

# MEMORIES OF WEST HOLLYWOOD

An Interview With

*Annabel Perry*

*Introductory note: On March 2, 1982, Gerry Witoszynsky, president of the Pembroke Pines Historical Society, conducted an oral history interview with Annabel Perry. This was the first interview conducted for the Pembroke Pines Historical Society, and covered a wide range of topics, focusing on the history of the Perry's Dairy property, which included today's North Perry Airport and much of the City of Miramar. What follows is an edited and condensed version of Mrs. Perry's reminiscences.*

**To begin with, could you give us a brief history of your early life — where you were born and where you lived?**

I was born in Miami, Florida, so I'm an old Florida cracker. My maternal grandfather had homesteaded down at Coconut Grove many years ago. He was county commissioner for nineteen years with Dade County, and James Carey was his name. My father, Arren T. Carter, as a young man, left Jacksonville, went to Key West and then came over and landed in Coconut Grove. He had a little

grocery store down on Mary Street and then he farmed tomatoes and had cows and one thing and another, including a sawmill at Twelfth [Street] where he said he used to lose mules on occasion, because of the deep muck. He cut much of the timber used for the first bridge to Miami

Beach, all down in the south of Miami. Before I started school, we built a house on South Miami Avenue and Eighth Street. I was raised right there in Miami. I met Henry [Perry], and we were married when I was still living right at that same place. Of course, we were sweethearts back in

*"Southwest Broward" — today's Miramar, Pembroke Pines, and adjacent unincorporated areas — is one of the county's fastest growing regions. Here, rapid development has erased many traces of a rich agricultural heritage. Once the home of Tequesta and Seminole Indians, and reputedly of Cuban cattle and hog ranges, this section and adjoining portions of Dade County attracted large dairy farms beginning in the 1920s. With the arrival of the first residential developments during the post-World War II population boom, "West Hollywood," as the area came to be known, entered a period of growth which resulted in the incorporation of today's municipalities.*

*Much of the history of the "West Hollywood" area revolves around the family of pioneer dairyman, banker, and civic leader Henry Perry (1901-1972). In this 1982 interview, Mr. Perry's widow, Annabel, describes the land, the people, and the events of the region beginning in the early 1920s. At the time the interview was conducted, Mrs. Perry still resided on the family's dairy farm. She currently makes her home in Hollywood.*

school. Henry and I moved from the house on Miami Avenue to a house back on Eighth Street in the same neighborhood.

*Then your family history in the Miami area would be extremely interesting?*

Like I say, my history is right here in this part of the country and goes way back. When I was a girl, my grandmother used to love to talk, and she'd tell about the time when they used to trade with the Indians and her brother was lighthouse keeper down at Cape Florida. So their history went way back and we've often wished that we would have made tapes and kept a little record of all that took place at that time.

*You mentioned that you met and married Henry Perry in Miami. Was Mr. Perry a native of Miami also?*

No, but he was a native of Florida. He was born outside of Gainesville in a little town called

Rochelle. His father worked for the railroad, and they came down when they [Henry Flagler] were fixing the railroad to Key West. Henry was down on the Keys for a while when his father was working there. They lived on Pigeon Key for about one year, when he was about ten years old.

I don't remember just what year it was when they moved to Miami, but they lived on Southwest Eighth Street, not too far from where we lived. Brickell Avenue was east of where we lived.

*So did you begin in the dairy business in Miami?*

As you know, Henry was in the ice cream business. We had the Seminole Ice Cream business in Miami, and then after a time we bought cows to have milk for the ice cream. We kept them in the Dade County section. Then we sold out to Southern Dairies when they came to town, and after we sold out we started in the dairy business and we moved up

here. We had a period of time, you know, before we could put milk back on the streets, and in the meantime, milk went down to eight cents a quart. We lived through all that Depression time and had a lot of struggles back in those days.

*Can you tell us when you came to Broward County, and what you remember about the area at that time?*

We started in Broward County in 1923, when Henry and Lonnie Perry, his brother, put the cows up here. The two of them were in business together, and they started up here at that time. I don't think there was settlement in this area or activity except the dairy farms, back in 1923 and along in those years. We were one of the first dairies out here. We didn't have U.S. 441, and we came out Dixie Highway. I don't remember how we would get back into the farm here. Pembroke Road was the only way into Miramar back in those days. It was just a dirt road that went from here on out.



**Perry's**  
DAIRY

**ALL MILK SOLD BY US  
IS PRODUCED AND BOTTLED  
ON OUR FARM**

•

OFFICE

626 N. W. 10th St.

PHONE 2-7221



Henry (left) and Annabel Perry.

*One thing that has puzzled Dr. [Cooper] Kirk [Broward County Historian] and Mrs. [Estelle] Kipnis and I and others involved in the Historical Society is how Pembroke Road got its name — whether somebody just liked the sound of the name, or whether there was a specific reason it was called Pembroke. Do you know of any early settlement out on the road where there were enough people to have had a school house?*

I surely don't know where Pembroke Road got its name. I don't believe there was a schoolhouse out in this section when we were first out here.

*So you don't know of any settlement in this area prior to the dairy farms? Do you have any idea what this area was like before the farms came in? Did they clear most of it out?*

A lot of the area prior to the coming of the dairy farms was palmetto. You just cleared a part and put the cows on it, and they gradually killed off the palms. Most of the fields were cleared of palmetto growth that way.

*Can you tell us any particularly memorable incident from*

*those early years — the '20s or '30s?*

We had a hurricane out here one year. I don't think it was the '26 storm. I think it was the next storm after that. The buildings were blown down. We had an old feed room that stood up, and the people that were working on the farm gathered in there. One of the men broke his leg somehow during that time. He had to get out a horse and get on that horse and ride over into Hollywood to get to a doctor to get his leg fixed. Of course, the water, they said, was way up on the horse's leg. He couldn't have gotten out without the horse otherwise.

*That may have been the 1935 storm. There was a bad one that year. What did you do to entertain yourself out here during those years?*

Of course, in the early years we lived in town and were not a part of too much that went on here at night because we were not here. Henry worked very hard in those days. He used to check the trucks out at midnight and then when the trucks were gone, he'd come to the farm. He'd sleep a few hours, and he worked hard. That was before we moved out to the farm. By the time I moved

here, our kids were raised, and away at school — one in medical school and the younger at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

*Now were the trucks you mentioned from the ice cream business, or was this after you started the dairy?*

The trucks I'm talking about were from when we sold milk. The dairy was Perry's Dairy and we had our plant on Northwest Tenth Street in Miami. There we processed the milk and it went out.

*You mentioned before that it was a struggle to begin with. Did you feel that you could hold out and that things would get better?*

Once we got over the Depression, we came along all right. I have two sons who were in college when I moved. Of course, as children they loved to come out here. That used to be the regular thing at home. On Sunday afternoon, we'd bring the neighborhood, and they'd all come out to the farm.

*So you didn't personally live on this property but remained in Miami, and what year did you move here?*

I didn't move out to the farm until 1947. Our kids had all left home by then, and it was just me, so I moved out here. Of course, there still wasn't very much out here. This house was just a little bitty house in 1947. Henry just used it when he was here. Then when I came out we added part, and we kept adding to the house so it's really just a farm house that's been stretched out. My son's house is a big brick house. That's Doctor Henry Perry, Jr.

*This is a nice spot, very attractive and picturesque.*

My home is on a little rise on coral rock. It's solid rock. We chose this spot because it was attractive, but also because of the potential from flooding.

*And Mr. Perry stayed here when he was working on the farm — before you came here to live. Do you know what was here before that?*

There was an old gentleman,

known as the hermit, Mr. Hobbs, that had this place and lived here. He lived here for years and he had a grove. Some of these fruit trees are left over from that. He used to come to the farm and borrow a horse to work the grove, and people would come out here and buy fruit from him. He sold most of it right from the place. His little house was right out here where my barbecue pit is. One time he got bit by a snake out here, had to crawl on his stomach all the way out to 441, and somebody picked him up and took him to the hospital. It was evidently a poisonous snake, probably a rattlesnake.

***So this parcel wasn't part of the original farm, then. How did Mr. Perry acquire it?***

Henry kept riding through and looking at the property, and he just loved this place right in here and so he bought it. Henry kept asking the owner to tell him when he got ready to sell. Finally, he couldn't stay here by himself and Henry bought the place.

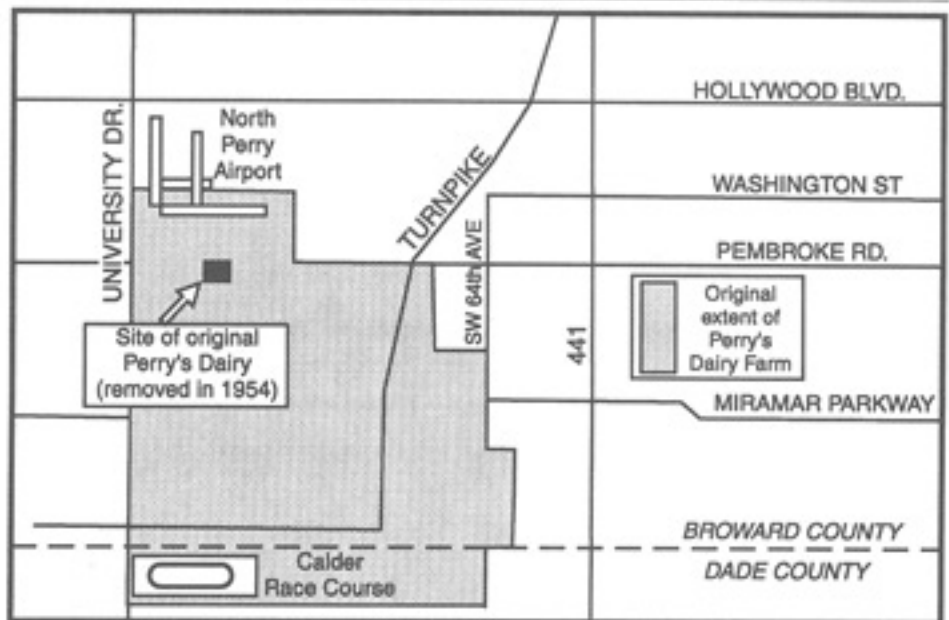
Only the grove was in here, and brush was grown all around the whole place. We couldn't live here like that, so we cleaned it all out and cleared out under the trees. That was to the benefit of the grove because it kept the moisture in and kept the wind from tearing up the trees.

***Would you say it was really remote at that time? No other people immediately in the vicinity?***

I think the Grants were our only neighbors when we moved out here. I hadn't been out here too long until they began to develop east of us. They opened a trailer park, and that was the first thing that they started east of us.

I was delighted to move out here to the farm. Of course, there were none of the houses east of us when we moved here. We used to have to stop out there on 441 and open the gate and come through to get in here to our house at Thirty-ninth Street (the old map listed it as Perry Drive).

***The Grants were due east of here. Do you recall some of the***



Map showing the location of the Perry farm.

***other dairies that were in the area?***

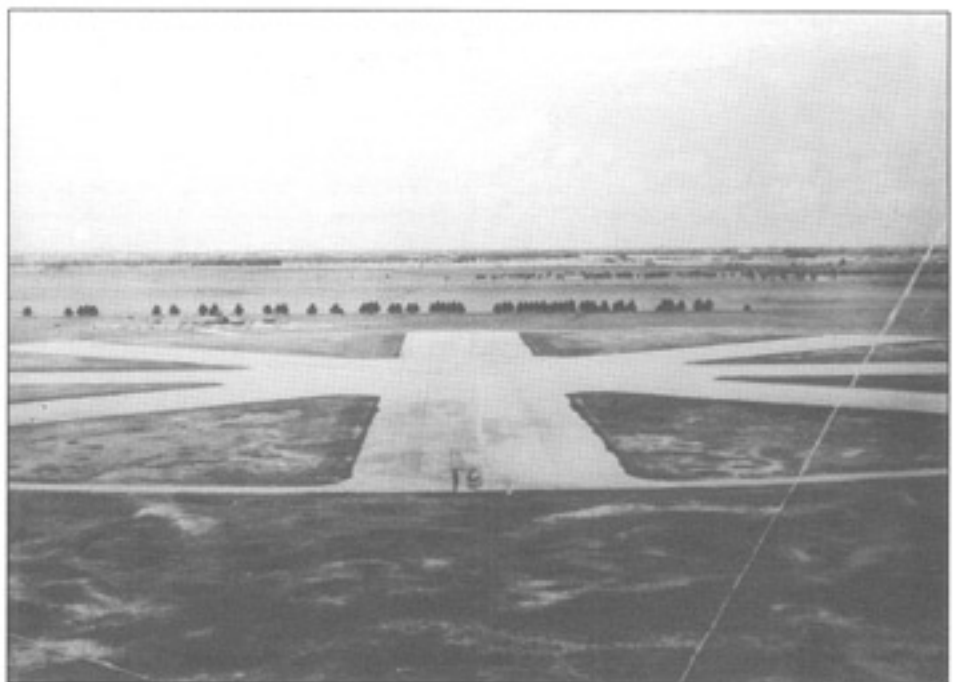
We had somewhere around twelve hundred acres, including Perry Airport. By then, the Johnsons were out here, east of us, and in time Mr. Peterson, a bachelor, had a dairy north of Pembroke Road. He had worked for Henry for a little while, and then he started that dairy over there.

West of us was Farway Dairy,

which eventually became the Land 'O Sun Dairy.

***But the Grants were closest to you?***

The Grants had their dairy right out here in front of my house. In fact, it's where they have the playground over there, where the children have the ballpark. The people came right to the dairy and would buy milk and eggs from the Grants. They sold milk right from the barn.



North Perry Field (now North Perry Airport) as it appeared during World War II.

That was about 1947.

Their son, Ray, Jr., was a stunt flyer, and he used to fly that airplane out here. He'd come around and come down underneath these wires right out in front of my house. It'd scare me half to death. He would come underneath the light wire and go back up and do all kinds of stunts. He didn't come out of Perry Airport, not that I know of. That was before there was too much at Perry. I'm sure it was before there were airplanes there.

***We know that Perry Airport was given by Mr. Perry for the use of the armed forces in World War II. Do you recall any of the circumstances of this?***

In about 1943 the Navy had come and they wanted land out here and they used the land for South Perry Airport and North Perry Airport. They used to practice with the planes out here. We'd run the cows right out on the field all the time they were here, and they used to say that the cows didn't hardly stop eating. They might moo at them or look at them when they'd fly over, but the cows got used to it.

***Where was South Perry Airport?***

South Perry Airport was south of Pembroke Road, and east of us. Our land went over to University Drive. Our barn was over on Pembroke Road next to the Pembroke Baptist Church. It was back behind that where they had the airfield. They were just here about two years — 1943 and 1944 — and the war ended in '45. Then they didn't need the field. They just turned the south field back over to us, but the north field, where the airport is now, they wouldn't give back to us.

***I knew there was a problem with that, that they wouldn't return it.***

Mr. Perry didn't want to give up the Perry Airport. Perry Airport was given by Mr. Perry for the use of the armed forces in World War II. We were supposed to get the land back afterward, but once they had put buildings on the land, they wouldn't give it back to us. The F.A.A. just

assessed the land and took it. Henry tried to prevent it, but he lost. They reimbursed him for the value of the property, but, of course, they set their price and paid what it was assessed for. They did not give Mr. Perry benefit of full market value, and he didn't feel like they had given him a fair price for it.

***Was that the county, or the F.A.A. [Federal Aviation Administration], or who?***

The F.A.A. The property was turned over to the county in 1957, but the F.A.A. still has final say on who uses it. We had another big fight when Broward Community College wanted that northeast corner for the South Campus, and that took about eight years. The F.A.A. wanted way too much for that property. I told the people who were involved in that fight to get the property for the campus that if only Mr. Perry were here, he'd give a hand in that.

***Now getting back to when you first came here to live. That would have been about the time of the 1947 flood.***

We did have a hurricane here in 1947, and there was a time when there was water four feet deep all the way from this house clear over to the barn. You could get in little row boats and go right over the top of the fences, all the way over to the barn. That was about the time of the 1947 flood. When we moved here in '47, there was water all around here already, and we had to use a little jeep to get in and out through the water. At that time my house was almost an island. Flood control and water management procedures were not instituted until after this severe storm. [Mrs. Perry has also described shooting snakes off the top of fence posts where they had taken refuge until the storm water drained.]

***Did you lose any cattle during that time?***

We didn't lose any animals during the flood. If we did, it was so minor that I don't remember it. They'd just go to a higher spot as the water would come in, so I don't think we lost any. We used to have a problem with the mosquitoes, though.

They would get into the nostrils of a cow and smother the cow. So when they were bad, they used to pile up tires and set a fire and keep it going all night, and the cows would gather around the fire for protection.

***Dr. Kirk from the Historical Commission told us once that mosquitoes were so bad that people had to be in the house with smoke of some kind, during the summertime.***

When we first moved here, the mosquitoes weren't so bad most of the time, but they would come in droves about four or five o'clock. They had the biggest legs you ever saw. They were marsh mosquitoes, of course, and if the dogs were here, you'd have to get the dog in the house. When you'd run your hand over it, that poor little old dog would be covered with mosquitoes. During the day it would be beautiful, and then maybe you'd have a couple of days of mosquitoes, and then it would clear off and be fine again. In those times there were a lot of marshy areas and everglade-type areas west of us where the mosquitoes would breed. The west wind would bring the mosquitoes in. Long years ago the pioneers were really hardy souls to put up with that.

***Can you recall any other interesting incidents from when you first moved out here?***

Back around 1950 they used to have races along the north side of Pembroke Road. All the farmers out here had horses, and they'd gather out there on Sunday afternoon and bring their horses and race them up and down the side of Pembroke Road. Quite a crowd would gather out there once people began to know about it. I don't know that betting took place — if it did it was on the Q.T.

***And you had barbecues?***

After we moved out here, we began to have the barbecues, and, of course, everybody knew about Henry's barbecues. He had a famous barbecue sauce, and they all talked about it, and people would say, "Well, what did you put in it?" Well, he couldn't tell them what he put in it. He'd make a big deal that he'd put in a little pinch of this and a pinch of



**Henry Perry (left) barbecuing with James McGee and Chan Cunningham, c. 1958.**

that, and it was a delight of his life. He'd get out there and cook that barbecue all day long, and then by night he wouldn't hardly know anybody because he was so tired. But he just delighted in it, and people came from South Miami and from Fort Lauderdale and everywhere.

*Former West Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department Chief Charlie Frey mentioned the barbecues; he said they were either south of Pembroke Road or somewhere on Pembroke Road and on the airport side.*

We did go over there a few times and have a barbecue, but the ones that Henry put on were mostly right there on the south side of Pembroke Road next to the barn. The police department was so good to us and looked out for things so much that they used to try to have a special one for the police department there.

*Were these fields always open, or was there a lot of brush?*

The fields were open, covered with low grasses. Back behind the barn we had lots of growth, trees and a lot of those old palmettos. If someone would ride a horse back there, they had to be careful or they would lose their way back out. It seemed like a long distance looking back from Pembroke Road. It seems so close

now, but they'd get back there in all those palmettos and they would just get lost if they didn't keep an eye on the barn so they'd know how to get back.

*And it was that way when you first moved out here?*

It was about 1950 before anything much began to happen out here. That was about when things began to build up a little bit. I don't remember when Pembroke Road was put through, though.

*Is there anyone besides Mr. Wiley Waldrep that might be able to give us any more information on this area? Any contemporaries of yours?*

The old timers have kind of died out. Mrs. [Linda] Johnson died just recently. They gave the property for St. Stephen's Church. Originally, there was a saw mill on that property. Then, after the Johnsons bought it, they put a filling station there. For a long time there was a filling station and a grocery store there. When we first came out they didn't have the filling station. The little grocery store on the opposite side of the street belonged to the I.F. (Cash) Registers. They sold big cane poles. The Registers moved to Ocala or some place in the central part of the state. Janice, their daughter,

could give you lots of information.

The newspaper clipping about Mrs. Johnson passing away gave two addresses. Her original house was on Southwest Fifteenth Street, just east of the Turnpike. She lived there a long time ago, while the farm was there. She was living on Sheridan Street when she died. They had moved to Pompano after they sold here, and they had a dairy up there.

*Speaking of the Turnpike, do you remember any of the circumstances of its construction?*

I lost some of my property when the Turnpike cut through it. It divided us and the Johnsons as it went through. I don't know why they put it in that way, but the best I can remember there was a little trouble getting land that didn't have too many buildings. I didn't object to giving up land for the Turnpike. It was progressive.

Still the Turnpike divided the place, and they built an underpass so our cows could get back and forth, and it's still there. I don't remember my husband being upset about the loss of property, once he got the place to get the cows through. He was upset, however, that the construction by the Turnpike Authority ignored an Indian mound uncovered by earth movers in the area south of Pembroke Road and University Drive, and they ultimately destroyed it.

*Now you said your barn was on Pembroke Road. I remember several years ago, when our youngsters were little, going to a dairy farm out Pembroke Road, but that could have been Land-O'-Sun Dairy.*

Our main barn was just west of Pembroke Church. Land-O'-Sun Dairy was on Pembroke. I forgot when they moved out, but we were there a long time after Land-O'-Sun.

*We moved here in '57, and I don't remember your barns at that time.*

The barns were here in 1957. We were operating even after the Pembroke Road Church was built. We used to have a little story about that. We had a little old donkey and we had a cart to hook the donkey up

to. It seemed like every time the preacher would get ready to pray, that little old donkey would get out and start to bray. He was just across from the church. When they had their vacation Bible school one year, at noontime Henry would hook up the donkey and have one of our men come and bring him to take the kids around the church for a ride. That donkey would get so he wouldn't move, and then they'd feed him cookies and he'd get up and go around that church one more time. Then they would have to feed him cookies again!

***What happened to those barns?***

Do you remember they burned all those buildings that were over there? They had pictures in the paper when they had the fire department come in and burn the buildings for us. I can't tell you when it was, but it was in the late '50s [1959].

I'm talking about houses right on Pembroke. We had one little house in the front and two or three more and the big barn back in the middle.

***Now I do remember taking the kids back to see the cows at the two-story green barn. Was that yours? It always seemed like a strange barn to me.***

Yes, we had a two-story barn and they kept the feed there. After we sold on Pembroke, then we moved back and we put that barn back there. There was a chute down to put the feed in and run it right on down. It was mainly a feed barn, but we did some milking there.

***Now you still have some cows here on the place, but you don't have any dairy operations?***

In later years, we didn't have any dairy operations here. We just had beef cows on the place. Before Henry died, he had put in some registered charolais cows, and he had real good cows. Then, after he died, we couldn't keep those because they are too much trouble calving, so we got rid of them, and these are just regular beef cows that we have here, now mostly Black Angus.

***You mentioned the Pembroke Road Church. Do you recall any***

***of the circumstances of organizing that church?***

We gave property for the Pembroke Road Baptist Church. We had already sold the land, when Brother Gardner from the Hollywood church [First Baptist Church in Hollywood] called up and said, "Mrs. Perry, do you realize how many houses are going to be out there on that place?" I said, "No, we hadn't really thought about it. It had been a farm to us all the time." So he said, "Well, how would you like to set aside a piece of property for the church?" Of course, I told him I'd talk to Henry, and when Henry heard he agreed to that. Since we had already sold the property, we had to get Mr. Mailman to give us back the piece where the church is. The church only has five acres, but that's all that Mr. Mailman would let us have back, and the church didn't want any farther back at the time anyway. Today we are a little bit short on land up there. We need parking lots, but we didn't realize how big the church would get. And it came so fast. It was almost like it was a shock. Like Pembroke Pines, we knew we would grow, but nobody could have anticipated.

***How did the congregation get organized and retain a minister in the early days?***

In the early days Reverend Gardner come out here and preached the church service during Sunday school time. We started the church in the airport and had our first Sunday school and church in one of the buildings there. Then he went back to town and had his service over there. We had Sunday school after the church services. We were also building at the time. Later Reverend Sawyer came right out of college and took over the church. We just had one building at that time, not the one that's on the corner now, but the little building over on the side. Now the kindergarten is behind that. We have a real nice school building now.

***Yes, that's a marvelous church and school, very well run.***

There is always something going on at the church and always has been. If people took part in every-

thing that went on there, they'd be busy all the time because we have always brought young people in. There was a time when Pembroke had more young people than any church in the Gulfstream Association, but of course many have moved. It's a transient area. That makes it a little bit harder, but we have all kinds of activity at the church from the young right on up to the older ones.

***You and your husband were great benefactors to the area, and you've been memorialized by having North Perry Airport and the two schools named for you. Do you recall the circumstances of the naming of the schools in your honor?***

Henry gave the land for the Henry D. Perry Middle School, and I didn't know they were going to name the Annabel C. Perry Elementary School after me until after the meeting. I was quite surprised and quite honored that they had done that. There is also a little park near the school named after me.

***I've seen Mr. Perry referred to as "Mr. West Hollywood." He was probably one of the most, if not the most, important citizen of the area.***

He started out when there wasn't too much going on. In fact, at that time people used to be ashamed to say they were from West Hollywood. That's how little we were. But Henry never was. He wore it proudly. The big turning point for West Hollywood was in the early to mid-50s when the bank started. It really began to grow at that time.

***Now that was the Citizens Bank of West Hollywood, where Mr. Perry was president and chairman of the board?***

Yes, I have pictures, clippings and all of people that were active in building and developing West Hollywood. I had one whole scrapbook of the things that went on at the bank and the hospital. It was all tied together.

***I'm glad you mentioned the hospital. Mr. Perry was instru-***



Memorial Hospital, Hollywood, 1960s.

*mental in getting that started too, wasn't he?*

Mr. Perry was involved in Memorial Hospital from the very beginning. He watched every nail that went into that hospital. It was his "baby" in 1961. Sid Holland was the one that helped get the bond issue through for the hospital, and Mr. D.M. Jordan, who had Jordan Furniture Store, was very active in the starting of the hospital. They had a hard time to get it, though.

*There is also an article from the newspaper telling how Mr. Perry and several others were honored by the Seminole Indians for helping them with their finances.*

Yes, Mr. Perry was honored for helping to incorporate the Seminole Indian Reservation, north of Sheridan Street. Henry and another man got up the money for the reservation, and the Seminoles presented them with this coat with all the colors. Henry was so proud of it.

*It seems that you weren't involved with your husband's public affairs as far as politics or the incorporation of Miramar or the West Hollywood area?*

I was a homebody. Most of my activities have always been with the church and with my children, so I was never much of a public figure. I wasn't too happy whenever they were trying to incorporate this area out here, and I didn't want my husband to take a political office. I was happy as long as he was in the background because he was good at it and he had a way with people.

I was certainly not equipped to be the mayor's wife. I would not have fitted in there or been happy at all. I wasn't interested in public activities, but Henry loved it. Still, we were compatible, so it worked fine for Henry and me.

*And so much of what we have here now is on property that you and Mr. Perry once owned. So much has changed, and the prices are just astronomical now.*

We sold before prices got to be as high as they are. We should have held on a little bit longer, but then somebody has to open the way for progress to come. You can't have the world with a fence around it. You had to make the best of what you had.

*Were you pleased or displeased to see the growth of this area and the creation of Miramar?*

I had no idea how large Miramar was going to be. It was much nicer when it was smaller. Everybody was happier, and it was just better, that's all. The residents were more of a family with more of a community feeling. But, of course, we had to grow — you always either go forward or you go backwards. And you adjust with it. Even so, since I moved out here I really haven't had anybody nearby. I'm still almost in the country now. I'm secluded if I want to be.



New homes and flooded conditions in Miramar, c. 1960.