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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GRIFFITH JENKINS GRIFFITH

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF COLONEL GRIFFITH JENKINS GRIFFITH

My grandfather, my father and myself wereborn in the same stone house on a little eighty acre farm called Penn Bryn near Bridgend, Glamorganshire, about thirty miles from Cardiff, South Wales. I was born on January 4, 1850. On that little farm were a few cows, horses and sheep, as well as a large poultry yard.

My earliest memory is between the age of 4 and 5, when I received the most terrible beating that I ever experienced, the result of which was that my thighs, hips and sides were black and blue, it was said for some days after.

It was the time of year when geese were hatching, and the boss of the barnyard at that time was a large white gander. While I was feeding several goslings, the old gander attacked me from the rear, caught hold of my white canvas pinafore, and holding me fast with his bill, beat me unmercifully with his wings until someone came to my rescue.

I am the eldest of nine living children, and at a very early age, owing to the delicate health of my mother, I had been entrusted to the care of my grandparents who were then living on that farm. I remained with them, attending school part of the time, feeding stock, herding sheep, and doing whatever else I could until I was nine years old.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Church of England was within 10 minutes' walk, we never attended their services, although paying annual tithes. There was another small church, Baptist by denomination, within a couple of blocks of our house

where Sunday school and church were held regularly, and I accompanied my grandparents to these services unless they were ill or the weather was so unfavorable that they could not go.

Then I was commanded to attend divine service, notwithstanding, and above all things not to forget the text. This was a hard task for me during those early years. More than once, overcome by the tedious length of the service, I would fall asleep in our little pew, and forget all about the text, and be obliged to inquire of some good neighbor before I arrived at home.

Upon announcing it, my grandparents would turn to the text in the place indicated in the Bible, and read the part, if not the whole chapter, from which the text was taken.

Before I was quite nine years old, both grandparents died, and I then lived with my Aunt Sarah, (father's sister, a widow), part of the time with father and then with other relatives in a manufacturing town called Maesteg, containing about 13,000 population, supported principally by coal and iron mines, rolling mills and blast furnaces, situated about 5 miles distance from my former home.

I remained there for a time, attending public school and part of the time driving a public horse, and the two of us earned a crown a day, equivalent to about a dollar and a quarter, American money. My father, at that time, owned and used a large number of teams and heavy draft horses to convey on small dump cars the raw materials from the railroad junction to the iron works and bring back the finished product

to reload the cars.

Shortly after I had passed my fourteenth birthday, a relative from the United States returned to our town on a visit, and offered to bring me over here, and to keep me in school for a number of years, which offer I immediately accepted.

I came to the United States in 1866 on the ship known as "The City of London". It was in the winter time when we landed in New York. A few days later we arrived in Ashland, Schylkill County, Pennsylvania, where I was immediately sent to the public school -- a large brick building with far superior school facilities to anything that I had seen in the old country.

After several months spent in the public schools in this town, I went to Danville, Montour County, Pennsylvania. About half way there, I stopped at a farm house where the old farmer was chopping wood. I showed him that I could handle the axe much better than he by cutting enough kindling wood to last them for a week. I had lunch with them before continuing my journey.

On arriving in Danville, I immediately formed the acquaintance of an old and esteemed resident by the name of Benjamin Mowry. After hearing my story, the old man took me to his home and introduced me to Mrs. Jane Mowry, his wife, and I then and there made a verbal bargain with them, the substance of which was that in consideration of their keeping me in school for five years, I would in turn do all of their chores in and out of the house during that period; that, if either party were dissatisfied, he would give the other at least a week's notice before any change would be made. There never

being any dissatisfaction, I remained with them the full five years.

The same evening, after the introduction to Mrs. Mowry, it developed that the old people had strong political proclivities, the old gentleman being a rabid Republican. It also developed that their only son, wounded in the army, had died of his wounds about a year prior to this time. When he was about my age, we must have looked alike, for this was frequently referred to. I grew up in their affections, and they in mine, so that our conduct toward each other was more like that of affectionate parents and child than of strangers.

They were not wealthy but moderately well-off and universally respected by all, and were considered influential people about Danville. Their principal income was about \$60.00 a month, derived from renting four cottages, while they lived in the fifth, in a prudent and economical manner.

They were devout Christians, attending the Methodist Church when their health and that rigorous climate would permit. "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you", was ever uppermost in their minds, and they practiced as they preached. Mrs. Mowry, before her marriage, was a Miss Alexander, a descendant of the old Mayflower stock. She had taught public school for some years before her marriage, and with her experience she was of value to me with my studies. Mr. Mowry was a German by birth, who arrived in this country when he was very young.

I attended the Methodist Church and Sunday school with them, and, when the weather or their health would not permit them to leave the house, I invariably attended services and brought home the text, from which Father Riley, familiarly called, (one of the most eminent Methodists pulpit-orators in all Pennsylvania), preached.

The Mowrys had a large Bible containing several books which our modern Bible does not contain, and from that Bible they would read a number of passages bearing on that text. It was a nightly occurrence for us to read some passages from the Holy Scriptures before retiring. I undertook the task of reading the Bible from cover to cover, which I did twice while I lived with them and attended the Danville schools.

From fifteen to twenty is the most interesting and instructive age of a boy's life, as it is the time when he changes from boyhood to manhood, and during this time his views of affairs broaden. During that period I had before me a constant example of the highest standard of Christian morality known to man.

Scolding or harsh language was unknown in this family. I never heard either Mr. or Mrs. Mowry use an unkind word to each other or to myself. There never existed in my mind an unkind thought towards them. The nearest thing to reproach that I ever received, or that could possibly be construed as such was something like this: on one occasion while at school some boys had told me about a wonderful story book which they had read, and which they recommended as a most delightful and interesting story. As

the price of the book was only ten cents, I immediately procured it, took it home and showed it to Grandma Mowry, (a term of endearment I generally used), and told her what the boys had said about it. Before I had read a single sentence, she told me it was a ten cent novel containing nothing but lies; that in all probability there was not a single truthful sentence within its covers, and that a boy who would fill his mind with such trash would have no place for literature such as was intended to elevate and instruct humanity. She said to me, "You can do just as you please, now that you have it, but if I were in your place, I would put it in the stove and burn it, rather than read any portion of it." Without another word I placed the 10-cent novel in the stove, and I have never read one of them from that day to this.

At the expiration of the five year term I had agreed to remain with the Mowry family, I had an opportunity to attend an institute on Broadway in New York, conducted by Professors Fowler, Wells and Sizer. As my means were limited, and as it was evident that I would have to start out in the world for myself, I was doubly fortunate in forming the acquaintance of Mr. Bergner of Bergner and Engle of Philadelphia.

Through him I was placed in a position where I could be of great service to him and his associates, not only in Pennsylvania, but in Highland, New York. My employment by them proved to be very lucrative to me, so much so that in less than two years I had saved from my earnings nearly \$3,000.

In the latter part of 1872, I determined to see a little more of the world and pay a visit to my relatives and childhood home in the Old Country. To defray the expenses

of this contemplated journey, I retained about \$500.00 of my little fortune, deposited the balance in the Odd Fellows Bank in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and started on my visit.

After a brief tour of Continental Europe, I returned to Great Britain, made a flying trip through England, Ireland and Scotland before returning to my native home in Wales, where I spent some weeks.

In drawing on the bank shortly before I had intended to start on my return to the United States, I learned that the Odd Fellows Bank in which I had deposited nearly all my earnings, had failed. This knowledge hastened my departure, and on reaching home, I succeeded in getting enough from the bank to pay my expenses to California, where I arrived in 1873. Later the bank paid depositors in full.

At San Francisco I was informed that Los Angeles might be a good place for a young man to make a start, and I came here by boat, there being at that time no railway connection between the two cities.

I found Los Angeles a sleepy sort of a Mexican town of about 6000 to 7,000 population. About nine-tenths of its inhabitants seemed to be Mexicans and Indians, the rest being white. I was at that early date deeply impressed with the great possibilities of this place, although I could not then find an opening where I could utilize my knowledge and energies to advantage, so I returned to San Francisco.

Soon after my return to San Francisco, I formed the acquaintance of Fred McCrellish and W. A. Woodward, who were the proprietors of the "Daily Alta California", the greatest

newspaper in the West.

At that time the San Francisco "Examiner" was in existence, and ran as a small evening newspaper, which was edited by Philip A. Roach. The "Daily Call" edited by Pickering, and the "Chronicle" by Charles DeYoung were rival morning papers, while the "Post" owned by Hinton and George, and the "Bulletin" by George K. Fitch, were rival evening papers.

Messrs. McCrellish and Woodward had married sisters, and owned and lived in a handsome home on Pine Street. These gentlemen were both from Philadelphia, and took a friendly interest in me. They informed me if I had knowledge of mining I could be useful to them, because the mining interests were pre-eminently the greatest of all California's enterprises, inasmuch as at one time they produced from the different mines nearly \$1,000,000.00 a year in gold and silver, exclusive of quicksilver, copper, lead and other minerals.

I told them I was willing to learn; if I had suitable books on mineralogy and geology, I thought I could equip myself in a short time, so that I could act as a correspondent from the different mining camps on the Coast.

Up to that time, neither the "Alta", nor any other of the daily papers in California had made mining a special branch. I immediately took up the study of mining and through the kindness of the proprietors of the "Daily Alta", I was introduced to nearly all the great mining and railroad magnates of the Pacific Coast, all of them having their headquarters in San Francisco.

It was through them that I had the pleasure of meeting Stanford, Crocker, Huntington and Hopkins, then the "railroad kings" of the Pacific Coast, and also Senator Jones, Senator Sharon, D. O. Mills, and W. C. Ralston of the Bank of California, Flood and O'Brien, Mackey and Fair, known as the "bonanza kings", and Lucky Baldwin, James R. Keene and James Phelan, who were then among the leading mining operators through the California stock boards.

J. D. Haggin, George Hearst and Alvinza Hayward were considered the leading conservative mine owners. J. S. Slauson was the most prominent capitalist in Austin, while Captain Plater was the head banker with Paxton and Company in Eureka, Nevada; and many others, all of whom commended the "Alta" management for its enterprise, and cheerfully offered to extend every courtesy to me for the purpose of examining and reporting on any and all properties owned or controlled by them.

The late John W. Mackey, personally showed me through what was then known as the "Con Virginia California Bonanza" several times at different stages of its development. From that bonanza nearly \$200,000,000.00 had been taken out in gold and silver, about forty per cent of which was gold and sixty per cent silver.

Through the courtesy of Senator Jones and the late Senator Sharon and General Charles Forman, I was given access to "Crown Point Belcher Bonanza", from which was extracted about \$50,000,000. From the "Comstock Lode", as it was called, (only 2 1/2 miles in length) there had been produced up to date in gold and silver in the neighborhood of

\$500,000,000. When the Virginia City and the Gold Hill Mines were in their highest state of development, and the mines were frequently flooded, Adolph Sutro conceived the idea of the famous tunnel, which bears his name, and which later was built. It was five miles long, and tapped the Savage Mine of the Comstock Lode in Virginia City, 1700 feet below the surface, so that all water at that level would run by gravitation out through the tunnel.

My mining visits became frequent and were not confined to the Comstock Lode but were frequent to Austin, Eureka, White Pine, Lord, Pioche, and many other districts in the eastern and northeastern part of Nevada, as well as Utah, Idaho, and sometimes into Arizona, New Mexico, and a portion of Old Mexico, where later I became interested.

In the winter of 1876-77, I was engaged by a syndicate of stockholders composed of Mr. J. B. Haggin, Mr. Redding, and a few others to report on the development and exposed condition of the "Great Con Virginia California Bonanza".

It was quite an undertaking, and I keenly felt the responsibility, but I was ambitious and with the consent of the proprietors of the "Alta", I hurried to Virginia City, and spent the greater part of three days in investigating the bonanza and the lower levels of the adjoining mines, where the heat was so intense I lost several pounds of weight in that short time.

My report, however, was so satisfactory and profitable to the syndicate that I was paid \$1,000 per day, cash, for the three days, and a few days later they presented me with \$5000.00 additional.

In 1879 the late James Phelan, Con O'Conner, Mr. Redding and a Mr. Applegate requested me to report on a mining property in Bingham Canyon, Utah, and another at the foot of Prospect Mountain, Nevada. The former was not available and nothing was done with it; but the latter was more favorably located, being on a small ledge with the Eureka and Richmond Consolidated companies' properties out of which about \$80,000,000 had been extracted in gold and silver.

A short time later some fifteen mining claims were acquired by purchase and located between the Richmond Consolidated and the Silver Lick Company, and the group was deeded to the company of which I was selected for its superintendent, and \$10,000 was placed in the bank subject to my order, to be expended in the development of the property.

In 1880, at a depth of about 300 feet a large body of low-grade ore was discovered, before the old hoisting works burned down, when promptly new hoisting machinery was erected over a double compartment shaft; winches were sunk, cross-cuts run and although the ore proved an immense body, yet as a whole, it was of too low a grade to pay for reduction. The narrow streaks of rich ore found in it made it, however, a very promising speculative property for some time.

In the summer of 1880 I had an opportunity of becoming interested, with some friends in Chihuahua, Mexico, and made a flying trip there. We met Mr. Johnson, the superintendent, in the city and with him inspected the silver mines which were situated in the Sierra Madre Mountains, about 90 miles from the city of Chihuahua. A great deal of work had been done on the property and rich ore was exposed in many places and in large quantities. I was so favorably impressed with what I saw, and

the liberal proposition made to me that I promptly accepted it. All that time silver was valued very highly and a good silver mine was considered as valuable as one producing gold.

In 1881 I made another short trip to the Mexican property which impressed me more favorably than before. At the same time I stopped over in Los Angeles for a few days, and was also more favorably impressed with its qualities, because its white population had increased and it was beginning to show some enterprise.

Early in 1882, a Chicago syndicate through the Honorable Thomas Wren of Eureka, Nevada, secured a controlling interest in the group referred to of 15 mining claims, near the Richmond, and I resigned the superintendency, and after taking friendly leave of my friends in Nevada and San Francisco, I proceeded to the mines in Chihuahua, and from there on a flying business trip direct to London and Paris.

I returned to New York City, where, by appointment I met those interested in the Mexican silver mines, all of whom were people of wealth. The silver market did not look favorable to me, and consequently I sold a part of my interest for \$50,000, which money I deposited in the Citizen's Bank of Pennsylvania, and through an agent loaned out a large portion at 6 per cent. I had seen so much poverty all my life that I deemed it wise to turn a portion of my interest into money.

Later the market value of silver was materially reduced, and for a long time was a drug on the market, and interest in the silver mines was in a state of stagnation, so much so

that I have never been able to get anything for my remaining interest in the Mexican mines.

In the spring of 1882, when my bank account seemed large to me, I visited my noble benefactors, the Mowrys, and I may say that it was not only a cordial welcome, but an affectionate reunion. Although we had regularly corresponded, they had never informed me nor even intimated that they had been reduced to poverty through the terrible iron strike in that region, the information coming to me through neighbors; (the Mowrys were too proud to tell me).

After that they were made comfortable until their death in the winter of 1886, when I caused to be erected over their graves the most handsome monument then in Danville cemetery, a Greek shaft 18 feet high of polished granite with an appropriate inscription thereon.

Born of Christian parents and raised under Christian influences, I naturally acquired religious tendencies, and I have always been interested in churches and theology in general. I have made many visits to Europe and London and on such occasions I have never missed an opportunity to listen to the greatest pulpit-orators such as Beecher, Talmadge, Sturgeon, Newman Hall, and many others.

I have on many occasions contributed toward the erection and support of different churches and in 1884, when the Catholic Church at the corner of Washington and Grand Avenue was being erected, the late Father Meyer and Mr. Sabichi called on me, and earnestly solicited aid for its construction. I responded with a donation of \$50. The Crocker Street Presbyterian Church and others could be named.

I returned to Los Angeles in the summer of 1882, and after looking around and examining various properties, I decided to buy the Feliz Rancho, which then contained a little over four thousand acres.

The Feliz Rancho, (meaning "Happy Farm"), contained originally nearly seven thousand acres of land, including the Lick Tract and a part of the City of Hollywood, and was acquired by Juan Feliz by a grant from the Old Mexican government, and subsequently confirmed by a United States Patent.

This tract lay adjoining the City of Los Angeles on the north, and with reference to the Los Angeles River, it is very peculiarly situated, being nearly bounded or traversed by the river in several directions, so that from a point at or near First and Alameda Streets (where I have seen the river three feet deep and covering the entire distance between the corner and where the Santa Fe Station is now located), it would lie north of the river, while from Burbank Lake, the head of the Los Angeles River in the San Fernando Valley, the Ranch would be correctly described as lying south, the irregular course of the stream making it possible to designate it as lying in three different directions from the river, depending upon the point of the compass from which the description was made.

I negotiated for the purchase of the Rancho through an attorney named J. A. Graves of this city and to satisfy myself as to the title of the land and the water rights, I engaged the most prominent law firm in this city, Messrs. Thom and Ross, and later, George W. Knox, to inspect and pass upon it, which they did, and assured me that it was as good as

the United States Government could make. On the property was an old adobe mansion occupied by its third purchaser, a Southern gentleman by the name of Baldwin.

After depositing with Mr. Graves the sum of money as a pledge of good faith, I went to San Francisco to consummate the transaction with the owner, Mr. Thomas Bell, then a millionaire and a director in the California Bank.

I informed him that as a portion of my means was otherwise invested, it would be impossible for me to pay the whole amount of the purchase price at that time, at which he readily consented to accept the partial payment, and to accept 6 per cent interest on the balance. The next important consideration was the form of deed I was to receive, and this he decided without hesitation by directing his counsel, the late C. Temple Emmett, to prepare a "Warranty" deed, which he signed, acknowledged and personally handed to me.

After arranging the details for the management of my newly acquired acquisition, the Rancho, I concluded to make a more extensive tour of Europe, and a large portion of the civilized world, which intention I carried out, and I had the good fortune to be accompanied by four gentlemen who spoke several foreign languages, so that in our party was represented French, German, Spanish, Italian and English, which enabled us to travel with facility in all parts.

The management of the tour was placed in the hands respectively of the gentleman speaking the language of the country we were visiting. In Germany, a German-American assumed the responsibility of guiding the party; in France, a Frenchman who had been educated in Rome and spoke Italian

as well as Spanish performed the service, while I had the honor of piloting the party through Great Britain.

We visited nearly all the great cities of the Old World and all the famous city parks then known. We returned to Paris and bidding adieu to my companions, I returned to my native home in Wales, and found that misfortune had overtaken my father; that he was financially embarrassed, and had a family of eight children for whom to care, some of whom were very young.

As I realized from my early experiences that their education and opportunities might be improved in America, I invited them to come here and share my home at the Los Feliz Rancho. They gladly accepted my proposition, and a year later arrived. The three youngest children were kept in school for five years.

After making arrangements for the removal of the family to America, I returned to Los Angeles, and at my earliest convenience I visited and made a more thorough inspection of the Los Feliz Rancho, and was more favorably impressed with the natural beauties and advantages than I had ever been before.

With the visions of the beautiful city parks I had visited throughout Europe and America then fresh in my mind, I was able to make comparisons and judge the relative merits, and I was then forced to the conclusion that there was not a territory in the immediate vicinity of any great city in the civilized world so desirable for park purposes as the Los Feliz Rancho.

Its altitude, its wild and romantic scenery, its unrivalled climatic conditions and many other attractions seemed to me to leave nothing wanting to make this the most magnificent city park in the world and one which any city could be proud to possess. I then conceived the idea and entertained the hope that someday I might be so fortunate in my financial affairs that I could afford to donate a large portion of it to the city of my adoption, and thereby bestow upon its citizens and humanity in general a blessing which they might enjoy for all time, and to which others might come and perhaps contribute so that Los Angeles might have not only the largest but the grandest park in the world.

As a business proposition, conducting this large ranch successfully involved an investment of many thousands of dollars in farm implements and stock. I resided on the ranch for several years and gave it my personal supervision. I had reached the conclusion that the most profitable method of conducting the ranch would be to stock it with the highest grade of stock that could be procured, reasoning that the cost of raising and keeping would be no greater, and the income from its sale would far exceed that of common stock; also, there was the satisfaction of knowing that I had the best that could be obtained.

I, therefore, purchased and bred from the finest Holstein cattle. My colts were from "General Crook", with a trotting record of 2-12, and my hogs were from the best Berkshire strains. Taken altogether I possessed the finest collection of blooded stock in this section of the country, and one which justified the contemplation of it on my part

with pardonable pride. Prior to that time, only the razor back hogs had been raised, and Jersey cattle, which did not give as much milk as the Holstein.

At one time there roamed over the hills and plains about six thousand sheep, fifty horses, one hundred fifty head of cattle, principally dairy stock, and a large number of hogs, and a portion of the land was devoted to raising alfalfa, corn, beans and barley.

Early in 1884, it developed that the City of Los Angeles was very anxious to obtain more perfect title to its water rights. It was deemed highly important for the City to purchase the water rights I had acquired with the Feliz Ranch. To that end the City Council appointed a committee composed of Joseph Wolfskill and the late Frank Sabichi.

After many consultations with the committee, I agreed to accept \$50,000 from the City for it, although I had been offered a larger sum by private speculators. I deemed it for the best interest of all parties to sell it directly to the City of Los Angeles, and the transaction was completed that same year.

The late Frank Sabichi, formerly a City Councilman of the City of Los Angeles, furnished a lengthy article relative to the title of the water acquired by the City from the owner of the Feliz Rancho, which was published in the Los Angeles Herald on April 20, 1893, in which he stated suit was brought against Leon Baldwin and others, the owners of the Feliz Rancho, in the Seventeenth Judicial District Court of California, before Judge Sepulveda, to fix the ownership of the corpus of the water in the river, etc.; that the Court found "that the Feliz Rancho was granted by the Mexican government in 1843; that in 1858

a patent in pursuance of that decree of confirmation of the title of the Rancho was issued; that the owners of the Rancho and their grantors have, since the grant of the Rancho, continually claimed and exercised the right to take water from the said river for the purpose of irrigating the rancho adversely to plaintiff and the whole world, and that they have not taken more than their fair proportion of the water for irrigation as riparian proprietors."

He firmly states that another action was subsequently instituted by the city against the same defendants to quiet the title of the City to all the waters of the river; in which the lower court found that the owners of the Feliz Rancho were "entitled to appropriate and use two irrigating heads of the waters of the river."

This decision was affirmed by the Supreme Court through Chief Justice Wallace and Justice Rhodes in 53 California Reports, page 469. The measurement of this "two irrigating heads" determined the fact that the Feliz Rancho was entitled to the use of eight feet of the waters of the Los Angeles River, and as the entire supply was 16 feet, it left to the City the only other riparian proprietor, the remaining eight feet, or one-half of the entire amount.

In 1885, the demand for money in Los Angeles was very great, and loans could be readily made at eight per cent. This, together with the fact, that my money was invested in Pennsylvania, where the securities were not under my personal supervision, induced me to recall loans in the East and reinvest the money here. I loaned many thousands of dollars to parties here on properties well known to me, and over which transactions I had personal supervision.

I opened an office on Main Street, and among those who borrowed money of me at 8 per cent was the late Louis Mesmer of the U.S. Hotel and some friends of his. The U.S. Hotel at that time was the leading hostelry in Los Angeles. I also loaned to Mr. Mesmer's friend, the late General Sanford of Santa Fe Springs on an indorsed note. I next loaned two of his friends at Anaheim \$9,000, receiving as security, the hotel and bank buildings at that place. Most of my loans were made in this City and ^{the} securities proved to be so valuable that I never lost a dollar on any of them.

Mr. Mesmer and his family then resided between First and Second Streets on Broadway, then called Fort Street. Up to this time I had never met Mrs. Mesmer nor either of their two daughters. One afternoon Mr. Mesmer called on me, and urgently invited me to dine with him at his house that evening for the purpose of meeting and forming the acquaintance of the family, which invitation I cheerfully accepted.

The ladies were very amiable and made it so pleasant for me, that at their solicitation I called after that time very often. In turn, I frequently invited them to the theater and other parties. Thus our acquaintance began and grew to friendship, and from friendship to my deep affection for the elder daughter called "Tena".

In the early spring and summer of 1886, my calls grew more frequent and "Tena" and I spent two or three evenings together each week exclusive of picnic parties on my ranch, at the beach and elsewhere. In September, 1886, I proposed and was accepted.

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The wedding took place at the Mesmer residence on the morning of the 27th of January, 1887, Vicar General Hartnett, officiating.

On August 29, 1888, Van M. Griffith was born, who was the only child of our marriage.

On December 16, 1896, as a Christmas present to the City of Los Angeles, I donated 3,015 acres of the Los Feliz Rancho to be used as a public park. My reasons for so doing were set forth in a letter to the Mayor and City Council of Los Angeles, which is as follows:

"To the Mayor and City Council of Los Angeles:

"Your Honor and Gentlemen:

"In the course of twenty-three years of active business life in California, I have become proudly attached to our beautiful city of Los Angeles, which, through its great natural advantages and its matchless climate, averaging three

hundred sunny days in the year, is destined to soon become a great metropolis. The arduous work of these years has been rewarded with fair success and recognizing the duty which one who has acquired some little wealth owes to the community in which he has prospered and desiring to aid the advancement and happiness of the city that has been for so long and always will be my home, I am impelled to make an offer, the acceptance of which by yourselves, acting for the people, I believe will be a source of enjoyment and pride to my fellows and add a charm to our beloved city. Realizing that public parks are the most desirable feature of all cities which have them, and that they lend an attractiveness and beauty that no other adjunct can, I hereby propose to present to the city of Los Angeles, as a Christmas gift, a public park of about three thousand acres of land in one body, situated a fraction over a mile north of the northern city line, including fully two and a half miles of the frostless foothills bordering on the Cahuenga valley, five miles of the Los Angeles river bottom, the lands generally known as the Ostrich Farm and the beautiful little valley which was called the Press Colony site. Also with these lands the improvements thereon, consisting of several buildings and a water plant with tunnels and piping, the original cost of these having been over \$10,000, and all of which will be of service and benefit in improving the park. The park will include over two thousand acres of tillable land and some of the most romantic scenery of any park in the world. Not only will it be the largest city park in the world, but its diversity of picturesque valley, hill, river and mountain, with its many

varieties of trees and its rich undergrowth, render it susceptible of being cultivated into the most beautiful of parks.

"I will deed this land to the city as soon as the city engineer has established the lines satisfactorily, but in making this donation I would like to impose this condition, if after consideration it should appear that it may be legally done, that no railroad to this park be chartered with the right to charge a larger fare than five cents. I wish to impose this condition to insure this fare, so that this park will be in every sense the peoples' recreation grounds and transportation to it be kept within the reach of the most modest means.

"I wish to make this gift while I am still in the full vigor of life that I may enjoy with my neighbors its bounties and pleasures and that I may bear with me, when I cross the clouded river, the pleasing knowledge of the fruition of a wish long dear to me. I trust that you will accept this gift for the people of Los Angeles, in the same spirit in which it is offered.

"Respectfully yours,

"(signed) G. J. Griffith

"Los Angeles, Cal., Dec. 16th, 1896."

The deed of gift in addition to the description of the property is as follows:

".....to be used as a Public Park for purposes of recreation, health and pleasure, for the use and benefit of the inhabitants of the said City of Los Angeles forever. And this gift and grant is made, and said property is hereby conveyed upon condition that said land shall be used and maintained by said City of Los Angeles and its successors in

interest and estate, exclusively as a Public Park and pleasure ground, for the amusement, recreation, health and pleasure of its inhabitants and upon the further condition that the name of said park now established by ordinance of said City, to-wit:

'GRIFFITH PARK' be continued as the official name and designation of said park; and whenever said tract of land hereby conveyed, or any part thereof shall cease to be used as a park and for pleasure, amusement, recreation, health, and uses incident to the aforesaid uses according to the intents and meanings of the same, and, if said City or its successors in interest or estate shall at any time change the official name of said park from 'GRIFFITH PARK' to some other name or designation, then the lands hereby conveyed shall immediately upon the happening of either of said events, revert to said parties of the first part or to their heirs.

"It is understood that the use of any part of said premises for the development, collection, transportation, accumulation or storage of water for the use of said city or its inhabitants, or for railroad or other transportation purposes for carrying the inhabitants of said city into and through said park shall not be considered a violation of any of the conditions upon which this donation and grant are made, anything herein to the contrary thereto notwithstanding.

"To have and to hold the said premises, together with the appurtenances, unto the said party of the second part and its successors in interest and estate, for the uses, purposes, and upon the conditions aforesaid, forever."

With a view toward aiding in the development of the park, I was appointed a member of the Board of Park Commissioners, February 2, 1903, and assisted in starting the necessary work.

On December 21, 1912, I offered \$100,000.00 to the City of Los Angeles to build a public observatory. The letter is as follows:

"To the Honorable Mayor Alexander
and City Council
Los Angeles, California

"Gentlemen:

Sometimes I ask myself, 'What have I done to perpetuate the prosperity of my city to posterity?' I feel that it is my duty as a good citizen to contribute to the utmost of my means and powers to the common good -- to lift myself above selfishness, to render service as well as accept it. The founders of this republic insured our safety and prosperity at a price bitter with privation and daring and death. They counted no sacrifice too great for their descendants and it is as much the duty of everyone of us today to give out of his time and his purse and his heart for the children who will come after us.

"With all our schools and colleges and universities, with journalism to send its voice across the continent, to standardize aspirations, to make earth a school room, to police the highways for the protection of life and property; with one hundred millions of better trained and better educated Americans from whom to pick and choose, with a hundred fold as many men possessed of sufficient means to serve without sacrifice the material welfare of the many; we are not producing as many efficient citizens per year proportionately as the republic brought forth in its infancy. We average more skill, more wit, more energy per head than any generation of any people,

but too many of us are planning and scheming for private advantage and personal profit; too many of us are sacrificing patriotism for profit; too many of us are too concerned with ourselves, the interest table, the market reports, and our particular specialties to trouble about the community. Our ideas are far superior to our ideals. We must remember that our strength as individuals is only in proportion to our community strength and that we can only really advance ourselves by advancing the interests of the people at large.

Too many men have died for this country. What we need now are a few thousand more to live for it, to perpetuate its splendid promises, to fulfill the prophecy of its founders. Each year there is a greater necessity for those of us whose welfare has been fostered by the republic, to realize how great is our responsibility toward our neighbors. No man is entitled to honor and respect for what he possesses -- only for what he achieves, and it is my ambition to achieve as much as lies within my gifts and my resources for my city and for my fellows. I wish to pay my debt of duty to the community in which I have prospered, and to help advance its interests. Here always shall be my home, and I consider it my obligation to help make Los Angeles a happier and cleaner and finer city, to which end I hereby propose to make another Christmas gift, a donation of \$100,000 for a public observatory, to be erected on the highest point of land in Los Angeles -- Mount Hollywood in Griffith Park, and to be fully equipped on or before the year 1915, and pray its acceptance at your honorable hands.

"If it be a fact that 'all true knowledge comes from observation of nature', would not the contemplated observatory in conjunction with Griffith Park prove a lasting benefit to this community?

"I can conceive of no greater service than that which will inspire men with hope and dreams. Ambition must have broad spaces and mighty distances. From this noble height one may behold the glories of the fairest land God gave to his children, and no man standing so near the stars, with illimitable fields and seas to challenge him to his utmost can dare doubt or despair of future opportunities. I make this gift now that I may behold and enjoy the pleasure and progress of my neighbors and live to see the partial fulfillment of my prayers for their betterment. My faith in Los Angeles has never wavered; I have loved my city, and my confidence in her dominance has been ever constant. I place no limit upon her splendid tomorrow, and I expect to live to see her population reach the million mark and ere then be able to donate, at least, another million dollars to the promotion of her interests, and for the uplift of my less fortunate fellows; but it is not what I plan or what I do that will mean most, it is my example that will benefit Los Angeles most, for I am sure that other who know under what trying circumstances I have struggled, will be inspired by my ability to rise above my handicaps and environment.

I believe that the twentieth century has inaugurated a spirit of service. The world has begun to realize that he who renders service to his people attains the highest in

achievement. The charity which feeds hungry people and houses the weakened is a fine and splendid thing; but at its best, it is a crutch. We must go farther and aim higher. There is a greater philanthropy, and it is that which helps men to help themselves, which rouses their confidence and stirs them to endeavor and cheers their hearts to resolution and reliance. There is a chance for every American, but poverty and ignorance frequently cloud his vision. We must dispel doubt of self; we must encourage self-support and lift the masses to planes of broad intelligence.

I have always held that the man who accumulates a fortune is the best judge in its disposition. I have always believed that great wealth should be disposed of by him who earns it and during his own lifetime. It is a false love that pauperizes ambition and dulls endeavor. The waster is the greatest menace of civilization and many a man with great potentiality for good has been prostituted into a useless citizen by the inheritance of means. I shall not, as others have done before me, will my money to be dissipated in amusement and profligacy, or as is too often the case, permit it to be wasted to the profit of judges and lawyers and selfish parasitical relatives !

In 1882 I made a tour of the world. During my travels I made a close study of social conditions. Returning home, I meditated on the joyless lives of the masses and found myself in perfect agreement with the late Professor Jevons in his theory that "Among the means to a higher civilization, I unhesitatingly declare that the deliberate cultivation

of the public amusement is a principal one."

There can be no good work, no hard work, without good play and the opportunity for hard play. Sunlight and air are the first requisites of sanity and health. Things that grow in the dark are unwholesome and lives lived in dark tenements are abnormal. Public parks are a safety valve of great cities and should be made accessible and attractive, where neither race, creed nor color could be excluded. Crime and degeneracy can best be battled with by a pleasure ground. Every bit of open green means the closing of a den and a dance hall and money wisely spent in parks for the people is the best investment that any community can make. There must be outlets for the herds in poor streets and gloomy alleys. Give nature a chance to do her good work and nature will give every person a greater opportunity in health, strength and mental power.

Throughout America, all great cities have received donations from their far-seeing philanthropists. There are hundreds of citizens in Los Angeles who brought less wealth and profited far more through her marvelous and unprecedented growth than myself, and I am sure that they can be induced to exhibit a public spirit equal to that shown in any other municipality. I specifically refer to the example of San Francisco located in our own State and similarly populated. The liberality of her wealthy citizens is a challenge to Los Angeles. Wherever one turns, there are beautiful fountains and splendid monuments. In Golden Gate Park, we find scores of attractions such as the 'Temple of Music', 'The Childrens' Playground', 'The Waterfalls,' 'The Memorial Gate,' and many

statues donated, at a cost ranging from five to sixty thousand dollars, each by private enterprises. Millions of dollars have been spent upon this beautiful recreation ground. Every San Franciscan points with pride to these evidences of public spiritedness.

Ours is a rich city and a city of rich men, and I hold that it is the duty of every person of wealth, to contribute liberally for the betterment of Los Angeles. I do not own an inch of ground adjoining Griffith Park, except the Reservation, my old home, and this is more than a mile distant from the contemplated improvement. I mention this fact now so that there can be no possible criticism of self-interest in my donation.

My reservation is within the boundaries of Griffith Park solely because of the urgent solicitation of city officials who needed all the river frontage on account of litigation with the city water company. Mayor Rader at that time estimated that through my five miles of river frontage the city was able to secure an extra million dollars in the settlement of its suits.

I wish to impose but one condition on this donation: that I shall have my own way in the disbursement of this and future donations, so that I may be able to fix the payments upon dates which will synchronize with the dates of my income, and that I may also enjoy the pleasure of superstructure according to the purposes intended.

Faithfully,

(signed) Griffith J. Griffith."

Relative to my public career in Los Angeles, up to this time I can say without fear of successful contradiction, that I have faithfully performed my duty as an officer in the National Guard Company; that I was one of the organizers of the Board of Trade and of the Chamber of Commerce; that I was a director in the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, as well as in whatever capacity I may have served in every great progressive public movement for the advancement of the city of my adpption, it having ever been my aim to assume my full share of the responsibilities on all such occasions.