

The "Grove"

The library's last column asked the public for research assistance on the area in west Banning known as the "Grove." According to the Tom Hughes book, the "History of Banning and the San Geronio Pass," the American Eucalyptus Company in 1908, bought 200 acres from C. O. Barker "west of town with 100 shares of water stock" for the purpose of producing a commercial Eucalyptus grove. John Repplier, Banning's first tree warden, supervised the planting of the Eucalyptus trees and it was expected that the trees would produce timber for commercial use within five years of being planted. However, the trees produced only saplings and much of the grove was above the reach of table water. After several years of planting and cultivating it became apparent the investment was not going to realize its potential for lumber and the project was abandoned.

In May of 1925, the north half of the Eucalyptus grove was subdivided and put on the market as "Sylvan Acres." Late in 1927, Banning's city limits were extended to include the Eucalyptus grove area. Even today many of the Eucalyptus saplings can still be seen in this area and are remnants of the initial plantings in 1908.

Long-time Banning resident, Clayton Rutherford, approximates the boundaries for the "Grove" as being between Sunset and Sunrise, north of the railroad tracks and south of Wilson. He says both the residential and business areas in this section are still referred to as the "Grove" by some of the old timers in town.

Virginia Lay Henderson of Beaumont called the library with personal information about the "Grove" area. Virginia was the 1938 Cherry Queen and her father had worked on the California Aqueduct tunnel. In 1938, Virginia's mother and father ran a café and truck stop on the northeast corner of Sunset and Ramsey where the Domino's Pizza strip mall is now located. The cafe was called "Julian's" and the property was leased from the Lynch Family. There was also an open-air, wood platform dance floor on Ramsey within some of the Eucalyptus trees, a few blocks east of Sunset called "Juicy's." "Juicy's" charged fifty cents for a dance ticket and had a live band on Saturday nights. Since it was one of the few places for young people to gather in the area it was very popular and the dance floor was crowded. Virginia has fond memories of some of the dances and music at "Juicy's."

Perhaps in keeping with the theme of entertainment along this stretch of the "Grove" a skating rink was established about 1950 on the north side of Ramsey, also a few blocks east of Sunset. The rink was purchased by Charles "Chick" Hoover in 1951 and soon became known as the Banning Roller Rink with its famous mascot, "Pinky the Roller-Skating Donkey."

Lewis Robertson remembers the Banning Roller Rink, the Julian Café and truck stop, and also remembers “Juicy’s” still being an outdoor dance floor shortly after WWII. He mentioned there were numerous “colorful” stories connected with “Juicy’s” and we hope to discover more about this popular Banning night spot. Does anyone else in Banning or Beaumont remember “Juicy’s” or have a photograph of this outside dance floor?

Thanks to all who participated in our “Grove” question of the week. Special thanks to Virginia Lay Henderson, Clayton Rutherford and Lewis Robertson, for their contributions to this article. (Banning Record Gazette, April 8, 2011, by Bill Bell)

Photograph Caption for Article:

“Pinkey, the Roller-Skating Donkey” with owner Chick Hoover and girls at the Banning Roller Rink located on Ramsey Street in the area known locally as the “Grove.”