

Down Memory Lane  
*Mary Etta Broadwell*

### **William Bowring**

In every community there are to be found certain men to whom belong the distinction of bringing into a new region the enthusiasm, energy and vitality which resulted in its expansion and development from a wilderness into a community of comfortable homes and flourishing industrial and commercial concerns.

In that respect the valley owes much to William Bowring who came to this district in 1888. Scion of a noted English family, he was born in 1863 at St. Johns Newfoundland. Leaving there as a boy he was educated at Scarborough England, in a school of the most approved quality and thoroughness.

At the conclusion of this period of school life, he served a 7year apprenticeship in marine engine construction and draughtmanship. It was soon after the end of this term of service that he came to America to make his home.

At the time of the land boom in the late 1880's he bought 40 acres on Bonita Avenue. With an Englishman's love of the open countryside, he was charmed with the natural wooded and flowered beauty of the tract. Reluctant to mar it with plow or axe he cleared just enough space beneath a spreading round oak to build a shack.

After planting the ranch, he worked in San Francisco, in the drafting department of the Union Iron Works, putting to good use his engineering training. He also ran managed mines in Lower California, and the Temescal Tin Mine.

In 1897 the present home on Terra Nova ranch was built for his young bride, the former Miss Louisa Allen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Allen, pioneer residents of Altadena. Mrs. Bowring still resides at Terra Nova with its beautiful gardens and air of gracious living.

In those early days, Mr. Bowring was active in developing the Glendora and Azusa packing and marketing companies and, a little later, was one of the first men to bring about the organization of the California Fruit Exchange.

He also became prominent in the development of irrigating water for the San Dimas citrus district. During the days of the "water wars" and the question as to who had the right to the little water there was, he defended his own water rights by sitting on the banks of the water ditch with a well-poised shotgun, according to stories.

For years, he was the manager, engineer and business head of the San Dimas Irrigation Company, and during those years the little community advanced to the position as the locale of maximum water development in the southern California citrus belt.

Until his retirement from active business interests, three years before his death, he was president of the San Dimas Fruit Exchange and also head of the Charter Oak Citrus Association.

As a young man he had been a prominent rugby and soccer player in England, and in the early days he played tournament tennis at Santa Monica and Ojai valley, going there by horse carriage. As a matter of fact, he played tennis until he was 72 years of age, and often gave his young opponents a good beating.

He was tremendously active in all war work. During the years from 1914 to 1918, Terra Nova was the rendezvous for war workers, with festivals and entertainments given for the Red Cross. Before our entry into the present war, the Allied Fete held at the Bowring home, drew crowds from the surrounding towns and realized a goodly sum for war relief.

His family were shipping people and before coming to California, he made three trips across the Atlantic by sailing vessel. He was very fond of rowing and owned a four pair-oared boat which he designed and had built in Racine, Wisconsin.

He kept his boat at Catalina and visited that island every year. This rowboat, of which he was so proud, was destroyed by the Avalon fire in 1913.

He was a respected member of the community and a parishioner of the Holy Trinity Church for many years. Mr. Bowring passed away in 1939, leaving his widow, and an only daughter, Mrs. Stuart (Winifred) Coulter, who with her husband and two small sons, lives in an attractive home built on the Terra Nova Ranch.