

Grace Centennial

Introduction:

Because Grace Episcopal will be celebrating its 100-year anniversary in 2012, your Centennial Committee is researching all facets of the history of our beautiful church. As we do so, we are publishing articles in the Communicator highlighting the fascinating facts we have uncovered. This is another in a series of profiles of people instrumental in the beginnings of our church.

The Little Brown Church in the Vale

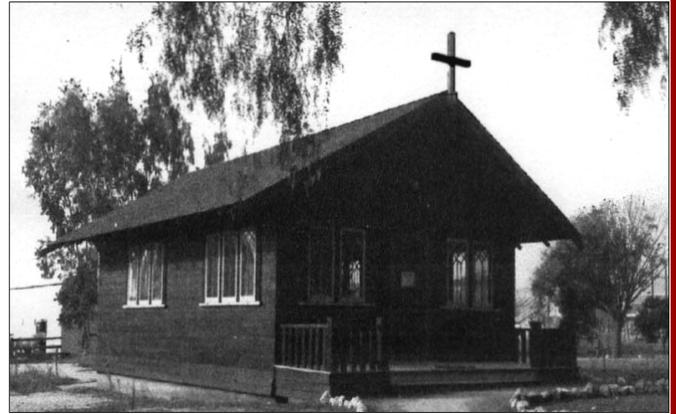
A Profile of Ernest Stockdale Langford and Rosa Reader Langford

By Mary Ann Burkhalter and Zella Cramer

When the founding families of Grace originally met to discuss the establishment of an Episcopal church in the city of Glendora, the Langfords were not among those in attendance. However, they soon became part of the faithful group who gave of their time, talents, and treasure to build our church.

The Langford name is recorded in the *First Service Book* of Grace Episcopal Church in 1912. By this time, Grace was occupying the compact, craftsman-style building on Vista Bonita Avenue. Soon, this small structure became familiarly known as “The Little Brown Church in the Vale.” After having contributed richly to the building and enhancement of this church, the Langfords continued to be devoted to Grace.

As history shows, “The Little Brown Church in the Vale” was not the only sobriquet by which Grace would be known through the years. Later, it came to be called “The Church That Love Built.”



The Langfords were pioneers. Like many Episcopalians of the 19th Century, both had emigrated from England to the United States. Ernest Langford was born in Wisbech, Chambridgeshire, England, in September 1867. In this small market town near the North Sea, he lived with his father, William Henry, a chemist (most likely what we now call a pharmacist); mother, Susannah; and five siblings. Their address, #1 High Street (which is traditionally the main business district of a village), suggests that the residence might also have housed an apothecary shop. The household also included a “Chemist Apprentice” and a domestic servant.

Rosa Reader Langford was born in London and was baptized at St. Anne’s church in 1873. Her father, James Edward Reader, was a “commercial cashier.” The 1881 census states that he worked as “a clerk in an ‘India Pub Mercht’.” This most likely meant that he was employed at a “public mercantile” (retail store) featuring imports from India, which were very key to the English economy at this time. His wife had been born Rosa Bramston. The couple had four children, a daughter, Rosa (named for her mother), James, Edward, and Frank. The household also included Mrs. Reader’s parents, Susannah and James Bramston, along with two servants.

The years passed and Rosa Reader Langford’s father, mother, and grandfather died. Thus, it appears that her grandmother, Susannah Bramston, became the head of household. Rosa’s brother James Reader immigrated to America. Although the records of his progress are sparse, we infer that he paved the way for the Reader family in their pilgrimage to Southern California.

Records show that on July 8, 1893 Susannah Bramston traveled with her grandchildren, 20-year-old Rosa, 17-year-old Edward, and 11-year-old Frank, to America. This journey was a significant accomplishment for a woman of Susannah Bramston’s age – for she was then 65!

Prior to this, Ernest S. Langford had emigrated from England, arriving in New York in October of 1890. Archives show that he applied for citizenship (Declaration of Intention to become a U.S. Citizen) in October 1892 in Los Angeles. It is interesting to speculate what brought this young man to California and what adventures he might have had during his journey from New York to California!

We do not know how Rosa Reader and Ernest Langford met, but we do know that by the 1900 census, they were a married couple. Other archives record that he was 30 and she 24 at the time of their marriage, which indicates that they were wed circa 1897. The 1910 census states that they were living in San Luis Rey, San Diego. Ernest was listed as a farmer and property owner. The Langford household also included Rosa's brother, Frank.

Ernest Langford's career continued to be focused upon horticulture. In a record from 1908, his occupation is listed as "florist." Later, in the 1920 census, this had changed to "horticultural inspector." By this time, most likely because of Ernest's career, the Langfords relocated to Glendora. The couple now had two daughters, Rosemary and Doris. Records tell us they first lived on Minnehaha (present-day Foothill Blvd.). After that, they moved to Ada Avenue.

It is clear that, in the crucial early years of Grace Episcopal, the Langfords were committed to its establishment, growth, and development. They donated generously to the original Vista Bonita church, most notably for the altar rail and the vesting room. Ernest served on the vestry for many years, and Rosa was equally dedicated.

In 1913, Ernest Langford was elected Warden. One of his key duties in this role was to coordinate the instructions for confirmands. Mrs. Langford was very active in the Women's Guild. The Langford home was the center of many social and secular activities, including Guild meetings and numerous other parish events. Grace was certainly a focal point of their lives.

On May 16, 1913, an article in *The Glendora Gleaner* newspaper reported that the Reverend Henry Quimby honored Mr. and Mrs. Langford as "First Members of the [Grace] Mission" and saluted them for being "instrumental in the present prosperity."

Throughout the years the Langfords, along with the Ward, Brunjes, and Vickery families, continued to steer the direction of the church. Now, almost 100 years later, what was once "The Little Brown Church in the Vale" still prospers, thanks to faithful people like the Langfords.