

STRONG MEN AND WOMEN CAME TO SETTLE...

One pioneer family found the land...

THE EMBERTSONS OF LAKEVIEW

By John F. Hoban

European settlers came into the Perris Valley in the last several decades of the 19th Century for a variety of reasons.

Gold discovered in the Gavilan Hills and Good Hope areas, and panned in what is now known as Railroad Canyon but was once called Armentrout Canyon, attracted people seeking a "stake" to make their lives better.

But others came for the land --- the pioneers, among whom there were dozens of families, with descendants of those families still living here, working the land, building their homes and raising families.

Among those pioneers there were the Coudures family, the Shains, the Martins, the Mottes, the Hooks, the Laudas and dozens of others, who arrived as early as 1878 and as late as 1922.

But all came to the greater San Jacinto Plains that had preciously been part of a Mexican land grant and had seen few permanent settlers after the gold mines were worked out.

What is now known as Lakeview was part of the greater San Jacinto Plains, and the land here attracted a different kind of settler.

One such was Louis Imbert Balvoll, born in Bergen, Norway, in 1865, indentured for 3 years starting in 1879 at age 14

for the cost of his passage here to a Shawnee Town, Illinois farmer.

As did many immigrants, Balvoll eventually "Americanized" his name to Imbertson.

After serving his Illinois mentor with backbreaking labor for three years, Imbertson made his way west, and, according to family archives he is believed to have arrived in the Riverside-Arlington area about 1888.

He worked there helping to plant some of the original orange trees and then found employment with the F. W. Brown Surveying Company, one of the first to survey land in the Lakeview area.

Louis often said that he first viewed the broad, deep sweep of valley panorama through a surveyor's transit.

He then worked for the Lakeview Land Company, which drilled a well near Pico Hill and helped construct wooden flumes to carry the water down to Lakeview Valley. He would be payed so much for his time and so much for the use of his mule teams.

Imbertson began to make plans to buy land, marry and settle in for the long struggle most farmers faced in this area in those years.

While still in Shawnee Town, he had met a "pretty young girl" named Grace Greenwood Ives, and said to himself,

"That's for me."

He returned to Illinois and fulfilled a promise that he would some day go back to marry her.

The couple were wed July 9, 1899, and the following day set out for Lakeview.

Imbertson had by then acquired 10 acres of land for \$2,000 which he planted in olive trees.

When the young bride first saw Lakeview, during a hot dry spell, "she fely like gittin' back on the train and heading back home."

There were dead cattle all along Pico Lane (now known as the Ramona Expressway).

The couple settled in Imbertson's old "bachelor shack" which was nothing more than a cabin on wheels, set up on his 10 acre spread.

But they soon purchased a home and moved the structure from its 6th Street location (across from the present Nutrilite Plant.)

Imbertson soon added another 40 acres to his holdings.

On September 20, 1900, the couple had their first child, Ival Mae. Soon, six more children followed: Hilda Pearl, Gracie Louella, Henry Edwin, Martyn Erwin, Walter Louis and Arthur Rubin.

Walter, born in 1911, still resides in Lakeview near Hansen Avenue.

Mother and daughters added to family income by picking potatoes in season.

With extra money, a treadle sewing machine was purchased and Grace taught the three girls to sew fine garments.

Nearby Bernasconi Hot Springs was used by the family as a source of "washing day water," the soft hot water being excellent for clothewashing.

In the early 1920s, Grace inherited a small estate from Illinois family holdings, and after getting some much-needed dental work done, she purchased the family's first automobile, a used 1922 Model-T Ford.

The family "always had meat, at least one meal a day." Their fresh meat would be delivered by the Perris mailman, who moonlighted for the buthcher by delivering meat orders along with the mail.

One dramatic day in the life of the Imbertsons came during the great erathquake in nearby San Jacinto in 1918.

San Jacinto was in the process of becoming a popular resort area for the newly-wealthy Hollywood set, when the quake struck and devastated the town and nearby rachnes and farms.

Martyn, Walt and Arthur Embertson were down in the old dirt cellar under the house playing as boys do.

The quake struck, and the boys tried to escape from the cellar, but were thrown back into it by the heaving of the earth.

They managed to get out in time to see the Ber-

nasconi Hills vibrating, and giant boulders rolling down into the valley.

The plunging rockslides threw off sparks, igniting brush and weeds and a raging fire enveloped the hills.

Martyn later said he though "the end of the world" had come.

The following day they travelled up into Juniper Flats to view then "great big crack" in the earth. "If you would have fallen into it, you would have disappeared," they said in later years. "That was the time it shook down San Jacinto."

In 1921, Ival Mae, the oldest child, married Donald Evans, and in 1922 Hilda Pearl married Howard Herrick. Gracie Louella was wed to Eugene Evans in 1925.

In his early farming years, Embertson hired occasional labor, and the children recall one "very large black" man who worked for their father from time to time.

"He was a kind person, and the boys, Martyn and Walt liked him greatly."

On one occasion, Walt did something to annoy his father, who took off after the youth on horseback and strapped him with the end of the reins.

The black man jumped on one of the horses and caught up with Embertson, persuading him to end the punishment.

On another occasion, Embertson and his black assistant were heading into the village by wagon, when the team spooked

and a runaway was in progress.

The pair were frightened and the black man threw the bouncing water barrel off the rear of the wagon.

At the point, "old lady McDonald and son Elmer" were passing near on foot and when they arrived at the Lakeview country store, they told one and all that the black man "has fallen out of Louis' wagon and was laying dead up on Hansen Avenue."

A rescue party hastened from the store, only to find a shattered water barrel in the road, and no sign of a dead man.

Embertson's fourth child, Henry Edwin, died at age 8, when a burlap costume he was wearing, "dressed as an Indian, caught fire as watched his father burning weeds in a field."

Embertson added to family income by moving houses from one location to another, using teams of mules and in some instances, sawing a house in half to make it more manageable.

A part of the Embertson heritage sits today at Nuvview School on Lakeview Avenue, in the shape of the old school bell.

Embertson first got hold of the bell in 1896, when he took a team and wagon to San Jacinto and collected the relic for use in the old wooden Lakeview schoolhouse.

In 1929, when the "new" Lakeview schoolhouse was built (later to

become the Grange Hall and then the Baptist Church), the bell was installed.

In 1948, when the Lakeview and Nuevo schools were consolidated into the Nuvview Unified School District, the bell was brought to that site.

"Embertson's bell" eventually became part of the lives of his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, something a poor immigrant boy from Norway would never have dreamed of leaving behind. The same boy who, in 1889, was thoughtful enough to send a money order for \$56 to his parents in Bergen.

Louis Embertson died April 18, 1952.

His wife, Grace, died December 15, 1959.

**TROLLEY MUSEUM
PUBLICIZED IN
L.A. AREA PAPER
(June 2, 1960)**

In an article entitled "Trolley Museum Comes To Life At Nearby Perris, Calif.", the local street car museum received its largest publicity stint to date.

The article appearing in the Compton Herald-American newspaper, Sunday, May 29th issue, was edited by Jack Cleland and is circulated throughout the southeast Los Angeles area. Along with the descriptive article, six photographs depicting various phases of activity and of trolley cars at the museum wereshown.