

# HERITAGE

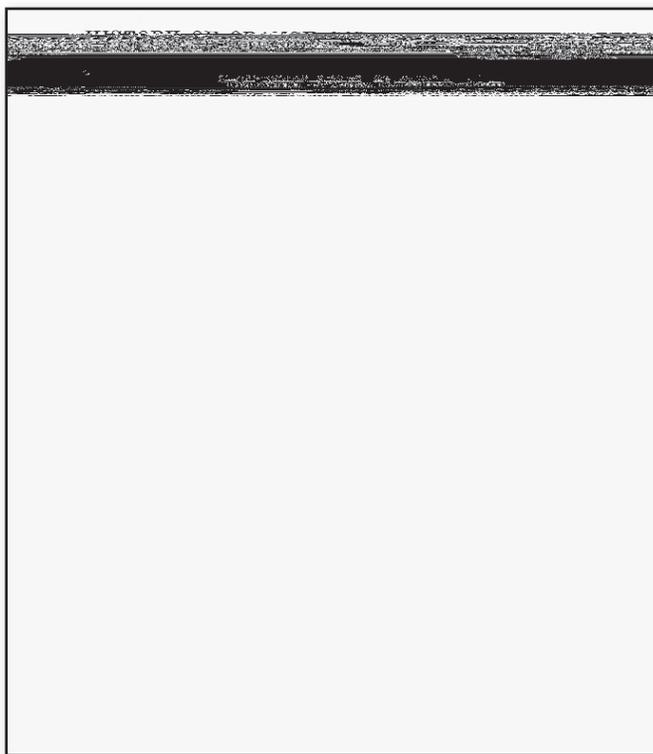
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Aug-Sept, 2016

## BUT NARY A DROP TO DRINK

With every news cycle, there seems to be a segment dedicated to our current water situation and, in the case of L.A., struggles over water rights, so this seems an appropriate time to take a look back at irrigation. Some of the most remarked upon displays in our Museum (other than the 1914 fire truck, of course) are the large aerial photos from earlier times. Through these images, it's possible to visually track the town's growth from the 1940s to the 1960s as grove after grove of citrus gave way to housing developments. Taken from planes, they offer a bird's eye view of greater Tustin, but there is a wonderful and often overlooked close-up aerial of the packing houses along the railroad line that followed Newport and Holt Avenues, circa 1945. In it can be seen the packing houses for Golden West (now Packers' Square where Ruby's restaurant stands), the Central Lemon Association, and the Tustin Hills Citrus Association, with miles of lush citrus trees filling in the background, and Newport, Holt, Irvine and 17th streets almost obscured by eucalyptus windbreaks. Great picture, chock full of nostalgia, but a question visitors never think to ask is where all the water came from to support those trees. Was it domestic water running from garden hoses strung through the groves? Well water located by local dowsers? Torrential winter rains, perhaps? Well, no. In fact, it was a well-planned irrigation system that became a model so successful that for decades it was pointed to by other states and countries, and frequently cited in court cases involving agricultural water rights.



Prior to 1831, Don Bernardo Yorba with his vast land holdings north of the Santa Ana River, his extensive orchard and gardening ventures, extended family and an army of servants and farm workers, was the first to harness the river near his homestead for irrigation via zanjias. As his rancho was partitioned out to family over the years, conflicting water rights became an issue on the south side of the river, which provided water to Tustin, Orange, and other tracts through a series of canals. In 1877 the Santa Ana Valley Irrigation Company (think S.A.V.I. Ranch just north of the 91 Fwy in

the Santa Ana Canyon) emerged from the former Semi-Tropic Water Company to buy up all those conflicting interests. This consolidated the entire Santa Ana Valley under one system, and the landowners worked together to create an equitable division of irrigation water that would not favor the needs of one rancher over another nor lead to further water rights issues, as each was allotted only one share of water per acre. Those shares couldn't be traded nor sold, remaining attached to the land itself. SAVI then developed a series of huge ditches to service the entire valley, including Tustin. One of these ran west of Yorba from

17th Street to 1st Street where the natural slope leveled out; from there, the water was taken east and west in Tustin for distribution to individual parcels, with volume measured as it flowed over dams located in concrete weir boxes. There is an inoperable weir box remaining in the parking lot of Cox's Market Plaza, but some old timers probably remember when Main Street had a number of them, and on a hot afternoon many a child couldn't resist hanging over the side to trail a hand

*Continued on Page 3*

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A Publication of  
The Tustin Area Historical Society  
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## Museum Hours

Every Tuesday and Thursday

9 am – 2 pm

First and Third Saturday  
of each month

12 pm – 3 pm

Open to Visitors  
Admission is Free

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope everyone is having an enjoyable, if somewhat warm summer; despite the heat, we've managed to keep busy with Museum projects around here, principally in the basement. There's much to be said for our basement, whose most appealing feature is a consistently moderate temperature!

Having said that, our Historical Society held a fairly successful Basement Sale during 90 degree plus weather the last Sunday of July that not only helped to clear out some room in the basement, allowing for improved organization, but also brought in about \$800 for the Museum. Our many thanks to Mrs. B's consignment shop for allowing us to use their parking lot for the sale and to Tiffany Miller for all her help. Also lending their talents and time were Wendy Greene, Gretchen Whisler, Ric Cannon, Joe Spreklemeyer, Jason Love, and Pat Corfield. Thanks to all.

In September, we will be ending the summer with two events in one week. The first will be our quarterly general meeting, 7 pm on Sept 19,

at the Senior Center. Please notice the change in venue. The Tustin library now closes at 7 pm during the week so we have moved back to the Senior Center. The speaker will be Richard Dodd, well-known local architect and writer. The topic will be "Traveling the El Camino Real - The Founding of the California Missions".

On Friday, Sept. 23, we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Tustin Area Historical Society with a Membership Mixer at Mrs. B's across El Camino Real from the Museum. You should have received your invitation, and please send in your enclosed response card. The Historical Society was founded in 1976 so what could be better than a 70's Disco Party. Think bell bottoms, crazy colors, and wild hairdos. Dress for the era and come prepared to dance Travolta style. We hope you can join us for a fun celebration!

*Al Corfield*  
President

## Accessions:

Anthony Bustos	Portable Windup Phonograph
Clifford Prather	OC Railway Historical Society Newsletters
Bob & Vicki Gray	Autographed Little League Baseball c. 1971
Guy Ball	Photos of 2015 & 2016 Promenade
Gretchen Whisler	Vintage irons, Pacific Electric Map c. 1947
Sherry Miller Hyatt	TUSD Ephemera c 1960's. City of Tustin Area Pamphlet – 1958
Four Crows	Book: ABC Guide to Horseshoeing, 1899
Ken Horn	Agriculture – Tools
Pete Beatty	Collection of vintage Sad Irons; Tiller from Blacksmith Shop
Tony Coco	Carson Mansion, Eureka, CA. Brochure
TUSD	Lambert School Ephemera – Seven boxes (school closed)

in all that cool water. With the weir box filled, water was released by SAVI after growers negotiated with others on the same line for a convenient date to start what could be a process lasting several days, so while each grower knew what day irrigation for his grove was due to begin, he didn't necessarily know the time of day; it was necessary to keep watch on the large stand pipe at the ranch where the water would first bubble up. Kids



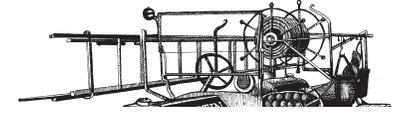
were often assigned the important task of keeping an eye on it, and when the smallest amount of water first appeared in the pipe would quickly hunt down a parent so that water had no time to rise and spill over the top. Valves were then opened and it was channeled out into the groves to thoroughly soak the tree roots for several days.

To the adults and teens, irrigating likely meant only extra hours in the grove, while to a small child, all that water burbling through the furrows on the heels of a long hot summer and the start of Santa Ana wind season was a long-awaited, much anticipated thrill. Popsicle stick boats with paper sails were set afloat, and villages were built on the furrows' banks (a la Toad Hollow from Wind in the Willows). Swings were hung from branches over water-filled ditches, and imaginations were sent into overdrive during those few wonderful days of irrigation each year.

## CALIFORNIA HISTORY WRIT LARGE IN ADOBE AND STRAW

We are very pleased to have North Tustin architect Richard Dodd with us for our General Meeting on Monday, September 19 to speak about the founding of the California missions. Not only is he a well-known architect, author of *Architectural Styles, Orange County*, and a sought-after speaker, his knowledge of historical buildings from the inland mission to the vintage beach cottage is unparalleled. He and his writings are a go-to source for researchers of architectural styles, and his architectural firm has excelled since

1961 in its efforts to interpret customer desires. Perhaps because he doesn't build homes as much as he creates statements that reflect an area's history, climate, religion, building materials and social conditions, his firm's projects are ubiquitous in Orange County and beyond.



Join the Tustin Area Historical Society and keep your newsletter coming. Please send your dues or an additional gift today. Ask a friend to join!

### ANNUAL DUES:

(Please check one)

- \$20-\$34 Contributor
- \$35-\$59 Explorer
- \$60-\$99 Colonist
- \$100-\$249 Settler
- \$250-\$499 Frontier
- \$500-\$999 Pioneer
- \$1,000 Heritage
- Renew       New

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## New Members:

Tustin Community Foundation  
Jim Hastings

## Obituary:

Walter Mills – TUHS Class of 1942  
Robert Schier

