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Burbank, California: An Historical Geography

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Geography

by

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1967

Dedicated to
Charlotte T. Tufts
Librarian, Southwest Museum

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
PREFACE	ix
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS	x
CHAPTER	
1. THE LOCAL SETTING	2
2. THE INDIANS AND EARLY SETTLEMENT	5
Impact of Spanish and Mexican Grants . .	6
Hispanic Cultural Remnants	9
The Early American Agricultural Phase .	12
3. ORIGINAL URBAN SETTLEMENT CORE	
ESTABLISHED AND SURVIVES	16
The Arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad	16
The Boom--A Local Case of a Regional Trend	20
The Founding of the Town	23
The End of the Boom	31
The Isolated Town Serves Valley Farms	32
The End of Dormancy	38
4. TERRITORIAL IDENTITY ESTABLISHED BY INCORPORATION AND THE PACIFIC	
ELECTRIC RAILWAY	43
Territory Officially Demarked by Incorporation	43
Municipal Consolidation	51
The Entry of the Los Angeles Suburban Railway	55

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

CHAPTER	Page
4. (cont.)	
The Last Era as a Rural Service Center	61
5. AREAL EXTENSION OF THE URBAN- INDUSTRIAL SUBURB	64
Location of Major Industries in Burbank	64
First Great Residential Expansion . . .	69
6. DEPRESSION, STAGNATION AND REVIVAL	80
Minor Landscape Changes	80
Strengthening the Industrial Base . . .	84
Ascendency of the Dominant Industry . .	85
7. WARTIME INDUSTRIAL BOOM AND SUBSEQUENT RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION	87
Aircraft Production	87
Population Influx and Further Residential Construction	89
8. THE DOMINANCE OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE	92
Open Land Virtually Filled	92
Further Industrial Diversification . . .	94
Decline of the Central Business District	98
Alterations in Residential Structure . .	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103
MAPS AND ATLASES	111

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
1. Grant map submitted with the petition for the Providencia Rancho in 1842	7
2. The Wheeler Survey map of 1874	10
3. The Burbank portion of Wildy and Stahlberg's Los Angeles County map	18
4. Town of Burbank from Wright's "Official Map of Los Angeles County, California,"	21
5. The Providencia Company's salesman's map	24
6. Population curve for Burbank from 1895 to 1965	34
7. Burbank's main intersection of Olive and San Fernando (2nd) in June, 1910	40
8. Map showing additions to the original City of Burbank	48
9. Number of Tracts Recorded per year from 1887-1966	71
10. Spatial growth of Burbank is depicted on a series of outline maps	73
11. Generalized street grid for Burbank	95

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R.F.L.

PREFACE

Most of us tend to see urbanization within the Los Angeles Basin as undifferentiated sprawl. But urban patterns are far more varied than this. Many communities still retain their identity for their inhabitants and some spatial integrity. This thesis attempts to trace the origins and historical development of the area occupied by the city of Burbank in terms of spatial organization, functional elaboration and population increase. Its legal limits, enclosing a roughly nucleated area, provide a territorial focus and identity of place more obvious than in many of the metropolitan suburbs. A geographical study concerned with historical sequence is of increasing significance in an age of rapid and dynamic modification of the area. Such research tends to point out the role of forgotten antecedents of present distributions--the geographer's cultural landscape.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Burbank, California: An Historical Geography

by

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Master of Arts in Geography

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Professor Howard J. Nelson, Chairman

This thesis attempts to trace the origin and subsequent spatial expansion and alteration of Burbank, California. The city's historical spatial organization is examined in relation to population growth and functional differentiation.

Almost no population and enduring settlement characterized the area prior to 1887. No Indians or Spaniards are known to have settled there permanently. Agriculture and irrigation were innovations of the Mexican era. The land grants of San Rafael (1798) and Providencia (1843) covered most of the area of Burbank. The town's namesake, David Burbank, bought the land and sold it to speculators who founded the development in 1887. The central nucleus was built up as was the street pattern which has retained the same general alignment to this day. When economic conditions slumped, the town reverted to a small rural service center until its incorporation in July, 1911. Population

growth and residential expansion were fostered when the trolley opened a line into Burbank. By 1920 the industrial base was established and spreading residential developments covered one-time agricultural acreage. Motion picture and aircraft companies located in the city as the depression years slowed the growth rate. By the late 1930's, aircraft was gaining position as paramount local industry. Continuing population surge and residential construction saturated the open land and by 1950 Burbank had "merged" with the surrounding metropolitan area. During the 1960's growth abated and functional modification involved the business core and residential zones while the city's mountainous portion succumbed to increasing development.

The landscape we see is not a static arrangement of objects. It has become what it is, and it is usually in the process of becoming something different.

Henry Clifford Darby

If we would study with profit the history of our ancestors we . . . must never forget that the country of which we read was a very different country from that in which we live.

Thomas Babington Macaulay

CHAPTER 1

THE LOCAL SETTING

Burbank, a southern California manufacturing and residential municipality some 16 square miles in extent and in 1966 the home of some 91,000 people, is located nearly 11 miles northwest of the Los Angeles city center and is situated in the eastern part of the San Fernando Valley. Its position near the gap or "narrows" of the spreading oval-shaped valley makes it the confluence for metropolitan-bound rail and motor transport routes. Its airport is the terminus for extensive air freight activity and significant passenger traffic. Burbank's industrial sector, the northeast limit of the prime manufacturing belt of Los Angeles, contains a wide range of firms. Aircraft manufacturing, motion picture production, food products, cosmetics, television production and broadcasting represent some of the more substantial mainstays in the local economy. Residential districts constitute over one-third of the city's total area. The detached single family dwelling has been most characteristic of these districts, even though the multifamily unit has become prominent recently.

The nucleus of Burbank's original settlement, the present day civic center, was built on the alluvial fans of the Verdugo Mountains. The gap formed by the proximity of

that range to the eastern end of the Santa Monica Mountains widens westward in the direction of the expansive San Fernando Valley while its eastern panorama includes the cluster of low rounded hills just north of the Los Angeles lowland plain. Burbank is backed strikingly by the Verdugos (elevations up to 3126 feet), a faulted granitic range, geologically part of the San Gabriel Mountains. The alluvial cones of the Verdugos grade rather sharply onto the plain that slopes gently across the narrows to an abrupt end at the base of the Santa Monica Mountains where the channel of the Los Angeles River is cut. Its course hugs tightly the base of this latter and lower range (elevations below 1821 feet) since the sediments from the Verdugo Mountains have built a more voluminous slope.

The climate is semi-arid in nature, a variety commonly termed Mediterranean. Its characteristic features are warm summers generally devoid of rainfall and a fall and winter season which accounts for most of the moisture for the year. These rains, occasionally intense, may bring about flooding and destruction as water surges down the usually dry stream beds onto the valley. Spring and summer days, despite many foggy mornings, are usually warm and sunny, although a constant haze is a characteristic of air masses of extreme stability. The yearly rainfall averages 14 inches while the mean annual temperature is 63°F. The area has few thunderstorms, high velocity winds are infrequent and snow is a rarely occurring phenomenon.

The most extensive natural vegetation cover within the city today is chaparral, a low dense stand of gnarled and stunted broadleaf evergreen plants, consisting of: chamise (Adenostoma fasciculatum) and laurel sumac (Rhus laurena) along with many others among which yuccas (Yucca whipplei) are seasonally prominent. This vegetation association stands on most of the steep hill slopes not yet urbanized and culturally induced fires frequently devastate the hills lending a pronounced desert appearance to the scrubby foliage. Prior to the time of settlement, the chaparral covered much of the hill and upper fan slopes. Other vegetation zones, long since eradicated by the growth and spread of settlement, included: a low grass cover with some scattered brushform plants over much of the valley section; the partially extant oak woodland association in canyon bottom and stream sites; and dense thickets of reeds in the tangled riverine and marshy vegetation in and around the Los Angeles River. The area was also the habitat for a number of larger mammals and other animals which have been decimated as urban expansion continued. A rancher named Comber compiled a list of the animals near his acreage in 1888 before intense settlement began. On his farm, near the present Warner Bros. Studio, he noted: "Wild cats, foxes, deer, raccoons, opossum, pheasant, quail and 'birds of many kinds.'"¹

¹Burbank Family Life Museum, Founder's Room, Display Board.

CHAPTER 2

THE INDIANS AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

The site of Burbank was essentially bypassed for settlement during pre-American times. Prior to European contact the Gabrielino Indians almost certainly traversed the area for food items when the supply was scarce near their camps in the Arroyo Seco (Pasadena) and in Big Tujunga Canyon (north of the city of San Fernando).¹ In the Spanish era and also under Mexican administration the area was given over to the rancho system of land dispensation. Parts of the Rancho San Rafael and Rancho Providencia covered the site of contemporary Burbank. Although no missions or even adobe houses were constructed, there remains a definite, if indirect, Hispanic legacy consisting of streets and city boundaries that follow grant boundaries; many street names; landmarks and the path of a major highway and long time main street, San Fernando Boulevard. During the post-civil war growth in Los Angeles, many of the hinterlands were bought by Americans as Spanish and Mexican power receded in the area. Two prominent Los Angeles residents, Jonathan R.

¹Bernice Eastman Johnson, California's Gabrielino Indians (Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1962), pp. 75-96.

Scott and Dr. David Burbank (for whom the town was named), were in control of the eastern San Fernando Valley in the late 1860's. By 1871, Dr. Burbank had consolidated separate holdings and owned a parcel which generally corresponds to the current city limits of Burbank.

Impact of Spanish and Mexican Grants

The land grants in the Burbank area were bestowed not only by the king of Spain but also by the Mexican government, although it is commonly assumed that all grants were Spanish. The San Fernando Valley, named and discovered by Gaspar de Portola, was under Spanish control from 1769 until 1822 when administration was taken over by the Mexican government. An innovation of profound significance during these years was the creation of land grants which were supposed to spur permanent settlement. The Rancho San Rafael, a Spanish grant of 1798, was one of the earliest grants in all of southern California and its western extension along with the Rancho Providencia, a Mexican grant of 1843,² covered the land on which Burbank is presently situated. The area existed, for a long time, under the economic

²The grant was apparently coincident with an earlier one called Rancho Portosuelo granted to Mariano Verdugo in 1795 and used for grazing until 1810. See W. W. Robinson, "The Spanish and Mexican Ranchos of the San Fernando Valley," The Masterkey, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July-September, 1966), p. 86.

Figure 1

This diseño (grant map) was submitted with the petition for the Providencia Rancho in 1842. It shows boundaries and nearby property lines. The map is crudely drawn with no scale and obvious distortion of the physical features. There may have been fewer trees than the surveyor suggests. The name Sierra Lindero is applied not only to the Verdugo Range north of the path called Camino Real de San Fernando but to the Santa Monica Mountains which are the Sierra Lindero represented south of the hills Lomeria and Rio de los Angeles.

Sierra Lindero

Camino real de San Fernando a los Angeles

Cuerna

Monte

Rio de los Angeles

Comunio

Sierra Lindero

Sierra Lindero
en que se encuentra el Puente



hegemony of the Mission San Fernando and it was undoubtedly during these years that the first grain was sown and grazing introduced in the eastern end of the valley. The Rancho Providencia was granted to Vincente de la Ossa on the condition that he respect the rights of the mission to plant occasional crops there. He was, in addition, to permit an Indian named Juan Miguel Triunfo to maintain his small cultivated plot there. Subsequently Triunfo was granted that land as a separate ranchito known as Cahuenga³ (Figure 3).

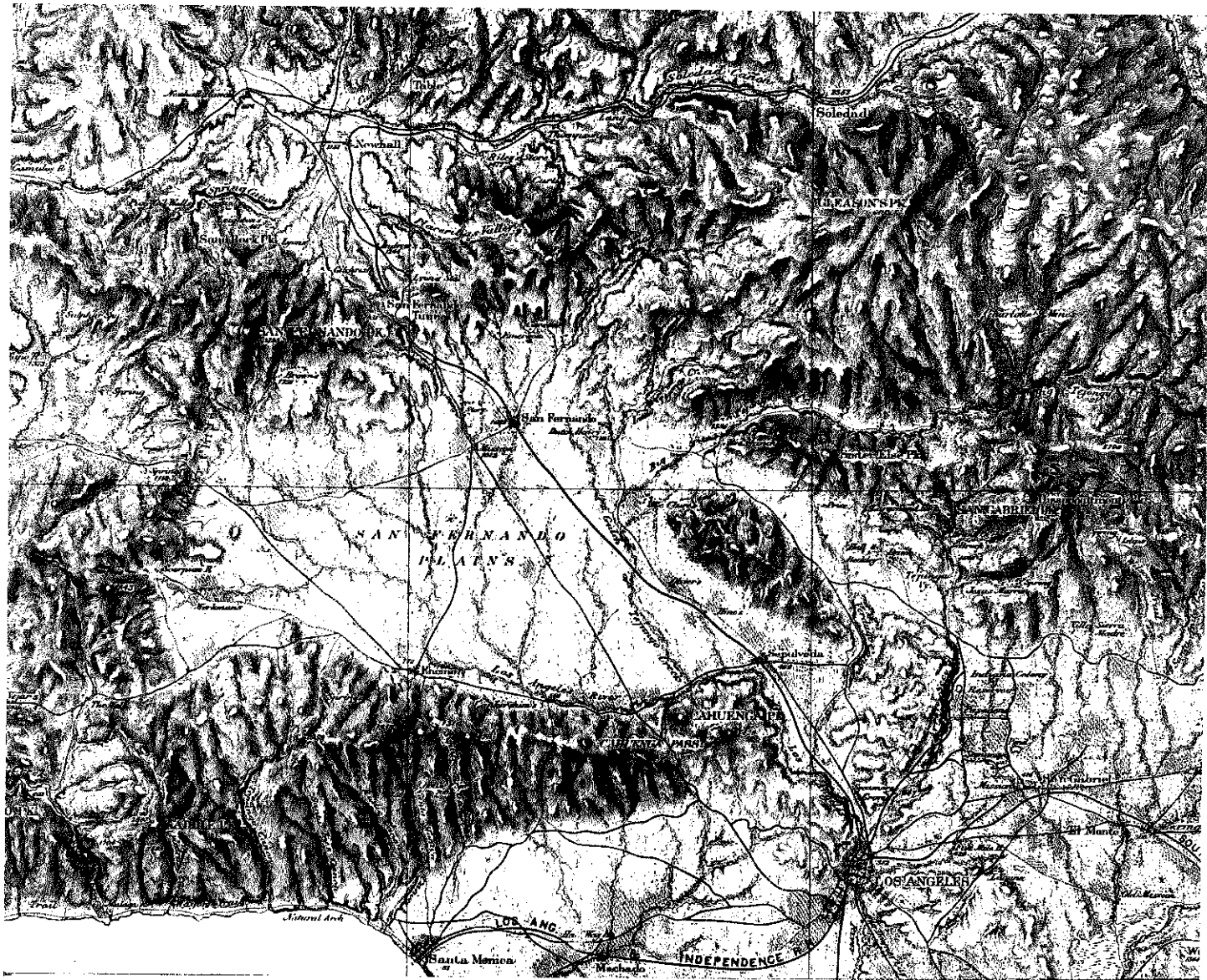
Hispanic Cultural Remnants

While no population growth or settlement was evident, the Spanish and Mexican era left some mementos which have persisted to the present day. Street names, the Compass trees, the path of San Fernando Boulevard, and the coincidence of rancho boundaries with streets and city boundaries of the present represent the holdovers still visible in the city. Street names such as Verdugo, Tujunga, Providencia and San Fernando were derived directly from the vicinity. The Compass trees, a one-time group of sycamores surrounding a spring which served as a resting and watering spot for travelers, are located near the present intersection of Lake

³Robert H. Becker, Disenos of California (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1964), #32.

Figure 2

The Wheeler Survey map of 1874 reveals the low population density in the San Fernando Valley at that time. In the Burbank vicinity Oliver's and Hines's houses are the only ones represented. The road junction settlement of Sepulveda is in the area subsequently owned by M. S. de Sanchez in Figures 3 and 4.



and Elmwood Streets. Only one of the old trees still stands. The path of San Fernando Boulevard seems to have been established in Spanish times. Perhaps once an Indian trail, it became the principal route from Los Angeles to the San Fernando Mission and much later was considered the main street of Burbank. Nelson has pointed out many instances in the Los Angeles area of concurrence of the rancho boundaries with present street and municipal lines.⁴ The Providencia grant boundary in Burbank provides examples of both cases in its northern and western portions. The rancho's northwestern limit coincides with Burbank Boulevard between Clybourn Avenue and Victory Boulevard. The land grant's southwestern boundary is the same as the Burbank city limit from Burbank Boulevard to the Los Angeles river along a street (Clybourn) and through a residential zone.⁵

The Early American Agricultural Phase

An extensive grain and grazing economy characterized land use in the area as a series of property transactions brought the land into the ownership of some Anglo-American Los Angeles residents. The Rancho San Rafael, originally

⁴Howard Nelson, "Remnants of the Ranchos in the Urban Pattern of the Los Angeles Area," The California Geographer, Vol. 5 (1964), pp. 1-11.

⁵Ibid., Figs. 2, 3, and 4.

granted to Juan Maria Verdugo passed to his children Julio and Catalina on his death.⁶ In 1857 Jonathan R. Scott became the first American to own the western (Burbank) part of San Rafael when he recieved 4603 acres in trade for his nearby Rancho La Canada, a transaction followed by considerable litigation. Shortly thereafter, the adjacent Rancho Providencia, with a total of 4600 acres, was acquired by Francis Mellus and David W. Alexander, two original members of the Los Angeles City Council.⁷ Ossa, the seller, wrote of this transaction:

The sum of \$1500 which has been paid to my entire satisfaction is the first price and true value of aforesaid ranch. It is not worth more nor have I found anyone to give more for same.⁸

As the number of owners increased, the question of boundaries aroused considerable haggling. In the 1840's the disputed line between Rancho Providencia and Ex Mission San Fernando had been settled by a commission. Still later, in 1870, the Ranchos San Rafael and La Canada were delineated into 31 tracts as a result of the "Great Partition"

⁶Security Trust and Savings Bank, Burbank Branch. Rancho Los Santos, The Story of Burbank (Burbank: Security Trust and Savings Bank, 1927), p. 9. Hereinafter referred to as The Story of Burbank.

⁷Becker, loc. cit.

⁸The Story of Burbank, pp. 15ff.

decision. Dr. David Burbank,⁹ who had obtained the "Scott Tract" from Jonathan R. Scott, had his title to the 4607 acres confirmed as a result of this famous decision of 1870.¹⁰ Thus, by 1871 David Burbank, who had purchased the Rancho Providencia in 1867 from Alexander, united the two parcels which closely approximate the contemporary city boundaries. Burbank apparently maintained a sheep ranch on his property from the late 1860's onward. But his operations included more than grazing. Monroe, a chronicler of Burbank, explains:

After the reign of the padres, the growing of wheat and other grain in the central part of the valley had been largely discontinued, but eastward in the adjoining Providencia rancho, Dr. Burbank and his predecessors in ownership devoted much of the land to these crops and the Providencia became the principle source of supply of grain for the stockmen in the valley and for the needs of the growing city of Los Angeles.¹¹

The land was utilized in large parcels and as late as the 1880's fewer than one dozen Anglo-American settlers had taken up residence in the entire San Fernando Valley.

⁹It was Dr. David Burbank and not Luther Burbank, the well-known horticulturalist, for whom the city was named. David Burbank migrated to southern California from New Hampshire and set up a dental practice in Los Angeles while raising sheep in the vicinity of the present day Warner Bros. Studio in Burbank.

¹⁰The Story of Burbank, p. 18.

¹¹Lynn Monroe (ed.), Burbank Community Book (Burbank: Arthur H. Cawston, 1944), p. 34.

In the eastern part of the valley Dr. David Burbank, Dr. Oliver and Simon Hoyt had established dwellings in the Providencia Ranch. . . .¹²

Thus the land passed into American ownership with only slight modification by its aboriginal, Spanish and Mexican occupance. And with the exception of the railroad tracks (laid in 1873), and some farm buildings, the area probably retained much the same general appearance as during its prior span of human history.

The aboriginal and first European inhabitants of the area tapped the land's potential productivity only slightly. The Indians who gathered acorns, also hunted small game and collected plants and insects. There is thought that they might have modified the landscape with their brush and forest fires. During Spanish times there was perhaps less use of the local resources than previously. By the Mexican era irrigated agriculture had appeared in spots in the Valley. Population and settlement remained negligible even after the Americans, who planted grain and raised sheep, took control of the land.

¹² Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

ORIGINAL URBAN SETTLEMENT CORE ESTABLISHED AND SURVIVES

Continuous settlement in Burbank dates from the 1880's. The townsite was established in 1887 during a land boom that encompassed all of southern California. The town grid pattern seems to have been laid out with its focal point near the Southern Pacific Railroad's passenger terminal. The nascent town consisted of a commercial core, surrounding residential lots and extensive peripheral agricultural acreage. Several hundred residents moved into the town developed by the Providencia Land, Water, and Development Company. When the boom ended in 1889, Burbank lost population, ceased growing and reverted to a small scale farm supply center. The dormant years persisted until roughly the years 1907, 1908, 1909 when real estate activity began to accelerate.

The Arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad

The railroad (and passenger stations) created possibilities for widespread town founding as did no other agency

in southern California to that time. The Southern Pacific Company had laid its line (in 1873) through the Burbank area in a 100-foot wide right-of-way strip purchased from David Burbank which roughly bisected his property. The establishment of a passenger station may be considered one of the most profound events in the subsequent formation of the town since it seems to have been the focus of the key downtown intersection, the hub of commercial activity and local interest. The Southern Pacific's records of Burbank's first terminal, if they ever existed, were destroyed and now officials list 1891 as the earliest year that records of a station existed for Burbank.¹ However, there is reason to believe that the depot was built before the town was established. It is, first of all, highly unlikely that any town would have been founded in such a rural hinterland without a sure connection to outside centers. The Providencia company's own sales maps (Fig. 5) depict a depot at Olive Avenue and Front Street in 1887. Another contemporary source, the Los Angeles Express is quoted as mentioning "a passenger station on the Southern Pacific line" in a description of Burbank in late 1887.² It is therefore concluded

¹Personal communication, Mr. William G. Phelps, Public Relations Department, Southern Pacific Company, September 14, 1966.

²The Story of Burbank, p. 23.

Figure 3

The Burbank portion of Wildy and Stahlberg's Los Angeles County map. The sparse settlement in the vicinity of Burbank is evident in this 1877 map. Compare the location of Oliver's house with the Wheeler Survey Map (Fig. 2). Scale is 1 inch = 6600 feet.

VERDUGO

MOUNTAINS

CANON

P. Beaudry
9122.71 Acres

Theodoro or
Catalina Verde
2629 Acres

Scott Tract
D. Burbank
4603.35 Acres

RANCHO T. Verde

SAN RAFAEL

RANCHO
PROVIDENCIA
4064.28 Acs

Dry Wash of Tujunga Creek

ROAD

Catalina Verde

Ranch House
C. Lyon

M. S. de
Sanchez

R. Verdugo
P. Beaudry

C. E. Thom
510.59 Act

O. W. Childs

RIVER

Julia Verdugo

MOUNTAINS

T. 1 N. R. 14 W.

T. 1 N. R. 13 W.

RANCHO

Sa. Eulalia

Benjamin

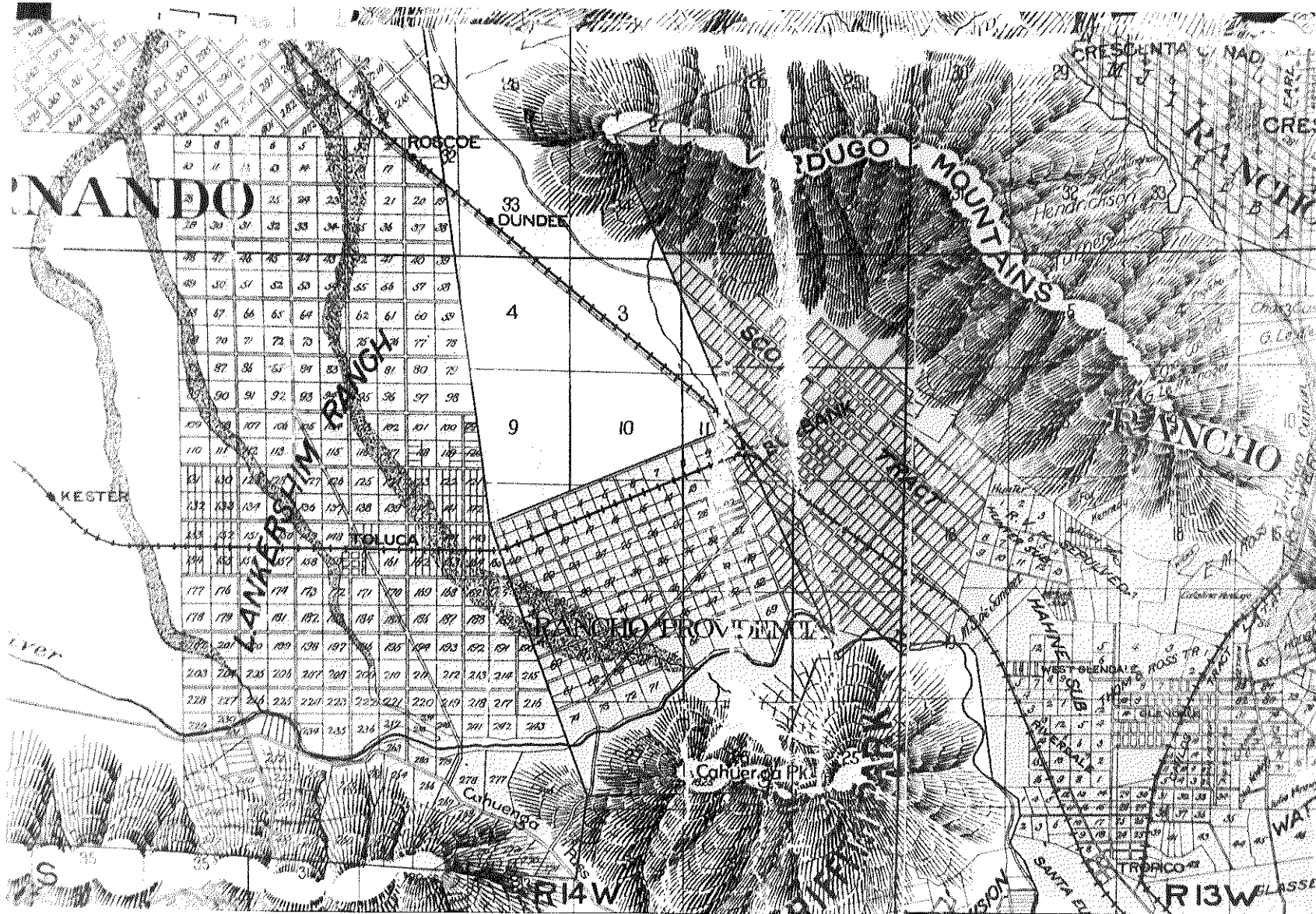
that the railroad depot was in use when Burbank was founded.

The Boom--A Local Case of a Regional Trend

The land boom of 1887 climaxed an extended southern California transition from a pastoral rural way of life to an increasingly urban and manufacturing economy. The land use changeover from extensive grazing to the more intensive practice of cultivation had been initiated after the local cattle industry deteriorated under the exceptional severity of the droughts beginning in the early 1860's. The growing numbers of southern California immigrants included many northern Californians driven out by losses sustained in floods, and by many well-to-do Easterners, who, arriving by train, sought a relaxed life along with investment opportunities. They were confronted with a widening range of economic possibilities as citrus growing and numerous artesian wells became more widespread, for the citrus industry proved to be the answer to southern California's quandry of finding a commodity for which there was no local competition in the Eastern markets. The group of immigrants, no matter why they came, added to the pool of prospective at whom the Burbank advertising could be directed. The recently arrived had, to a great extent, been transported by the Southern Pacific until the Santa Fe Railroad completed a competing line to the Pacific coast in the late

Figure 4

Town of Burbank from Wright's "Official
Map of Los Angeles County, California,"
dated 1898. 1 inch equals 7000 feet.



1880's. The ensuing competitive rate decline provided impetus for a large number of newcomers. The furious competition was initiated after the Santa Fe drove its golden spike in November of 1885.³ The double attraction of cheap fares and the then novel advertising method of the excursion proved, for many, simply too tantalizing to resist.

The Founding of the Town

On May 1, 1887 sales of residential and farm lots began in the town of Burbank, planned and owned by the Providencia Land, Water and Development Company. Once the boom began in earnest, the Burbank acreage quickly changed hands to a group of speculators who soon plotted a new town. David Burbank, who made a profit of between \$150,000 and \$250,000, sold his holdings of nearly 9000 acres (except for four smaller lots he had previously sold to individuals) to W. H. Goucher on December 27, 1886.⁴ The following day Goucher sold it to the Providencia Land, Water and Development Company.⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Rancho Providencia and the Scott Tract were plotted as an entity. The area was surveyed by the McClure brothers in February and March of

³Glenn S. Dumke, The Boom of the Eighties in Southern California (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1944), p. 24.

⁴Los Angeles County Book of Deeds, Book 187, p. 239.

⁵Los Angeles County Book of Deeds, Book 184, p. 470 ff.

Figure 5

The Providencia Company's salesman's map shows the development in the year of its founding 1887. It reveals not only the lots available but also gives some evidence of the extent of road construction. The town core was focused on the railroad station and occupied the former Scott Tract while the 74 larger lots in the valley section were offset from the main grid pattern and conformed to the boundaries of the Providencia Rancho. Photograph courtesy of Providencia Bank.

Providencia Park.

1887.⁶ The town was laid out in March and April of the same year.⁷ A former resident wrote,

They finally laid out the streets, tearing out rocks and boulders. . . . All materials had to be brought from Los Angeles by team.⁸

Lots in Burbank went on public sale on May 1, 1887.⁹ The area soon included a commercial nucleus, a flanking residential area on the "hillside" and some primarily agricultural acreage in the valley portion which featured 10, 20, and 40 acre plots. Some other residential subdivisions, besides the main Burbank segment, included: Binford Brothers & Hardy's Subdivision, Booth's Subdivision and the Newsom & Rebman subdivision.¹⁰ The original street names have come down to the present much the same as they were first designated. Some notable exceptions are: Crescent Street, now Victory Boulevard; Second Street, now San Fernando Boulevard; and Eighth Street, now Kenneth Road. The original main intersection, too, shows close correspondence with the

⁶Los Angeles County Miscellaneous Maps, pp. 19-22.

⁷Ibid., p. 15.

⁸Grace L. Eichar, History of Burbank, Typescript in Burbank Library Local History Collection (hereinafter referred to as BLHC), p. 1.

⁹Lynn Monroe (ed.), Burbank Community Book (Burbank: Arthur H. Cawston, 1944), p. 38.

¹⁰William E. Howell, Real Estate Tract Directory (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror, 1888), pp. 34, 39, 160.

more recent central business district.

Burbank's more noteworthy new accomplishments included: two commercial buildings, a pretentious hotel, two reservoirs (near Sunset Canyon) and the associated water distribution system, a short streetcar line up Olive Avenue's steep incline, and the Bryant Burbank Furniture Manufacturing Company. A Los Angeles newspaper praised the development,

The town of Burbank has been laid out. It is a charming location for a town. Several hundred feet higher than Los Angeles, it affords a magnificent view of the city and surroundings, while in the opposite direction there is a broad expanse of valley, the foothills, and the picturesque scenery of the Sierra Madres to be looked at and enjoyed. Burbank has been laid out in such a manner as to make it, by and by, an unusually pretty town. The streets and avenues are wide, and all have been handsomely graded. Everything done in Burbank has been done right, there is not a shabby building in the town.¹¹

The Providencia Company claims to have sold \$475,000 worth of property in about a year's time. Their advertising copy contended that (during the boom) a buyer could make 100% profit in three month's time. The prospect was urged to call at their headquarters on Spring Street in Los Angeles for a quotation of current prices. The cost of lots was not widely advertised, an apparent result of boom-time price fluctuations. But a newspaper quoted the price of an

¹¹Los Angeles Daily Tribune, September 24, 1887.

acre (probably in the valley area) in Burbank at \$300.¹²

The peak of the boom, according to Kirsner, was reached in August of 1887 and the two and one half years following January, 1887 witnessed the founding of some 60 new southern California towns.¹³ In the welter of far flung real estate activity, a town's name might be something of an asset. In the case of Burbank, a number of designations were suggested: Burbank, the Panorama City; Burbank, the Magnet City; and Burbank, the Prosperity City (some years later). Yet even the name "Burbank" did not seem to be firmly imprinted in the minds of many who persisted in referring to the town as "North Los Angeles," "West Los Angeles," and in later years, "North Hollywood." During the height of the boom, southern California advertising reached a peak of flamboyancy and hyperbole perhaps unsurpassed in its time. Dumke deals at length with this advertising¹⁴ of what Kirsner has called the seven cardinal "Talking Points."¹⁵ These widely disseminated tenets include, applied singly or in combination, most of the following recurrent themes: the climate was one of the nation's finest; the area was any-

¹²Los Angeles Daily Herald, September 18, 1888.

¹³Donald Kirsner, The Road to Urbanization. Unpublished M. A. Thesis: University of Southern California, 1957, p. 110.

¹⁴Dumke, op. cit., Chapter IV, "Advertising,"

¹⁵Kirsner, op. cit., p. 88.

thing but a rugged and remote frontier as many Easterners believed; there were unlimited agricultural potentialities in this garden-like spot; nearly anyone's health would be improved by living here; southern California was uniquely picturesque, steeped in the romance of the Spanish Dons and the charm of homey little Mexican adobes; and above all, here were opportunities for making money in an atmosphere of leisure and comfort.

With full command of the above material, Burbank's advertisements broadcast the developer's claims with a maximum of unbounded exuberance and a minimum of sophistication. The Times, Burbank's short-lived weekly boom newspaper, carried a continuing half page spread which contained some typical prose of that era. After calling Burbank "the Sightliest Location in Southern California," the elaborate claim was made,

Conditions favorable to longevity are nowhere more numerous or more happily combined . . . choicest benefactions to prolong the lives of the feeble and enhance the enjoyment of the robust. . . . There are none of the sudden changes so trying to weak constitutions, but the variations of temperature so small, that one must know the name of the month in order to distinguish winter from summer. "December's as pleasant as May." . . . Persons who are suffering from general debility and nervous prostration, whose constitutions are racked by the atrocious climatic changes of the Eastern states will find the general, even warmth and get the stimulating vital air they so much need. Such will find no enervating influence in the heat which enable them to gather figs, oranges, etc. in the day time, nor lurking chills in the brac-

ing air that makes night's slumber so refreshing.¹⁶

In the event that some types may have remained unconvinced,

Natural scenery unsurpassed in grandeur and in interest and varied allurements of forest and stream to lovers of sport.¹⁷

A few familiar fruits are listed in an assortment of "Products of the Soil" which manages to include such exotics as pomegranates, quinces, nectarines, bananas, guavas, olives and loquats.

The acreage mentioned (in the advertisement) of 17,000 is far in excess of the original 9,000 acres of David Burbank. According to Monroe,

The tract . . . reached from the top of the Verdugo Hills and Burbank Boulevard on the north and west to Grandview Avenue and the Los Angeles River on the east and south, and one point crossed the river and took in the territory now known as the Laskey Ranch.¹⁸

The company's sales claims of \$475,000 seem to bear out the effectiveness of the methods used if not the veracity of the list of benefits promised.

Burbank had the short-lived distinction of being one of four depots on an ostrich farm railway. The Los Angeles and Pacific Railway connected the settlements of Los Angeles,

¹⁶Burbank Times, March 30, 1889, p. 3. ¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Monroe, op. cit., p. 41.

Burbank, Santa Monica and Ivanhoe (Silver Lake district) to one Dr. Sketchley's ostrich farm located near the present day Griffith Park. Originated in 1885, the farm's railroad was not extended to Burbank until May 31, 1889, after which time five trains per day were operated (six on Sunday). A depot was built on a four acre plot, donated by the Providencia company, near Verdugo Avenue and Flower Street (Fig. 5). After only a few months operation, the station was closed due to the poorly constructed trackage which had been responsible for an engine tipping over near town.¹⁹

The End of the Boom

A general slump in land sales, which affected all of southern California, halted Burbank's growth by 1889. The boom activity, despite early optimism, failed to stabilize and in early 1888, according to Dumke, there came about a decline in the amount of real estate transfers. Suddenly, in the light of decreasing land values, people desired to sell lost and many were unable to continue their payments. Perhaps a substantial number of Burbank's newly arrived residents moved out at this time. One of the most telling local signs that the flurry had terminated comes from the change in advertising content of the Providencia company in the Burbank Times. In late 1889, the advertisement which had

¹⁹Franklyn Hoyt, "The Los Angeles and Pacific Railway," Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1952), pp. 261-271.

run so long in more affluent times was removed and a new version, emphasizing economy and practicality, was issued in the same slot. The headline type of the main phrase leaps out at the reader,

CHEAPEST LAND IN CALIFORNIA
\$100 An Acre! One Fourth Cash Balance in
4 Years. . . .²⁰

The basic richness and productiveness of the soil is stressed and boasts of Burbank's abundant water and delightful site are followed by an offer of free transportation to the town. One desperate soul tried to sell his property with these words,

The best land in the choicest spot in God's foot-stool at \$100 on time.²¹

The Isolated Town Serves Valley Farms

The tiny nucleus of Burbank functioned as a trading center for the eastern San Fernando Valley farmers from 1889 onwards. The miniscule settlement's stores and businesses served the rural residents with basic necessities of feeds, dry goods and the like. The most significant crops grown were cantaloupes and watermelons and apparently Burbank was the prime supplier for a large segment of the Los Angeles

²⁰Burbank Times, December 28, 1889, p. 3.

²¹Burbank Times, February 1, 1890, p. 3.

market. A cantaloupe was depicted on the city's first official seal and a long time resident described their extent,

In the last decade of the 19th Century . . . cantaloup and tomato acres extended from Grandview to Verdugo from Kenneth Road to San Fernando and here in the valley ranches, 600 acres of melons.²²

Viticulture also became a well established non-irrigated practice during the 1890's, although much land in the valley section reverted to sheep and cattle grazing. According to one local historian,

Sheep raising, which had been practically abandoned as an industry in the valley, also had a comeback during the nineties and as late as 1908 great herds of these animals stirred up so much dust on the main street of Burbank that business houses were obliged to close all doors and windows until the herds had passed.²³

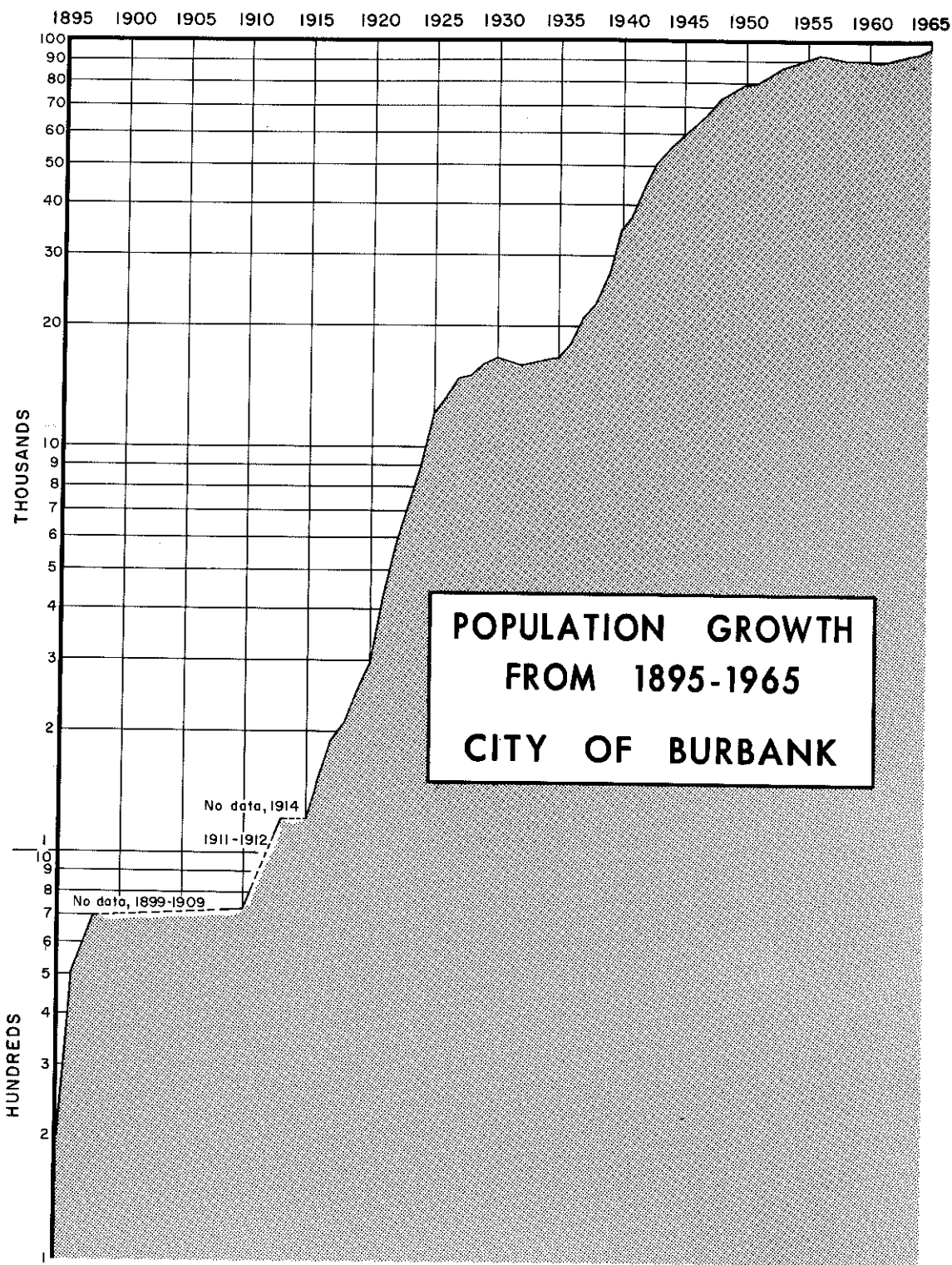
In 1890, a newspaper numbered no more than 80 dwellings in the vicinity and a count of the structures (house, barn, or out building) shown on the 1902 edition of the U. S. Geological Survey's Santa Monica quadrangle (scale: 1 to 62,5000) reveals almost 100 buildings within the present city limits. This figure probably represented no more than 450-500 inhabitants (Fig. 6). The city's lone industry, the

²²Mrs. Pret's Talk, pamphlet, BLLHC.

²³Frank M. Keffer, History of the San Fernando Valley (Glendale: Stillman Printing Co., 1934), p. 72.

Figure 6

Population curve for Burbank from 1895 to 1965. The curve is on a three cycle semi-logarithmic graph. A portion of the curve in the third cycle would signify a greater increase than a like curve on any lower cycle on the graph.



SOURCES: U.S. CENSUS OF POPULATION; BURBANK DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE 1915-1965; AND LOS ANGELES CITY AND COUNTY DIRECTORY.

furniture factory, had burned to the ground as a further touch and shortly thereafter the editor of another Burbank newspaper could moan,

In September '94 Burbank was dead. . . .²⁴

A pioneer Burbank schoolteacher wrote,

The town--or rather village--consisted of only one main street with its inevitable post office, grocery store, drug store, meat market and blacksmithing shop. There was a small hotel and a central upstairs hall where fraternal organizations held their meetings . . . in 1894 it was difficult to reach Burbank. It was a long drive by horse and buggy; there were no busses or motor cars, and the Southern Pacific Railway to San Francisco had only two through trains a day, which would stop on request at the little station platform at Burbank.²⁵

In 1895, the widow of David Burbank petitioned the court to let her dispose of the ranch (near the site of Warner Bros.), "because it is hardly worth keeping."²⁶ Road conditions had fallen into gross disrepair by 1905,

The people of Burbank are too progressive to allow the streets to remain long in their present condition. It would only take a few days work to put them in shape again.²⁷

²⁴The San Fernando Valley News, November 6, 1896.

²⁵Belle Cooper, Burbank in 1894, Typescript, BLLHC.

²⁶"Little Known Facts About This City's Founder," Burbank Daily Review, August 26, 1964, p. 3A.

²⁷Burbank Review, June 23, 1905, p. 3.

The town, despite small size, had been listed in the Los Angeles City Directory for 1894. It was the first time the entry was included. The same brief description was continued in its exact form (with annually revised population estimates) in several successive issues and ran as follows on page 1213:

Burbank--On the S.P.R.R. in Los Angeles County 11 miles northwest of Los Angeles. Express; telegraph and telephone; principle industries are farming and fruit raising; population, 300.

There followed a list of the town's prominent people and firms,

Burbank Merchandise Co., general merchandise
Edmunds C., general merchandise
Halburg F.A., postmaster and general merchandise
Powell H.E., agent W. F. & Co.
Scott Charles E., fruit and notions.

That there was considerable population growth is indicated by the Directory's list just five years later than the one above. The list was nearly four times as long. The town was gradually adding population and although its "municipal services" were all but non-existent, a few innovations were introduced. An anonymous author wrote,

Burbank had two telephone systems, each with its own poles. The Home Company came in 1900. By 1903 there were two telephones in Burbank and by 1911 there were fifty.²⁸

²⁸
Burbank Through the Roaring Twenties, Typescript in BLIHC, p. 4.

The existence of Burbank as a railroad junction point dates from 1896. In that year another main line of the Southern Pacific branched out across the San Fernando Valley. * The line, dubbed the Chatsworth Park branch, was built to carry rock quarried in the extreme west valley to Los Angeles harbor for construction of the breakwater.²⁹ Now two separate rail lines, later to become primary coastal and interior branches, converged on Burbank where a single line led to the railyards of Los Angeles. This addition apparently spurred little local population growth and it gained greater significance some decades later as an attraction for industry.

The End of Dormancy

Certain signs appeared to indicate that Burbank was emerging from the depths of the stagnant years as news in 1905 of the possible arrival of the Los Angeles aqueduct stirred interest in property throughout southern California. And despite the persistence of the small farm era in Burbank, the growth of the commercial sector became increasingly substantial as evidenced by the following 1905 roster of stores and their owners:

Burbank had:

2 large stores--Luttge General Merchandise and
Halbergs

²⁹Keffer, op. cit., p. 69.

- 1 bakery--Charles Daniker
- 1 bicycle store--O. C. Lane
- 1 lumber yard--Kerchoff & Cusner
- 1 poultry feed and supply house--M. J. Groshong
& Co.
- 2 1st class physicians--A. O. Conrad, M.D.:
Miller, M.D.
- 2 blacksmiths--Henry Lehman; Dan Fog
- 1 Post Office--"In charge of accommodating and
efficient officials"
- 2 rural mail delivery routes.³⁰

Burbank's urban functions were extremely modest compared with those of Los Angeles and it was still little more than a rural village serving the nearby farms. One of the more prosperous of these farmsteads was described by the local newspaper,

The Fawkes place [near Olive and Lake] contains thirty acres, fifteen of which are in walnuts, ten in apricots and the balance in peaches and apples. He dries and cures his own fruit. There is a barn 30x40 feet; and a wind mill, the wheel measuring twelve feet in diameter.³¹

But regardless of the population growth and despite the quality of some of the farm land, there was little basic growth. One supporter put it this way,

The slow growth of the San Fernando Valley in comparison to other sections not half so favorably situated must be attributed tin a large degree to a lack of enterprise . . . Boost, Boost for Burbank.³²

³⁰Memorandum from E. Clifford Hill, BLLHC.

³¹Burbank Review, March 12, 1909, p. 1.

³²Ibid.

Figure 7

Burbank's main intersection of Olive and San Fernando (2nd) in June 1910 as represented by Sanborn fire insurance maps. The numbers indicate atlas sheet numbers. Reproduced through the courtesy of the Sanborn Map Company.

Burbank's business district at the end of the lean and dormant years is given exhaustive treatment on the Sanborn (fire insurance) maps and atlases.³³ Preserving detail now available nowhere else, these maps show not only all the structures but also include special notes on the main industries and even note the type of materials used in construction. The June 1910 survey reveals 160 buildings in Burbank's central business district. There were two water towers. The brick high school building had hot air heating and gas lights while the elementary school had two stoves for heating and went without gas lights. The once pretentious Santa Rosa Hotel was now deserted. Six fire hydrants served the entire town. Most residents depended upon kerosene and gas and oil lamps for lighting.

Once the railroad had insured accessibility to the vicinity, land speculators lost little time in developing a tract which gave the area its first urban focal point. A population of several hundred remained after the boom had run out. Agricultural activities dominated the region's economy and Burbank was a farm oriented service town for much of the San Fernando Valley.

³³"Burbank, California, June 1910," Sanborn Map Co., scale 50 ft. = 1 in. See also Fig.

CHAPTER 4

TERRITORIAL IDENTITY ESTABLISHED BY INCORPORATION AND THE PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY

When Burbank was incorporated in 1911, it became the first city in the San Fernando Valley. Independence lessened the possibility that Los Angeles would assimilate the town, a fate of many southern California settlements. Burbank, with its local tax base, confronted the municipal problems of water supply, road construction and many others. The linking of Burbank to Los Angeles via the Pacific Electric Railway, also in 1911, seems to have been a spur to local expansion and population growth. But despite signs of increasing activity, Burbank continued its function as the rural serving town in the eastern San Fernando Valley.

Territory Officially Demarked by Incorporation

When the townspeople decided to form an incorporated city on July 8, 1911, Burbank was the first town in the San Fernando Valley to take such action (although the settlement of San Fernando became the second incorporated city later that year). Yet incorporation in the Los Angeles area was not an especially rare occurrence, and Burbank was the 23rd

city since 1850 to incorporate in the county.¹ Its neighbor to the east, Glendale, had achieved corporate status in 1906. Pasadena, eastwards from Glendale, was already a long-established community, having been incorporated in 1886.²

Most obvious of the motives for incorporation besides the belief in future growth was the initiation and improvement of municipal services, by securing local taxing power to:

. . . replace the boardwalks, pave the streets and install streetlights plus . . . [provide] adequate police and fire protection.³

The drive toward incorporation was aided by a vociferous effort of E. M. McClure, editor of the Burbank Review, to implant the notion of Burbank as an independent city. And as late as autumn 1910, incorporation seemed less likely than the probability,

that Burbank will become a part of Los Angeles in the course of the next ten years. . . .⁴

¹Richard Bigger and James D. Kitchen, How the Cities Grew (U.C.L.A.: Bureau of Governmental Research, 1952), p. 60.

²Ibid.

³Burbank Through the Roaring Twenties, Typescript in BLLHC, p. 5.

⁴Burbank Review, November 18, 1910, p. 2.

The issue began to provoke some local sentiment and comments about the desirability of a connection to the Los Angeles interurban railroad were frequently coupled with pleas for municipal independence. Shortly there appeared an article entitled "Advantages of an Incorporated City" which was produced by a number of Glendale people. It ended with these words:

We reproduce the above article in order that Burbank people may get the facts concerning the expense of running a city government such as has been talked of trying to establish here. The good roads work will soon be completed when every objection to incorporation will have been removed. There is no question that under incorporation Burbank would have many opportunities for advancement which it now lacks and the slight increase in taxation would be more than offset by the many advantages to be secured under incorporation, such as good streets, police and fire protection, electric lights, gas and organized as well as directed effort in all public matters.⁵

The railway news took up much subsequent newspaper space in the next few weeks, but McClure could not resist his impulse to comment occasionally. He warned of the "impending threat of undesirable control" by Los Angeles for:

As long as Burbank is a village it will be easy for Los Angeles to include it with some other territory and force it into the city. If the town was incorporated this would not be possible.⁶

⁵Burbank Review, November 25, 1910, p. 6.

⁶Burbank Review, December 16, 1910, p. 2.

And, in an emotive attempt to convince, he wrote,

We are liable to wake up most any time now and find ourselves hitched on to the tail of the Los Angeles kite.⁷

By March 1911, there had been formal meetings on incorporation complete with a boundary committee composed of F. A. Halburg, G. H. Deacon and C. E. Salisbury. Page one of the March 10 edition announced happily that the citizens supported incorporation. Yet many people must have remained adamant and the editor tried to convert the skeptics,

Burbank has been on a great transcontinental railraod and enjoyed the advantage of a main travelled state highway since the townsite was laid out besides, the town is backed up by as fine a stretch of fruit and farming land as can be found anywhere and its climate and natural beauty are beyond comparison. Besides these, the townsite is within two miles of Los Angeles. Why is it that other newer towns, less favorably situated have out stripped us in growth? Simply because they have incorporated and guaranteed conveniences and safeguards to residents. You can see and you can reason. Use your eyes and think a little for yourself.⁸

The dispute persisted until the election when, by a count of 80 to 51,⁹ the electors (all male) voted to incorporate as a city of the sixth class (less than 3000 people).¹⁰ The in-

⁷Burbank Review, December 23, 1910, p. 2.

⁸Burbank Review, March 17, 1911, p. 2.

⁹Bigger and Kitchen, op. cit., Table VIII, p. 111.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 43.

corporation procedures came under California's Municipal Corporations Act of 1883 which allowed any unincorporated place in the county to incorporate providing it had over 500 residents. The stipulation of 100 qualified electors signing the incorporation petition had been cut to 50 by an amendment in 1889.¹¹

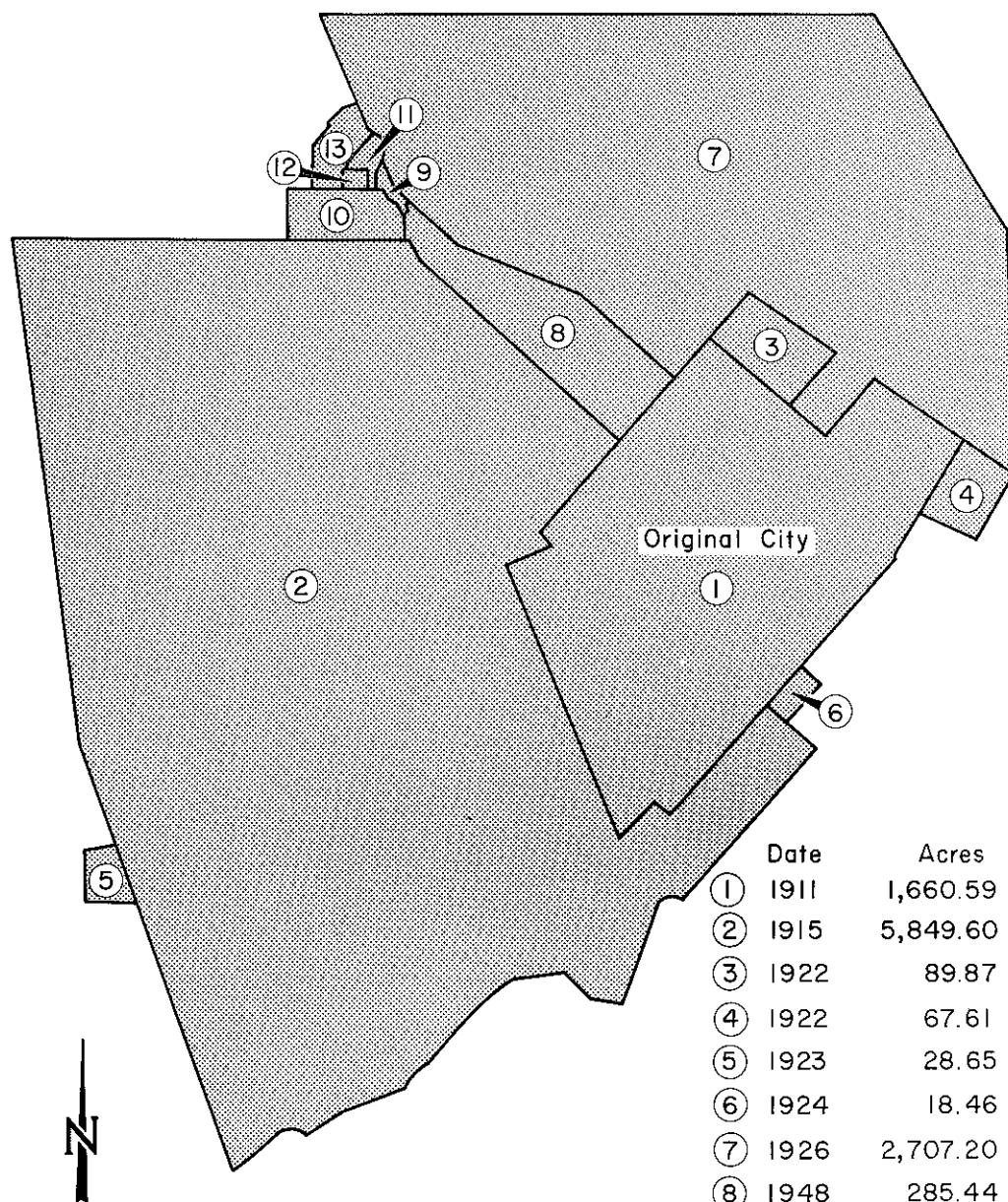
The parcel of land comprising the new municipality was centered on the same core established in 1887, with the main intersection of Olive Avenue and Second Street (San Fernando Boulevard). The total area was 2.59 square miles or a little more than 1660 acres (Fig. 8). Burbank soon (in 1915) annexed the valley portion and increased its total size well over four times to nine square miles or 5800 acres. The annexation in 1926 of the 2700 plus acre Sunset Canyon district brought Burbank to its present size with the exception of several comparatively small parcels which were added gradually until the most recent annexation in 1959.

Burbank's population in the year of its incorporation was estimated, by various sources, as 515, 600, 750 and 1000. Since there were no Bureau of the Census statistics for the town until the 1920 census, the exact figures cannot be verified. They probably represent no serious difficulties if, as is probably the case, the estimates include various areas peripheral to the city limits.

¹¹Ibid., p. 44.

Figure 8

Map showing additions to the original City
of Burbank. After the Burbank General
Plan.



TERRITORY ANNEXED CITY OF BURBANK

	Date	Acres
①	1911	1,660.59
②	1915	5,849.60
③	1922	89.87
④	1922	67.61
⑤	1923	28.65
⑥	1924	18.46
⑦	1926	2,707.20
⑧	1948	285.44
⑨	1954	2.56
⑩	1954	81.02
⑪	1955	12.10
⑫	1955	5.70
⑬	1959	35.12

0 1/2 MILE

Municipal Acreage in - 1966 = 10,843.92

Most cities in the county, as Bigger and Kitchen point out, attempted incorporation when the population was relatively small. They suggest that perhaps,

. . . smaller communities do possess more homogeneous populations, greater ease of communications and interpersonal contacts.¹²

Apparently ease of communication and interpersonal contacts remained ineffective because there were two determined efforts in 1920 and 1925 to consolidate Burbank within the city of Los Angeles. Of these attempts, spearheaded by J. W. Fawkes, the first was overwhelmingly defeated 847 to 92.¹³ The second election, however, was somewhat less decisive with 1232 votes for independence and 645 for consolidation.¹⁴ The proceedings obviously reached high levels of emotional fever. According to a Los Angeles newspaper,

Two Burbank boys were shot with birdshot about the shoulders last night while taking part in a demonstration by some of the victorious anti-annexationists in front of the J. W. Fawks home. Mr. Fawks [sic] denied any knowledge of the affair and no charges have been brought. Previous to the shooting a number of anti-annexation enthusiasts celebrated their Tuesday victory at the polls with a huge bonfire on San Fernando Road where an effigy hung bearing a placard inscribed "Here lies the body of consolidation Joe."¹⁵

¹²Ibid., p. 104.

¹³Los Angeles Times, November 17, 1920, Part II, p. 1.

¹⁴Burbank Review, July 1, 1925, p. 1.

¹⁵Los Angeles Times, July 25, 1925, Part II, p. 8.

The local sewage disposal and water storage systems were at the center of the controversy and Fawkes apparently believed Burbank would develop industry more readily if it were joined to Los Angeles. The consolidation faction spread rumors that,

Burbank's domestic water supply was adequate, but attempts were made to create a "water scare" by suggesting that Los Angeles' right to the entire flow of the Los Angeles River meant that the larger city could take away Burbank's supply.¹⁶

Municipal Consolidation

The new community took measures for meeting the needs of its residents. Some streets were named (although most shown in Fig. 5 remained the same) and houses were assigned numbers. A new grammar school was added (on Magnolia near San Fernando). A new city hall was planned (and completed in 1916) and steps were taken to acquire a water works. The sorts of changes inaugurated were gradually to spiral as the town took on an increasingly citified appearance while quietly leaving behind its agricultural past.

The incorporation effort was spurred, at least in part, by the need of a rising population for an assured water supply. Burbank, by virtue of its location overlying a great ground water storage basin, has nearly always had local supplies of water for residents and the original settlement was

¹⁶ Bigger and Kitchen, op. cit., p. 190.

not confined, as might have been expected, to the banks of the Los Angeles River. Even during the years prior to its founding, the area's water supply had significant surface expression. Sherer, referring to 1871 conditions, writes,

. . . the country (Burbank-Glendale area) was crisscrossed by small ditches constructed so as to carry the water by gravity to the door of almost every house holder.¹⁷

Immediately after the town's founding, wells dug for domestic use certainly increased sharply around the business nucleus. By 1900 the municipality was served by L. C. Brand's El Miradero Water Company with its well and pumping station both located at Olive Avenue and Front Street.¹⁸ The same organization controlled the city's two reservoirs: number one, with a two million gallon capacity, was situated one and one-fourth miles from the city's center and number two, which held four million gallons, was located about a mile and one-half north of the first. Both drew on the supply of Tujunga Creek.¹⁹ Brand had an interest in another company. The Consolidated Water Company with well and pumping station at San Fernando Road and Grandview Avenue, supplied the eastern residential area often considered Burbank

¹⁷John Calvin Sherer, History of Glendale and Vicinity (Glendale: Glendale History Publishing Co., 1922), p. 114.

¹⁸Personal communication with Mr. Clarence Shadel, Burbank Department of Water and Power, April 5, 1966.

¹⁹Sanborn Map Co., loc. cit.

before the district was annexed to Glendale. The service provided by Brand's companies must have aroused a measure of discontent. An early public official wrote,

At the time of incorporation in July 1911 and for some time thereafter the town of Burbank was dependent upon El Miradero Water Co. for domestic water. The citizens were rather dissatisfied with the service and lack of fire protection and they prevailed upon the city authorities to investigate proceedings for the establishment of a municipal water works. A bond election was called on March 25, 1913, \$50,000 in bonds voted for this purpose.²⁰

Los Angeles as well as Burbank relied upon the basin under the San Fernando Valley as its principle source of water. In the face of a brisk population increase, Los Angeles constructed a subsurface concrete diversion channel in Burbank known as the "Fridle Cut." Intended as a sort of compensatory measure to counter the exhaustion of surface drainage, this little known feature lead to serious depletion in the basin. A long time resident recalled,

. . . Burbank soil was once so consistently wet that irrigation was unnecessary even in the hottest part of the summer, and an artesian well flowed in the business section . . . several raised red raspberries here without irrigation and the Bly ranch in the valley was almost swampy. This was changed when a Purlte [sic] ditch was installed the length of the valley by Los Angeles interests, lowering the water level until continual irrigation is now necessary.²¹

²⁰James McCambridge, "Origination of Burbank Municipal Water System," Burbank Public Service Department, Historical File.

²¹Burbank Review, May 19, 1937, p. 1.

Los Angeles' consequent need for augmentation of river and well water supply was temporarily met by the Eaton and Mulholland plan to connect an aqueduct from distant Owens Valley (completed in 1913). But by the early 1920's it was seen that additional water would be required for the region. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (of which Burbank is a member) constructed dams--Hoover and Parker--on the Colorado river in the early 1930's. Burbank first used this water in 1938 to supplement during periods of peak demand, although in more recent years the town has come increasingly to rely on MWD water. Local water is becoming scarcer as the ground water of the San Fernando Valley is expended by the large population and as the extensive coverage of buildings and pavement prevent replenishment of the supply. At the time of this writing, Burbank obtained nearly 30% of its water from MWD and the remainder from its wells.

Burbank's use of local water has long drawn opposition from Los Angeles. Before incorporation, local farmers adjacent to the Los Angeles river armed themselves against those who tried to prevent diversion of or "tampering" with the water supply of the city of Los Angeles. By the early 1930's Los Angeles brought a suit against Burbank charging that Burbank had no right to the water it was pumping. The status quo prevailed following this court action. Still more recently, in 1959, Los Angeles has sued Burbank, Glen-

dale, San Fernando and some corporations for drawing ground water from Los Angeles sources. The extended proceedings could result in the smaller cities giving up their water works in the event of a Los Angeles victory.²²

Natural gas lines were another domestic utility which accompanied incorporation. In the words of a district superintendent,

During the early part of 1913, the [Southern California Gas] Company began initial construction work on the Burbank distribution, and in that year the first natural gas was delivered into the homes of this city.²³

The Entry of the Los Angeles Suburban Railway

The Pacific Electric Railway provided Burbank not only a link to downtown Los Angeles but "opened" it to an ever rising inflow of new residents. It is the conclusion of Dumke that the Pacific Electric was the main agency of population dispersion over the expanse of the Los Angeles metropolitan region.²⁴ It began an era of suburban spread

²²"Decision on Lawsuit that Could Cost Glendale-Burbank Millions Awaited," Glendale News-Press, July 25, 1966, p. 3.

²³G. W. Hackley, "Burbank and the Gas Company," Gas News, June, 1927, p. 16.

²⁴Glenn S. Dumke, The Growth of the Pacific Electric and Its Influence upon the Development of Southern California to 1911. Unpublished M. A. Thesis: Occidental College, 1939.

in which the single family dwelling became dominant in most of the residential areas. Dumke points to the growth rate of Burbank township (includes all of Burbank, Glendale and part of the present North Hollywood) in 1890, 1900 and 1910. The increment for the first decade was less than a thousand (1890, 2,296 people; 1900, 3048 people) but by 1910 the figure had risen to 12,225 people,²⁵ These figures suggest the enormous impact the trolley had on the process of suburban southern California growth.

To Burbank, a small town serving the area's farmers, the importance of the Pacific Electric can hardly be exaggerated. It has been claimed that the issue of the trolley aroused more popular sentiment than that of incorporation. The only prior commercial means of local transportation had been the Glendale-Burbank autostage, which arrived in Burbank five times daily charging a fee of 35 cents per round trip. And before San Fernando Road, the main road link to Los Angeles, was paved, Burbank was occasionally inaccessible by the contemporary means of overland transportation.

The newspaper, cognizant of the significance of an interurban rail link to Los Angeles, was quick to urge the importance of connecting the line to Burbank. The project involved, in contrast to the plea for incorporation, a request for money--\$40,000 was asked by the company for extending

²⁵Dumke, op. cit., p. 108.

its line from the Glendale terminus.²⁶

Local officials and boosters had hopefully considered Burbank a logical place to extend the Pacific Electric's line for years prior to its completion. As early as 1904, when trolley service to Glendale was inaugurated, a dignitary of that community had said:

... . I cannot believe that the road will stop here while just beyond us lies a beautiful country just as fertile and populous, and like Glendale waiting an outlet and an electric railway system to tie it to the world.²⁷

Appeals to Burbank residents for contributions to the fund began with the promise of potential wealth, for example,

. . . . When an electric railroad is built to Burbank many ranches that are being dry farmed to melons, barley or oats will be subdivided or improved and placed on the market as town lots and instead of the land selling from \$500 to \$700 per acre it will bring from \$1000 to \$2000 per acre.²⁸

The editor prodded his readership,

Are we to wait another seven years and remain within four miles of a trolley line before Burbank gets an electric road? If we don't get the road this time, Burbank may as well order its burial robe.²⁹

²⁶Burbank Review, November 11, 1910, p. 2.

²⁷Sherer, op. cit., p. 99.

²⁸Burbank Review, October 14, 1910, p. 1.

²⁹Burbank Review, November 25, 1910, p. 3.

One can almost sense the urgency as the fund total reached a level near the goal. The newspaper continually announced progress and urged the citizenry on to greater heights. When the limits of patience had been reached, the following item was published,

One thing is sure and that is, Burbank will either get an electric railway or advertise itself as the deadest community in seventeen states.³⁰

On December 16, 1910 the news was released that the Pacific Electric would extend the line to Burbank since the \$40,000 had been raised. The line would extend five miles from Glendale to Burbank and five new cars would be added. This was confirmed by the headlines, "Burbank Line Assured" on January 27, 1911 and "Railroad Assured" on the following February 17. And by May 26, work was in progress from the Glendale end of the railroad. Difficult as it may be to determine just how much gaiety was spread by this news, it is certain that at least one anonymous poetess was openly pleased,

Who said Burbank had a nap?
Burbank sure is on the map,
When was Burbank born again:
December 27, 1910.
Watch us grow and see things hum.
Whoop ! Hurrah ! The Trolley'll come.³¹

³⁰Burbank Review, December 2, 1910, p. 2.

³¹Remarks for Council Meeting, April 25, 1961, BLHHC.

The day of the initial trolley entry into Burbank was September 6, 1911. It was a day which, in a sense, witnessed the end of the community's relative isolation from the pace and activities of its neighbors to the east and south. This event, according to available data, marked the beginning of the most rapid population influx Burbank had experienced to that time (Fig. 6). An account of that first trip was provided by a Glendale newspaper.

Last Wednesday morning the first car carrying passengers from L.A. to Burbank over the electric railroad just completed. On the return trip it was well loaded with Burbankers who made the round trip to Glendale and return. Cars run hourly at present. Round trip fares between Burbank and Glendale are 25 cents. Burbank to Los Angeles 40 cents.³²

The line ran along Fourth Street (Glenoaks Boulevard) and the depot, built in 1912, was located at Orange Grove Avenue and Fourth Street. According to Smith, whose thesis recently took up the question of the importance of the interurban railway systems in the Los Angeles area,

. . . Los Angeles--Burbank (line) . . . typically provided service 30 minutes to an hour . . . emphasized weekday service and scheduled limiteds or flyers during rush hours.³³

³²Ibid.

³³Howard G. Smith, The Role of Interurban Railways in the Los Angeles Area. Unpublished M. A. Thesis: San Fernando Valley State College, 1965, p. 26.

Smith asserts that the influx of population in the area caused new heights in real estate, activated business life and brought in some new industry. Burbank's population curve certainly experienced its first dramatic upswing (Figure 6). The city's residential functions also expanded considerably during the decade after the Pacific Electric arrived. The square mile area of land on the hill slope northeast of the city's core became densely settled. The central business district, as represented by the Sanborn atlases, shows a marked elaboration between 1910 to 1918. The total of brick and store structures (non-frame) was twelve in 1910. By 1918 the number had reached 32. An assessed valuation chart for Burbank reveals that in 1912 the total was slightly under one million dollars; by 1918 it had reached two and one half million and in 1922 the total was well over three million.³⁴

The Pacific Electric maintained a sort of dominance in the local transportation facilities until the mid 1920's when it seems to have been seriously challenged and limited by the increasing use of the automobile and the concomitant expanding mileage of paved roads. Keffer mentions that as early as 1915,

San Fernando and Burbank cities . . . proceeded with extensive paving programs. Early in the

³⁴Smith, op. cit., Fig. 21.

Twenties the entire valley was engaged in a great road building spree that continued unabated until 1931.³⁵

By the 1930's the interurbans had lost so much right of way and their running time had been so cut down by the road intersections that they were declining in competition with the auto for commuter transportation.

The Last Era as a Rural Service Center

Despite the creeping transformations of population growth and urban expansion, the town still retained its role as the principal east valley shopping and trading center. Burbank's agriculture reached its fullest extent in the second decade of the century. During this period there was more land in farms than at any one time before or since. The familiar generalization, true for much of southern California, has often been repeated; anything that can possibly be grown in this climate was planted in Burbank at one time or another. In spite of this claim, certain crops can be considered dominant. The greater part of the valley section was, by incorporation, under irrigation and much of the arable land was utilized by the dairying industry. Sizeable plots of corn and alfalfa were in close conjunction with this multi-hundred acre activity. Dairy farming in

³⁵Keffer, op. cit., p. 108.

Burbank was brought to its demise by the hoof and mouth disease, an occurrence which may also have done away with a possible animosity between ranchers and subdividers, as well as adding impetus to the trend toward suburban land developments.

The entire eastern part of the San Fernando Valley was known for its orchards--particularly peaches and apricots. There were also many walnut trees near Burbank's western limits. The soils of this section, as mapped and described in L. C. Holmes' classic survey of the San Fernando Valley,³⁶ are named Tujunga Sandy Loam and Tujunga Fine Sandy Loam.³⁷ These valley alluvial soils are deep and porous, with somewhat coarse surface materials, and were capable of supporting some of the most intensive agriculture in the valley. The western part of the Verdugo slope (including a small area of the valley section) was almost entirely without irrigation and was primarily devoted to vineyards. Here the soils, primarily the Hanford series with stony and sandy subtypes, are basically coarse, quite porous, and frequently untillable. Steep slopes and proximity to stream beds are often limiting controls of agriculture.³⁸

³⁶L. C. Holmes, Soil Survey of the San Fernando Valley Area, California (U. S. Dept. of Agriculture; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917).

³⁷Ibid., pp. 44-45.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 34-39.

Thus, local agriculture in its most productive period was characterized by dairying (with corn and alfalfa in close association), grapes, peaches, melons, walnuts while minor parcels produced still other types of tree and field crops. A number of poultry farms were scattered around the periphery of the settlement. There were three wineries and one distillery. Extensive tracts of vacant land in plots of various size and location was intermingled with the farmland giving a decidedly rural aspect to the entire city which persisted into the 1920's. The dominance of this market oriented "truck farming" declined as Burbank was more closely linked with the overall pace of Los Angeles. The streetcar connection in addition to the expanding paved road network made commuting feasible for many and open lands were sought after to be transformed into residential and industrial sites.

Burbank's first notable population growth and areal expansion followed the town's incorporation and connection with the Pacific Electric railway. The town continued to serve the predominantly rural-agricultural hinterlands. But a trend had been generated towards a residential suburb of Los Angeles.

CHAPTER 5

AREAL EXTENSION OF THE URBAN- INDUSTRIAL SUBURB

Burbank's industrial elaboration began with the 1917 location of an established truck manufacturing firm in the city. Many smaller operations soon joined the truck company as the industrial sector gradually grew to include notable motion picture and aircraft enterprises. Burbank also experienced a marked "boom" in real estate activities during the 1920's. Related directly to the influx of industrial workers and to a general trend toward suburbanization in the region, subdivision and construction transformed many an acre of open land into residential blocks.

Location of Major Industries in Burbank

The years 1917-1929 witnessed an unprecedented establishment of major industrial firms including trucks, motion pictures and aircraft. The Moreland Motor Truck Company, the true harbinger of industrial Burbank, agreed to move its plant from Los Angeles to Burbank in 1917.¹ That this site

¹Burbank Review, March 9, 1917, p. 1.

was chosen instead of one in Alhambra is due largely to a few local leaders who were able to convince the residents to donate \$25,000 necessary to present the land at the corner of Alameda Avenue and San Fernando Boulevard to the firm.² The newspaper called on the townspeople to put forth the required sum on its front page spread which, in addition to extolling the advantages of a Burbank site, includes some heady optimism, "Big Boost for Burbank . . . Watch Burbank Grow . . . This is the Biggest Thing Yet."³ The readership must have been receptive to the suggestion of contributing the land since the announcement of completed subscriptions came in little more than a month later. The editor seemed sure that the town's future was assured. He asserted, "Beautiful Burbank Is Now on the Map with a Capital B. . . ."⁴

The establishment of small manufacturing firms became a Burbank characteristic during the early 1920's. Within a few years after the Moreland opening Burbank's industrial roster included: the Empire China Company, the Carbassemo Products Company (soap), the Fred L. Mencley Company (window shades), the Allen Burbank Company, the United States Compression Inner Tube Company, the Burbank Canning Company

² Monroe, op. cit., p. 43.

³ Burbank Review, March 9, 1917, p. 1.

⁴ Burbank Review, April 13, 1917, p. 1.

(dehydrated products), and Libby, McNeill and Libby Cannery.⁵ Though a number of these, like the canneries, operated on seasonal production schedules, their impact was partly due to the short span in which they came to the area.

Burbank's list of advantages offered to manufacturers was being disseminated: reasonable natural gas rates, crude oil piped in from the Kern River Oil Fields, an abundance of open semi-rural land, and close proximity to rail and major highway transportation. The newspaper claimed,

No city adjacent to Los Angeles is more admirably situated than Burbank with reference to transportation facilities, both freight and passenger.⁶

A Pittsburgh manufacturer outlined the main advantages he saw in operating a plant in Burbank. He claimed that the cost of factory construction was one-half the cost of Pittsburgh; powers was one-third less than Los Angeles; gas was one-half the cost of the eastern rate; water was 30 percent less than "other places"; raw materials were accessible; the region represented a \$25,000,000 yearly market; the tax rate was favorable.⁷ He neglected to mention the existence of large plots of open land, a factor significant to many of the larger firms which came to Burbank.

⁵Burbank Review, January 14, 1921, p. 1.

⁶Burbank Review, January 28, 1921, p. 3.

⁷Burbank Review, January 26, 1928, p. 1.

First National Pictures followed Universal Studios into the valley. In early 1928 the new facilities were built on the former Martin alfalfa acreage near the Los Angeles river, a site which also included the original house of David Burbank. Only a mile downstream from Universal, the site was near the Dark Canyon (Barham Boulevard) access road to Hollywood and the company's former headquarters on Sunset Boulevard. The Los Angeles Times wrote,

Burbank is now on the map as a center of motion picture activities. First National, after years of renting space, has just settled down in the vicinity of that town, having adopted the "own your own home" policy. The construction cost of this new studio is approximately \$1,500,000, and it is located on a sixty⁸ five acre tract with thirty buildings in all.

The Warner Brothers bought control of the studio in 1928. The number of acres has subsequently grown to 102 and there were more than 60 major buildings at the time of this writing.⁹ Today, the claim is made that Warner Brothers' Burbank studio is the "largest and most modern motion picture and television center in the world. . . ." ¹⁰

⁸"Triumph of Studio Building," Los Angeles Times, August 22, 1926, p. 4.

⁹"Facts About Warner Bros. Studio," Publicity Dept., Warner Bros. Studio, p. 1.

¹⁰Ibid.

Lockheed Aircraft was another small but vital concern that located its plant in Burbank. Having started a firm in Santa Barbara in 1916 and then again in Hollywood in 1926, the Loughead (pronounced "Lockheed") brothers found their small shop pushed to its limits trying to fulfill orders for aircraft in late 1927. They quickly scanned the immediate vicinity for an appropriate site and finally chose a location near an intersection known as "Turkey Crossing,"

Through his connection with the Empire China Company in Burbank, Keeler (president of the company) found space available in a building across the alley, partly occupied by the Mission Glass Works. Around the plant stretched miles of vineyards, farms, orchards and unreclaimed desert. . . . It was a good place to build and fly airplanes. So in March 1928, the Lockheed company occupied 20,000 square feet of working area at the corner of San Fernando Road and Empire Avenue.¹¹

Soon after operations were under way, the Review ran an article headed, "Burbank May Become Big Airplane Center."¹² The writer could hardly have guessed how prophetic this statement was to be. Only a year later, Burbank was selected as the site for an airport constructed by United Aircraft and Transport. First called United Airport, the official designation was later changed to Union Air Terminal and most recently to Lockheed Air Terminal, for the current

¹¹Philip L. Juergens, Of Stars and Men: A History of Lockheed Aircraft Corporation (Burbank: Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, 1958), Ch. 3, pp. 5-6.

¹²Burbank Review, March 9, 1928, p. 1.

owners. On the 234 acre site a \$2,500,000 complex was constructed. Mr. A. K. Humphries, the airline representative, explained the selection of the site,

We have spent a year looking into a number of possible locations in the Los Angeles area to find the most favorable from the standpoint of weather conditions, availability to the metropolitan district, and the other things needed for an air terminal, and have found a certain location in Burbank the most ideal. Weather experts had spent days and nights in the locality testing out air conditions under all possible circumstances.¹³

Events during the depression years brought the company to bankruptcy. In 1932 the firm was purchased by a group headed by a shrewd Bostonian banker Robert E. Gross under whose leadership it proliferated and rose in the industry through the many technological turnabouts and sporadic junctures of uncertainty to one of the aerospace leaders, nationally, at the time of his death in 1961. Lockheed's local acreage amounts to "approximately 821 acres,"¹⁴ of which the air terminal occupies some 550. Lack of open land in Burbank and stress on decentralization of defense industries led to the establishment of many branches in other parts of the state and nation.

First Great Residential Expansion

The urban transformation of Burbank reached its greatest proportion and spatial extent in the early and middle 1920's

¹³Monroe, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁴Personal communication with Mr. Philip L. Juergens, April 14, 1966.

and the result was characterized by the single family dwelling. The gradual intensification of industrial activities had ramifications for residential land. The steady acceleration of population growth (Fig. 6) was abetted by those "driving West" in one of the nation's largest internal migrations. The changes during this period when the residential districts were expanded and demarcated from the once agricultural fields were part of the most all-encompassing landscape modification in Burbank's history.

Burbank, in the 1920's, became farther removed from its rural past with every mile of paved road added and every acre subdivided for residential or industrial use. Motor traffic soon increased, especially after the completion of the state highway and a newspaper survey in 1920 indicated that average traffic on San Fernando Road (Highway 99) included 306 trucks and 31 tractors per day. News of proposed paving or the widening of existing roadways was to become an everyday occurrence during and after the imminent construction boom.

Tremendous activity in real estate came about when a number of large tracts were offered for sale parceled into home sites. In addition to some larger blocks around the main business core there were two outlying developments of long term significance. One was called the Magnolia Park subdivision and the other (the former Stough ranch) was christened Woodland Heights and soon renamed Ben Mar Hills.

Figure 9

Tracts recorded indicates the intensity of combined industrial, commercial, and residential property in Burbank. It should not be confused with a construction graph which might represent houses built per year. Compiled from the data in the Burbank City Engineer's Office.

NUMBER OF TRACTS RECORDED
PER YEAR FROM 1887-1966
CITY OF BURBANK

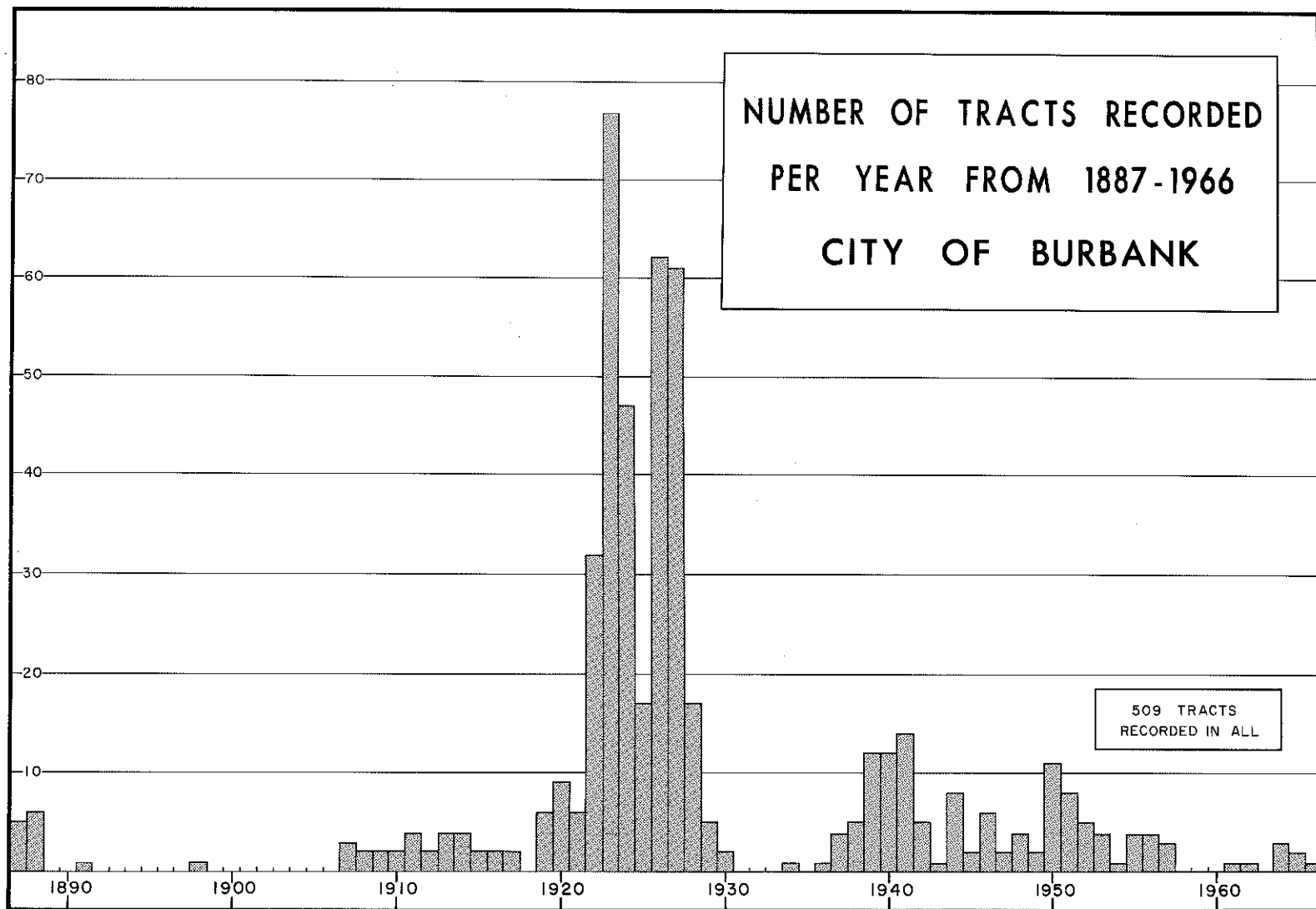
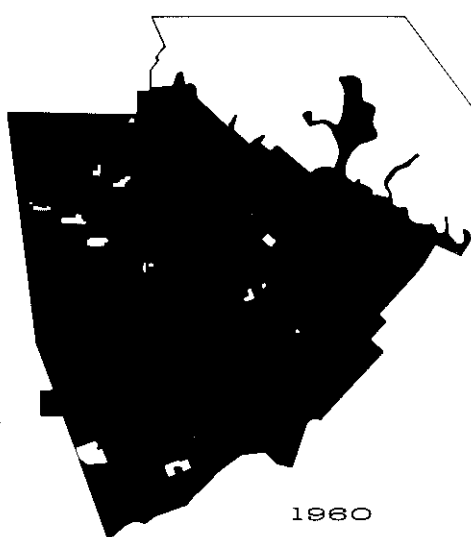
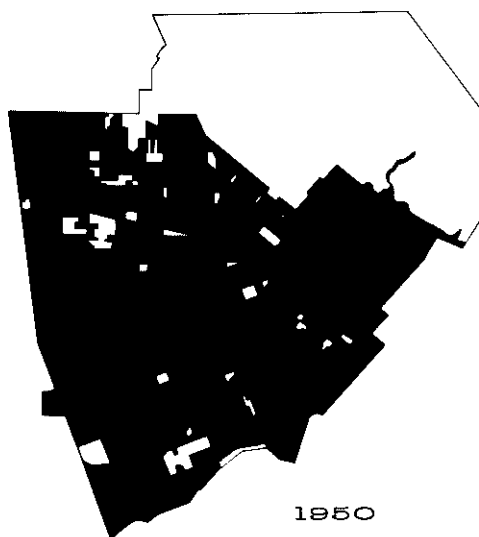
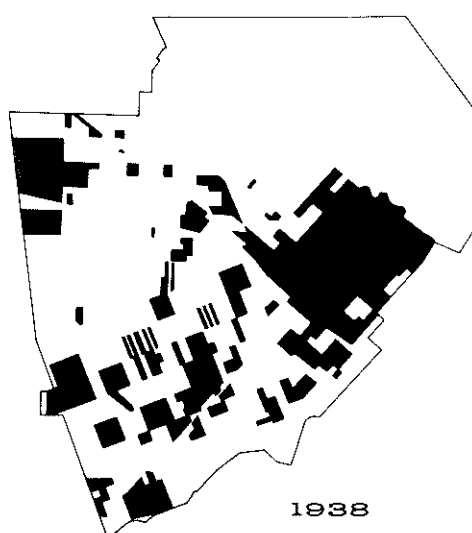
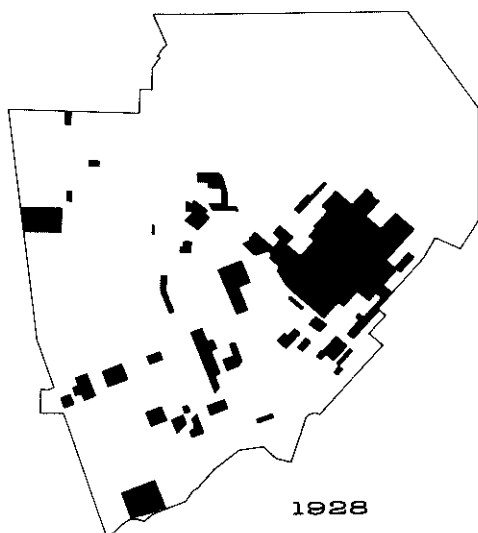
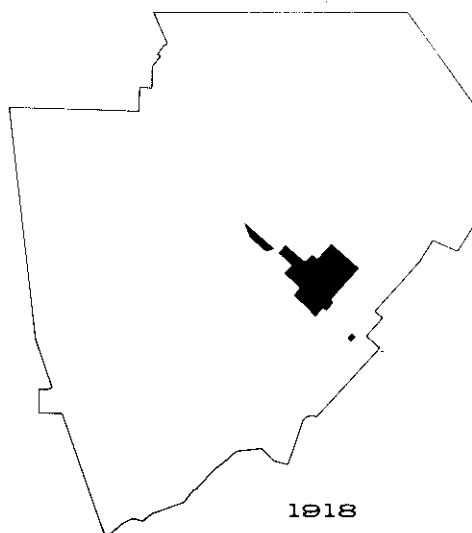
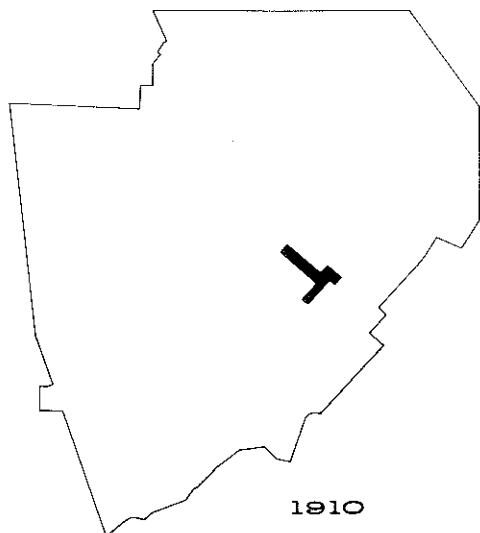


Figure 10

Spatial growth of Burbank is depicted on a series of outline maps. Boundaries are current and the shading represents the completely urbanized segments of the city at six points in time. Comparison with the tracts recorded graph reveals that much land was subdivided before it was built upon. Taken from the Burbank General Plan.



Promoted by one Ben Marks, the Woodland Heights development was the first to open. Marks' vision for the hill slope tract resembles a scene from the Arabian Nights. Ornate oriental structures, many domed and bedecked with grandiose ornamentation, highlighted the artist's drawing which contrasted almost harshly with the modest reality of the more common frame bungalow found in the vicinity. That the developers hoped to lure the southern branch of the University of California to the site was also emphasized.¹⁵ The opening ceremonies drew a crowd of 2500 onlookers to the vacant acreage.¹⁶

The Magnolia Park subdivision grew into a minor retailing center and residential area, in contrast to Marks' subdivision, soon after its opening on March 2, 1923. The former dairyman Earl L. White offered some 300 lots, many of which were 50 feet x 135 feet, near the main intersection of Magnolia Boulevard and Hollywood Way. Prime emphasis was placed on the proximity to the heavily populated Hollywood and Los Angeles area. The one-time dairy area soon took shape as a semi-independent commercial node complete with

¹⁵The Burbank site for the University, supposedly endorsed by important administration figures and the Los Angeles City Council, was rejected in favor of a site in Westwood where the Southern Branch soon became U.C.L.A. Boosters, however, continued the search for a university for the city. They tried to lure a certain University of International Relations to Burbank but had no success. A 1951 attempt to bring California State College at Los Angeles to Burbank failed when a site was chosen several miles east of the Los Angeles civic center.

¹⁶Burbank Review, March 12, 1921, p. 1.

150 residences, its own newspaper--the Tribune, and a radio station, KELW.

The two subdivisions bore witness to the increasing need to accommodate the rapidly arriving wage earners as well as demonstrating the vast power of the automobile as an agent of dispersal from the established business and residential sectors.

Urban growth in Burbank stemmed from a large number of individual lots as much as it did from any widespread, large scale developments. The current popular image of southern California tract housing as being composed of hundreds of units of uniform ages and styles fails to explain Burbank and some other "older" communities. On the contrary, there is little similarity relating to styles, construction materials, age of houses along a one-mile span of nearly any residential street. This "individual lot sale" sort of development is well illustrated in a news story of April 1923,¹⁷ which listed nearly 40 tracts (in 1, 5, 10 and 20 acre plots) totaling in excess of 350 acres. The headline pointed out that,

Four Hundred and Fifty is the Estimated Number That Has Been Cut Into Lots in Burbank in the Past Year--Many Have Been Substantially Improved.¹⁸

¹⁷Burbank Review, April 27, 1923, p. 1.

¹⁸Ibid.

It also seems to have been a local characteristic that many residents owned the house (frequeuntly a single family, one story unit) they lived in.

The completeness of the landscape change which was under way during the peak years of 1922-1928 (Fig. 9) was clearly pointed up in a newspaper column concerning a man who had bought a town lot in Burbank in 1916 and, after having forgotten it for a while, returned only to find an unsuspected networkd of streets in the emerging northern residential zone,

. . . when he arrived he was woefully puzzled. He'd forgotten the names of the grassy and weedy streets he had seen here, and he was unable to tell the conductor where to stop. And he had a real hard time finding that lot. Dusty and rutted streets that he remembered had been changed to graded or paved thoroughfares. The vacant lots had been built upon and instead of weeds and refuse he found modest homes.¹⁹

The street improvement projects and construction were accompanied by a number of other indicators of urban growth. Prevailling "rural" traits were altered or dismissed. Fewer people continued to leave their houses unlocked after dark, a common habit in farming areas. As automobiles became more widely used, trees were often removed from the vicinity of the intersections on the grounds that they blocked visibility and created hazards. City officials discussed topics concerning garbage pickups, the outlawing of outhouses, the new

¹⁹Burbank Review, February 3, 1921, p. 1.

need for enforcement of traffic and parking regulations, the problem of excess weeds on vacant lots, and the question of erecting debris dams to check the seasonal surge from the numerous canyons whose channels emptied towards the growing settlement. As early as 1925 formal discussion was commenced on the topic of constructing a flood control channel in the Los Angeles river bed--a project not completed until after the disastrous floods of March, 1938.

Spatial expansion was rapid as five tracts of territory were annexed to the city in the early 1920's (Fig. 8). Burbank added some 2800 acres by this means. Some notable changes were discussed in a "booster edition" of the

Tribune:

The total area of the city is approximately fifteen square miles, fully 80 percent of which is subdivided. The balance is in small land holdings and is rapidly being laid out and improved with all public service. . . . Burbank had approximately twenty miles of paved streets on January 1st, 1923. A recent survey shows that within the city limits there are now more than 125 miles of paved streets.
 . . .²⁰

By the 1920's Burbank clearly manifested a transformation from the small center to an emerging urban-industrial city. The population had more than tripled in the past decade and would multiply at an even faster pace during the next one. In addition to the permanent establishment of in-

²⁰ Burbank Tribune, March 8, 1927, p. 1.

dustry, the commercial zone was growing in regional prominence and magnitude, and the residential areas were built up as never before. Agricultural land use waned noticeably and much open land was in vacant lots rather than farms.

CHAPTER 6

DEPRESSION, STAGNATION AND REVIVAL

Spatial expansion and population growth slowed in Burbank during the depression years. Some road building and other public works measures were undertaken at this time. As early as the mid-1930's Lockheed aircraft edged into the position of the dominant local industry.

Minor Landscape Changes

The Burbank landscape underwent little visual modification during the depression although road construction and other activities helped to avert economic stagnation. Relief and public works programs continued road paving and sewer renovation projects which were partially funded by the county. Crews were given innumerable assignments to improve not only existing city streets but they began, for the first time, to cut long stretches of fire roads into the relatively untouched Verdugo Mountains.¹ Sewer lines were also given more attention. Since Burbank had been connected with Los Angeles lines since 1928,² and at least a segment of the

¹Burbank Review, January 19, 1932, p. 1.

²Burbank Review, February 22, 1928, p. 1.

old network was pressure operated, the new system was changed over to the gravity flow system.

That the local economy did not flounder during the early 1930's is probably due largely to the newly-arrived aircraft and motion picture industries. Then, too, the airport near Lockheed became the focal point for more government mail deliveries, air express lines and many notable test flying developments. The prosperity of the motion picture industry remained, in a sense, unscathed by the depression when compared to other industries. Indeed, one of the most revolutionary innovations in its history had just been introduced: talking pictures. "On August 6, 1926, Warner Bros. introduced sound pictures."³ The reliance on sound became standard almost at once and it effected a dramatic turnabout in the stability of Warner Bros. Arthur Knight mentions,

Sound didn't do anything more to the industry than turn it upside down, shake the entire bag of tricks from its pocket and advance Warner Brothers from the last place (among film companies) to first in the league.⁴

And even if this firm employed a small percentage of local residents (generally less than a third of its total), it

³"Facts About Warner Bros. Studio," p. 3.

⁴Arthur Knight, The Liveliest Art (New York: The New American Library, 1957), p. 147.

still contributed greatly to Burbank's financial well-being in the property taxes it paid. A motion picture set storage lot, the Columbia Ranch, moved onto a 40 acre site at the corner of Verdugo Avenue and Hollywood Way in 1935. Burbank at this time still offered extensive open land and easy access to space-consuming activities such as the film companies.

By the 1930's Burbank evidenced a surprisingly wide range of house styles even though there was little marked difference in price class. The single family residence, whether the rare but conspicuous hillside mansion or the more widespread and humbler single story bungalow or Spanish stucco house, occupied the preponderant percentage of the total developed residential land. The quality of house generally fell into the category of "adequate" and "homey" rather than "spacious" or "elegant" and the Review ran an extended series of house styles and floor plans emphasizing the variety possible for a prospective builder of small means. The individual wage earner was the target for many of the real estate developers from the beginning. For example, a syndicate known as the Workingman's Hombuilders had a tract of 26 lots with the hope,

Houses that can be bought with moderate means will be erected here, the group said. The large lots will afford plenty of room for chickens and vegetable gardens.⁵

⁵Burbank Review, January 10, 1940, p. 4.

Note the corresponding attitude here with the view of architect Richard Neutra that the southern California area in general was sought by people trying to face life,

. . . less harshly, more comfortably, and above all informally. . . . They had a native taste for semi-rural land ownership and rusticity in design.⁶

The houses and the few apartment dwellings in Burbank were oriented toward the major and secondary highways, as the city was taking shape as a peripheral suburb of metropolitan Los Angeles. But the rural past was still in evidence as many residential lots alternated with patches of vacant lots and in many areas of the valley, with large acreages of open land. The profile of the business district was in like manner, low-profile and non-distinctive with only a few three and four story structures along the main street. In 1935, a slow year for adding tracts (Fig. 9), 101 new houses were constructed along with 36 industrial buildings, and 13 new business structures.⁷

⁶Richard J. Neutra, "Los Angeles Inventory," California Arts and Architecture, Vol. 60, No. 9 (October-November, 1943), p. 18.

⁷Burbank Review, January 3, 1946, p. 4.

Strengthening the Industrial Base

Burbank's remaining open space proved to be an attractive feature in acquiring major industries. The city's industrial base was strengthened when the Walt Disney Studios relocated its headquarters to acreage only a mile east of Warner Brothers near the Los Angeles river. The move, made possible after the financial success of the feature film, Snow White, was another case of an organization with a space-restricted Hollywood plant that sought Burbank in a search for a large tract of open land within reasonable distance of the Los Angeles and Hollywood business and film centers. The 51 acre site chosen provided the Disney studio with the essentials of an extensive tract just a few minutes drive to Hollywood. The complex, with its thirteen major buildings, was to be a self-contained production center and brought with it the thousand or so employees from the old plant on Hyperion Avenue.⁸ Although only 23 percent⁹ of the workers were Burbank residents (a 1956 estimate), the large acreage still represented a sizable increase to the city's tax rolls. The recent elaboration and expansion of Disney's projects could not be accommodated within the space at the

⁸"Walt Disney Comes to the Valley," Valley Progress, October, 1939, pp. 3-5; 24.

⁹Gerald F. Brommer, Burbank, California: The Urban Geography of an Industrial Suburb. Unpublished M. A. Thesis: University of Nebraska, 1956, p. 82.

Burbank plant. In 1955, the Disneyland amusement part was opened in rural Orange County and in the 1960's Disney's research and development branch was opened in a Glendale industrial park since there was not enough space in Burbank reasonably available.

Ascendency of the Dominant Industry

European war plane orders began to raise aircraft manufacturing from secondary status to leadership in the local economy as well as securing national prominence. Aircraft activity accounted for a notable upsurge on the local scene beginning as early as 1936. Some foreign governments (particularly the British) placed orders for military planes from this time on. Lockheed, which had catered to civilian markets up to this time, found itself in need of additional space in response to the rising number of orders. The Review claimed in 1938 that,

. . . 55 percent of all airplanes manufactured in the United States are made in Southern California and most of them in this vicinity.¹⁰

During the years from 1937 until United States' involvement in 1941 almost phenomenal growth occurred as,

. . . the company [Lockheed] was to experience the most phenomenal growth ever recorded in American

¹⁰Burbank Review, June 23, 1938, p. 1.

industrial history. It was to zoom from the fifth ranking U.S. airframe manufacturer to the largest. Its work force was to multiply more than 40 times to 53,000 and its sales were to skyrocket from \$5 million in 1937 to a staggering \$145 million in 1941. In the one month of December 1941 it was to produce the astonishing total of 325 airplanes--nearly four times more than in the entire year of 1937.¹¹

While making the airframes themselves, Lockheed subcontracted with many smaller manufacturers to produce or partially finish most of the components. Burbank's northwestern sector was gradually dominated by this function.

By the early 1930's urban cover had begun to dominate the landscape. Population growth lagged and areal expansion was halted during the crippling depression years through 1935. Added industrial construction was beginning to expand Burbank's manufacturing zone, especially during the late 1930's.

¹¹Philip L. Juergens, op. cit., Ch. 5, p. 2.

CHAPTER 7

WARTIME INDUSTRIAL BOOM AND SUBSEQUENT RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION

Burbank experienced a prodigious population increment during the war years. The influx came largely to fill the labor short aircraft industry. The workers and their dependents required accommodation beyond the limits of the available housing and by the war's end widespread residential expansion was under way throughout the city and particularly in the northern section.

Aircraft Production

War efforts spurred production and elaboration of Burbank's industrial sector. Local industrial output had been geared to the war demand even prior to America's entry in late 1941. The population had begun a sharp ascent during 1935-40 (Fig. 6). The Lockheed Aircraft Company quickly became a prime enemy target and camouflaged its facilities so that from the air it appeared as an area of tranquil farmsteads. Production requirements called for more workers than were readily available and, due to the Armed Forces drain on the labor force, companies turned to hiring large numbers of women and even high school students. In mid-1943

Lockheed employed a peak of 94,329 workers (as opposed to 30,000 in 1937). During the period 1940-1945 the company completed some 303,000 aircraft.¹ The extraordinary work load on the Burbank facilities was eased somewhat by the creation of feeder plants in other cities which could assume some of the load. Many of the local subcontractors, ranging in size from one and two man shops to the larger operations with upwards of 50 workers, were set up in the vicinity of Lockheed on such streets as Empire, Thornton and numerous others and in the process further bolstered Burbank's industrial sector. Yet despite the post-war contraction, Lockheed and Burbank had undergone a basic transition. In little more than ten years a minor aeronautical firm had emerged as one of the foremost employers in the region as well as Burbank's paramount industry. The future of Lockheed suddenly assumed great importance to Burbank and news of contracts or layoff of workers were front-page news items to the time of this writing.² The city's industrial base had indisputably become aircraft oriented.

Manufactural expansion and war measures brought the remaining agriculture in Burbank to a virtual termination. Japanese farmers, some of whom had been in the area since

¹Philip L. Juergens, op. cit. Ch. 6, pp. 5-6.

²Charles J. V. Murphey, "Lockheed Scrambles for the Battle of the Primes," Fortune, February, 1965, pp. 148ff.

the early 1920's,³ were removed and placed in outlying internment camps as presumed enemies. The former farmland stood idle and much was subdivided into industrial and residential property.

Population Influx and Further Residential Construction

Southern California experienced wartime shortages of skilled labor, housing and construction materials. And in the face of the massive inflow of immigrants, building could hardly keep pace as bricks, pipe, lumber and plaster were scarce commodities. Burbank's population had risen from 20,000 in 1937 to over 34,000 by 1940 and almost 60,000 in 1945 (Fig. 6). At the war's end, one source indicated a 2500 unit housing shortage in Burbank.⁴ Still composed primarily of the single family residence, the city had relatively few multi-unit dwellings to accommodate new residents. In addition to the original citizens, the new residents consisted of,

. . . immigration of veterans; displaced war workers from other sections of the country; war workers who decided to remain.⁵

³Akashi, Kaoru, Representative Collection of Photos of Japanese Residing in Southern California (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1922), no pagination, Burbank Photographs are in the middle part.

⁴Burbank Review, January 3, 1946, p. 1.

⁵Burbank Review, op. cit., p. 4.

Some of the less durable solutions to the housing shortage included stark frame apartment dwellings on Magnolia Avenue near Glenoaks Boulevard, a large trailer park on Burbank Boulevard and the renovated barracks in Glenoaks Park.⁶

The post-war construction activity completed the last large area of non-mountainous land in Burbank. The Benmar Hills subdivision, on the western slopes of the Verdugo Mountains, was soon occupied by the largest single tract development in the city. The former vineyard and orchard lands had remained virtually open land despite the hopes and promotions of the original developers. Legally, it had degenerated into a welter of confusion, defaluting its bonds and leading to a mix-up of title claims.⁷ Only a few of the vaunted stately houses had ever been built and the area was crossed by only a few dirt roads in the late 1940's. The area ultimately developed into what had been originally planned: single family residential tract with nearly 900 houses. It is the closest approximation to a large scale tract section in Burbank. Unlike the post-war "tract cities" of West Covina and Lakewood, Burbank had smaller parcels left for such expansive developments and in this respect could be compared with communities like Inglewood and Santa Monica. College inspired street names of Benmar Hills--Harvard, Stanford, Cambridge--give some evi-

⁶Burbank Review, January 17, 1946, p. 1.

⁷Valley News, June 23, 1966, pp. 1, 12.

dence of the group toward which the tract aimed: young middle income married couples.

The decade of greatest construction in Burbank was 1940-1950, a fact not represented on the tracts recorded graph. The period 1920-1930 saw the peak of subdivision activity in the city's history, but fewer than 3,000 houses were constructed in that span. But during the decade 1940-1950, despite the relatively few tracts recorded, there were over 14,000 residences completed.⁸

By the early 1950's Burbank had become nearly fully merged with the cities on both sides and for those unaware of the location of municipal boundaries it was necessary to note the style and color of street sign and quality of roads to distinguish between two adjacent cities.

A continuing population surge which met local wartime labor demands spurred residential construction. The consequent housing expansion, including the largest single tract in the history of Burbank, nearly completed the saturation of the city's non-mountainous land. This coincided with a general metropolitan-surburban consolidation in Los Angeles.

⁸Brommer, op. cit., p. 156.

CHAPTER 8

THE DOMINANCE OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

Since the mid-1950's Burbank's potential urban land had dwindled to almost nil. The town, except for its mountainous land, has reached near saturation in terms of room for horizontal expansion. Some industrial concerns have added further diversification to the existing assortment of light industries. Burbank's downtown core has floundered in the wake of strenuous competition from newer nearby commercial nodes. Burbank also had a pronounced evolution in residential function as multiple unit dwellings have become increasingly common throughout the older established areas in town.

Open Land Virtually Filled

The postwar construction boom effectively completed the urban cover over most of the face of Burbank. For the first time the non-mountainous land within the city limits had approached near saturation. The availability of large plots of open acreage, long a characteristic and attraction, had become a thing of the past. The continuation of building of all sorts has further reduced the total and a recent (1963)

estimate has placed the number of vacant residential lots as less than 200.¹

The last remnant of open land in Burbank was impinged upon for a variety of uses. The south facing rampart of the Verdugo Mountains, including over 2700 acres, came under both private and municipal uses. The private development took the form of residential extensions onto the hillsides. The Sunset Canyon residential area, a canyon-bottom housing zone built up during the 1930's and 1940's, was the first significant urban penetration of the mountains. A distinguishing feature of the more recent residential building is the practice of grading the land to create level building sites on steep slopes. The very expense involved has limited the number of units constructed as well as placing them in a higher price category. And excluding a sizeable tract at the upper end of Providencia Avenue, most of the development has involved individual lots or small groups of lots. Up to the present, most such developments have occurred in close conjunction with the existing street system and no extensive residential areas emerged as they have in the less rugged Santa Monica Mountains to the south and west.

The city itself also has brought about prominent visible modification of the Verdugos. Long used for municipi-

¹General Plan, City of Burbank. Eisner, Stewart and Associates (South Pasadena: June, 1964), 247 pp.

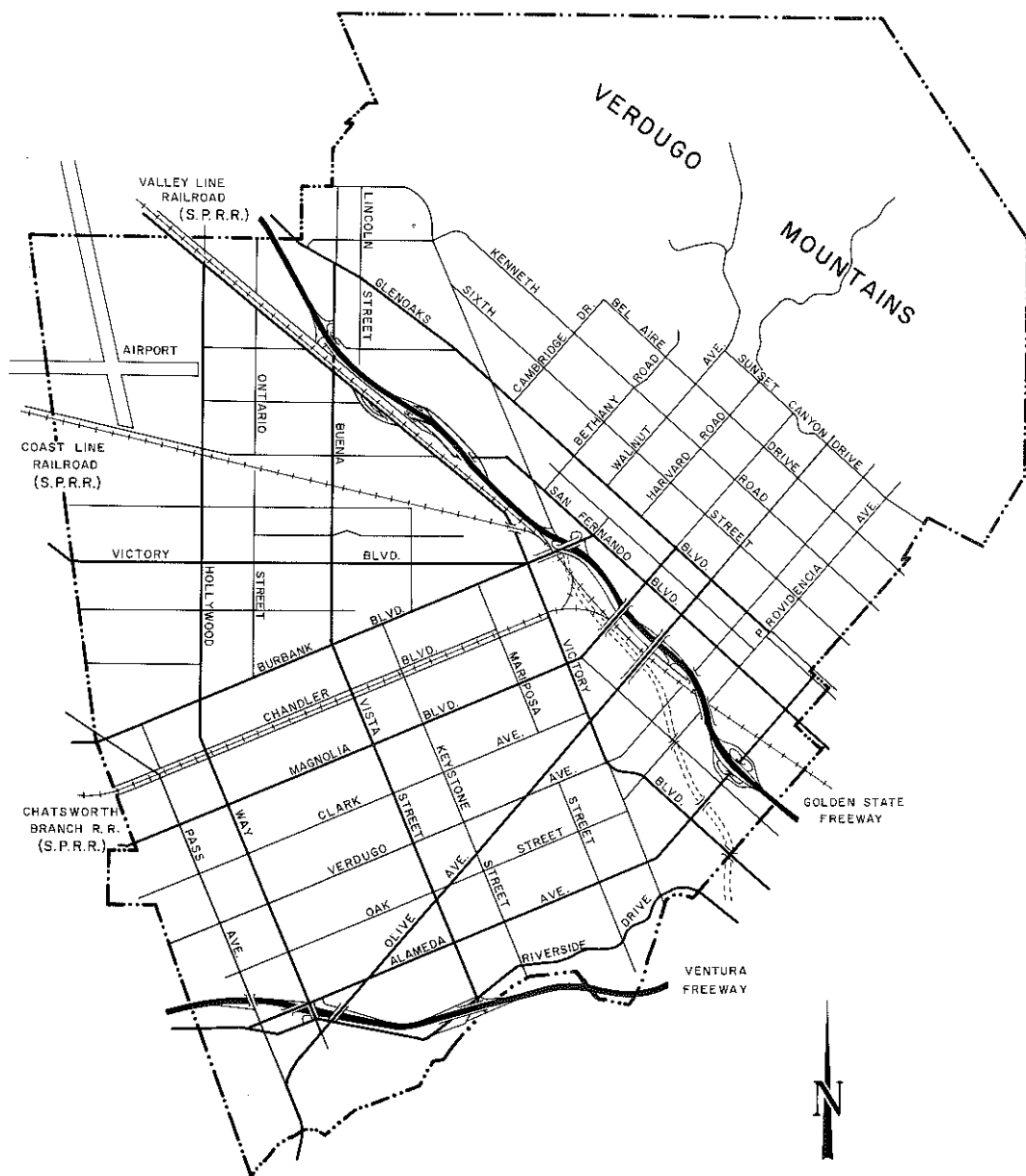
pal water storage reservoirs, the hillside is used for parks, refuse disposal and commercial recreation. The Stough Park area north of Walnut Avenue became the site for an outdoor theatre, Starlight Bowl, in 1951. The nearby V-shaped canyons served as dumping grounds for local rubbish collection vehicles. Initiated in 1949, the reclamation fill project will, on completion, result in the creation of several acres of level land to expand park facilities. The late 1950's also witnessed the construction of a municipally owned 18-hole golf course in the Verdugos. A prestige restaurant, renowned for its hilltop view, was soon added to the complex, which quickly became an attraction which drew customers from the entire region. This area constituted the greatest single alteration of the Verdugos' natural landscape and led to the question of the desirable extent and character of future urban development on these slopes.

Further Industrial Diversification

Despite the surging volume of construction, Burbank still retained large enough parcels of open land to appeal to firms in more congested portions of southern California. The National Broadcasting Company was such a firm that sought more space than the Hollywood facility at Sunset and Vine could offer. The company moved its complete west coast operations to a 47-acre plot at Olive Avenue and Alameda Avenue

Figure 11

Generalized street grid for Burbank.



STREET PATTERN CITY OF BURBANK

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1951-1957. In addition to the need for greater space, the move was also based on the site's proximity to freeways (not completed at that time) and the fact that the valley was undergoing rapid growth generally.² As one of the nationally known firms in the city, it has brought Burbank less fame than might have been expected since most of the programs produced are said to have come "from Hollywood."

The trend towards electronic industries was also seen in Burbank as Bendix Corporation, the electronics division of Elgin Watch Company, Collins Radio, International Electronic Research Corporation and numerous other smaller enterprises become a part of the local industrial structure. Burbank has become noted for a large number of headquarters or home offices of well known organizations. Lockheed Aircraft, Warner Bros. Studios, Walt Disney Productions, National Broadcasting Company (west coast), Baskin Robbins 31 Flavors Ice Cream, Adolf's Limited (meat tenderizer), International House of Pancakes Restaurants (original branch). As the point of saturation nears, only small plots remain for new construction. Some parcels have been organized into small "industrial parks" for light manufacturing uses. The apparent continued attraction of the area is attested to by the recent arrival of the Du Pont photo product sales offices and warehouses and the warehouse of

²Personal communication, N.B.C. Publicity Department, June 6, 1966.

Mode O'Day, a clothing chain.³

Decline of the Central Business District

Stagnation of Burbank's downtown core reached advanced stages in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The main corner of San Fernando Boulevard and Olive Avenue, long the key intersection, had begun to degenerate as the center of activity gradually reoriented westward. By 1956, it was claimed that Burbank Boulevard at San Fernando Boulevard had assumed the position of main intersection in the city. Deterioration and vacancy were widespread in the older central business district.

Perhaps a major contributor to the commercial decline of Burbank's historic main street (San Fernando) were the postwar shopping centers of the Los Angeles area. These nucleated retail centers (such as the Valley Plaza, Panorama City, The Wilshire District) offered a cluster of large department and specialty stores with a huge variety of products and ample offstreet parking in a clean contemporary setting. The freeways may have been a more recent source of drain on the retail trade area of Burbank. The Golden State Freeway (opened in July, 1959), and the Ventura Freeway (opened in September, 1962) cut travel time to outlying areas

³Valley News, May 5, 1966, pp. 1, 14.

and distant shopping centers. Certainly more cars passed through the city than stopped in it. The freeways were responsible for a moderate realignment of some commercial establishments which must also have acted as a drain on the vitality of the downtown area. The arrival of the large chain discount department stores (Zody's above all, Unimart and Leonards) was responsible for some of the most serious recent damage to the central core and it profoundly changed local retail shopping patterns.

Earlier attempts to avert stagnation of the central business district included measures such as the creation of off-street parking lots and tree planting along sidewalks. These moves hardly precipitated the turnabout of the all too obvious trend. More drastic measures were recommended in the General Plan of the City of Burbank completed in 1964.⁴ The plan proposed, in addition to a variety of other suggestions, the construction of a pedestrian mall for a length of six blocks along San Fernando Boulevard. The former street would be occupied by gardens, fountains, kiosks and other attractions. It would be crossed by three streets. Although the idea was opposed by a number of the area's merchants, supporters claimed that it would restore the importance of the historic main street as malls had done for cities like Fresno and Riverside. At the time of this writing the mall appears to be imminent. The city council has

⁴General Plan, 247 pp.

passed the architect's drawings and the projected date of construction is early 1967.

Alterations in Residential Structure

A quiet transformation came across Burbank as many older residences were removed for the erection of new multi-unit structures. The existence of apartment houses was hardly novel in Burbank and structures built in the 1920's and 1930's could be found scattered near the fringe of the downtown area. Similarly, several "strips" of newer (post-war) apartments were a common sight on parts of streets like Alameda Avenue and Scott Road. In most of the cases, however, construction had taken place primarily on vacant lots whereas the distinguishing feature of the recent trend is that the older buildings were either moved or demolished to make way for the new ones--another indication of scarcity of land. The lack of a very large concentration of apartments was obvious since they were scattered in a rather piecemeal fashion, one noticeable orientation being towards freeway on-ramps and main intersections. The new apartments, with their wide range of qualities and styles, increased Burbank's population holding capacity. Many of the streets, on the other hand, were required to bear the additional burden of traffic and parking with no modifications.

Recent innovations in the apartment concept have appeared in Burbank, along with the standard type of multi-unit dwelling. One is the condominium ("own-your-own") apartment. The "rent" is a series of payments on the unit and the upkeep is less costly than with a house. Catering perhaps to a younger group, another type of apartment offers a broad range of organized social activities for all the single tenants. Still others include stables and equestrian care as part of the inducement. The advertising stresses the proximity of the Burbank area to the business and recreation centers of southern California, a contemporary variation on a long-since standard theme.

The near completion of urban cover in Burbank has directed attention to the previously unused mountain slopes. And while development was initiated, the town's functional structure underwent changes following or responding to such regional trends as apartment construction and the viability of competitive retail centers. Local population has stabilized around the 91,000 mark, where it is expected to remain constant, barring drastic changes in available housing. The future will undoubtedly witness the extension of the man-made environment to cover the hill slopes, obliterating the last remnant of the natural landscape, long considered one of the town's major amenities.

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