

Down Memory Lane  
*Mary Etta Broadwell*

**Jacob Brunjes**

To the many European immigrants lining the ship's rail as it steamed into New York Harbor in the 1880's, the Statue of Liberty personified the peace, security and opportunity of this country. Among those seeing that symbol for the first time was 17-year old Jacob Brunjes, a native of Bremen Germany, who was leaving family and friends to try his fortune in the New World.

When it was he left New York and travelled across the country to San Francisco is unknown, but it was undoubtedly soon after arriving in this country.

A storekeeper in Germany, he followed that trade during those first years in America. Fairly well established in San Francisco, one evening he took time out for a bit of recreation and attended a dance.

On that evening occurred one of those happenings which, if written as fiction, might seem stretching the long arm of coincidence.

Among all the lovely girls waltzing on the floor, one alone caught his attention. During the evening they were introduced by mutual friends and discovered, much to their amazement, that they had attended the same school in Bremen and their families lived near each other.

Within a short time, as might be expected, this same attractive young girl became Mrs. Brunjes.

Sometime after their marriage they came south and settled in El Monte, where Mr. Brunjes again became a storekeeper. Knowing nothing of farm life, he nevertheless felt the urge to get outdoors and near the land.

In 1887 he and his wife bought a house and grove in Covina located at Azusa Avenue and San Bernardino Road. The house, facing Azusa Avenue, still stands.

One of their first tasks was to clear the land of the immense sunflowers which covered it. That first winter the dried sunflower stalks were their only fuel, as there were very few trees in the vicinity and wood was at a premium.

By hard, laborious work, Mr. Brunjes set out 15 acres of small orange trees. A well was made around each tree and periodically filled with water hauled in barrels from the San Gabriel River.

The problem of water was vital to the prosperity of the community. Even every drop of drinking water was hauled from the river. It wasn't until some years later that open ditches were dug which brought the first river water to Covina.

Growing practically all of their food on the ranch, nevertheless it was necessary for the Brunjes family to occasionally trade at the only grocery store, then located at Citrus and Broadway. Here eggs and butter were exchanged for coffee, tea and sugar.

Trips to Los Angeles were made by horse and buggy and required the entire day. These were rare excursions which the children anticipated for weeks.

One of the happiest memories in the lives of the Brunjes children were in the Christmas Eves they spent at the Snodgrass home. Every year their neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Snodgrass, who lived in what is now the Cooper house at Azusa and San Bernardino Road, invited the entire neighborhood to her home.

A ceiling-tall Christmas tree, bedecked with tinsel and ablaze with candles graced the living room. Among those included with the Brunjes family in these festivities were the father and mother of Henry Damerel who lived just up the road.

Before his death in 1917, Mr. Brunjes lived long enough to see his orange grove bear prodigious crops. He saw paved streets replace the dusty, rutted roads. During his life-time water in abundance was brought to Covina and he saw the valley flourish like a garden. But perhaps the thing that brought him the greatest happiness was seeing his children grow up and establish homes of their own in this same community.

His daughter, Meta, now Mrs. Charles Hassheider, lives on Cedar Drive. Another daughter, Mrs. William (Adele) Hoogendyck, resides on First and Covina Boulevard. All her children were educated in the Covina schools. A son, Tom Brunjes, lives in Glendora.

This year his granddaughter, Ann Marie Hassheider, enters Covina High School. On Bonita Avenue lives his great-granddaughter Wendy, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Heth, and it is said she greatly resembles that staunch pioneer who helped build the Covina Valley four generations ago.