

AGUA MANSA was a small village whose site was between the present cities of Riverside and San Bernardino near the county line. It was settled in 1845 by a group of New Mexicans under the leadership of Lorenzo Trujillo.

The story of the bell is an interesting one. As there was no belfry in the old Agua Mansa church, two poles were procured and placed near each other in the ground. A cross piece was fastened to the poles and upon this the bell was swung. As the poles were green, they took root and became large trees. Ultimately, one tree died and the bell was hung on the living one that remained. The bell cracked and according to legend, the tree in which it was suspended died because it believed the bell to be dead.

During the great flood of the Santa Ana river in 1862, Father James Anthony Borgatta, pastor of the church, upon hearing the roar of the oncoming waters rang the bell vigorously as a warning to the inhabitants of the little village. Fortunately no lives were lost in the disaster, but most of the buildings of the settlement were swept away. The church was spared.

In the following year the Rev. Fr. Peter Verdager came to serve the community. Desiring to have a new bell, but not possessing the funds with which to purchase one, he determined to recast the old one. In his memoirs he wrote, "I heard that an old Mexican in the neighborhood could make a bell. I went to him and he agreed that should I give him two good horses and twelve dollars, with the material necessary, he would make a good bell . . . The man went to work at once at the foot of the hill where Mr. (Cornelius) Jensen's house stood; he made the oven and the mold, and soon the cast was made. (According to a contemporary, people threw gold and silver coins, chains and other jewelry into the cauldron where the molten metal was being prepared.) Hundreds were present when the Mexican broke the mold, and when the bell was seen there was a shouting which resounded from hill to hill. But, alas, the joy was soon changed to sorrow, because we noticed on one side of the top two small holes, which not only disfigured the bell,



Dedicating marker of Agua Mansa Bell. From left: Mrs. Ruth Schumacher, then Parlor president; Riverside Mayor E. V. Dales; Mrs. Floretta Banks, chairman of project and S.D.G.P. of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Appearing on the marker are the words: "Agua Mansa de San Salvador. This Historic Bell, Dedicated to 'Our Lady of Guadalupe,' Marked the Adobe Church of Agua Mansa, near Riverside, from 1852 to 1868. This Bell is Marked by Jurupa Parlor No. 296 Native Daughters of the Golden West. July 24, 1957."

Agua Mansa Bell

LOCAL HISTORY

by Ynez S. Barbour

but were the cause that its sound was not as pleasant as we expected."

The bell was put back into use until the Agua Mansa church was destroyed by the flood of 1868. Later it was placed in the little wooden Catholic church at Colton. When that structure burned the bell was acquired by Frank A. Miller, founder of the Mission Inn.

Jurupa Parlor No. 296, N.D.G.W., conducted ceremonies on July 24 in the patio of the Riverside Mission

Inn at which it marked the historic Agua Mansa bell. Among those participating in the marker dedication were Mrs. Floretta Banks, chairman of the project; Mrs. Ruth Schumacher, then parlor president; Riverside Mayor E. V. Dales; Dr. A. G. Paul, president of the Riverside County Historical Society; and Dr. Krieger of the Riverside Museum.

Prior to the ceremonies, members of Jurupa Parlor and their guests had breakfast at the Mission Inn.

1957
 L.H. Riv. City - Mission Inn -
 Collections - Bells - Agua Mansa Bell
 LOCAL HISTORY