

COVINA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

During the 1940's, Mary Etta Broadwell write a column for the Argus-Citizen. Thanks to Lucy Wheeler's scrapbooks, (Mary Etta thought of it as just a job), we are able to reproduce them for you, one at a time. Bear in mind that OVER THIRTY YEARS HAS GONE BY since the articles were written. The old-timers are no longer with us.

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// BY MARY-ETTA BROADWELL //
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// The Story of Covina's Pioneer Settlers and Families //
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// Samuel A. Overholtzer //
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The record of the latter half of the life of Samuel A. Overholtzer is, in some respects, a record of the history of California and the development of its horticultural interests. When he crossed the plains in 1864, it required a toilsome journey of six months, overland, to bring him to his destination in California.

As yet, the railroad had not spanned the continent, nor had the telegraph wires brought east and west into instantaneous communication. Then, too, Indians were particularly troublesome, being quick to commit depredations at a time when the government, in the midst of Civil War, could not easily punish the offenders. One who crossed the continent at that time, truly took his life in his hands.

As the name indicated, Mr. Overholtzer was of German descent. He was born and reared in Lancaster County, Penn., and married Maria E. Harnish, who was of German and English extraction. Prior to his marriage, he had accompanied his parents to Ogle County, Ill., and from there he and his wife, shortly after their union, moved to Carroll County in the same state.

In 1864, he brought his family to California, traveling with wagon and horses from Illinois to Sacramento County. After a short time also spent in the San Joaquin Valley, he came to Covina in 1886, one of the earliest settlers.

Purchasing 80 acres of the J. S. Phillips tract, which was located between Puente Street and Rowland Avenue and Azusa Avenue and Hollenbeck, he engaged in fruit culture and had the acreage set out to citrus and a large, comfortable home built on the property. Mr. and Mrs. Overholtzer were exceptionally hospitable, and their home was always open to strangers as well as friends. They would often have as many as 25 to 35 overnight guests at one time, many of them easterners who were looking for a homesite in Covina.

Devout members of the Brethren Church, Mr. and Mrs. Overholtzer were often hosts to members of other Churches who were visiting the Covina congregation, the first Church of this denomination in Southern California.

Not only was Mr. Overholtzer a Deacon of the Mother Church, but has the distinction of being one of the four co-founders of Lordsburg College, now known as La Verne College.

With Daniel Houser, also of Covina, and the brothers, David and Henry Kuns, 100 lots in La Verne were bought for \$15,000. The sale of the College building site was consummated on March 6, 1891 and conveyed by the owners to the Lordsburg College Association on March 30, 1891. The four founders also served as the first trustees. Founders Hall at the college has been named in their honor.

An interesting bit of history is that the "David and Margaret Home for Children" was founded by Henry Kuns in honor of his brother, David, and sister-in-law, Margaret Kuns.

Although he himself had no scholastic training, Samuel Overholtzer was deeply interested in the early days of the institution and it owed much to his zeal and intelligent aid.

There were a number of enterprises in this district with which Mr. Overholtzer was intimately indentified. He held official positions on two different water boards of Covina, and for a number of years, was a director of the Covina Citrus Association, in the organization of which he was greatly interested since his first oranges had been graded and packed in his own barn. He was also a director of the Covina Valley Bank.

The fine property which he accumulated before his death in 1900, and which he left to his children, was secured without aid and was a creditable showing for a man who began in life without influence or capital, indicating his sturdy nature and unflagging industry.

He and Mrs. Overholtzer were parents of 11 children of whom three are still living, Mrs. Carrie E. Ogle of Pasadena, Mrs. Celia Burnham of Burbank and Jesse Irvin Overholtzer of San Antonio, Texas.

The only descendants of this family now living in Covina are a granddaughter, Mrs. Blanche Overholtzer Jones of East Center Street and her sons, Donald Snider and Robert L. Jones, whose son, Ronald, is a great, great grandson of Samuel Overholtzer.

Due to a spinal injury, Donald Snider has received a medical discharge from the U.S. Navy. Pfc. Robert L. Jones is serving with the U.S. Army.

Their mother is the daughter of William Overholtzer and Martha Finch, sister of the late Thomas Finch, Sr., another well-known pioneer.

Mrs. Joe Cornet, Jr., (Winogene Runyan) whose mother was Grace Overholtzer, is a great granddaughter of the Samuel Overholtzers.