

**FINAL DRAFT**

**JOURNAL**  
of the  
Riverside  
Historical Society

**This cover page to be replaced by the printer.**

**Number Seven February 2003**

**Mission  
of the  
Journal of the Riverside Historical Society**

- To publish carefully researched and documented articles of broad popular appeal relating to Riverside personalities, events, and institutions of the past.
- To publish personal accounts by witnesses of or participants in significant past events. These are to be derived both from manuscripts and from planned oral history interviews.
- To encourage both established and new historians to research and publish articles on previously unexplored aspects of Riverside's history.
- To foster among Riverside's newer residents a lively interest in Riverside's history and an active concern for Riverside's historic resources.
- To increase participation in Riverside Historical Society membership and activities among the publication's readers.

Adopted by  
Historical Society Board  
March 1996

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**INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS:**

The *Journal of the Riverside Historical Society* is currently an annual publication devoted to the history of the City of Riverside. It is the stated intention of the Board of the Society to increase the frequency of the *Journal*.

Contributions of articles, edited documents, and book reviews are welcome on a continuous basis. They should be submitted (at the owner's risk) to: Publications Committee, Riverside Historical Society, P.O. Box 246, Riverside, CA 92502-0246. The *Journal's* Publications Committee will also announce a specific period of solicitation for each issue.

The authority for matters of style will be the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14<sup>th</sup> edition. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to return accepted manuscripts to authors for required changes. An author whose article is accepted for publication will receive ten gratis copies of the issue in which his or her article appears. Statements and opinions expressed in articles are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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# JOURNAL of the Riverside Historical Society

Number Seven      February 2003

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## Foreword

Inasmuch as this year marks the centennial of the founding of our Society, it seems fitting that we should honor our own past in this issue. This is by no means mere institutional narcissism. As the reader will learn from Joan Hall's brief history, we, as a Society, are not only dedicated to honoring and preserving the history of our city, but have also had members and officers who have played vital roles in that history. Several of these individuals are pictured in this issue. Also reprinted here for your amusement and edification is an article from the *Riverside Daily Press* which recounts the news of our Society's founding.

Two other articles in this issue range from north to south. Dr. Harley's article recounts the history of La Placita de los Trujillos, Riverside's early "suburb" to the north, which actually predates the city. John Adams of the Rialto Historical Society recounts a tale of tragedy and heroism at Mockingbird Reservoir at the city's southern end.

We honor the centennial of another of our city's institutions with Joan Hall's history of the Victoria Club. Indeed, not a few members of our Society have also been members of the Victoria Club over the years.

Finally, we wish well to the Mission Inn as it, too, celebrates its centennial. Through the years the Society and the Inn have been close, from the Society's project of transplanting one of the Parent Navel Orange Trees in front of the Inn (pictured in this issue), to holding meetings in the Inn itself. Indeed, Frank A. Miller, the Master of the Inn, served on the Society's first executive committee. Your editor hopes that these centennials will generate further research and articles that can be published in future issues of our Journal.

William Swafford, Editor

## About the Authors

**John A. Adams** holds a Ph.D. in Soil Sciences from the University of California, Riverside & worked for the Bureau of Land Management. He serves as Historian for the Rialto Historical Society. The author of *Dirt*, and *Dangling from the Golden Gate Bridge*, he is also co-owner of the last orange grove in Rialto.

**Although Joan Herrick Hall** did not move to Riverside from her native San Francisco until 1952, she is descended from a prominent local pioneer family. Her great-grandfather, Stephen Henderson Herrick, was a Riverside banker involved in the agricultural development of the Highgrove area. Mrs. Hall has authored and co-authored a wide variety of local history books and articles, specializing in biography and architectural history. Her latest book, *Through the Doors of the Mission Inn*, tells the stories of 45 celebrities associated with Riverside's historic hotel. Mrs. Hall has also had a long civic involvement with local history, having served as chair of the Riverside Cultural Heritage Board and of the Riverside Municipal Museum Board and as president of the Riverside Historical Society.

**Dr. R. Bruce Harley** holds a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Iowa. He was the chief historian at March Air Force Base, 1959-1983. Upon his retirement from federal service, he became the first archivist of the newly-established Catholic diocese of San Bernardino. In this capacity he authored numerous books and articles on church history in the Inland Empire. His final retirement came in 1998, although he continues to write about March Field, the Agua Mansa community, and the Old Spanish Trail.

# Riverside's Historical Societies Centennial

by Joan Hall

Riverside's first historical organization began as early as 1879 when a group of pioneer men attended a meeting in the Riverside Hotel, a small hotel built on the site of the present Main Library. The purpose of this meeting was to organize a Riverside Pioneer Society to recognize and honor early settlers. Unfortunately, a great deal of time and effort was wasted deciding who would be eligible for membership. Initially, membership was limited to local men who had settled in Riverside before 1 July 1872. Since this early date excluded many others interested in local history, it was extended to 1 January 1873 and included ladies over 18 years and gentlemen over 21 years. This time limitation, however, did not provide for admission of new members when the old-timers passed on and as a result the first Riverside Pioneer Society lasted but a short time.

On 21 January 1888, the San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers organized for the purpose of bringing together "hardy pioneers of peace and harmony so that they could recount their past adventures to fellow pioneers and to enjoy the brotherhood and social activities of such an organization." The city of Riverside was part of San Bernardino County in 1888 but Riversiders did not join this group because of strict membership requirements. To become a member one had to have arrived in California before 31 December 1850, the year California was admitted to the Union, or to have been a resident of the county no later than 26 April 1853, when San Bernardino was established. Once again, there was no provision made for new members but the requirements were later relaxed and a few Riversiders subsequently joined this group.

During the 1880s and 1890s there was a widespread popular custom to honor your elders. They were treated with respect and dignity and were encouraged to share their past experiences. In 1889, the Historical Society of California placed notices in newspapers throughout the state asking for citizen support to gather historical materials in their individual areas. They were collecting donations of newspapers and books to compile a state history.

## Journal of the Riverside Historical Society



*Mrs. Mary F. Darling, long time supporter of the Riverside Historical Society (Courtesy of Riverside Public Library)*

Later, in 1900, James Roe of Riverside placed a notice in local newspapers announcing that he was compiling facts and stories of local history and asked for help in gathering such materials. The result of his work became known as Roe's Notes. Roe's handwritten manuscript is owned by the Riverside Public Library's Riverside Local History Resource Center.

Since many early historical societies did not provide for the admission of new members, most of these groups faded away. Then on 7 January 1903, at All Souls' Universalist Church, an enthusiastic group of Riversiders gathered to organize a Riverside Historical Society. This was the beginning of our present organization, although it did not enjoy a continuous existence. At the first meeting Mary F. Darling said,

"Riverside is our adopted home and it has advanced through the work of citizens who have fulfilled public duties and obligations. Let us carefully guard the historical records and traditions of our community and demonstrate our belief in the value of a historical society by doing our part so future generations of historians cannot complain that we scattered and lost what was entrusted to our keeping."

The Riverside Historical Society's first project was to save the one remaining parent Washington navel orange tree still standing on the Luther Tibbets' property. San Bernardino banker Lewis Jacobs had



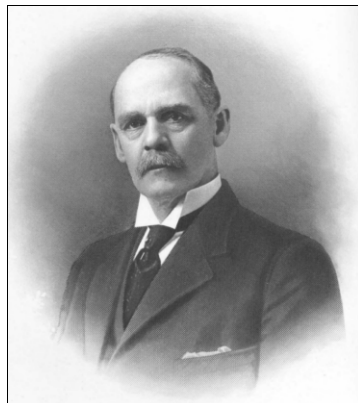
*Samuel Cary Evans, Jr.  
Riverside's First Mayor  
(Courtesy of Riverside Public  
Library)*

Inn on the occasion of President Theodore Roosevelt's visit to Riverside on 8 May 1903. Members of the Historical Society were present for this historic event that was recorded in a popular photograph. Although the famous tree was referred to as Teddy's tree or the Mission Inn's tree, it remained property of the Riverside Historical Society.

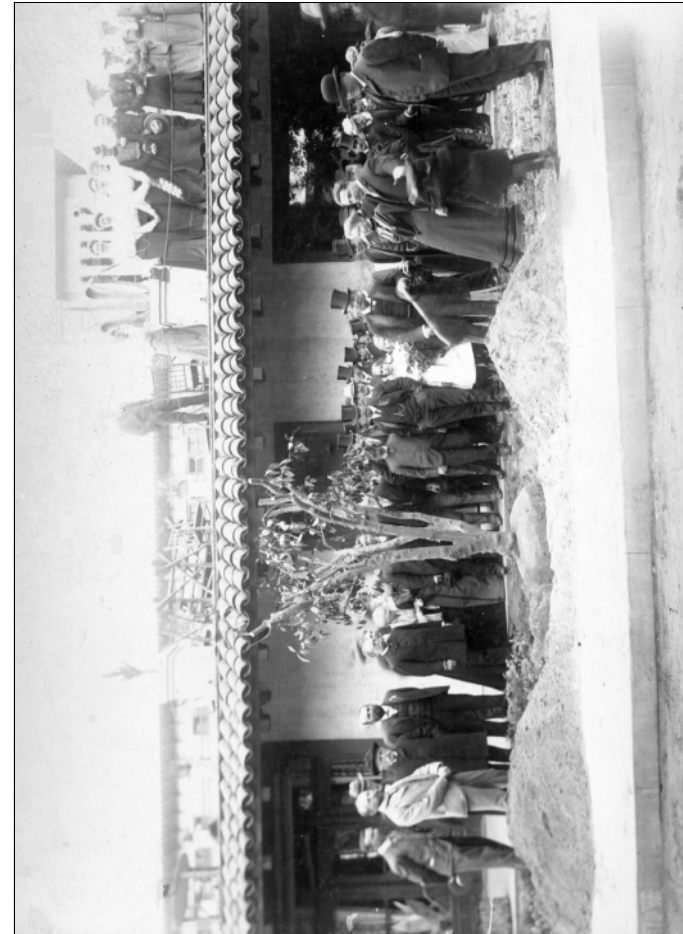
During this era, John Greenleaf North, son the Riverside's founder Hon. John W. North, was president of the Society. In 1910 he died suddenly while visiting Ireland and

foreclosed the Tibbets homeplace on Central Avenue near Magnolia Avenue. One of the two original trees had been given to the City of Riverside in 1902 and was moved to a donated lot near the corner of Arlington and Magnolia Avenues. The second tree was growing on the foreclosed property that was about to be sold. Members of the new society were interested in preserving the remaining tree.

Frank a. Miller, a prominent member of the Society, offered a site for the tree in the front courtyard of his Glenwood Mission Inn. Other sites were considered, such as White Park and Fairmount Park, but Society members decided to transplant the tree at the Mission



*John Greenleaf North, son of  
Riverside founder, John Wesley  
North (Courtesy of Riverside  
Public Library)*



*President Theodore Roosevelt transplants a Parent Navel Orange tree in front of the  
"Old Adobe", Mission Inn. Frank Miller is standing to the President's left (Courtesy of  
Riverside Public Library)*

the historical society became inactive. Between 1910 and 1914, some early settlers and local citizens had a parting of the way, perhaps due to a perceived mutual lack of recognition and attention. Regardless of the difficulty, Pliny Evans, son of a prominent pioneer Samuel C. Evans, reunited both groups in April 1914.

Pliny Evans invited 60 men who had settled in Riverside before 1880 to a grand banquet at the Mission Inn. Evans planned and



*John R. Gabbert (Courtesy of  
Riverside Public Library)*

hosted this event to bring together all pioneer men to organize an active historical organization. The gentlemen toasted with their water glasses and agreed to organize a society to be known as the Pioneer Historical Society. In order to be eligible for membership, a man had to have been a resident of Riverside for at least 25 years. Even in 1914, some people thought membership should be open to anyone interested in Riverside history.

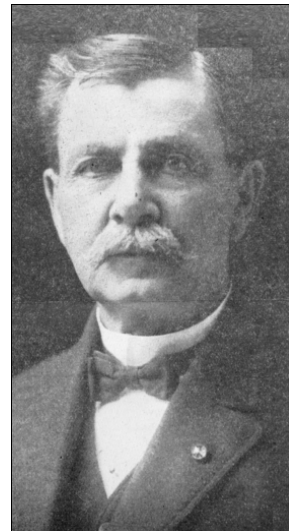
Lyman C. Waite was elected president and meetings were held in the old adobe of the Mission Inn.

Social gatherings were an

important part of their programs and annual picnics were held in Fairmount Park. The basic purpose of the society, however, was for every member to gather and preserve any historic materials for future generations and record all information about early days in Riverside. Many of these materials were given to the custody of the Riverside Public Library.

Samuel C. Evans, Jr., mayor of Riverside in 1907, became president of the Society until his death in 1933. The Pioneer Historical Society then became inactive until 1940 when John Raymond Gabbert took over as president. He had written a 1935 book, entitled *The History of Riverside County*, that updated earlier history books.

In 1944, Dewitt Hutchings, Frank



*Lyman C. Waite  
(Courtesy of Riverside  
Public Library)*

Miller's son-in-law, became president, followed by Arthur Paul in 1950. Professor Paul was a prominent educator and served as principal of Riverside Polytechnic High School and director of Riverside Junior College. During his long term as president of the Society, membership was open to "all persons interested in the purposes for which the society was organized."

The Pioneer Historical Society helped organize the Riverside Museum Associates, a support group for the Riverside Municipal Museum. At this time the city-operated museum became a depository for historical items acquired by the society. Membership in the society was open to everyone with no restrictions or requirements.

In 1958, the Pioneer Historical Society joined a citywide campaign to save the trees in Riverside. In 1961, the Society requested the management of the Mission Inn not to remove the arches along Seventh Street (Mission Inn Avenue). That same year, the organization helped to secure a State of California recognition marker, 761, recognizing the Inn's historical significance. Three years later, in 1964, members of the Society helped obtain another State marker, 787, for the De Anza crossing at the Santa Ana River.

Roy Haglund was elected to the board of directors in 1963 and became president in 1971. During his leadership, he organized a series of successful luncheon programs and welcomed all new members. He maintained a high degree of commitment in preserving local history. Roy Haglund resigned in 1988 due to failing health and Joan Hall became president of the organization.

Many people were reluctant to join the group because they were not pioneers. The word "pioneer" apparently discouraged people from inquiring about membership. The board of directors decided to change the name of the organization to the Riverside Historical Society and the general membership voted in favor of the name change in 1990. Since that time Sandy Sandison and Alan Curl have served as presidents.

Happy 100th Birthday, Riverside Historical Society.

## Reprint of a 1903 Newspaper Story, “New Society of Historians”

*Introduction by Ron Goff*

On Thursday evening, 8 January 1903 the *Riverside Daily Press* printed an article describing the formation of the Riverside Historical Society. Because of the cast of characters (some of them recognizable as significant contributors to the founding and development of Riverside), their colorful stories, and the now archaic reporting style, the following reprint of that story, on the occasion of the Society's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, seems appropriate and should be both informative and entertaining:

### NEW SOCIETY OF HISTORIANS

#### Riverside Historical Society Has an Auspicious Inauguration — Officers and Plans

At a very enthusiastic meeting of citizens last night, called together by the Extemporaneous (sic) Drill Club, the organization of a historical society was successfully effected.

The meeting was held in the Universalist church, which was decorated with a profusion of greenery and pink roses.

Mrs. Mary F. Darling presided and the meeting was opened by an invocation by Rev. Dr. Deere. Mrs. Monroe sang "Auld Lang Syne" very acceptably.

In her address of welcome to the guests of the evening, Mrs. Darling said:

Gentlemen and Ladies: On behalf of the executive board and members of the Extemporaneous Drill Club we bid you most cordial welcome. We have looked forward with eager anticipation to this date and have made arrangements in preparation for it. The executive board of this club has met with fear and trembling and pondered long and carefully over lists and lists of names of the early settlers, and with unswerving trust and confidence in Heaven's just forgiveness, the executive members have formed themselves a nominating

committee and have ventured to make a selection of officers for Riverside's Historical Society, which they hope will be acceptable for at least one term. They have also decided to read in your hearing a close copy of the constitution and by-laws of the Southern California Historical Society. These have been localized — that is the word Riverside has been substituted for the words Los Angeles, etc. We trust these models with possibly some variations, will be found suited to the needs of the new organization about to be formed.

President Roosevelt said: "For a man or woman the problem of good citizenship is in its essentials the same. The first duty is to the home, the man must care first for his wife and children, the woman first for her husband and children. And yet, this indispensable first is not enough, but as the opportunity arises each is also bound to remember the duty of each toward all of his or her fellows — that is, to the community." And so it is on this occasion, men and women together recognize the sanctity of the obligations that rest upon each in his or her relations to all. And if we for a time turn our attention to the past, looking backward, it is with a tender trusting tribute to the good men and women who have evolved this healthful and attractive city.

We feel sure that the lives of the early comers were not always festivals of delight, nor their outlook not always the most cheerful. They struggled through some hard stages in contrast whereof we revel in all the comforts of the modern conveniences and inventions. And yet the majority of us — their contemporaries — have been here long enough to sympathize with their trials and rejoice in their triumphs; we have caught something of their hardihood and perseverance; their efforts have been an inspiration to their successors.

Love of Home is inherent in humanity. Riverside is our adopted home, let us worthily cherish it. The difficulties experienced have had a tendency to brush off and polish away the spirit of selfishness and we have become a united, loyal and home-loving people. Riverside has advanced through the patriotism of its citizens and so amid all our other public duties and obligations let us carefully guard the historical records and traditions, and demonstrate our belief in the value of such



a society by doing our part, that future historians cannot complain of us that we scattered what was intrusted to our keeping.

Mrs. Gleason, secretary of the Extemporaneous Drill Club, then read the constitution of the proposed historical society, which is modeled on the Los Angeles Historical Society.

It provides for a full corps of officers and committees, and its object is stated as follows:

The object of this society shall be the collection and preservation of all material which can have any bearing on the history of Riverside.

The discussion of historical, literary and scientific subjects and the reading of papers thereon; also to cultivate social intercourse and friendship among its members and perpetuate the memory of those who by their honorable labors helped to make that history.

The officers selected by the committee were as follows:

Executive committee – C. A. Crosby, Bradford Morse, F. A. Patton, Priestley Hall, F. A. Miller, B. W. Handy.

Finance committee – A. A. Caldwell, C. L. McFarland, Geo. Bittinger, Theo. Hurd, J. A. Simms, Arthur Everest, Geo. Cunningham, M. J. Daniels.

Publication committee – S. C. Evans, James Boyd, S. B. Bliss, L. V. W. Brown, R. L. Bettner, F. M. Dunbar, W. A. Purington.

Officers of the Historical Society of Riverside:

President – John G. North.

First Vice President – L. C. Waite.

Other Vice Presidents – D. C. Twogood, S. W. Culpepper, G. W. Garcelon W. P. Russell, A. J. Twogood, P. D. Cover, John Crawford, D. S. Strong, Dr. G. H. Deere, H. M. Streeter, Dr. C. J. Gill. A. P. Johnson, J. A. Allen, D. W. McLeod, George Morse, Geo. Crawford, Clarence Stewart, J. S. Castleman, Z. Brown, F. J. Hall, Sr., H. D. Noland.

Honorary Vice Presidents – Mrs. D. C. Twogood, Mrs. K. D. Shugart, Mrs. Mary E. Darling, Mrs. N. P. J. Button, Mrs. G. H. Deere, Mrs. James Bettner, Mrs. Martha E. Hewitt, Mrs. Dorothea Hall, Miss Kate Overton.

Secretary – E. W. Holmes.

Treasurer – Geo. Bittinger.

Curator – A. S. White.

Mrs. Darling then called for expressions on the organization, and on motion the society was duly formed by unanimous vote, and the officers were by the same token declared elected.

On taking the chair Mr. North asked that Mrs. Darling, with Mrs. D. C. Twogood, take places on the platform.

Mr. North spoke with mingled feelings of pride and embarrassment – the former sensation because of the compliment implied, and the latter because of the presence of the ladies of the Extemporaneous Drill Club. He believed it an excellent plan to preserve the documents and papers which have had so great a bearing on the history of the city.

L. C. Waite was next called upon and told of his first visit to Riverside, on December 8, 1870, and a call on the Twogoods, who then resided somewhere in Hall's Addition. Judge North and family arrived at practically the same day.

Mr. North said his family were old settlers when Mr. Waite came here, having been in the settlement a whole week.

Mrs. Twogood was next introduced, and talked most interestingly of her experiences in the early days. She said many wondered why the early settlers came to so bleak and barren a spot as Riverside. Five families came with them from their old Iowa home, thinking that it would be more pleasant to have old neighbors about. She wished when she first climbed Rubidoux that she might have been given a vision of her future home, but the rosiest dreams of the founders were not equal to the fulfillment. It was all very unlovely, but all worked with energy and a determination to reclaim the desert. There were some privations, too, but soon a society developed, and church privileges were early secured. When she came to Riverside the only railroad in Southern California ran between San Pedro and Los Angeles. They waited fifteen years for a railroad. Mrs. Twogood urged that while the settlers had done much to beautify the city there was still a work to do, and she looked forward to the time when the East Side should have a park, and when Rubidoux should be transformed into a beauty spot.

Hon. E. W. Holmes was next introduced, and said he had long felt the need of some organization which should put on record the statement of the doings of the early settlers. He had frequently been surprised to find the recollections of the early settlers at variance, and that many certain historical facts were not in harmony. He urged that it was necessary to look forward in the work of development of the city as well as backward to get a true historical perspective.

A. S. White was called upon to give a bit of reminiscence, and said that he first came here because he was told by the doctors to seek a dry, warm climate. When he announced his intention of coming to California a lady told him to be sure and see Judge North. In San Francisco he met Jas. Bettner and Mrs. Bettner, and came south with them. The Bettners were not pleased with Los Angeles where horse racing on the main streets made life a little precarious. It was therefore decided to come to Riverside. They were discouraged by tales of winds which blew trees out of the ground, and of the river, which was dangerous to ford. But they determined to come, and arrived February 1, 1877. Mr. White found some difficulty in securing a boarding place, but when G. W. Garcelon found that he was from Maine he concluded to take him in. Mr. White said that for ten years he had been collecting papers and pamphlets which might form the nucleus of an historical collection. [These were later given to the Riverside Public Library.]

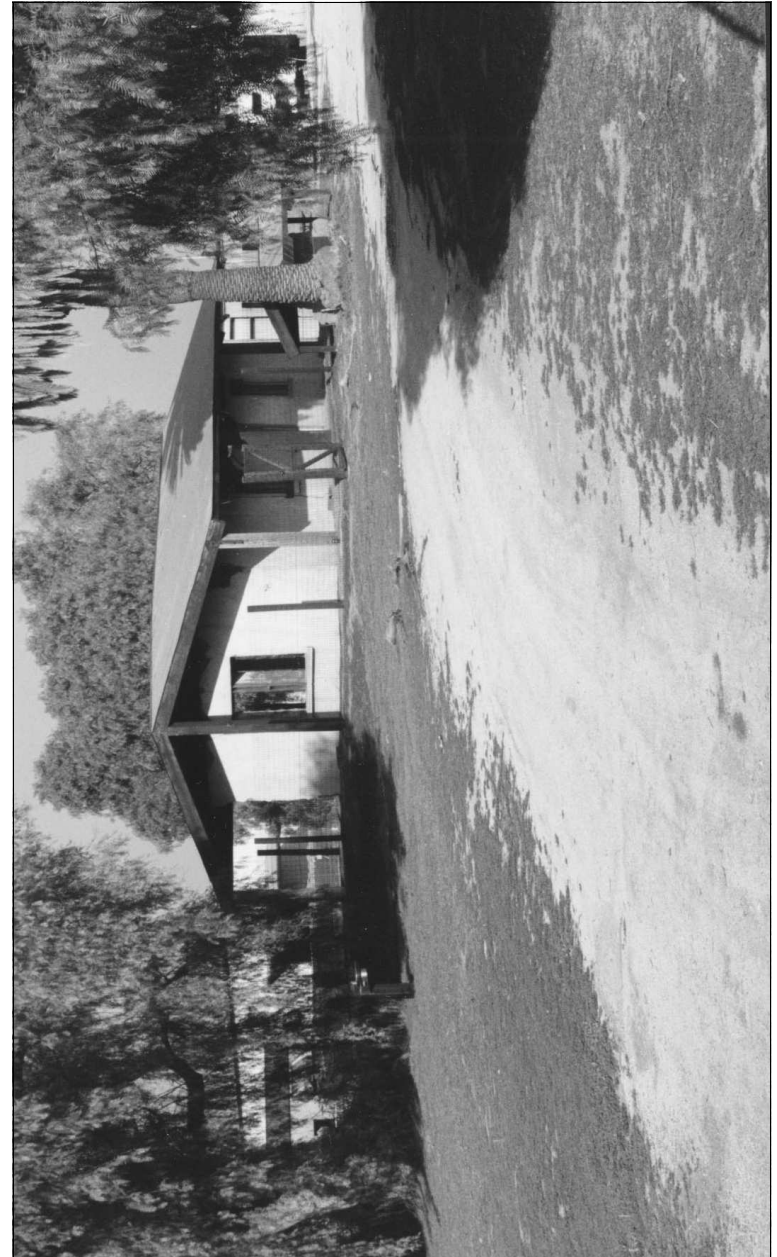
James Boyd told of some of his early experiences in the settlement. It was two years after he came that there was a buggy here.

Mrs. Martha G. Davis said that coyotes used to steal jerked venison from the porch of her house in the dead of the night.

Francis Cuttle said he was not a pioneer, but could remember when the site of the Santa Fe depot was a rifle range.

W. P. Russell was called upon, and told of coming to Riverside in February, 1871. He walked up from San Diego, and found such a terrific wind blowing that with his companion he was obliged to camp in the willows on the river bottom.

This closed the historical features, and an adjournment was taken to the lecture room, where the ladies served coffee and doughnuts.



*Ruins of the Trujillo Adobe today. (Courtesy of William Swafford)*

## An Early Riverside Suburb at La Placita

*by R. Bruce Harley*

When Riverside was founded in 1870, the settlers quickly became aware that they had Hispanic neighbors on a northern portion of the same former Rancho Jurupa that was being occupied by the Anglo newcomers.<sup>1</sup> This pre-Riverside settlement had the appearance of a New Mexico village rather than one originating from Mexico or even Los Angeles. Orange Street from Riverside connected with La Placita at Center Street, which today is a road which runs through the unincorporated community of Highgrove (at first, called East Riverside), settled two decades after La Placita. The latter quickly picked up nicknames from the Riversiders such as "Spanish Town." In the 1880s, "TrujilloTown" was used on wedding license records. Orange Street itself as it led north from Riverside, was sometimes called "Spanish – Town Drive." The settlement was a recognized sub-community of Riverside as late as the 1920s.<sup>2</sup>

This date demonstrates that La Placita II outlived its Agua Mansa counterpart by several decades. Therefore, this portion of the greater Agua Mansa community was not wiped out by a flood in 1862 with its people presumably disappearing from the historical record. That portion of the population moved up from La Placita I after 1862 to settle on La Loma mesa, formerly community pasture land at the southern edge of the settler's Bandini Donation.

The La Placita which Riversiders came to know therefore dated from 1862, although its historical roots go back two decades. In 1842, a group of about 50 emigrants from Abiquiu, New Mexico, trekked over the Old Spanish Trail to settle in the San Bernardino/Colton area. Additional colonists arrived in both 1843 and 1844. By this time the settlers had had a falling-out with the Lugo family and they consequently moved about four miles downstream from Rancho San Bernardino to Juan Bandini's Rancho Jurupa. Although the property had a new owner by the time the relocation decision had been finalized, Bandini's original offer of free land led to the grant being called the "Bandini Donation." The settlers

in exchange were to defend all of the rancho against Indians and other marauders.

These colonists finally settled on both sides of the Santa Ana River. Those on the downstream right bank named their community Agua Mansa (gentle waters), while those moving to the left bank adopted the name of La Placita de los Trujillos, in honor of the twin communities' leader, Lorenzo Trujillo. The shorter name of La Placita was usually used; however, in referring to the double settlement, the name of Agua Mansa was usually used. This included any reference to the inhabitants as Agua Mansans regardless of domicile location. As fate would have it, La Placita had a longer existence by at least half a century.<sup>3</sup>

During the first decade after the founding, Agua Mansans on both sides of the river experienced an agricultural abundance. When the Mormon colonists arrived at San Bernardino in 1851, they were short of supplies until their own gardens and fields could produce crops. The Agua Mansans, especially Isaac Slover (the only non-Hispanic in the village at the time), shared their bounty. Thereafter, both groups continued cordial relations, something which could not be said of future Riverside-La Placita relations.

After the move from Rancho San Bernardino, Lorenzo Trujillo quickly inaugurated measures to establish a New Mexico style town somewhat similar to the familiar layout of Abiquiu. Accordingly, he soon used La Placita's small village plaza as it was intended. As a strong-minded churchman, he laid out a rectangular spot for services. The crude facility was very simple: a reserved place for standup/sit-on-blankets outdoor meetings, initially both religious and secular. The one permanent fixture was an altar at the rear edge with a brush cover (enramada) when not in use. Contact with Mission San Gabriel led to that mission's parish priest journeying out occasionally to hold services on a weekday for parishioners from both sides of the river.

Also in 1844, Trujillo was responsible for the opening of a community school featuring a teacher, Manuel Ochoa, who joined the settlement from Los Angeles. Initially sitting on the ground, the pupils eventually had rough benches which could be left in place for

church and other meetings. People from both banks came to La Placita to preclude the necessity for duplicate church and school gatherings. Eventually, the two institutions were each named "San Salvador" (Holy Saviour). Both of these names continue today with Colton's Catholic San Salvador Church (with many parishioners descendants of Agua Mansans) and Colton's San Salvador School which celebrated 150 years of public service in 1994.

As the farming settlement became more permanent, Trujillo sought to improve the religious and educational facilities. After the American-Mexican War of 1846-1848, the Mexican Catholic diocese and its bishop were succeeded by American ones. In 1852, Lorenzo persuaded the new bishop to approve three requests: to create a new parish (the first one in southern California after the Mission Period), to assign a resident priest, and to build a church. These requests were granted, and the parishioners built an adobe church on Trujillo's side of the river, with a school house adjacent.

Unfortunately, disaster struck early on the very morning the first mass was to have been said. On 14 November 1852, the structure collapsed in quicksand. A group decision led to reconstruction of the edifice across the river on the Agua Mansa side. This second church was completed in time for the Christmas season in 1853. At the same time, another school was erected close by. The center of village activity was completed the next year with the establishment of Agua Mansa Cemetery on the small bluff overlooking the church and school. It appeared that the settlements had survived another crisis, but matters were destined to change within another decade or so.

The next major event in its history found the community devastated. A massive flood on the night of 22 January 1862 nearly destroyed the fruits of two decade's agricultural prosperity. All of the homes but one on both sides of the river were washed away as was the schoolhouse. This time the church was fortunate in not being touched as it sat on higher ground. The school moved a couple of miles down Agua Mansa road to a house which had survived the flood. Later, a building was constructed near the boundary line of Agua Mansa and the new city of Colton.<sup>4</sup>

As for the La Placita side, most residents did not attempt to rebuild on the same ground due to the unpredictable river. Instead, they moved up the cliff to the mesa and transformed part of the community grazing area into a new village carrying the same name. The beginning of this move occurred very soon after the flood.

Judge Benjamin Hayes, a frequent visitor to the greater Agua Mansa area in his judicial capacity, had this to say about the river bottom desolation:<sup>5</sup>

I visited Agua Mansa on the 6th of February 1862... only dreary desolation now meet the eye... a month ago all was green and beautiful. For the night I found shelter with one of the old families... a few huts had been rigged upon the high bench and the stalwart boys had already prepared to put in a crop of wheat.

At first, the transplanted La Placitans prospered at least somewhat from the sale of agricultural products to their new neighbors in nearby Riverside. For a time, events showed that the village's inhabitants could stand alone after the ultimate downfall of river-bottom Agua Mansa in the late 1870s.<sup>6</sup>

Due to school population growth in southern San Bernardino County after 1865, several school districts were split off from the original one, including a separate school for La Placita in 1875. A one-room adobe was built in the vicinity of Center Street between Riverside's Orange Street and La Cadena Drive, just east of the Trujillo Adobe. Appropriately enough, the new building was named Trujillo School. The first teacher was James Roe, a druggist and founder of *The Riverside Press* newspaper.

After several teachers over the next few years, a newly-graduated female teacher was assigned to the school in 1888. She was Alice Rowan, the first black teacher in the San Bernardino-Riverside area. The daughter of freed slaves who had originally migrated with the Mormons from Salt Lake City in 1851, she was a brilliant student and was a graduate of the State Normal School at Los Angeles (now



*Crumbling Home in La Placita (Courtesy of Riverside Public Library)*

UCLA). After two years at Trujillo School she was awarded a lifetime teacher's certificate, making her the first certified black teacher in California. She then moved to the Los Angeles school district. On 12 February 1909, after many years of distinguished service, *The Los Angeles Times* honored Alice Rowan Johnson as one of that year's ten foremost black "women of worth."<sup>7</sup>

After the (temporary) closure of Agua Mansa's San Salvador Church in 1878, the congregation was split. Parishioners living on the right bank of the Santa Ana River were directed to attend St. Bernardine's Church in San Bernardino. Those dwelling in La Placita were provided for by starting a mission chapel in the community which had an estimated population of 250 at its height in the 1890s. The most logical place to meet was at the Trujillo School, just as many rural congregations did in the last quarter of the 1800s. A mass was said in English and Spanish at 8:30 a.m. on the fourth Sunday of every month by a visiting priest from St. Bernardine's in San Bernardino. Sunday School was held every Sunday. Three lay

teachers attended to these classes which averaged some 50 pupils per week.<sup>8</sup>

The reason why Riverside did not enter this picture was due to the lack of a Catholic church in the city for a number of years. Consequently, St. Bernardine Church served Catholics from Riverside for over fifteen years. Finally, St. Francis de Sales was established as a mission outpost in 1886. It was raised to parish level in 1893. That meant the supervision of the mission at La Placita was shifted from St. Bernardine to St. Francis Parish. After the closure of La Placita's St. Francis Chapel, in 1928, three Our Lady of Guadalupe missions were established to provide services for the increased Hispanic population at Highgrove as well as Belltown and East Riverside.<sup>9</sup>

At about the same time, Trujillo School had only 15 pupils. Consequently, it was closed and the district consolidated with the nearby Highgrove School, which had been in existence since 1889.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile also, with the formation of Riverside County in 1893, a second school had to be established in the northern part of La Placita to accommodate pupils no longer eligible to attend Trujillo School, located south of the new county line. Accordingly, La Loma School was built and opened for fall 1893 classes. This school began with an enrollment of two dozen transfers from Trujillo School and never expanded, tied as it was to the economic changes affecting the parents.

Aside from arbitrary boundary lines which did not follow the course of the river, the La Placita families had a fairly close-knit community and merely regarded the two-school situation as the quirk of bureaucratic policy. By 1906, La Loma School was down to 15 pupils and never increased thereafter. With only a dozen attendees in 1920, the school was closed. Pupils in this case were transferred to Terrace School in today's city of Grand Terrace.<sup>11</sup>

Although the northern and southern portions of La Placita comprised basically one community, the residents were affected in more ways than one by the new 1893 boundary line associated with the creation of Riverside County. This was not only true in the case of the necessity for two schools as well as two church arrangements,

but also in legal matters such as two court systems and two police systems responsible for the mesa. Also, two voting precincts were needed.

Apparently, La Placita was never large enough to rate its own post office under that name. Before 1870, Cornelius Jensen had an informal office at his home/store where people could pickup mail dropped off by the pony express from San Bernardino to San Diego. Outbound mail could also be picked up by giving the courier money for the postage. After Jensen moved to his new rancho in Jurupa, citizens of both Agua Mansa and La Placita could go to the newly-established federal post office on Agua Mansa Road. Mail was addressed to San Salvador, CA for both communities.

On 26 June 1888, this facility was closed. The Hispanic community's split appeared when those still in the traditional Agua Mansa area could now go to the new post office in Colton. Those in La Placita at large could go to a new branch office opened in East Riverside. The name was changed to Highgrove Post Office in 1897 and operated nearly a century before becoming a branch of the main office in Riverside.<sup>12</sup>

The new political arrangements also affected leadership. Prior to 1893, the Trujillo family, as it had for 50 years, provided initiative. After the new boundary line was drawn, the Garcia family became the leader in northern La Placita affairs. This surname covered several individual families, four of whose household heads bore the name of David Garcia.

David Santiago Garcia, Sr., the most prominent, was born at Agua Mansa in 1866. By the 1890s he had acquired the lands of some settlers who chose to move to Riverside. For a time he pursued dry-farming and raised cattle; the family lived in a wooden house as befit people seeking to rise above an adobe background.<sup>13</sup> Then a new neighbor, Anton Pellissier, began to expand his dairy and vineyard holdings centered around buildings located north of the Trujillo Adobe. Acquisitions eventually included the Garcia farmstead. The Pellissier operation ceased by World War II.

After better than a century, the dilapidated Garcia farmhouse still stands in an area once used as a pigpen. The house, which can barely

be seen from the end of Orange Street, thus complements the Trujillo Adobe as one of two remaining structures from the La Placita period of Agua Mansa history.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the new city of Riverside obtained much of its water supply from two canals which crossed the mesa. Riverside's overall La Loma system went out of use in 1886 except as an emergency standby. A lawsuit settlement at the time included formation of the Riverside Water Co. It is this utility which today still owns most of the mesa, even though it is on the San Bernardino County side of the boundary line.<sup>14</sup>

On the subject of boundary lines, it should be noted that the Hispanic settlers encountered problems when their new American neighbors occupied the latter's share of Rancho Jurupa, plus some government land adjacent to the eastern boundary. The resident Hispanics had had no land problem with the Mormons in the 1850s, for they occupied Rancho San Bernardino several miles east of the original Agua Mansa location. When the refugee La Placitans first moved from their river bottom location to La Loma Mesa in the 1860s, they initially had no trouble maintaining their livestock. Since the move from Rancho San Bernardino to Rancho Jurupa in 1844, the New Mexican colonists had used the mesa for grazing purposes. The inhabitants of La Placita II continued that practice without really being aware of the true boundaries of the Bandini Donation since there were no "next-door" neighbors for almost a decade. When the Hispanics continued their grazing habits after Riverside's founding in 1870, conflict developed.

Under pioneer laws which basically supported a grazing economy, it was necessary to fence land to keep out wandering livestock (this lack of fencing had caused the Agua Mansans to move from Rancho San Bernardino in 1844). The early Riversiders' unfenced alfalfa fields and truck gardens were very tempting to the animals belonging to residents of La Placita and a few families still at old Agua Mansa. Thus, the new land owners would have to build a fence. By 1872, the state legislature, in recognition of changing times, adopted what was referred to as the "No-Fence Act." This required animal owners to

keep livestock under control and off neighboring property, fenced or unfenced.

This move simply added to the friction between the newly-arrived Anglo settlers and the Spanish speaking pre-Riverside residents, whether they were Mexican, Spanish, or Indian. The new Riversiders carried their point-of-origin prejudice with them. The new school board imposed segregation in city schools. Another example of extreme prejudice as late as 1912 was revealed by county historian E. W. Holmes. He spoke of the Hispanic residents at the fringes of a city over four decades old as "the miserable half-breed race which had so long ranged without restraint over the entire section... ." Holmes' attitude was probably reflected at least passively by an unknown segment of Riversiders with Anglo background.<sup>15</sup> This attitude, expressed or not, was probably carried on by some people until mid-century. By that time, most of La Placita had been abandoned except for the Trujillo Adobe.

As might be expected, this prejudiced attitude applied also to workers, because, for the most, part the growing younger generation needed jobs other than subsistence farming. These people from La Placita found that the Agua Mansans had taken the better paying jobs at the Slover mine or with the railroad in the Colton area. This meant that La Placita's second and third generation typically worked in the citrus groves of Highgrove, East Riverside and Casa Blanca. During the slow breakup of the La Placita community, some of the younger men also worked in the small mines (gold and other minerals) in the desert as well as the Gavilin Hills and Perris-Menifee hills west and south of Perris. These mines produced only for a few years.<sup>16</sup>

Gradually, these people began to work at Anglo businesses and even establish some of their own. The Trujillo Cantina was in business near the Trujillo Adobe from about 1900 to the 1930s and had no difficulty during the Prohibition Era. At various times, it was a dance hall and road house where beer and wine were served (even to Anglos!), and sometimes there was entertainment of a boisterous variety (again, the audience probably included some Anglos).<sup>17</sup>

La Placita business success stories also include that of an enterprising woman. It was no surprise that this lady came from the

Trujillo family, with its leadership qualities. She was Olive Trujillo, known affectionately in the community as "Aunt Olive." Born at the Trujillo Adobe in 1906, she attended Trujillo School and the St. Francis mission services at the school. After World War I, her older brother, Ted, owned a furniture store on Main Street in downtown Riverside. She worked there and was later an accountant for Binford's Furniture Store in Riverside. Later, she owned and operated Johnnie's Grill and Old South Tea Room in Riverside with her husband, George Vlahovich.

After her husband's death in 1973, she moved to Arroyo Grande, California. In March 1996, some 50 Trujillo descendants gathered to celebrate Olive's 90th birthday. She died on 26 December 1997 from "complications of old age" and was buried in the local cemetery, far from her Agua Mansa/La Placita roots.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, La Placita was a vital community for nearly a century. It was first settled in 1844, survived the great flood of 1862 by moving to a mesa overlooking the Santa Ana River, and then gradually developed the necessary institutions to support a population and culture which was almost completely Hispanic. As with its sister-community of Agua Mansa, it was a model community and as such was quite unlike notoriously riotous towns such as Los Angeles and San Jose, with their chronic drunken brawls and other "low life" characteristics. Major Horace Bell, Mrs. Carolyn Barnes Crosby (a teacher at San Salvador School) and Augusta Joyce Croacheron (a Mormon colony observer) noted with favor the positive comportment of a unique settlement. These people eventually comprised a significant portion of nearby towns. Their New Mexico heritage stood them in good stead, and they were admired by Hispanics from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Although their formal history ended at the time of World War II, descendants of the pioneers continue to live in the general area and carry on the traditions of their ancestors. Generally, they have led peaceful lives, worked, hard and upheld the hallowed New Mexican/Mexican traditions of hospitality, devotions, and community-wide celebrations of baptisms and weddings as well as other Hispanic gatherings.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This situation was not unusual for the Santa Ana River Valley. When the Mormon colony was settled at San Bernardino in 1851, those pioneers found their neighbors to be Hispanics at Agua Mansa, a portion of the Agua Mansa-La Placita-Jurupa complex which had been settled a decade previously.
- <sup>2</sup> Tom Patterson, *A Colony for California: Riverside's First Hundred Years* (Riverside, CA: Press-Enterprise Co.), 1971, Chap VII, "Manifest Destiny at Riverside," *passim*.
- <sup>3</sup> Jane D. Gunther, "La Placita de los Trujillos," in her *Riverside County, California, Place Names: Their Origins and Their Stories*, (Riverside, CA), 1984, p. 285.
- <sup>4</sup> This historical survey based on Rev. Juan Caballeria, *History of the San Bernardino Valley* (San Bernardino, CA: Times-Index Co., 1902), Chaps. VII, XIX-XXII.
- <sup>5</sup> Judge Benjamin I. Hayes, *Pioneer Notes*, ed. by Marjorie Wolcott (Los Angeles, 1929), p.821. Probably the "stalwart boys" included the Trujillo sons quickly providing a place for their by-then widowed mother. A later permanent house in 1864 eventually became the "Trujillo Adobe" (Riverside County Historical Site No. 9).
- <sup>6</sup> Joyce C. Vickery, "The New Mexican Pioneers of La Placita," in John R. Brumgardt, ed., *Historical Portraits of Riverside County* (Riverside, CA: Riverside Historical Press, 1977), pp.18-31.
- <sup>7</sup> Shfrah Ann Rozenstain, "Alice Rowan, Teacher," *Fedco Reporter*, March 1994, p. 46.
- <sup>8</sup> "St. Francis Chapel in Spanishtown," in Fred L. Reardon, *Catholic Parish Gazetteer of the diocese of Monterey and Los Angeles* (Los Angeles), 1899, p. 294.
- <sup>9</sup> R. Bruce Harley, "St. Francis de Sales: One of Earliest Southland Churches," *Inland Catholic* (San Bernardino, CA), 15 Jan. 1987, pp. 1, 6.
- <sup>10</sup> R. Bruce Harley, "Trujillo School," City of San Bernardino Historical Society *Odyssey*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan-Apr 1991), pp. 11-13.
- <sup>11</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "La Loma School," *ibid.*, pp. 13

- <sup>12</sup> Lewis Garrett, "Postal History of San Bernardino County," San Bernardino County Museum Association *Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Fall 1992), p. 24. Cited as SBCMA *Quarterly* hereafter.
- <sup>13</sup> "Reminiscences of David Santiago Garcia," adapted from Helen Loehr's summary of interview Notes, SBCMA *Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Fall 1993), pp. 11-16.
- <sup>14</sup> Tom Patterson, "Ruins Were Once Home to Some of Area's Earliest Settlers" (Garcia family), *The Press-Enterprise* (Riverside, CA), 5 Jan. 1992, p. B-2.
- <sup>15</sup> Patterson, *A Colony for California...*, p. 369.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 357-358. Despite the older Anglos' complaints about La Placita horses grazing beyond the Jurupa boundary, young Anglo bucks eagerly attended rodeos at the La Placita arena – "Mexican Independence Day," *The Citograph* (Redlands, CA), 24 Sept. 1898, p. 2.
- <sup>18</sup> "Obituary, Olive C. Vlahovich", *The Press-Enterprise* (Riverside, CA), 29 Dec. 1997, p. B-8.



## Victoria Club Centennial ~ 2003

*by Joan Hall*

Few clubs in southern California have had the devoted patronage and profound influence that Riverside's Victoria Club has enjoyed for the past one hundred years. The arroyo golf course and beautifully designed clubhouse is the oldest country club in the community. From the very beginning, it was destined to play important roles in both the athletic and social affairs of southern California.

The Victoria Club was incorporated on 16 October 1903, when leases on two existing golf courses were about to terminate. The desire of local sportsmen to have a centrally located permanent golf course resulted in the establishment of the Victoria Club. Community leaders and active sportsmen concentrated on acquiring suitable property for an aesthetic yet functional site to develop an enduring golf course. A search committee negotiated with the Ethan Allan Chase family to buy approximately fifty acres of land east of the Victoria Bridge. The Chase family owned hundreds of acres of citrus southeast of town, however, the proposed club property consisted primarily of undeveloped arroyo land.

The unusual site encompassed a wide, shallow valley with sloping hillsides along the banks of the arroyo. This natural setting offered a picturesque, sheltered location for a proposed golf course. The land was an extension of Sycamore Canyon that gradually descended into Tequesquite Arroyo. A small stream fed by underground springs and run-off water occasionally flowed through the arroyo and added another appealing dimension to the proposed course. The committee had chosen a most historic location for their new club and golf course.

The history of this land dated back to 1774 and 1776 when Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza traversed the canyon leading an exploration party from Mexico to Monterey. The Sycamore Canyon Mountains gradually transcended into Tequesquite Arroyo where run-off hill water once gravitated into the Santa Ana River. DeAnza chose this natural gully to reach the river. He crossed at a point known today as the Anza Narrows Regional Park.



*Victoria Club 1908 (Courtesy of Riverside Public Library)*

The existing Victoria Avenue, Victoria Hill, and Victoria Bridge had been named by nearby Canadian and English property owners in honor of their reigning Queen Victoria. The proximity of these landmarks no doubt influenced the naming of the new club. At the time there was a private men's club headquartered in a mansion downtown and was widely known as the Country Club. This social organization had been in existence for some years and consequently the new country club was simply called the Victoria Club.

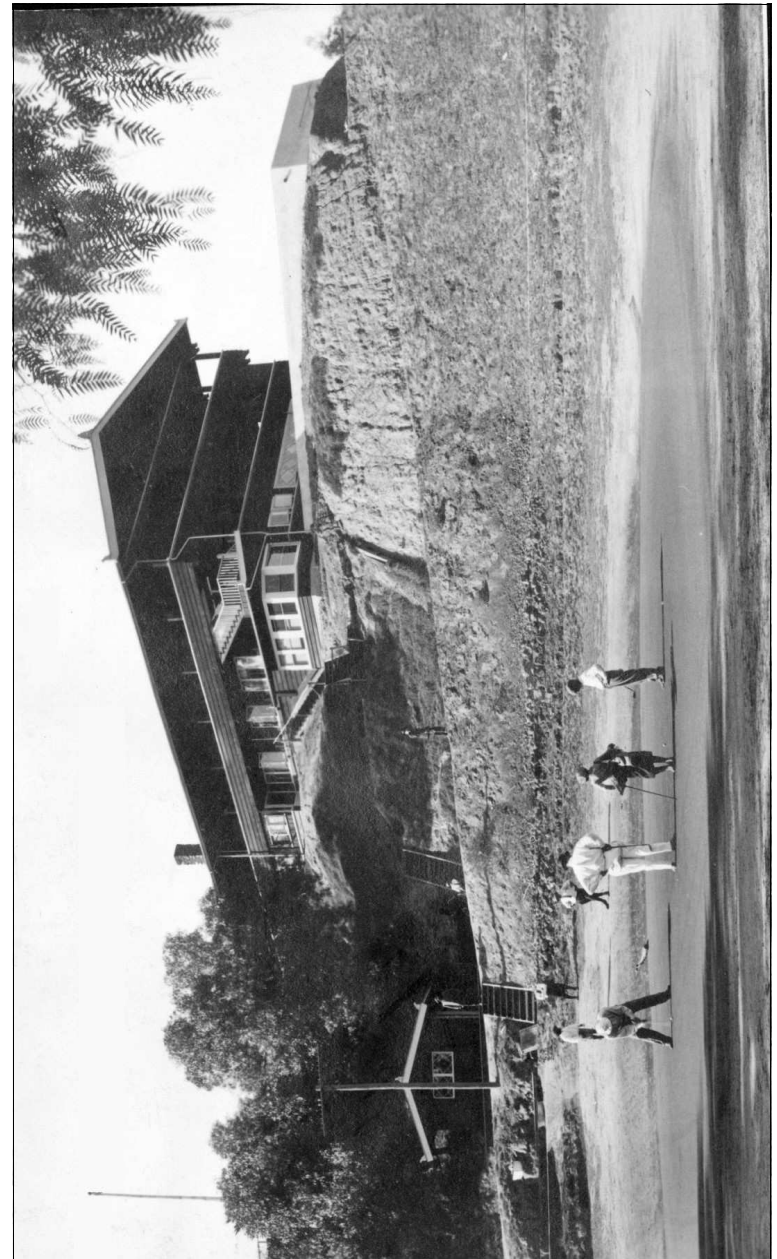
Articles of incorporation were filed with the Riverside County Clerk's Office. This legal document set forth the Victoria Club's right to own land, issue capital stock and to "set out suitable grounds for games of golf, tennis and other open air athletic sports." The original term of existence for the club was set for 50 years. The enterprising founders of the club clearly underestimated the popularity and longevity of their new organization.

Riverside's Victoria Club was the thirteenth club to join the young Southern California Golf Association organized in 1899. Golf had become a popular sport and frequent inter-club matches often ended in disputes. Rules differed in each club and the SCGA filled the need for a central clearinghouse to standardize rules and coordinate inter-club events.

The three-story, Swiss-chalet style clubhouse was built into the sloping hillside on a small spur of land that overlooked the arroyo. The popularity of the elegant new clubhouse grew rapidly with its unique setting, extensive recreational facilities and well-appointed building. It quickly became the golfing and social center of town with prominent members representing local business, professional, and financial institutions.

While the new 1903 Glenwood Mission Inn offered comfortable lodgings for out-of-town visitors, the Victoria Club provided a variety of recreational facilities to entertain both local residents and tourists. From its inception, the Victoria Club augmented and enhanced Riverside's rich history and the two organizations have shared a common bond of past traditions.

The Victoria Club has survived several economic depressions and a destructive fire that destroyed the popular clubhouse. Nevertheless,



*Victoria Club from the Golf Course (Courtesy of Riverside Public Library)*

the club has remained one of Riverside's great attractions with its arroyo golf course one of the finest in southern California. In October 1978 members celebrated the club's 75th anniversary and 2003 marks the Victoria Club's 100th anniversary.

**NOTES**

# Tragedy at Mockingbird Lake

by John A. Adams

The event which many of Rialto's old-timers remember as causing the greatest shock of any calamity in small-town Rialto took place in one of the more idyllic settings of the citrus era. A happy group of Rialto residents had gone to nearby Riverside County to picnic and fish at Mockingbird Lake in the summer of 1923. The group included two daughters of a popular Rialto judge. Beautiful, seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Burton was there to enjoy the day with her husband, Robert Burton, and her seven-month-old baby, Jimmy. Mary Roberts, who was Elizabeth's thirteen-year-old sister, two other relatives, and a friend of Mary's made up the rest of the party. In the middle of the afternoon, after an enchanting day, during which the group happily sang songs, they began to get their things together in preparation for returning home. Mary, who was inseparable from her older sister, Elizabeth, and always ready to help, was worried that the baby might be thirsty. "Wait just a minute," she told the group, "I'll go to the irrigation ditch and fill the baby's bottle with water."

She leaned over the slippery bank to scoop up some water from a puddle at the bottom of the big channel. This ditch carried excess water from Riverside's Gage Canal into the lake and whenever the water level in the canal reached a certain height, water would automatically be released from the canal to flow through the ditch and into the lake. In one of those grotesque coincidences which often accompany tragedies, the water was released from the canal just as Mary was leaning over the bank. As the others watched in shocked disbelief, Mary was swept into the rushing torrent of water. Elizabeth, still holding the baby, reached for her sister without a thought for her own safety, and was immediately pulled headfirst into the swift current. The baby was torn from her grasp and all three were being hurled toward the lake. Robert Burton, Elizabeth's husband, climbed into the flume below the three and braced himself in an attempt to stop their slide. He failed and was carried into the lake along with the others. Neither of the sisters nor Robert knew

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how to swim. None of the others standing in horror beside the ditch could swim either, except for Mary's friend.

Mary's friend jumped into the water and tried to save Mary, but after being pulled down twice, she had to give up and save herself. As the four people from Rialto washed into the lake, a thirteen-year-old orphan boy named Ronald Huber, who lived in Riverside with his grandmother, saw them and jumped into the water. He grabbed the baby, and carried it safely to the bank. Then the boy swam to the baby's father and pulled him near enough to the bank to allow two men to pull the nearly-drowned man out with a pole. The heroic orphan boy next tried to save the two sisters, who were both struggling wildly in the water. When he reached them, however, they both clung to him, dragging him down with them. All three drowned.

During the rest of the afternoon, little groups of people gathered in Rialto, discussing the awful message that had been received from Riverside, and hoping desperately that the news of the triple drowning was wrong. The only measure of relief came when townsfolk saw the little baby being safely returned to his home. Just a few years ago I saw the grown-up version of Jim Burton, that lucky baby, now wearing a moustache, seventy-four-years old, apparently very happy in his retirement, and without any memories of the terrible day when he came so close to drowning with the three others.<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Rialto Record*, 24 August 1923.

<sup>2</sup>*Riverside Enterprise*, 24 August 1923

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 August 1923

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 28 August 1923

## NOTES

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