

COUNTY COURIER

Official Publication of the Orange County Historical Society

www.orangecountyhistory.org

Historic Preservation “Sweet, Sweet Orange”

This program will be presented by Teresa (Tita) Smith on Thursday, May 13, 2004, at 7:30 p.m. at Bower’s Kidseum, northwest corner of Main and 18th Streets, Santa Ana. The public is invited.

It is not by accident that preservation and Old Towne are synonymous with the name, Tita Smith. Tita, born at St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, writes in the *Proceedings of the Conference of Orange County History, 1988*, [see our list of publications for sale on page 5] “I’ve lived in Old Towne all my life, and my parents have lived in the same home for 40 years here in Old Towne. I’m a seventh generation native Californian. My family originated in Spain and my ancestor, Cristobal Dominguez, was present at the founding of Mission San Juan Capistrano in 1776. The Dominquez family then acquired one of the original California land grants from Spain [The vast Rancho San Pedro spread out across most of what is now the South Bay region, from the Los Angeles River on the east, to the Pacific Ocean on the west. It encompassed what is now Compton, Gardena, Carson, Redondo Beach, Torrance, Palos Verdes Estates, Lomita, Rolling Hills Estate, Rancho Palos Verdes, San Pedro, Wilmington, Harbor City, and a part of Long Beach.] in the Palos Verdes area, where my grandmother was born.” Her grandparents married



WATERCOLOR BY ARTIST BARBARA

STUTHEIT FROM OLD TOWNE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION 1996 CALENDAR
Home of Bill and Tita Smith since 1976.

They have lovingly restored this jewel on N. Shaffer in Old Towne

The Victorian Italianate was built in 1888 for Henry and Wilhelmina Grote by F. W. Gelderman, a carpenter to whom Grote told, “make it just like an Eastern home.” Using redwood throughout the large \$3,500 house took him over two years to complete with the ornate porch and detailed woodwork inside and out. Grote’s surrounding 15 acre ranch included apricot and walnut orchards. He also operated Ehlen & Grote Mercantile which still stands downtown.

in San Pedro and moved to Orange in 1927. Tita’s children are fourth generation natives of Orange. This explains her interest along with the fact she and her husband own the home pictured above. But for Tita interest translated in to action when residential property in Old Towne was in jeopardy of being demolished for a parking lot. She was a cofounder the Old Towne Preservation Association and has been serving on the Planning

Commission of the City of Orange since 1992. Tita’s talk will be about the grass root efforts involved in the history of Old Towne Preservation Association, the process of National Register designation to the present day. After reading minutes from last fall of the City of Orange’s Planning Commission, it is clearly evident that Tita is a vital force in preservation of “Orange — A Slice of Old Town Charm.”

Preservation Efforts

by Phil Brigandi, Orange County's Archivist and author of *Orange the City Around The Plaza*.

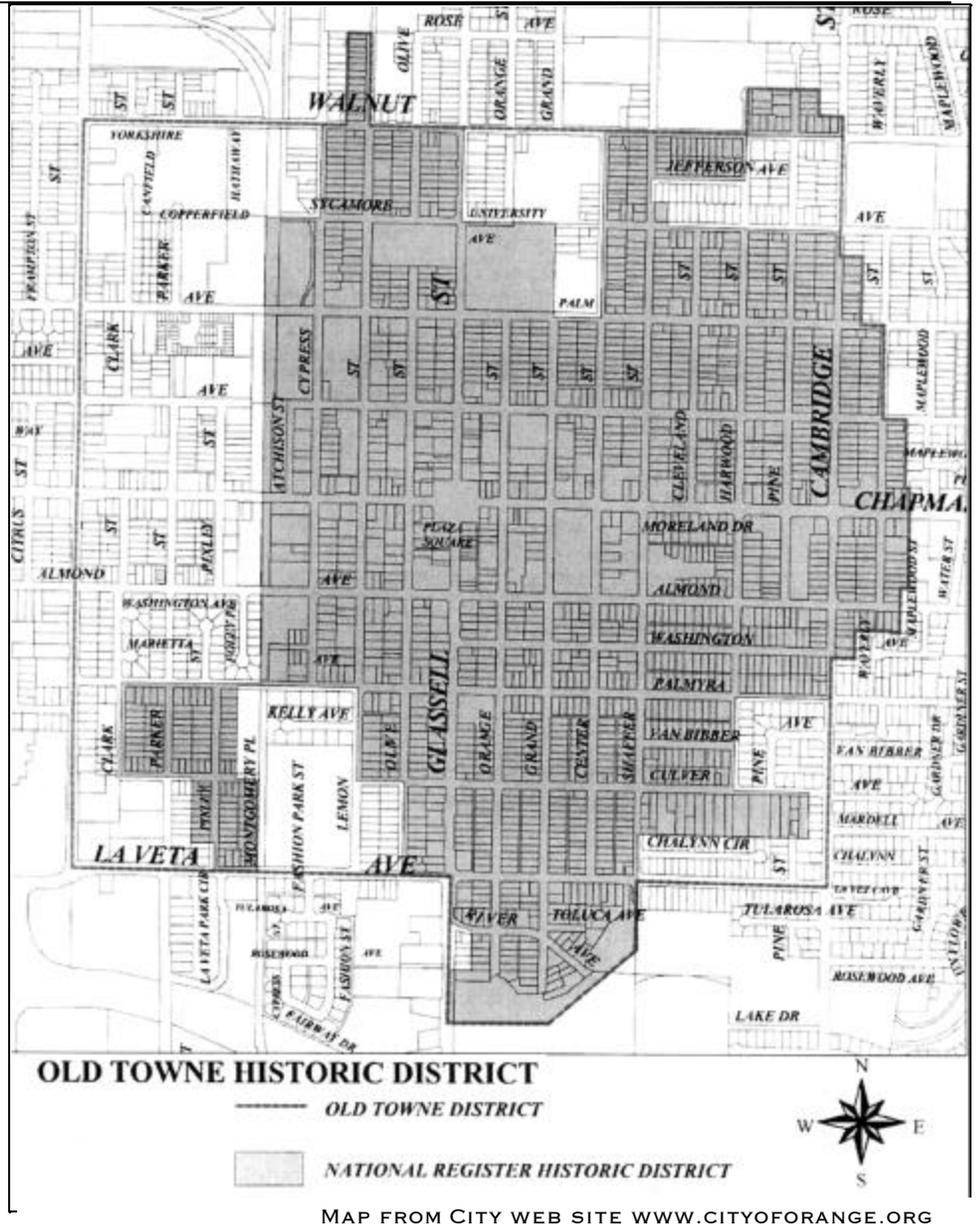
(The following was written for Orange Public Library web site)

"In the 1970s, while the business community downtown was declining, interest in the historic neighborhoods began to grow. The city designated an "Old Towne" area of about a mile square as worthy of special care, and families began moving into the old neighborhoods and rehabilitating the old homes.

Groups and individuals began to take an interest in Orange's rich history. The Orange Community Historical Society was founded in 1973. In 1979 the City Council formed an Old Towne Steering Committee. The first short-lived preservation group, Preservation Orange, began in 1982, and the Old Towne Preservation Association (OTPA) was formed in 1986.

In 1977, the historical society began the drive to have the Plaza placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The plan soon grew to include 41 of the surrounding historic buildings, and in 1982 the Plaza Historic District was created. In 1997, under the leadership of the OTPA, more than 1,200 homes and other buildings in the heart of old downtown Orange were added to the National Register as the Old Towne Historic District -- the largest National Register district in California.

In 1983 a historic preservation element was added to the city's General Plan, and in 1988 the first set of design guidelines was issued for new construction and remodels downtown. After more than 30 years of effort, interest in the historic neighborhoods in Orange remains strong."



MAP FROM CITY WEB SITE WWW.CITYOFORANGE.ORG

The map on the above shows the boundaries of the National Register Historic District* contained within Old Towne. According to State Historic Resource Surveys, Orange is unique among the region and the state in that it has the second largest concentration of historic buildings of which about 1/3

of the buildings are non-contributing.

On the city's web site the Community Development Department has made available the Design Standards for Old Towne. The standards for commercial and residential structures are listed separately and include the application process, description of what is subject to review and the reviewing bodies. They are Design Review, Planning Commission and City Council. Their function is explained in detail. All of this to protect "the desirable and unique features of the historic neighborhoods, protect and stabilize property values, minimize building deterioration and

* What is an Historic District? It is a geographically definable area with a significant concentration of buildings, structures, sites, spaces or objects unified by past events, physical development, architectural design, materials, etc. It includes contributing and non-contributing properties.

ensure that new construction is structurally and aesthetically compatible with existing historic neighborhoods.”

Old Towne Historic District

[text by Phil Brigandi](#) written for Orange Public Library site which can be found online by going first to www.cityoforange.org, then click on Library, then local history and then Old Towne.

The City of Orange is often called the "Plaza City," and indeed it is the only city in Orange County that was planned and built around a plaza. It was founded in 1871 as a real estate venture by two lawyers, Alfred Beck Chapman and Andrew Glassell. Like many cities located in the eastern and midwestern United States, Orange was subdivided into a grid system of streets that focused around a central square. The Old Towne Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 and includes more than 1,300 homes and other buildings. It is approximately one square mile in size, making it the largest National Register district in California. The district provides a feeling for life in Orange from 1888 to 1940, showcasing acorn-shaped streetlights and approximately 53 different architectural styles. Victorian, Prairie, Craftsman, Bungalow, Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean styles, to name a few, may be found among the homes in Old Towne. The area has been used repeatedly as a film location because of its ability to capture the flavor of earlier time periods.

Residential Development

The development of Orange's early residential neighborhoods mirrored the growth of downtown in many ways. The earliest homes in Orange were built on the original eight-block townsite, or were scattered across the outlying farm lots. It was not until the



Descriptions of the homes come from *A Tour of Old Town Orange* by Doug Westfall, Paragon Agency Publishers

A Classic Box 1903 Clapboard with flattened hip roof on N. Shaffer.



Craftsman 1914 on N. Shaffer



Victorian 1905 on N. Shaffer



Mediterranean Revival 1923 On E. Maple

mid-1880s that the farm lots surrounding the townsite began to be subdivided for residential development. During the brief real estate “boom” of 1886-88, more than a dozen subdivisions were laid out downtown, but many of the lots were simply held for speculation, and when the boom died down, returned to agricultural use.

It was not until after 1900, when the citrus industry began to drive the local economy, that the downtown neighborhoods began to fill out. New tracts were subdivided, and old 1880s lots re-surveyed. Homes began appearing further and further from the Plaza, especially to the east, and to the south, where the new Nutwood Place tract near the Santiago Creek (1906) became a desirable place to live.

By the mid-1920s, almost all the land we now think of as Old Towne Orange had been subdivided, and residential neighborhoods were growing up more and more to the west, towards Main Street. Neighborhoods began to fill in, creating interesting assortment of styles on a single block. A two-story Victorian farmhouse on the corner might be surrounded by a mix of Bungalows and Mediterranean style homes, with a few Classical Revivals, or perhaps a Tudor style home tossed in here and there. As late as the 1970s, new homes were still being built on the few remaining vacant lots downtown.

Orange’s historic residential districts reflect the economic life of the community. The area was very middle class, with individual ranchers working 10-20 acres, and local businessmen making up the backbone of the local economy. So instead of a few grand mansions, Orange has block after block of middle class homes. More than 1,200 pre-1940 homes still survive in the downtown area.



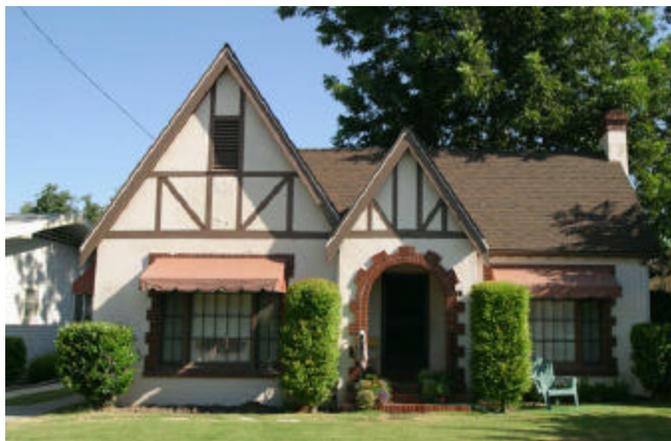
Bungalow 1920c
On N. Cleveland



Hip Roof Cottage 1906
On E. Maple



Spanish Colonial
Revival 1928
On N. Pine



Provincial Revival 1921
On E. Palmyra

All photographs from
Orange Public Library
Photo Database
searched *houses*.

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- Board Meeting
- Thursday May 6, 2004 at 7:00 PM
at the Kidseum
- May Meeting
- Thursday, May 13, 2004
- Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
- At the Kidseum, Santa Ana
- **Historic Preservation**
- **by Tita Smith**

▪ June 10, Meeting
Doris Walker Smith on the early period of Dana Point history.

▪ June 12, Field Trip to Dana Point
Tour of the new state of the art Ocean Institute at 10 AM and a docent talk and walk by Dana's ship, The Pilgrim. (No tours on Sat.) We will follow this with lunch at one of the nearby harbor front restaurants.



Where will you find books on local history? Your best source is your Orange County Historical Society.

Books listed below in BOLD are pictured and described on our website: www.orangecountyhistory.org

Don't see the book you are looking for? ASK US. If we don't have it we will help you find it.

WEBSITE ADDITIONS:

A list of current home and walking tours in areas of Orange and Los Angeles Counties

PLACE A DOLLAR AMT. OPPOSITE EACH ITEM YOU WISH TO ORDER		
Bawdy Balboa by Judge Robert Gardner	\$25.00	
Cañada de la Brea by Virginia Carpenter	\$10.00	
Centennial Bibliography of Orange County	\$70.00	
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José Antonio Yorba by Arnold Dominguez	\$4.00	
The Portolá Expedition 1769	\$3.00	
Orange Countiana II	\$12.00	
Orange Countiana III	\$12.00	
Orange Countiana IV Architecture: soft cover	\$32.00	
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Orange Countiana V Early Businesses soft cover	\$22.00	
In Orange County hard cover	\$30.00	
Orange County Through Four Centuries By Dr. Leo J. Friis	\$15.95	
The Orange Blossom 50 Years of Growth in Orange County	\$40.00	
ORANGE COUNTY The Golden Promise by Pamela Hallan-Gibson 2002 edition	\$37.00	

Proceedings of the Conference of Orange County History	1988	\$11.00	
	1989	\$11.00	

All prices include sales tax

MERCHANDISE TOTAL _____
Postage and Handling (\$3.00 first item, \$1 each additional)
Orange Blossoms is \$5 per book, \$1 each additional
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Make checks payable to OCHS
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 Call him (949) 559-5668 and he will bring your book/s to the next meeting.

