

## WE WERE PIONEERS OF KAGEL CANYON

One day in June, 1923, a salesman entered our office in Los Angeles and said he was selling life memberships in a Country Club to be located in Kagel Canyon. We had never heard of this place nor could we find anyone who had. We had been looking for a place where we could go on week ends for recuperation, so like Columbus we took a chance and bought two memberships.

There was a three day holiday during the 4<sup>th</sup>. Of July week, we decided to pack our camping equipment and drive off into the hills to find the remote Kagel Canyon. Such a wonderful surprise to us when we came into this beautiful wooded canyon, it was a perfect Shangra-La to us. We were told it was the most wooded canyon this close to Los Angeles, just twenty five miles from Civic Center. You couldn't see the canyon for the trees, such large oaks making such delightful cool shade on such a hot July day. There was a clear stream of cold water running down the floor of the canyon just full of watercress. The nights were cool and very still, the deadly silence was broken only by the chirping of crickets, croaking of frogs, and occasionally the bark of a coyote. When Saturday night came that was a very different story, which I'll relate later.

The following Monday, after our very pleasant vacation, we were making the necessary arrangements to start building our first cabin in Kagel Canyon. Now we were really pioneering. Our first disappointment was the drinking water, it was so full of mineral, especially iron. We couldn't make a decent cup of coffee with it. Our alternatives were: carry spring water from the bottom of the canyon, haul in water or buy a water softener. Of course we were without electricity, Gas, and not a paved road in the canyon, not even gravel. During the rainy season the mud was so deep and slippery we would have to go and come into the canyon "On a Wing and a Prayer".

For lights we used kerosene lamps and Coleman lanterns. We cooked and heated with wood. With all these inconveniences we were still in love with the canyon and could see many possibilities, especially when we discovered we were on our way to raising a family.

The real estate company, trying to promote the country club and failed, had built a dance floor under the broad and spreading oak trees, where they danced and drank on Saturday nights. They had built hutches out around the dance floor to be used in between dances or shall I say to rest from dancing?? Of course there was a charge for this accommodation so with all of this added attraction they were really taking in the revenue. The residents who wished to retire before midnight couldn't go to sleep until they stopped up their ears. Finally as more people came into the canyon there were naturally more to complain, in time this situation was

abolished but I believe we were still living under the stigma created by this condition.

Eventually there were enough people living in the canyon with integrity and foresight to see the potentialities of the canyon and they decided to do something about it. This was 1930, they organized the Kagel Canyon Improvement Association, Mr. S. A. DeLue was the President. Through his political prestige with the County Supervisors, the association was able to attain the services of both Southern Calif. Edison and Southern Calif. Gas Companies, also Kagel Canyon Road paved. There achievements were greatly appreciated by everyone, we felt we were no longer living in the dark ages.

In 1936 a water system was made possible with the labor help of the W.P.A. and a \$68,000.00 bond. Our water system was, and still is, the Los Angeles County Water District #21. Two wells were completed and put into operation by April, 1939. In 1949 two more wells were put into operation, and another bond was issued in 1949 for \$20,000.00. Well #5 plus 50,000 gallon tank and 1¼ miles of pipeline were installed. By this time the Association had changed their name to "Kagel Canyon Civic Association" and the women of the Canyon had organized "The Kagel Canyon Women's Club". All through American history our women have played a great part in the making of our country, these women of this little canyon have run true to form, for they have worked with the Civic Association in many community projects. Their first big project was to get a \$39,000.00 recreation building in Dexter Park, Kagel Canyon. In 1954 this club bought a resuscitator and gave it to our County Forester Fire Dept., to be used in and out of the Community wherever needed.

Other accomplishments of the Civic Association were; securing lower fire insurance rates for the residents of the canyon. Due to the extreme fire hazard created by lack of water and adequate fire protection. Public health service, sheriff protection, 1<sup>st</sup> class fire department, fire hydrants throughout the canyon, and trails paved are among the most important accomplishments of the association.

Many more things are to be accomplished and always shall be, but we feel now like we are on the march to greater improvements. However, there is a prevailing condition in this canyon we can proudly boast of. This canyon is "Smog-Free" which helps it to still be our own Shangra-La.

Dr. Eunice Stebbens

Written in about 1960.