

Herbert Jeffers Store/Gardena Hotel



STILL STANDING—The H. Jeffers Store as seen circa 1905 and as the building appears today. The structure remains at its original site at 825 W. Gardena Blvd.

From Market to Hotel, Building Has Survived More Than a Century of Change

By JAMES OSBORNE
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

Back around 1908, a small promotional booklet was printed by the Gardena Reporter newspaper entitled "Gardena, California." It contained various images of Gardena homes, farms, churches, and businesses throughout the Gardena Valley.

Today, if a person conducted a survey of the 32 images of Gardena structures found inside the booklet, they would discover that only one of those early structures is still standing. That building is what was commonly known back then as "Herbert Jeffers Store."

The structure is still located today on its original building site at 825 Gardena Blvd.

Herbert Jeffers was born in the state of New York in December 1859. His wife, Inez was born in Iowa in April 1861. The couple wed in 1886 and later journeyed to California sometime after 1890 along with their two young daughters, Hazel and Marjorie. Their third daughter, Gladys was born in California in 1893.

The Jeffers family was living in Gardena, California as early as 1892, when Gardena's population totaled only about 140 residents. Land records for March 1892 show a real estate transfer between early Gardena pioneer, Spencer R. Thorpe and Inez M. Jeffers, for 3.75 acres in "farm lot 49" for \$750.

The old home where the family once lived originally stood at 16525 S. Berendo Ave.

In 1905, Jeffers constructed his rectangular store building on what is today a portion of

the Los Angeles "shoe-string" strip. The City of Gardena Historical Resource Survey Report, produced in 1981, regarded the buildings design as, "Utilitarian style influenced by Spanish Colonial architectural elements."

The exterior of the two-storied building remains largely unaltered today, with the exception of an additional upstairs window on the front side.

The Dec. 8, 1904 edition of the Gardena Reporter briefly described Jeffers and his store. The passage reads: "H. Jeffers is proprietor of the pioneer general merchandise store on the northeast corner of Palm Avenue and Ainsworth Street and carries a large stock of

trustee for the Gardena Grammar School in 1901, when the total number of students attending was less than 160.

The Jeffers residence was also made available for meetings of the "Gardena-Moneta Farmers Club." The club's discussions included dairying and poultry raising. The Jeffers family was also among the charter members of the Gardena Methodist Church, which incorporated on Oct. 25, 1893.

Church meetings were actually held in the upstairs hall of the Jeffers Store for the first year and a half after the church was organized.

It is believed that Herbert Jeffers sold his store in 1927. The 1920 United States Census lists a widower named Herbert Jeffers living in Compton, Calif. and also working as the manager of a feed mill.

He may or may not be the same person who once owned the Gardena store.

Today the old Jeffers Store building still stands as a forgotten memorial to the man who built it. Most people know the building today simply as the Gardena Hotel.

The eastern downstairs half serves as a medical supply store. However, the western downstairs half serves as a store providing baby food. Not exactly the same fare that Jeffers' store once offered of "boiled cider, mince meat, hominy, and pickles," but still a food store non-the-less.

James Osborne is an author of South Bay history and was a contributor to the book: "Gardena" published by Arcadia Publishing in 2006. His family was among the early settlers in the Gardena area, arriving in 1902.

Gardena Valley Yesterday & Today

everything pertaining to that line and also patent medicines."

The paper further states in the "Local Notes" section that, "H. Jeffers orders the REPORTER sent to his friend, L. Fikes, in Red Oak, Iowa. Hope others will do likewise."

The second floor of the Jeffers Store building originally served as a meeting hall and included a stage. During the 1920s, it was used as a pool hall. From 1924 until 1927, back when the original address was designated as 827 ½ Palm Avenue, the second floor housed the Gardena Library. Since 1929, the building has been known as the "Gardena Hotel."

Herbert Jeffers is also credited as serving as Gardena's first postmaster and remained in that position until 1898. He was also active in other community affairs and served as a

OUR BILL OF FARE FOR THE PRESENT

—O—O—

BOILED CIDER
MINCE MEAT (in bulk)
HOMINY
SAUER KRAUT
HEINZ PICKLES (in bulk)
OLIVES } Bulk Bottles Cans

H. Jeffers

N. E. Corner Palm Avenue
and Ainsworth Street

GARDENA

CALIFORNIA

Advertisement for H. Jeffers Store was taken from the Dec. 8, 1904 edition of the Gardena Reporter.

Today, if a person conducted a survey of the 32 images of Gardena structures found inside the (1908 promotional) booklet, they would discover that only one of those early structures is still standing.