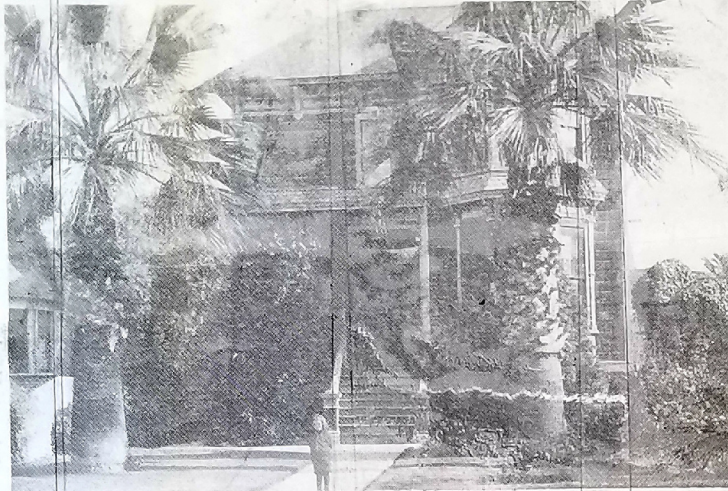


# "Gibbs Brothers Electric Co. Put Spark In Lovelace Avenue"

By Jim Bishop

I have written long and lovingly many times in the past about Lovelace Avenue, that quiet, dusty little one-block-long street a block west of Figueroa between Washington and 21st.



1932 LOVELACE AVENUE. This is the house I saw each day across the street from my home at 1933. George L. Gibbs, lived in this house. Above, he stands on his sidewalk at the age of 8 in 1910.

I thought Lovelace was a quiet-backwater of Los Angeles with no historical significance. How wrong I was! I found out the truth when I met Bob Gibbs at Los Angeles Rotary. And discovered Lovelace has direct ties to the highest history of early L.A.

I lived at 1933 Lovelace. 1932 Lovelace was right across the street. 1932 was unique because there was usually a little Model A truck parked in front that said "Gibbs Brothers Electric Co." on the side.

Bob's father, his grandmother and grandfather, his great aunt (Aunt Sepulveda) and his four uncles lived at 1932 Lovelace. I dimly remember Bob's grandmother, a stocky, dark haired old lady whose smile could span the street from her front porch.

Bob gave me an old letter, written in age-browned ink. Ancient photos. Made it possible for the rest of this column.

George, co-founder of Gibbs Bros. Electric Co., Inc., now long-located at 1754 North Main Street, spelled out in sprawling script that "it was approximately 1828 that great grandfather and his wife migrated from Spain to Los Angeles which was then just a sleepy little hollow.

"In 1834, grandfather was born at First and Main and christened Louis

Martinez. Another girl was born in the same era. She was christened Eloisa Martinez."

### A Very Pious Man

George Gibbs continued, "Grandfather Martinez grew up to be a very pious man and he loved the things close to God. He loved farming and worked on a farm. He was persuaded to run for Councilman and defeated Billy Workman, who was one of the early pioneers.

"In 1857, he met a pretty blue-eyed Spanish girl whose parents came from Andalusia, Spain and originally settled in Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico. One of the five children was Emilia Autuniz who was born in Guaymas in 1846 and from this union fifteen children were born. Twelve grew to maturity. Their names were Louis, Rose, Eloisa, Frank, Mike, Albert, Fred, George, Francis, Gus, Delta and Edward.

"When the City of Los Angeles was giving land to its citizens, grandfather drew forty acres. This land was on Lemon Street at Olympic Boulevard. Now the Ampar parking company occupies part of the land. Some of the large trees are still growing there.

"Grandfather made a trip to Mexico with his son to get trees, coffee and vegetables and they were attacked by Indians. They were both left for dead



LOVELACE AVENUE TIED TO EARLIER L.A. LEADERS. From left above, Edward A. Gibbs, oldest of the five brothers born in the Sepulveda House, still alive at 89 and who is past exalted ruler of Elks Lodge 99; the late George L. Gibbs, youngest of five, and their father, Edward A. Gibbs, Deputy City Engineer of Los Angeles until shortly before his death in 1921.

but grandfather survived and finally made his way back home after five months of traveling by foot after he recuperated."

### Sepulveda Relationship Begins

"Grandfather's sister, Eloisa, married Joaquin Sepulveda and they built a two story adobe house by the plaza. The house faced Bath Street which is now Main Street. From this union only one child was born but died in its infancy. It was after the death that Eloisa Martinez, daughter of grandfather Martinez, was given Eloisa Sepulveda to rear. (Note: this was a common practice among large interrelated early Los Angeles Hispanic families — to "share" children with childless relatives.)

"Eloisa Martinez grew to maturity and married Edward Ashley Gibbs, August 29, 1888. (grandfather of Bob Gibbs) Edward Ashley Gibbs was the son of an early pioneer ship builder of Connecticut."

The wedding took place on the old Martinez Rancho at Olympic and Lemon Streets. (close to Mateo Street).

Gibbs was born in 1853 in Iowa and arrived in Los Angeles in 1881. He was both an attorney and an engineer.

In 1887, he was elected representative to the old First Ward in the City Council. He both practiced law, and spent many years with the City Engineering Department, where on his retirement, he was serving as Deputy City Engineer. He died at 1932 Lovelace Avenue, October 31, 1921. City Hall closed for his funeral as a sign of respect for his years of dedicated duty, and the Board of Public Works and the City Council sent his family engraved memorials as their tribute to him.

### Present Sepulveda House Started

Back to George Gibbs' letter:

"In 1884, it was decided to build the present Sepulveda House and it was started in 1885. There were many dignitaries at the groundbreaking, including Hon. Stephen M. White (the famed early U.S. Senator whose statue is now at 1st and Hill), the Del Valle, Dominguez, Sentous, and Workman families and the clergy from the Plaza Church and others from all walks of life.

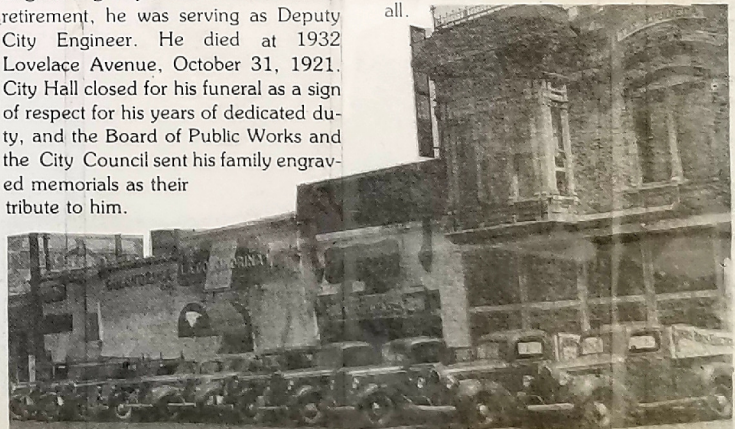
"The Sepulveda House was a home-like place to live and was enjoyed by many people. It came into the possession of Eloisa M. Gibbs in 1901. All of the five Gibbs boys (Bob's father and his four uncles) were born in the Sepulveda House. Edward in 1892. Robert in 1894, Arthur in 1896. Carl in 1898 and George (Bob's father) in 1902.

The Gibbs life and love affair with Sepulveda House had a sad ending. In 1955 the State took over the entire Olvera Street area, including the House where many of the Gibbs were born and where so much of early Los Angeles' history was written.

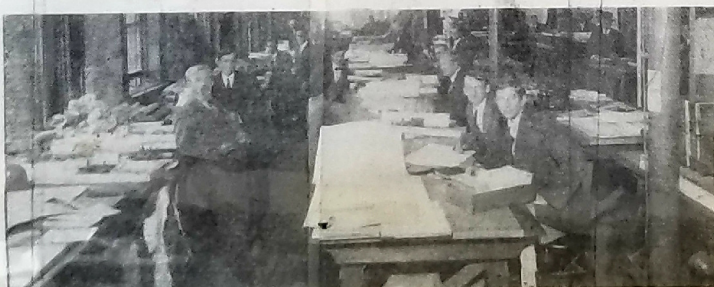
The Gibbs ownership ended in 1955. But the love affair continues on.

Today, the Sepulveda House is a strong and living remnant of the long-ago sleepy pueblo, and the Gibbs are still an active part of the throbbing metropolis that is Los Angeles in the '80s.

So maybe it's a happy ending after all.



L.A. HISTORY SPANNING A CENTURY is shown in the above photo taken in 1938. The Gibbs Brother Electric Co. Model A's and Plymouth trucks are lined up on North Main Street in front of the now-historic Sepulveda House which Gibbs owned. Present L.A. Rotary Club member Robert Gibbs' father and his four uncles, were all born in the room with the high windows at the left upper corner of the Sepulveda House shown above. Gibbs Electric was squeezed between Sepulveda House and Olvera Street restaurant-landmark, La Galandrina which is still a



ROTARIAN BOB GIBBS' GRANDFATHER, Edward A. Gibbs, left foreground, and fellow workers in L.A. City Engineering Department in old City Hall at the turn of the century. Gibbs as Deputy City Engineer played leading role in establishing