



COUNTY COURIER

Official Publication of the Orange County Historical Society

www.orangecountyhistory.org



The Orange County Register celebrates 100 years of delivering news and information

The program this month will focus on the history of the Orange County Register. Our speaker is Andrew Horan. He is co-leader of the 100th Anniversary Team and a senior editor in the Content Center. He is in charge of the Register's signature publications this year: "Orange County Innovators" sections and the soft-cover book, "100 People and Families Who Shaped Orange County."

To commemorate its connection to the community as an information provider and in honor of its 100-year anniversary in 2005, The Orange County Register has launched anniversary-related features, special sections, promotional events and an employee-recognition program. The Register's yearlong celebration emphasizes its shared history of innovation and aspirations for a promising future.

One of the special features is "A Moment in OC History," which highlights milestone photos and news events covered in the Register. In addition, the Register will publish articles about Orange County's history, culture, geography and



Santa Ana Register building at 6th and Sycamore. The Register was at this location from 1939 to 1957.

Photo from "A Moment in OC History," Jan. 2, 2005, *Orange County Register*

people throughout the past 100 years which will be utilized by at least 100 teachers and schools participating in Register in Education (RIE), a community-sponsored program that provides teachers, students and parents with copies of the newspaper as creative learning tools. Four special sections on technology, tourism, culture and land development will run in October and November. A soft-cover book about 100 people who shaped Orange County will also be produced and delivered to subscribers

in November. A special 100-year anniversary collector's edition of the Register will publish Nov. 25.

We will gather Thursday, October 13, 2005 at 7:00 at the Kidseum, northwest corner of Main and 18th Streets in Santa Ana. Our program on The Orange County Register will begin at 7:30 p.m. Bring a guest, the public is welcome. Parking is free at the back of the building.

OCHS connection to the SANTA ANA DAILY REGISTER

The Orange County Register's beginnings date back to 1905. Originally owned by a group of Santa Ana businessmen, it was sold to J.P. Baumgartner in 1906. At that time, it was called the Santa Ana Daily Register and was located at Fourth and French Streets in Santa Ana.



Terry E. Stephenson
1880 —1943

In 1906, one of the future founders (in 1919) and directors of the Orange County Historical Society became managing editor of the *Register*. In Allen W. Goddard's address to the Society in 1964, published the following year and entitled, *Terry E. Stephenson*, he gives this account of Stephenson's early years at the newspaper:

The owners of the Santa Ana *Register* knew Stephenson and had offered him the position of managing editor, and as an added inducement to affiliate with the paper, then just a year old, proffered part ownership. He had accepted the proposal and the venture proved to be a profitable undertaking. Under the active direction of J. P. Baumgartner and Stephenson, the *Register* flourished as the town of Santa Ana grew. A dozen years after Stephenson arrived the Register absorbed its principal competitor, the Santa Ana *Blade*.

Allen furnishes Stephenson's background for journalism and gives high praise for his future ability as a historian.

As a student at Stanford University at the beginning of the century he demonstrated ability in journalism . . . After graduation he spent three years as a newspaperman on the San Francisco *Examiner* and on the Fresno *Morning Republican* before he returned to Orange County to become managing editor and part-owner of the *Register*. At the age of twenty-five he had proven his ability in the field of journalism. He was yet to prove himself in the highly competitive newspaper business and in the qualities necessary for civic leadership, and in pioneering a new field of accomplishment—the scholarly assembling of County historical data from almost non-existing sources.

In his career as a County historian, he was unique—molding the anecdote of the early settler with the critical analysis of a trained reporter and career editor, into one of the first scholarly efforts toward recorded history of Orange County.

Allen continues with a description of a special edition of the Santa Ana *Register* under Stephenson's editorial control that leads perfectly into an article by John Sorenson.

A special *Quarter Centennial* edition of the Santa Ana *Register* was issued in April, 1913. It was a noteworthy journalistic effort with some 130 pages approximately 11 x 16 containing informative articles and photos of life in Orange County. While issued somewhat prior to the actual 25th anniversary of the founding of Orange County the edition contained abundant material for students of County history.

According to a register announcement all unsigned articles appearing in the special issue were written by Stephenson. In addition, "Good Roads in Orange County" in the Quarter Centennial Edition bears Stephenson's name and photo. Excerpts from this read: "California voted \$18,000,000 for a state road to traverse the state . . . Through Orange County the route lies along the historic El Camino Real . . . established by the Spaniards over a century ago. The state is to build a macadamized road . . . from La Habra . . . to San Juan Capistrano.

The State Highway System

By John Sorensen.

While helping with the production of our new postcard book, I came across some wonderful information on the history of California's highway development. Highways are conduits of economic growth and development, as well as avenues of recreation. For example, what would Huntington Beach be without PCH? This article provides a short history of various highway agencies up to 1934. A future article will review Federal and State routes in Orange County as they existed when uniform signage came into being in 1934. You can read more about these subjects at www.cahighways.org.

From the building of the first state highway in 1897 until 1934, there was no uniform signage on our state highways. The first such signage in California, occurred on federal highways in 1928 and was posted by private interests. Highway maps of the late 1920s, show a few routes marked as Federal Routes 99 or 101; but California routes like CA 22 and CA 55 were not yet identified as such. In 1934 the state decided to identify the thousands of miles of roads and highways that had already been constructed. It may be that the work of erecting signposts was just the kind of public works needed during the Great Depression utilizing

low-skilled workers. Well marked roads also encouraged travel, which stimulated the economy and helped create revenue for the state's new sales tax.

Phase I: A Highway System Is Established (1897-1914)

California's first roads were horse trails and wagon roads, developed by the settlers. Californians began pressuring their government for improved roads after statehood was granted in 1850. In 1850, the state created the Office of Surveyor General with the duty of recommending new roads. In 1855, there was public demand for a road from the Sacramento Valley to Carson Valley in Nevada, and the Legislature passed a bill ordering the Surveyor General, to complete a survey for a good wagon road over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Surveyor General authorized bids for construction of the Emigrant Wagon Road. While the bill authorized costs up to \$105,000, remarkably, the Legislature failed to actually appropriate the funds! Instead, there evolved a policy of granting franchises for building toll roads. This resulted in a number of toll roads and bridges constructed during the period 1850 to 1880. It was during this time that the Emigrant Wagon Road (also called the "Lake Tahoe Wagon Road") was completed in November 1858. In 1864, the Dutch Flat and Donner Lake wagon roads were completed by the Central Pacific Railway over the Sierras. Both were toll roads.

In 1895, the Bureau of Highways was created by the state Legislature. The new officers of the Bureau purchased a buckboard and visited each county during the period 1895 to 1897 in order to develop recommendations for a state highway system. Their first report stated that: "The conditions of highways in California today is the result of generations of neglect and apathy." Their report was the result of traveling in excess of 16,500 miles over the existing road system. Their report to the governor of November 25, 1896, recommended a system of state highways made up of 28 distinct routes of approximately 4500 miles using existing roads when possible, and connecting all county seats.

Their original proposal recommended that the state construct these routes as the counties lacked the cash to construct and maintain the roads on their own. This was, however, modified by the Legislature, which feared the increasing power of centralized government. In the state capital the Legislature provided greater county control over the system, including the ability of the counties to add an

unlimited number of new routes.

In 1897, the Legislature dissolved the Bureau of Highways and established the Department of Highways, consisting of three commissioners appointed for two-year terms and a civil engineer appointed for a four-year term. During this time, the state took over the toll road then known as the Lake Tahoe Toll Road. This is the route of present-day US 50. The recommendations of the new department were often ignored, because of the fear of over concentration of power in the Legislature.

In 1899, an interest in the route from near Chinese Camp to Yosemite National Park was defined. In 1901 an interest in a route from Long Barn to current US 395 was defined.

The scope of State involvement may have been confined to maintenance only, though this is hard to determine because the records are incomplete.

Apparently, the reluctance to concentrate power in the Legislature was overcome in 1902 when the state constitution was amended to give the Legislature the power to establish a system of state highways and to pass the laws necessary for highway construction. It also permitted state aid

to be provided to the counties for road construction.

In 1907, the Legislature dissolved the Department of Highways and created the Department of Engineering, the forerunner of the Department of Public Works. The Legislature provided minimum funding for this department, and most funds were devoted to maintenance such as clearing storm debris and constructing retaining walls and culverts. Before the 1909 Bond act, the Department of Highways had interests in routes over the Sierra Nevada mountain range and a route to Yosemite.

1909 - First Bond Issue

In 1910, the voters approved the first State Highway Bond Act for \$18,000,000. This measure established a state highway system and authorized construction of 3,052 miles of highways. It required the Department of Engineering to acquire the necessary land, and construct a continuous and connected highway system. California's population at this time was 2.4 million. In 1911, the Legislature passed the Chandler Act, which authorized the appointment of a three-member board to advise the Department of Engineering. This board was California's first highway commission. The Chandler Act also created the position of State Highway Engineer serving at the pleasure of the Governor. The first highway commissioner, Austin B. Fletcher, together with the highway commissioners took a 6800 mile tour of California's state highways in 1911. Mr. Fletcher recommended dividing the



state into seven divisions (now called districts). Each district was to have its own experienced engineer. The commissioners also recommended that the roads be "permanent in character" and provide a "continuous and connected state highway system."

On August 7, 1912 Commission Chairman Burton Towne turned the first shovel of dirt on State Highway Contract Number 1, for a section of the coast route between South San Francisco and Burlingame. However, this was not the first groundbreaking for a new state highway. That had occurred a month earlier 3 miles north of Wheatland for what would become US 99 East.

In 1914, road maintenance was a function added to the Division of Engineering, which was supported by funds made available by a 1913 legislative act, requiring motor vehicle registration. Fees generated by the new registration law were to be divided between the State and the counties. The result was a systematic, statewide road maintenance program.

Phase II: Early Growth (1915-1932)

1915 Bond Act

In 1915, the state authorized an additional \$15 million bond act, which was approved by the voters in 1916. This year also saw the passage of the Convict Labor Law, which permitted the Department of Engineering to use prison labor for the construction of state highways.

In 1916, the voters passed the 1915 Bond Act. More importantly, in 1916, Congress passed the Bankhead Act, which created the Federal Aid Program. Under this program Federal funds were provided for roads that were to improve rural mail delivery. These were commonly known as "post roads". This program required the state's two raise half of the costs of these roads. California received \$151,063.92 in Federal Aid Funds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1917.

By 1918, several important highway projects had been completed, including the Ridge Route, the Yolo Causeway, the Kings River Canyon, Alturas-Cedarville, Emigrant Gap and the Imperial County Plank Road.

In 1919, the state Legislature amended the Motor Vehicle Act of 1913, to require that the county supervisors submit an annual report detailing the expenditures of road funds derived from the State Motor Vehicle Fund. These reports were intended to ensure that funds were expended in accordance with the original intent of the funds.

1919 Bond Act

Voters approved a third highway bond issue in the special election of July 1, 1919 in the unprecedented amount of \$40 million. This act authorized creation or extension of 1853 miles of highways. This act authorized funds for the completion of the highways contemplated under the two preceding acts by the addition of \$20 million

to the highway funds for this purpose. An additional \$20 million was allocated for the construction of some additional routes. At this time, the entire population of the state was only 3.4 million, which is just slightly more than Orange County's current population.

In 1919-1920, the State Highway Commission's biannual report identified problems with highway funding provided through bond acts. The result was a recommendation for a tax on gasoline sales. The gasoline tax was finally enacted in 1923.

In 1921, the California Legislature created the Department of Public Works, which included the State Highway Commission, the State Water Commission and the newly created Division of Highways. The State Highway Commission was removed from the Department of Public Works in 1923 and made a separate state agency largely responsible for highway matters previously handled by the Department of Public Works. In 1923, the Highway Commission also created three new divisions (now called districts), with offices in Stockton, Bishop and San Bernardino. This brought the total number of districts to 10.

MORE ON STATE HIGHWAYS NEXT MONTH



POSTCARD BOOK UPDATE

The proofs for the postcard book arrived and have been returned to the publishers. Next, the material will be sent to Great Britain to be printed. There were few changes to be made in the 232 captions. Because of the extraordinary research efforts of the committee, we were not asked to lengthen any captions only shorten some.

The committee was comprised of the board of directors and Tom Pulley. Each person had a particular expertise or background which facilitated mutual cooperation to achieve a successful book. Thanks to Jane Norgren and Judy Moore's final checking of grammar, punctuation and sentence structure, there were no corrections. If all goes as expected, we will have books to sell in late November. So be thinking of how many copies you will want to purchase for holiday gifts.

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OCHS Calendar

- Board Meeting
- Thursday Oct. 6, 2005 at 7:00 PM
at Kidseum

October Meeting

- **Thursday, Oct. 13, 2005**
- Opening at 7:00 p.m.
- **Kidseum**
- Corner of 18th and Main Streets, Santa Ana
- **7:30 Program**
- **Orange County Register**
1905 to 2005
- **Speaker Andrew Horan**

- ❖ **November Program**
Orange County Postcard Book
*My favorite card and what I learned
that wouldn't fit in the book and the
great cards we had to leave out.*
BY THE AUTHORS

BOOK SALE



All publications with an *
below **will be sold at 40 %
OFF** during October and
November 2005.

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
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Orange County Through Four Centuries By Dr. Leo J. Friis	\$15.95	
The Orange Blossom 50 Years of Growth in Orange County	\$40.00	* 25.85
ORANGE COUNTY The Golden Promise by Pamela Hallan-Gibson 2002 edition	\$37.00	

3 NEW Images of America Series cities of Fullerton, Buena Park and Huntington Beach	\$21.50 each
Fruit Box Labels An Illustrated Guide to Citrus Labels by Gordon McClelland & Jay Last	\$35.00

All prices include sales tax

MERCHANDISE TOTAL _____

Postage and Handling (\$3.00 first item, \$1 each additional)
Bibliography of OC is \$5 per book, \$1 each additional
Orange Blossoms is \$5 per book, \$1 each additional
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Make checks payable to OCHS

~ **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.



FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

▪ ✂ x

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