

THE FOUNDING OF LOS ANGELES * * 1781



Painting by Millard Sheets

Ballad by John Russell McCarthy

Peons from lazy Mexico,
Heavily burdened, weary and slow,
Is there a dream in your dark eyes
As you turn your faces toward Northern skies?

Under the burning sun
The miles drag, one by one,
Do you ever dream as you stumble on
That a city leans on your sweating brawn?

Do you see, in the years ahead,
A city of silver and red
Where the wise shall gather from many a land
And know and remember your peon band?

Do you hear, in the years to come,
Cannon and fife and drum,
The shouts of men from another sea—
A new world born of victory?

Do you dream of a horse with a belly of metal
Whose strength comes out of a steaming kettle?
Or a road of steel for his feet to ride
Where your feet limp on the mountainside?

Or roads of stone for a thousand miles
Where a mile-a-minute traveler smiles?
Or a voice that sings, by radio,
From this far land to Mexico?

Your minds scorn all such mocking dreams—
The world is as wide and rough as it seems,
And sullen, silent, and stubborn you go
Journeying north from Mexico.

Sons of sorrow and woe,
This is the vision you know—
Not streets of gold for the shining ones
But better 'dobes for your sons.



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Phil Townsend Hanna, Editor*

Sons of tropical soil,
Tired of fruitless toil,
This is the vision you see,
A grant of land in fee.

Your leader lost, and his soldier train,
Garcés slain, Rivera slain,
Their bodies broken on Yuma's plain—
Mean nothing at all to a sweat-dulled brain.

Though one be left by the way,
Two more thrown out on a day,
Enough of peon blood remains
To found the queen of Pacific plains.

"Now comes the muttering priest to bless
Our Lady of Los Angeles;
That's over. And here is leave to dine,
And here is land will soon be mine.

"I've come a hard way by land and sea.
But here's good soil to hold in fee.
I build no spires for the shining ones—
Only a better home for my sons."

Today, in our glory and pride
Our boasts fly swift and wide,
And we'll build (who are wise and free)
A queen of all land and sea.