

Bennett House Timetable
From 2nd Street & Cherry to Heritage Hill

1869

Dona Petra Serrano subdivides Rancho Cañada de Los Alisos

1890's

Land ownership transitions through Cook, Victor, Gardner. Fifteen acres sold to Charles Bennett of Tustin for \$750. The ranch was planted mostly in apricots and walnuts. Later, experimenting with citrus growing and phasing out the apricots and walnuts.

1908

"Caretaker house" built by local carpenters White & Pope.

1910

Harvey Bennett, son of Charles Bennett, State Legislator, becomes on-site foreman. This was a change in plan for college bound Harvey, who took the ranch responsibility when his father became ill.

1913

Harvey marries 18 year old Frances McDonnell, whom he met during the summer apricot harvest and drying season. High school kids came to the ranch in the summer as hired help to earn money. Living quarters during these times was a camp-like setting. Frances was saving to go to nursing school. Extreme freeze kills many citrus trees that winter.

1915

The Bennetts' first child, Helen, is born. Water is piped into the house using a 1 1/2 hp motor to pump. Harvey "rolls" in a small house for the hired help to live in. Workers come in from Mexico with families & livestock at \$1.50 per day to help in the heavy work seasons.

1917

Beverly, their second child is born.

1918

Deep wells are dug to reach more water for irrigation and home use.

1920

The front porch is screened in and used as a sleeping area for parents Harvey and Frances. Evelyn, their third child, is born. "Mother" [in law] Bennett is concerned about Santa Ana blown dust on the baby who also sleeps on the porch.. Frances assures her the blanket over the crib is most effective.

1921

The first tractor is purchased to replace drey horses & walking plow.

1925

A crystal radio set with headphones brings the outside world closer to the Bennett home.

1927

Bonnie is born. She is the fourth child and considers herself the oldest of the "second family of kids" since there is a seven year gap between her and the third child, Evelyn.

1928

Electricity is connected to the house and brings an electric range, water heater, electric pumps, and lights. An addition to the house adds two bedrooms, large bath, service porch. Cove ceilings are added and the fireplace in the living room is moved from the corner to the center of the wall. Bedrooms upstairs were used for guests occasionally, and often as a play area. Mrs. Bennett had her sewing machine in the hallway alcove upstairs.

1929

An electric radio is purchased and becomes part of the dining room furniture so that baseball fan, Harvey, can enjoy the game with his mid day dinner.

1931

Harvey "Jr." is born, the Bennetts' fifth child.

1933

Richard is born, the sixth and last Bennett child. Helen, the oldest child is 18.

1934

The Bennett Ranch is now 85 acres, having been expanded through purchase of additional parcels from the original 15 acres.

1940

Telephone service is installed, for business only, not to "visit", according to daughter Bonnie. The local elementary school closed and children now ride the bus to school in Tustin.

1944

About this time metal cabinets in kitchen replaced the wooden cabinets on the outside wall. The front porch was bricked in with large louvered windows all around. Mrs. Bennett is known for her collection of colored glass items displayed in these windows.

1963

Harvey & Ray Prothero lead a 3 million dollar bond drive to connect the Metropolitan Water District to the new water district in El Toro.

1971

Harvey Bennett died.

1977

Frances Bennett retires from farming & sells ranch to Lyon Co. to develop. The Bennetts \$5,200 investment and seventy years of hard work nets 1.13 million. Frances stays in the area to be near

her friends and neighbors.

1978

Through the intercession of the Saddleback Area Historical Society the Wm. Lyon Co. donates the Bennett house & 1/2 cost of moving the house to the park.

1985

Restored house opens as example of turn of the century, stucco on wire over wood frame, farmhouse of the craftsman cottage era with unique "Airplane" roof line (the first airplane flight had been in 1903). Although the room and bath additions remain, the post 1920 enclosed porch has been restored to the original open porch.

1985

Francis Bennett died.

The Bennetts' Usual Workday

At 5am. start the fire in the stove to begin the day's cooking. At 7am the men go into the fields. The children go to school. Frances begins her daily chores by cleaning the oil lamps, 3 large & 1 small. Other chores follow depending on the day of the week. At noon dinner is served to all on the ranch. After 3pm. there might be a visit in town at the "Mercantile" store and to pick up mail. All the family was "in" at dark.

A Usual Workweek Schedule for Frances

Monday - wash, Tuesday - iron, Wednesday - bake, Thursday & Friday - clean, Saturday - bake, Sunday - visit & big dinnerday

Dale White
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