could accomplish it as readily as we can follow the progress of Our Lady. But we can't. They disappeared from the annals with great rapidity. By 1816, the original male settlers had dwindled to two—Manuel Camero and José María Navarro, son of José Antonio Navarro. By 1850, when the first American census was taken, only the

(Continued on Page 40)



Our Lady *in the Beginning*

(Continued from Page 17)

names of Navarro and Rosa were found on the official roster, and we have no assurance that they were related to the first Angelinos. And now, in the year 1931, no monument commemorates their triumph, nor tablet their courage. The names of Lara, Navarro, Mesa, Camera, Quintero and Moreno remain among the street names of the city of Los Angeles, but little survives to remind us of the equally important debt that we owe to Banegas, Villavicencio and Rodríguez. Humble players in a great and pre-destined drama, their achievements assume an extraordinary magnitude as, from our vantage-point, we look back across a century and a half to the Beginnings of Our Lady.

THE FOUNDING OF LOS ANGELES • • 1781



Painting by Millard Sheets

Ballad by John Russell McCarthy

Peons from lazy Mexico,
Heavily burdened, weary and slow,
Is there a dream in your dark eyes
As you turn your faces toward Northern skies?

Under the burning sun
The miles drag, one by one,
Do you ever dream as you stumble on
That a city leans on your sweating brawn?

Do you see, in the years ahead,
A city of silver and red
Where the wise shall gather from many a land
And know and remember your peon band?

Do you hear, in the years to come,
Cannon and fife and drum,
The shouts of men from another sea—
A new world born of victory?

Do you dream of a horse with a belly of metal
Whose strength comes out of a steaming kettle?
Or a road of steel for his feet to ride
Where your feet limp on the mountainside?

Or roads of stone for a thousand miles
Where a mile-a-minute traveler smiles?
Or a voice that sings, by radio,
From this far land to Mexico?

Your minds scorn all such mocking dreams—
The world is as wide and rough as it seems,
And sullen, silent, and stubborn you go
Journeying north from Mexico.

Sons of sorrow and woe,
This is the vision you know—
Not streets of gold for the shining ones
But better 'dobes for your sons.



*Supplement to Touring Topics, September, 1931
Phil Townsend Hanna, Editor*

Sons of tropical soil,
Tired of fruitless toil,
This is the vision you see,
A grant of land in fee.

Your leader lost, and his soldier train,
Garcés slain, Rivera slain,
Their bodies broken on Yuma's plain—
Mean nothing at all to a sweat-dulled brain.

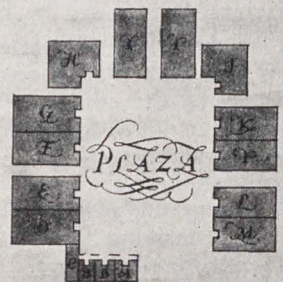
Though one be left by the way,
Two more thrown out on a day,
Enough of peon blood remains
To found the queen of Pacific plains.

"Now comes the muttering priest to bless
Our Lady of Los Angeles;
That's over. And here is leave to dine,
And here is land will soon be mine.

"I've come a hard way by land and sea.
But here's good soil to hold in fee.
I build no spires for the shining ones—
Only a better home for my sons."

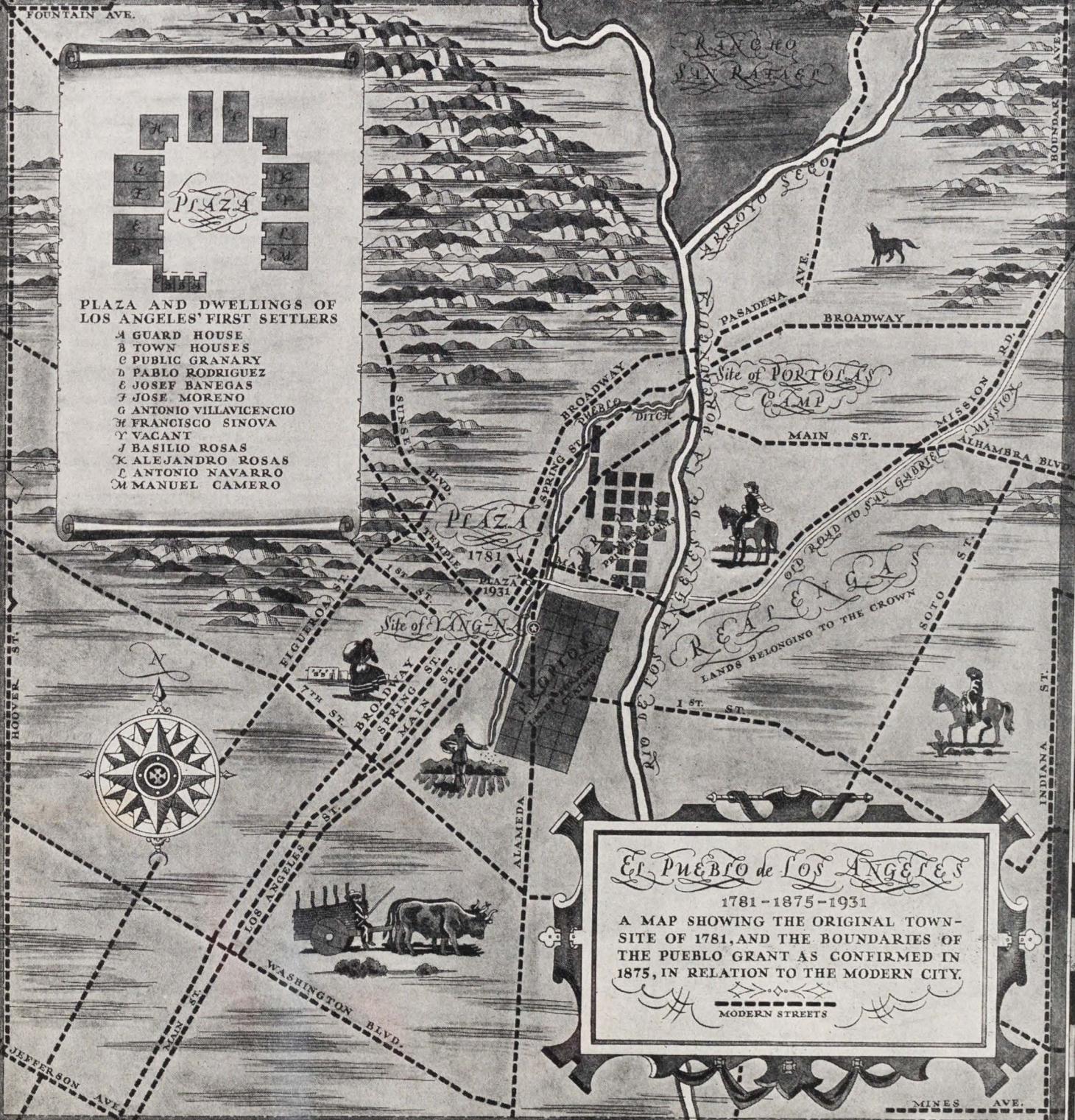
Today, in our glory and pride
Our boasts fly swift and wide,
And we'll build (who are wise and free)
A queen of all land and sea.

FOUNTAIN AVE.



PLAZA AND DWELLINGS OF LOS ANGELES' FIRST SETTLERS

- A GUARD HOUSE
- B TOWN HOUSES
- C PUBLIC GRANARY
- D PABLO RODRIGUEZ
- E JOSEF BANEGAS
- F JOSE MORENO
- G ANTONIO VILLAVICENCIO
- H FRANCISCO SINOVA
- I VACANT
- J BASILIO ROSAS
- K ALEJANDRO ROSAS
- L ANTONIO NAVARRO
- M MANUEL CAMERO



PLAZA
1781
PLAZA
1931

REALE
LANDS BELONGING TO THE CROWN

El Pueblo de Los Angeles
1781-1875-1931
A MAP SHOWING THE ORIGINAL TOWN-SITE OF 1781, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PUEBLO GRANT AS CONFIRMED IN 1875, IN RELATION TO THE MODERN CITY.

MODERN STREETS

MINES AVE.

CHAS. LAURENCE









MD. 1931