

The Magic Story --of-- Hollywood

BY SYL MacDOWELL

Once Indians Roamed Cahuenga Pass and the Land Below; Then Spanish, and Finally the Americans—But it Remained for the Photoplay Studios to Make the Town a World Center

HOLLYWOOD'S own history holds more thrills than most of her movies.

Greater dramas than those filmed in the studios are woven through her past. Hollywood has been a theater of Fate, rich in repertoire.

The living pageantry of her past is filled with countless scenarios of love, mystery, tragedy and conquest.

Let us forget today's shady avenues, the splendor of her hillside terraces; and close our ears to the din of traffic on the boulevard and the busy tremulo of rivet hammers high up in the steel skeletons of skyscrapers. Let us go back 150 years.

Hark to the story of Hollywood, Scene One.

It is Nature's dominion now. Denuded of man-marks, the alluvial fans spread out from the hills in long, fertile vistas, whereon chaparral and cactus thrive, stabbed by the dazzling bloom of yucca shafts.

The sharp slopes above are covered with live oaks—and the brighter green of sycamores peer from canyon glens.

In the center of this generous setting a great gap clefts the mountain backdrop. The gap is Cahuenga Pass, marked by a denser growth which shadows the winding course of a trickling stream.

The stream emerges onto the parched rocks of a barranca and expires in a lush bay thicket. From the thicket, streamers of smoke rise, attracting the eye to a cluster of conical-shaped huts, half hidden there.

This is a rancheria of Cahuenga Indians—the first Hollywood. (Nowadays, a patch of black earth at Yucca street and Vista del Mar marks the site of this first Hollywood—almost within sound of the sputter of Lasky Kleig lights.)

As serene as this beautiful picture were the placid folk who dwelt there. Seldom were the Cahuengas moved to strife with the people of other villages scattered up and down the wide valley. For they were mountain people. Herds of fat deer roamed in their glens. The cactus slopes were excellent for rabbit drives.

Primitive Golf Played

AFTER the seed-gathering of summer, acorns awaited the squaws' baskets. Then, in autumn and winter, wild fowl streamed into the cienagas. At La Brea, where devil-mud oozed from the earth, tule clumps grew where great oil derricks bristle now. There, whole flocks of great geese, helpless with oil-weighted wings, could be gathered with a stout club.

Away in the haze to the east, where looms downtown Los Angeles now, was the village of Yang-ga. At times, the Cahuenga young men would meet braves from Yang-ga in tournaments of takersia.

Takersia was primitive golf. The game was played with oak balls, knocked around with knobbed sticks. Lacking riches with which to wager, the contestants pawned their wives on the outcome of the games.

Primitive, you say? Is not the game of wealth played in our later-day Hollywood for that very stake: The smile and favor of women?

Years fled, becoming, as they do, stars of the sky; and then strange tales began to seep out of the south.

It was the beginning of the end of Act One in this gigantic superdrama of Hollywood. It was the doom of the first people. These whisperings bore news of the landing in the south (San Diego) of fair-skinned gods in winged ships.



Above—Hollywood Boulevard and Cahuenga, 1924. Below—same location in 1909.

(A photograph by courtesy of the Hollywood branch, Security Trust & Savings Bank.)

Thus the curtain rose on the Mission Fathers and Spanish soldiery.

The Cahuengas did not know that their race was doomed to die like the wild fowl gripped in the Paleozoic ooze at La Brea. Yet, out of them, a subject race and their conquerors, a new breed was to be born.

So, somewhere out of this primeval melting pot there came one dark-skinned clan bearing the good Castilian name of Urquidez.

Perhaps the first Urquidez was one in the legion of helmeted courtiers that humbled the aborigines. But the lens of Hollywood history sharp-focuses on one particular product of this odd racial crucible of the Old World and New—one Don Tomas Urquidez.

Casa Don Tomas Urquidez was the first house builded in Hollywood. A thick-walled adobe, it was, of hewn sycamore timbers. It sat in a quiet pocket in the hills, surrounded by noble trees. The old house which stood near Franklin and Cahuenga avenues, is gone now. A real estate man

tope it down to make way for a new street.

That historic glade was the birthplace of Hollywood culture. Where council fires of savages had gleamed, the new race brought primitive drama. Los Pastores, the Mexican Passion Play, was enacted there each year. The Urquidez place was a public forum. From the ranchos for miles about people gathered. Caballeros flung their sombreros into that dust for the dainty feet of señoritas who danced el Jarave of Old Mexico.

Urquidez's lands and the ranchos of other Mexicans had been wrung from the Indians, just as the Mexicans' holdings were destined to be snatched by gringo land-grabbers. Casa Don Tomas Urquidez was builded in 1855. One day, many years afterward, old blind Uncle Tomas came home from a celebration of the Eve of St. John at Mission San Gabriel, to find himself dispossessed. This same American who had taken the 1000 acres of Jose Valdez a few days before was "owner." The American had taken advantage of the

Mexican custom of falling to record deeds.

The Valdez land eventually became West Hollywood and Sherman. Teofilo Valdez, son of Jose, still lives in Hollywood. The Urquidez land, containing the glade of Los Pastores, which rang the last time to holy songs in 1878, passed through a succession of owners, until during the later part of his lifetime it was maintained as a park by Gen. Harrison Gray Otis, founder of The Los Angeles Times. It was known then as The Outpost and as such came to be owned by Jesse L. Lasky. Now it is a realty tract, wherein lots are priced from \$15,000 to \$25,000.

It was Cahuenga Pass, being a natural causeway, that made Hollywood a strategic point, where history was formed.

For many generations, restless feet have trod the pass. There is a cave near the summit, capable of containing about thirty men, which is an ancient "robber's den." The cave was the lurking place of bandits who preyed on travelers, old accounts claim.

The pass was the gateway of marching armies, both when Mexico freed herself from Spanish oppression and when Mexican California balked at United States rule. There, under the "Treaty Oak," Andres Pico surrendered to Gen. Fremont in 1847.

It was a haunt of Tiburcio Vasquez, the "Robin Hood of California," in the '60's.

And mule teams made camp in the '80's where Universal City stands. Until fifteen years ago, horse-drawn stages labored over the grade. Automobiles now roar over a macadam that seals one of the most historic strips in all California.

A chapel once stood at the top of the pass—a resting-place for the Mission Fathers as they trod the weary trail up and down the chain of churches. It is gone. Progress does seldom respect age-hallowed things.

It was on such a journey that the good padre, Junipero Serra, rested one day in the grateful shade of trees near the mouth



"The Outpost," the first house built in Hollywood.

of the pass. Before passing along on his journey, it is said that he paused to say Mass of the Holy Wood of the Cross. This is a legend that accounts somewhat remotely for the name Hollywood. But authenticated accounts give the distinction of its christening to a woman—Mrs. H. H. Wilcox.

Hollywood's first house, a half-century old, was removed only this year. The act brought down a chorus of protests. But Father Time had poked his fingers through the roof. The old earthen walls were patched beyond recognition of their original state. There was no floor, which made removal impossible, according to the subdividers. So those hallowed walls were felled into the dust whence they rose.

But the great trees remain. May the ghost of Don Tomas haunt the man who causes an ax to ring in that glade.

Houses and clearings were beginning to appear on the long, alluvial fans which spread from the hillsides. The slopes were beginning to gain fame as a natural out-

In 1879, bull-fighting, although forbidden in Los Angeles, was an economical pastime; because cows sold as low as 50 cents a head. Up to twenty years ago, the law was enforced that forbade driving more than 2000 head of sheep in one band along Hollywood streets, old-timers assert.

A collection of photographs and fact-data about early Hollywood has been compiled by the Hollywood branch of the Security Trust & Savings Bank. Much of the material gathered was later attractively presented in a pamphlet prepared by Lawrence L. Hill and Silas E. Snyder.

In the pamphlet, H. H. Wilcox is honored as founder of Hollywood. Other sources name H. J. Whitley as father of the most talked-of town in the world.

Wilcox lived on Hill near Fifth street, Los Angeles; which location, strangely enough, has come to be the terminus of the mile-long Hollywood subway now being bored.

Wilcox owned 160 acres in Hollywood and

after the owner of a 500-acre tract there, Senator Cornelius Cole, a centenarian, later blossomed with bungalows, like the Wilcox tract. H. J. Whitley also was an active subdivider, and many others who find niches in history.

First Film Studio in 1911

BLONDEAU'S TAVERN stood at Sunset and Gower. This hostelry has a place on history's pages, in that the Blondeaus were friends of De Longpre and "boosters" who persuaded him to locate there. The old tavern also became Hollywood's first film studio in 1911.

Although 1911 was the date of the founding of Hollywood's gargantuan picture industry, D. W. Griffith was "flivvered" in that locality in 1909 by the indefatigable Frank Wiggins of the Chamber of Commerce. But it was several years later before Griffith returned and established the Reliance Studio at Sunset and Hollywood boulevards.

In 1903, Hollywood was incorporated;

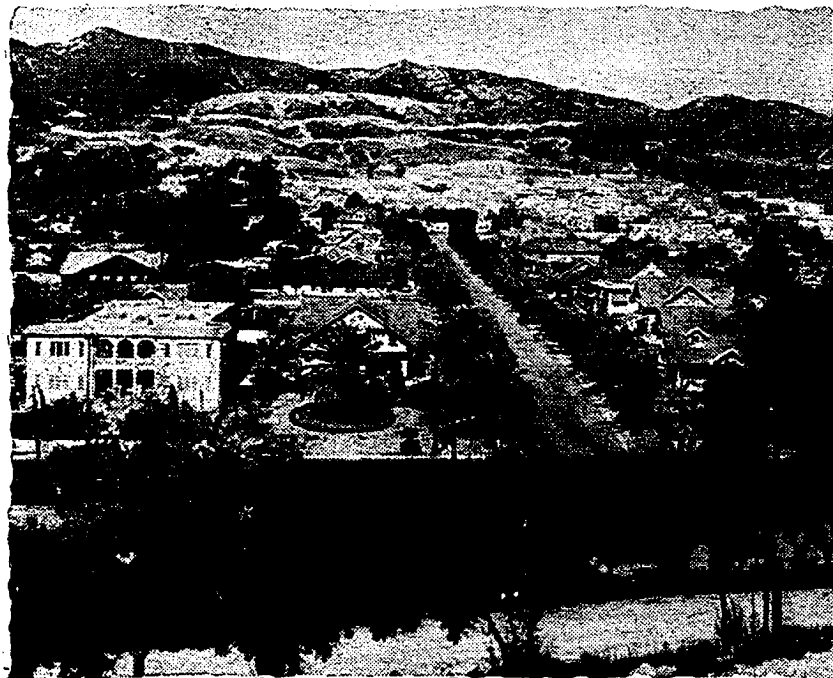
and around Los Angeles—Mary Pickford, Florence Lawrence, Mack Sennett and Owen Moore. They were among the vanguard of the gigantic industry which now produces three out of every four of the world's films—in Hollywood.

But David and William Horsley opened the Blondeau Tavern as the first studio. Al E. Christie came with them from New Jersey. (The Christie Studio now stands on the old tavern site.)

They learned about Hollywood on the train. A booster described the town's charms. So they came direct from the train and invested their capital of \$2500.

They "shot" "Law of the Range," the first picture made in Hollywood. Milton Fahrney directed it. Mrs. Fahrney wrote the scenario. Will Horsley has a laboratory now at the Gower and Sunset corner. It is the nucleus of a group of comedy plants.

When the Horsleys came, the site of the great Fox Studio was occupied by a garden patch and cucumber hothouse. The



door hothouse. The flowers there were to become world-known in after years, with the coming of Paul De Longpre, the celebrated floral artist.

The De Longpre home was at Hollywood and Cahuenga boulevards, which was a part of the 160 acres homesteaded by one John Bower. Bower sold his quarter-section for less than \$1.25 an acre. A many-storied office building stands there now.

Near this place was the home of "Greek George," a rancher. It was there that Vasquez, the outlaw, was captured in 1874 by Sheriff W. R. Rowland, who now lives on Bonnie Brae street, Los Angeles.

Vasquez ranged up and down the State, pillaging and robbing, from 1863 to 1874. But he spared his own countrymen, thus frequently gaining protection among them, which saved him from the law.

A reward of \$15,000 was the downfall of the picturesque outlaw. A sweetheart near Sherman preferred the blood money to his favors.

A half-century after his successful operations in and about Cahuenga Pass, Vasquez became the hero in a fiction tale which formed Douglas Fairbanks' "Mark of Zorro."

William Lacy, President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, remembers when the road to the pass led out West Ninth street. San Francisco stages mounted those slopes before the Southern Pacific Coast Line was in service.

In this near-modern scene in the story of Hollywood, great herds roamed the valley. The Mexicans were stockmen; they planted little. It was Chinese gardeners, Lacy says, who first grew winter vegetables in the "frostless belt" along the foothills.



Upper left—East Hollywood from Olive Hill, 1924. Upper right—The same, in the nineties. Lower left—Western avenue and William Fox studios, 1924. Lower right—Same location, minus the studios and autos, in 1906. Notice the vehicles that traffic cops had to contend with on Western avenue eighteen years ago!

subdivided it. He planted the now-famous pepper trees; those trees have been storied wherever Hollywood is known.

In a drought of the early '90's, the wells of the valley went dry; and Wilcox had a Mexican load a cart with watermelons, which was driven about so that a fruit was broken at the roots of each young tree. Thus the trees survived. And many of them cast their shade today on the streets including and bounded by Gower to Hudson, Franklin to Sunset.

Mrs. Wilcox named the place Hollywood because of the toyon berry or California holly which abounded on the slopes.

As Hollywood the tract was known to tourists who were fetched thither on the Cahuenga Valley Railway, from Los Angeles. A tally-ho met the train, and after a tour of the hillsides, the visitors were given chicken dinners at the Glen-Holly Hotel; all for 75 cents.

The Glen-Holly had twenty rooms but only one bath—a lack owing, no doubt, to water scarcity. Now, Hollywood has hostleries equal to Gotham's most exclusive Park avenue "shelves."

South Hollywood—first named Colegrove

seven years later it was annexed to Los Angeles. G. T. Gower, the Town Marshal, used to lock an occasional drunk up in his residence, as there was no jail.

But there never had been a drinking-place in Hollywood, although Los Angeles contained well over 100 saloons when the community was founded.

Thus, civilization came with its blandishments, and in 1903 the first Democratic rally was held. The three Democrats of Hollywood attended.

We now approach the last act in the story of Hollywood.

It was the proscenium of cerulean skies that drew the First People to the bosom of those kindly slopes; again the great arch of unclouded sunlight attracted the movie pioneers, swelling Hollywood from a town of 7000 to 70,000 in a decade.

The first motion-picture crank turned in Los Angeles in 1904. But it was 1903 when Col. Selig made the first complete picture; it was produced at a mansion at Olive and Eighth streets.

But the first studio in Hollywood was the old Blondeau Tavern. Besides Selig, others who have since become notables were in

property which became the Famous Players-Lasky lot was a lemon grove and barley field.

The "Famous" drama cannery, which produced seventy-six big films last year, started there in a barn.

The "plot" opened with Jesse Lasky, Cecil De Mille and Sam Goldfish (now Goldwyn) together at a lunch table in a New York cafe, in 1913.

Lasky had just gone broke in an attempt to transplant the Folies Bergere from Paris. De Mille, a stage director, also had just staged a glorious flop with a

Mary Roberts Rinehart story. Goldfish, a glove manufacturer, who dabbled in shows, had some money. It was mostly his capital that launched their enterprise with \$20,000.

They planned screen versions of stage successes. So they bought the first screen rights ever heard of; and engaged Dustin Farnum for \$5000 to come West and appear in a flicker rendition of "The Squaw Man."

De Mille and Farnum looked around for a place to work and decided on the stables of Jake Stearns, a Hollywood millionaire.

Stearns had just rid himself of some of his horses and carriages, as automobiles were coming in, so he had room for the movie men in the barn.

Fred Clay was "studio" manager and he and De Mille had one desk—the kind with two sides. They sat facing each other and when one had a visitor the other had to leave the room.

When Stearns's hostler washed the carriages in the room adjoining, De Mille and Clay had to prop their feet on their desk, as the floors were a-slosh with soapsuds.

That one room served as office, casting room, prop loft and dressing quarters.

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cans who may have themselves descended from that proud race which played there, toll in transforming the birthplace of an early California culture into—lots.

The Hollywood Bowl is the modern prototype of the amphitheater where the Mexicans produced their Passion Play. And, independent of the films, Hollywood has come to be the home of musicians, singers, inventors, architects, sculptors and other celebrities, fifty-six of which, including actors, are listed in "Who's Who in America," according to Hill-Snyder compilings.

And on one of those long, alluvial fans which reach down into the valley from the eternal hills of the pass, is the home of the Writers' Club.

Here assemble the mighty of literature; great authors who delve into the vague realms of fantasy and imaginings for screen drama.

But few among them have written a story as great as that living tale which hallows the soil on which they stand.

STORY OF HOLLYWOOD

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The barn is now a shipping shed in the Lasky Studio grounds on Vine street. The modern studio covers two blocks.

In 1916, the Lasky organization merged with Adolf Zukor's Famous Players, which held forth at a studio on Fifty-sixth street, New York. The wedding of famous players and famous plays made them parents to Paramount films.

Ever since they started, the film people have been trying to determine what the industry means in dollars and cents. It being subject to the craziest financial gyrations imaginable, nobody has yet been able to agree with anybody else.

The threads of the story now draw together, with Jesse Lasky the owner of the historic Urquidez ground. But instead of building a home there on the sacred soil of Los Pastores, he sold it. And now Mexi-