



COUNTY COURIER

Official Publication of the Orange County Historical Society

www.orangecountyhistory.org

WRITTEN HISTORY OF ORANGE COUNTY

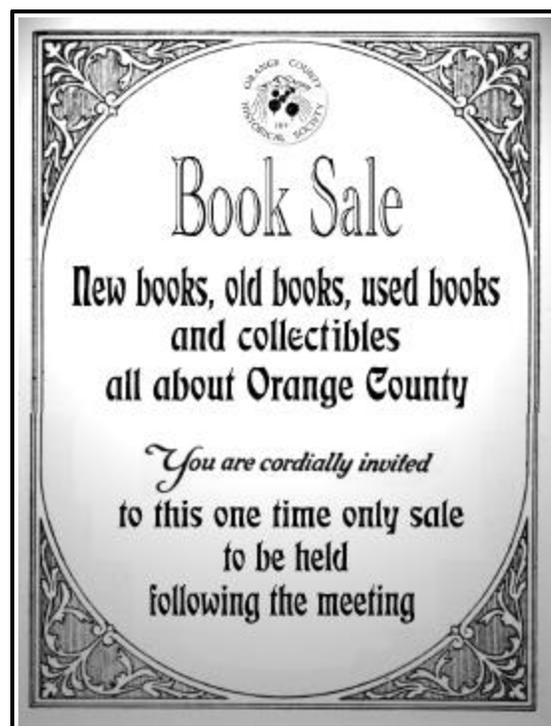
Our April meeting (details in page 5) will once again focus on authors of local history. The past two months we have heard from authors describing the process of producing a book for publication. In spite of the difficulties encountered, we were encourage to try it for ourselves.

This month will be about the writing of articles on local history. The authors are Society members whose articles have appeared in the *County Courier* in past years.

Potentially, this task should be easier than producing a book. We will hear their opinions and points of view as well a description of the process. Hopefully they will motivate others to write.

Through the years we have had articles considered primary sources of information. These were firsthand accounts such as the diary by Maggie Skidmore Julian of her trip to San Juan Hot Springs in 1878, the letters by Allen Goddard written in the aftermath of the 1933 earthquake, and the 1890 journal by Horace C. Snow of Tustin. Newspapers are another source of primary material. John Sorenson's article last month on what was written in the *Santa Ana Journal* make interesting reading.

We have had recollections not quite as primary as a diary as they are more distant in time from the events described. Memoirs often have additional insight because of the author's perspective. Richard Vining as President of the society included many of his recollections in his President's Message each month. He also wrote an article on exotic bird farms in Orange County as he remembered them. Other articles of this type were *Harry and the Train at the End of an Era* by Dwight Curran, his boyhood experiences riding the steam engines in Santa Ana. Dwight



contributed to *Remember When* with recalling the Sears Roebuck store on south Main in 1949. Elinor Schmidt wrote of Lasky's Camp as she remembered.

More often articles have been written about an event or area using materials from other authors, secondary sources mixed with primary sources. Ken Leavens, our historian has done this frequently in answering queries. A perfect example appears in this issue on page 3, his article on Bitter Point. Steve Faessel wrote an article about a postcard that was given him picturing the Municipal Water and Electric Light Plant, Anaheim. To his surprise it was written by a man on whom Steve had been doing extensive research. Primary sources
Continued next page

can also be maps, photographs and even three dimensional objects or artifacts. John used the Sanborn maps when writing the article on the Orange County Hospital and its construction.

Another type of article included in the *Courier* is the write-up such as John Sorenson did on rare books by Terry Stephenson. J J Friis when he was President contributed articles on subjects such as *Walter Johnson-The Big Train, First Easter Sunrise Service* and *California's Mecca for Health*. There have been book reviews by Harriet Friis and Judy Moore.

All of these writings have furthered the Society's stated goals of research, preservation and dissemination of local history.

We will meet on Thursday, April 14, 2005, at 7:30 p.m. at Bower's Kidseum, northwest corner of Main and 18th Streets in Santa Ana. Free parking in back with entrance to building in back and to the side.

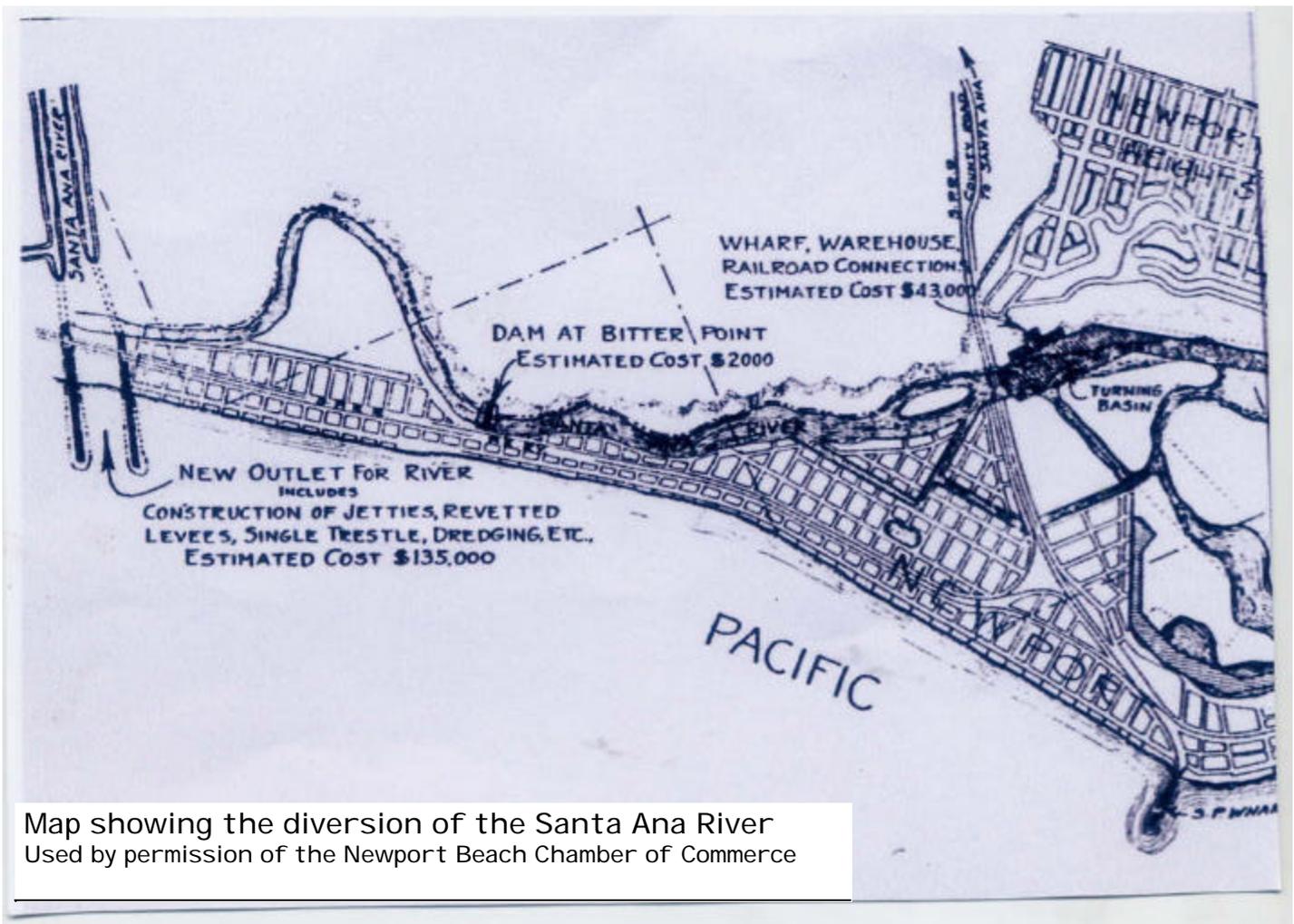
The following research article comes from **Ken Leavens**, our historian, in response to a query from Rick Truefreh asking about Bitter Point Dam and it's location.

BITTER POINT DAM

In June of 1919, the citizens of Orange County voted a \$500,000 bond issue for harbor development at Newport Bay. Two thousand dollars of that bond issue was to be used to build an earthen dam from Bitter Point to the coast line.

The need for such a dam was of great concern for residents of Newport Beach. By 1920, Newport Bay, then called Orange County Harbor, was attracting pleasure crafts and yachts from as far away as the East coast. However, there was a problem with the Santa Ana River.

During times of flood, enormous amounts of silt would find its way into Newport Bay caused by the river flowing



Map showing the diversion of the Santa Ana River
Used by permission of the Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce

around Bitter Point and eastward into the bay. In 1916, 900,000 cubic yards of silt had been deposited by the flood waters of the Santa Ana River. Joseph Beek, Newport Bay's first harbor master, was quoted in the September 17, 1967 edition of the Los Angeles Times as saying, "In the flood of 1918, I had to row across the bay to the peninsula. When I crossed, debris in the water was flowing in from the Santa Ana River. By the time I tried to come back, the debris was so thick you could almost walk across it." It was obvious that the Santa Ana River had to be re-channeled.



Looking West from Bitter Point

Photo by Ken Leavens 2005

The construction of Bitter Point Dam was the solution. In 1920, a new outlet was cut for the Santa Ana River directly to the ocean and a dam was built across the river's old channel at Bitter Point forever diverting the Santa Ana River into the Pacific Ocean. This was the first work of its kind undertaken by Orange County. Again quoting Joseph Beek, "you can't see that dam anymore, but when you go over that hump at the west end of Newport on Coast Highway, you're driving on the old dam."

More About Bitter Point

Bitter Point is a bluff one hundred feet high overlooking the Santa Ana River Basin. It is located on property owned by the West Newport Oil Company.

The name "Bitter Point" comes from lagoons that were formed below the bluffs in Costa Mesa before the Santa Ana River was channeled directly into the Pacific Ocean. Algae would form in these wetlands giving the water a bitter taste.

Santa Ana Journal

By John Sorenson

In part two of our look at the Santa Ana Journal, we will look at the big news stories for May 1-3, 1935.

The 1st edition headlined the purchase of the Ramona Bldg. in Santa Ana by James Irvine Sr. This purchase was made from the builder L. L. Mercereau in exchange for 34 residential acres in Eagle Rock. The Romona building was completed in 1922 on a 100 by 112 foot lot on the east side of Sycamore Street. The building is located between 4th and 5th Streets and

housed Federal Finance Company. There were five other offices available on the 1st floor. Thirty two offices were available on the 2nd floor.

In International news: Great Britain announced an expenditure of \$15,000,000 for the expansion of the Royal Air Force for defense of the home islands. In 1933, 500 aircraft was sufficient, in 1934 the number was raised to 1,000, in 1935 the number was raised to 1,500. On the other side of the English Channel, German Air Minister Goering told the world "this is not the time to attack us". In San Francisco Bay, the U. S. Navy gathered 153 ships for annual maneuvers.

Continued next page

In Orange County: SERA (not further identified) offered agricultural work at \$2.02½ for a nine hour day. SERA may have stood for State (Economic or Employment) and (Relief or Recovery) Agency or something close to it. Imagine a six day work week for \$12.15 per week. This same agency stated to extend Main Street to the coast would require 300 men for two years.

Water was an important subject. Seasonal rainfall for the year was 17.69 inches. A proposed earth filled dam at the Prado site was part of a \$11,600,000 water project. This 92' high structure would hold back 180,000 acre feet of water would cost \$ 7.2 million. Getting water from Parker Dam by 1938 was the goal of the Metropolitan Water District according to Secretary, Col. S. H. Finley.

Business was showing some signs of recovery: 25 new home permits had been issued in the first four months of 1935. Total permit value was \$495,000 compared to only \$95,000 in the first four months of 1934. Pep Boy's to open a store at 211 North Main Street with Moray Rosenfeld, manager.

The National Night Ball League (softball) met at the Blue Bird Café in Garden Grove to iron out the 1935 schedule. The six teams in the league were: Long Beach, Huntington Beach, Westminster, Anaheim, Santa Ana, and Olive. Santa Ana had recently equipped their field with new bleachers and lights for night games.

In education: Construction was to start on Valencia High School. Enrollment at Santa Ana High School had reached 1179 with the admission of three new students. The article lists the students, their parents, and their addresses. (Today that would be invasion of privacy!). Finally, a story headlined "Students Say Homework Too Heavy".

On the lighter side, Bower's Museum is to be the scene of a Native Daughters of the Golden West social function. Night sergeant C. L. Neuschwanger celebrated 17 years on the Santa Ana Police Force.

Finally, Chapter 1 of a serialized novel appeared in the paper. This novel, Want Ad Heiress no doubt appealed to the romantically inclined of the day. Also appearing was a regular column by C. F. Shirvin, "Skinny Scribbles". Skinny ran a tire service business in Santa Ana.

BOOKS and COLLECTIBLES FOR SALE

There will be books from authors Jim Sleeper, Leo J. Friis, Esther Cramer, Louise Booth, Don Meadows and Robert Cleland Glass to name a few. Two books are rare, out of print and pricey. All books are priced at the going rate seen in local book stores and the internet.

We will have the Images of America Series for Fullerton, Huntington Beach and Buena Park. Books printed by Friis-Pioneer Press will be available. Some periodicals will be for sale such as issues of the *California Historian*, the publication of the Conference of California Historical Societies.

Sample issues of the publications listed for sale in this issue will be available to browse and The Orange Blossom book will be available for sale.

Collectibles are all types of things relating to Orange County including some jewelry.

Come, look and make a donation. The society rarely has fundraisers, but this is one.

OCHS

TOUR OF ARDEN —The Helena Modjeska House & Garden

Saturday, MAY 14 9:45 a.m.



DEADLINE FOR RESERVATION- APRIL 29

RESERVATIONS LIMITED TO 17

We may need to carpool as parking is limited also. Your \$5.00 admission fee secures your reservation.

Send your check to:

Jane Norgren

1826 Sandalwood Ave.

Fullerton CA 92835

Or pay her at the April 14 meeting.

OCHS Calendar

2004-2005 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
949/643-0602Greg Rankin

Vice president
714/838-5149Richard Vining

Secretary
714 469-9463..... Carolyn Schoff
ceschoff@aol.com

Treasurer / Sales
949/559-5668John Sorenson
grncv8 @peoplepc .com

Activities
714/529-5160Jane Norgren

Preservation
714/558-1067..... Phil Chinn

Corresponding/membership
714/533-3199Judy Moore
jbmo38ore@netzero.net

Curator
714/738-7738 Tracy Smith-Falk

Historian.Ken Leavens
714 /526-4761
HistoryOC@aol.com

Historian CommitteeHarriet Friis
714/538-2642
JJandHJFriis@aol.com

Marketing
714/993-7009..... Diane Taylor
vimariner@aol.com

Member at Large
714/530-1448..... Don Dobmeier

Member at Large
714/538-2642 J.J. Friis
JJandHJFriis@aol.com

Newsletter Editor
714/525-4879Betsy Vigus
vvigus@pacbell.net

- Board Meeting
- Thursday Apr. 7, 2005 at 7:00 PM
at Kidseum
April Meeting
- **Thursday, April 14, 2005**
- Opening at 7:00 p.m.
- **Bower's Kidseum**
- **18th and Main Sts., Santa Ana**
- **7:30 p.m. Program:**
- WRITTEN HISTORY of OC

- **MAY 12, Program**
- **Preservation Month**
- **Thirtieth Street Architects,**
present a program on
Madame Modjeska's house in
the Santa Ana mountains.
- **MAY 14, Saturday Tour of**
Madame Modjeska's house



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.

PLACE A DOLLAR AMT. OPPOSITE EACH ITEM YOU WISH TO ORDER		3 NEW Images of America Series cities of Fullerton, Buena Park and Huntington Beach			
Bawdy Balboa by Judge Robert Gardner	\$25.00		\$21.50 each		
Cañada de la Brea by Virginia Carpenter	\$10.00				
Centennial Bibliography of Orange County	\$70.00	Fruit Box Labels An Illustrated Guide to Citrus Labels by Gordon McClelland & Jay Last	\$35.00		
House of Bernardo Yorba by Don Meadow	\$4.00	<p><i>All prices include sales tax</i></p> <p>MERCHANDISE TOTAL _____</p> <p>Postage and Handling (\$3.00 first item, \$1 each additional)</p> <p>Orange Blossoms is \$5 per book, \$1 each additional</p> <p>Orange County The Golden Promise is \$5 per book, \$1 each additional</p> <p>TOTAL DUE _____</p> <p>PHONE _____</p> <p>NAME _____</p> <p>ADDRESS _____</p> <p>CITY, STATE ZIP _____</p> <p>Make checks payable to OCHS</p> <p>^ MAIL TO: John Sorenson, 14932 Gainford Circle, Irvine CA 92604 Call him (949) 559-5668 and he will bring your book/s to the next meeting.</p>			
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	\$32.00				
A Window on the Past hard cover	\$40.00				
Orange Countiana V Early Businesses soft	\$22.00				
In Orange County hard cover SOLD OUT	\$00.00				
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				

