

NUGGETS OF HISTORY
 Highlights from California's
 Past
 by
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THE FOUNDERS OF LOS ANGELES

The seal and insignia of the City of Los Angeles bears the date 1781 commemorating the year in which the Spanish pueblo of La Reina de Los Angeles was founded by order of Felipe de Neve, Governor of California. But was this the real origin of Los Angeles ? The answer is an emphatic no !

The Spanish pueblo was actually founded in the immediate vicinity of the Vitam Indian's village of Ya, as well as near several other villages (one of which was very close to the Los Angeles Dodger's proposed baseball stadium in Chavez Ravine). The village of Ya is very little known. Los Angeles school children call it Yangna which means " the place or village of Ya." It was probably located between Fort Moore Hill and the Union Station and when the latter was built many Indian relics were found. Unfortunately the village's remains are buried beneath the Civic Center and cannot be studied by archaeologists. Thus we don't know how old Ya was when the Spaniards moved in and changed its name to Los Angeles. We do know, however, that the Vitam village of Tujunga in the San Fernando Valley was carrying on trade with the Indians of southern Arizona as early as 700-900 A.D. Thus Ya may have been founded more than 1,000 years ago !

The arrival of the new settlers in 1781 did not greatly alter the way of life of the Los Angeles area for some time. The village of Ya was merely absorbed into Los Angeles and it continued to exist as a suburb for perhaps seventy more years. The events of 1781 did not greatly change the racial character of the community either, except in the fact that considerable Negro blood was introduced. This may come as a surprise to many readers but 65% of the founders of Los Angeles pueblo were of racially mixed ancestry, that is, they were Indian-Caucasian (Eurindians), Negro-Caucasian (Eurafrians), or Negro-Indian-Caucasian (Afro-Eurindians). 26% of the 1781 settlers were pure Indian but only two out of forty-six were Spaniards, and they had Indian wives. 54% of the settlers had some degree of Indian ancestry and 56% had Negro blood. The following list of the settlers of 1781 should prove interesting to all persons interested in California history:

Name of settler	His Race	Race of Wife	Number and Race of Children
1. Jose de Lara	Caucasian	Indian	Three-Eurindian
2. Jose A. Navarro	Eurindian	Eurafrian	Three-Afro-Eurindian
3. Basilio Rosas	Indian	Eurafrian	Six-Afro-Eurindian
4. Antonio Mesa	Negro	Eurafrian	Two-Eurafrian
5. Antonio Villavicencio	Caucasian	Indian	One-Eurindian

6. Jose Vanegas	Indian	Indian	None
7. Alejandro Rosas	Indian	Indian	None
8. Pablo Rodriguez	Indian	Indian	One - Indian
9. Manuel Camero	Eurafrican	Eurafrican	None
10. Luis Quintero	Negro	Eurafrican	Five - Eurafriean
11. Jose Moreno	Eurafrican	Eurafrican	None
12. Antonio Miranda	Chinese	Not Known	One - Chinese

Some readers may wonder how it came about that the founding settlers of a Spanish pueblo were mostly of Indian and Negro blood. The reason was that the Spanish citizens who came to California in the 1700's and 1800's were not from Spain (except for the governors, priests and a few others); rather they were from the Mexican provinces of Sonora and Sinaloa. Most of the people of these areas were Indians, although a large number were Eurindians, Eurafriean and Afro-Eurindians. The few Spaniards living in Sonora and Sinaloa were comparatively wealthy and had no desire to come to California. The Mexicans who emigrated to California were always from the very poorest classes and were financed by the government.

In Spanish and Mexican California the Indian, Negro and Caucasian racial strains merged together and eventually the African heritage was completely absorbed. The possession of Negro blood was apparently not a liability as Governor Manuel Victoria, 1830-1831, was said to be of Negro ancestry and the last Mexican governor, Pio Pico, was of Indian, Negro and Caucasian descent.

It seems unfortunate that very few Californians are aware of the Indian origin of most of our cities and towns, and of the racially cosmopolitan character of our state historically. No monuments have been erected to commemorate the activities of the Yavitam (the people of Ya) or to honor the humble founders of the pueblo of Los Angeles. This seems a shame indeed.