

COUNTY COURIER

Orange County Historical Society

Vol. 51, No. 4

Spring 2020

C. Jepsen, President

Ellen Bell, Editor

Covid-19 Virus Quarantine Special Edition

We at the Orange County Historical Society are quite accustomed to looking back at history— now we are living it.

These are unprecedented times and none of us will ever forget the Spring of 2020, when a global pandemic brought life to a standstill. We will all be able to look back at this time with our own unique perspective. Be sure to preserve your own personal history for future reference!

To ensure the safety of all, we have decided to follow suit and cancel programming through the summer. April's History Hike, May's OC History Roundup, and the Annual June Banquet have all been cancelled. We ask you to all safe safely at home so we can get together at these events next year!

We will be monitoring the quarantine status throughout the spring and summer, but we hope to reunite at our annual September meeting which will, once again, be at the Sherman Library. Please save the date.

Please Join us for the

SEPTEMBER MEETING AND SOCIAL
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH AT 7:30PM

Sherman Library and Gardens

2647 E Coast Highway
Corona Del Mar, CA



We will also be suspending the monthly newsletter production until things are back on track. However, we will send out two seasonal editions, this Spring edition and another to come in Summer. As always, you can find out the latest information at our website:

www.orangecountyhistory.org

On our site, we also feature a brief history of the county, OC history articles, a photo gallery, a list of suggested readings (and a bookstore), and links to local historical organizations.

SO...HOW CAN YOU STAY IN TOUCH?



ORANGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board of Directors

President

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

Guy Ball
Ellen Bell
Phil Chinn



Chris Jepsen

position open

Stephanie George

Alan Ray

Monica Ortez
Jamie Hilber
Lynne Yauger
Dann Gibb

OCHS Message Line : 714.540.0404 ext 226

**Mailing Address: 3101 W. Harvard St.,
Santa Ana, CA 92704.**

www.OrangeCountyHistory.org

info@orangecountyhistory.org
webmaster@orangecountyhistory.org
historian@orangecountyhistory.org
membership@orangecountyhistory.org
newsletter@orangecountyhistory.org

ORANGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ONLINE RESOURCES

While we all prefer and good, old fashioned get-together...in times like these we all need to try new ways to stay connected!

Fear not! We have a wealth of information online that you can access with ease while we stay "socially distant."

Check out our own OCHS Website!

This is the best source for event schedules, society information and a wealth of history articles! It's also the perfect place to become an OCHS Member...

Just go to www.orangecountyhistory.org

Follow us on Facebook! Let's be Facebook friends!

Search for the [Orange County Historical Society Page](https://www.facebook.com/ochistorical/) and then click "follow" You'll receive updates on events and links to great articles. Plus, it's a great place to share some of your history images too.

<https://www.facebook.com/ochistorical/>

The [Orange County California History Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ochistory/) is another great Facebook resource. Join in on the fun!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ochistory/>

Listen to a History Podcast! Did you know the Orange County Historical Society has its own podcast? Check out our program, [Vintage Orange!](http://vintageorangekuci.blogspot.com/) Every episode is a discussion of OC history with our local experts...give us a listen!

<http://vintageorangekuci.blogspot.com/>

Visit a History Website! Chris Jepsen's [OCHistoryRoundup](http://ochistorical.blogspot.com/) is full of great articles and vintage images. <http://ochistorical.blogspot.com/>

Phil Brigandi's [OCHistoryland](https://www.ochistoryland.com/) is a fabulous resource <https://www.ochistoryland.com/>

Visit your local historical society's website—visit www.orangecountyhistory.org, select **Learn** from the top navigation bar, and then click **Community Links**.

Remembering Phil Brigandi

Phil Brigandi, our greatest, present-day historian, leaves behind a treasure trove of Orange County history articles. In this issue, we have selected two of them to share.



Phil Brigandi Memorial Fund

Because of Phil's dedication to our archival collection, an account has been established in his name that will be used exclusively to fund the needs of our archives. Phil was an advocate of professionalizing our collections, either by using archival-quality supplies (aiding in preservation), digitization (contributing to access), or taking advantage of what technology had to offer. Managing our archival collections takes dedicated volunteers and financial support. We encourage you to join the board in contributing to this fund that will continue Phil's dream of having a first-rate archive. Electronic payments can be made online on our website or by making checks payable to OCHS with "Phil Brigandi" in the memo. Thank you for your consideration.

"A Brief History of Scouting in Orange County"

-Phil Brigandi (2011)

One hundred years ago, a group of civic leaders formed the first Orange County Boy Scout Council. Phil was a lifelong scouting enthusiast and his personal expertise shows through in this account of local scouting history. [Click here to read the article.](#)



"The Early Years of Knott's Berry Farm"

-Phil Brigandi (2008)

Knott's Berry farm in Buena Park is having a Centennial Celebration during the summer of 2020. In this article, Phil takes us back to the early days when the Knott family first arrived here in Orange County. [Click here to read the article.](#)



“Influenza Epidemic Touches the Irvine Ranch— 1920”

—Ellen Bell

In the winter of 1920, a weary nation was recovering from a decimating World War and a deadly global pandemic. Across the globe, an estimated 500 million people were infected with Spanish Influenza, which was approximately one-third of the world's population at the time. As many as 50 to 100 million people died globally and an estimated 675,000 people perished in the United States. This was considerably more than the nineteen million deaths from the four years of World War I.

Even though the worst wave of influenza hit Orange County during 1918 and 1919, the threat of this deadly virus was still very real as the new decade began. The fear was understandable. Unlike previous strains of influenza which attacked the vulnerable elderly and the very young, the Spanish Influenza was a ruthless killer of people in the prime of their lives.

According to John Barry, author of *The Great Influenza*, there were high mortality rates in previously healthy people. “Influenza and pneumonia death rates for those 15 to 34 years of age were over twenty times higher than previous years,” writes Barry. “Nearly fifty percent of the deaths were among young adults.” Famed physician, Henry Cushing, called the victims of the Spanish Influenza, “doubly dead in that they died so young.”

The Spanish influenza, named because many news accounts came from Spain not because of the origin



Kathryn Helena Irvine Lillard (1894—1920)

of the virus, was a global pandemic. But in the winter of 1920, the world's killer struck very close to home.

Kathryn Helena Irvine was born on April 24th, 1894. Her father was James H. Irvine, the young owner of the vast Irvine Ranch which he had just inherited two years earlier on his twenty-fifth birthday. She was named for her mother's friend, the actress Helena Modjeska, and by all accounts was the “apple of her father's eye.” Pretty and pleasant, Kathryn was born between her two brothers, James and Myford, and added a warm-hearted cheer to her family.

“She was a much-courted miss,” according to historian Jim Sleeper. “Among her early suitors was pioneer aviator Glenn Martin who bombarded the ranch house with carnations before landing to pay his respects.” Sleeper writes that Miss Irvine thought Martin was “some kind of nut” and favored a dashing ex-Navy pilot, Frank Lillard, instead.

In June of 1919, in the tea house on the ranch house front lawn, Kathryn married Lillard. Within a year, the couple

welcomed a baby girl, Kathryn Anita, or “Katie.” Kathryn gave birth at the family ranch house instead of the hospital, reportedly at her father’s insistence. This decision proved to be deadly and, according to historian Sleeper, one that would haunt James Irvine for the rest of his life.

His reluctance to send his daughter to the hospital was warranted. The Spanish influenza attacked young, healthy adults yet the most vulnerable of all and the most likely to die were pregnant women. According to Barry, “In thirteen studies of hospitalized pregnant women during the 1918 pandemic, the death rate ranged from 23 percent to 71 percent.”

On March 3rd, 1920, the *Santa Ana Register* published the tragic news.

The hand of fate that brought death to Mrs. Frances Z Lillard, formerly Miss Kathryn Irvine, brought through her death an unmeasurable depth of sorrow to her relatives and her friends. Death came yesterday afternoon, as a result of pneumonia, following influenza and the birth of a daughter last Friday...

The death of Mrs. Lillard is especially sad. Of cheerful and optimistic disposition, with joy of prospects of bringing up a family, loved and admired, married less than a year, her taking has touched the heart of the community as few deaths have touched it.

Mrs. Lillard as a schoolgirl and as a young woman through her wholesome personality, her charm and her cheerful outlook on life, made hosts of friends here. The family is overwhelmed by the loss... In a week’s time, Mrs. Lillard went from robust health and joyous life to death.

Kathryn Helena Irvine Lillard was just 25 years old. She was buried next to her mother, Frances Anita, who had died from an unexpected heart attack eleven years earlier. James Irvine, who had endured the loss of his mother to tuberculosis when he was a small boy, now buried another part of his heart.

He raised his motherless grand-daughter, Katie, in the family home at the Irvine Ranch Headquarters. In 2008, a replica of this home opened as the Katie Wheeler Public Library, named for the little girl who was born there. Mrs. Wheeler was a life-long philanthropist and board member of the James Irvine Foundation which was created by her grandfather.

Kathryn Lillard’s death was not the only loss on the Irvine Ranch that week. Cora Marsh, 30 year-old mother of two, died of influenza the following day. Her father worked at the Callens bean operation nearby. The mind-boggling statistics of the Spanish Influenza pandemic seem distant and difficult to mentally grasp. But for those who were living here in Orange County during those dark days, the loss was tragically personal.



Kathryn Irvine Lillard on her wedding day, June 1919



*An 1887 view of
Fifth and Main in
Santa Ana*

*Courtesy the
Orange County
Archives*

Col. Finley Writes Story of Early Santa Ana Water

**Col. S.H. Finley in the
Santa Ana Journal, May 28, 1936**

Editor's Note: Colonel Finley is secretary of the Metropolitan Water District [MWD], of which Santa Ana is a member. He was city engineer at the time Santa Ana installed its first municipal water system and has followed its development since that time. Col. Finley has been an important figure in the history of Santa Ana and Orange County.

My first memory of a Santa Ana water supply was when I arrived in this small village in 1878. At that time the scattered residences around the business section were supplied from individual shallow wells.

A portion of the business houses were furnished with water from an artesian well 300 feet deep, located on the ground now occupied by the W.H. Spurgeon building, which was operated by Mr. Spurgeon.

Soon afterward there was a demand for water in the second stories of buildings, which the natural pressure from the well would not reach, and a windmill

and 3,000-gallon tank were installed for meeting the requirements. Within a few years the windmill failed to supply sufficient water for the growing town and a new pump and steam engine replaced the windmill. The entire new equipment could be carried on an ordinary buckboard.

Following this advanced step, various mains of limited length were installed to supply new customers, some of the pipes being as large as two inches in diameter. When the boom of the 80's struck Santa Ana and the population rapidly increased, it became apparent that the local water system, which Mr. Spurgeon had provided because no one else would do it, was inadequate for the needs.

Upon incorporation of the city in 1886, it was possible to secure a public water system. The first bond issue ever authorized by the city was provided to the amount of \$60,000, in 1889. The writer was city engineer at that time and it became his duty to take charge of planning and constructing the municipal system. The Baker Iron Works of Los Angeles secured the contract for installing the systems. The original pump is still in place—kept as a souvenir.

With the available funds, lands were purchased at the corner of Flower and West Fifth streets, upon which an artesian well was provided, pumping plant installed and concrete reservoir constructed, into which the water flowed, and from which it was pumped through the cast iron mains (the largest of which was eight inches in diameter) to the business and close-in residential areas of the city.

...Continued on next page



King Citrus & Queen Valencia

Phil Brigandi (2011)

Once upon a time in Orange County, money grew on trees. Citrus was the crop that made Orange County orange. Citrus—primarily Valencia oranges—once cascaded in green and gold down out of the mountains and along the rich coastal plain in neat, orderly rows, divided by windbreaks of eucalyptus trees. Sixty ago, much of central Orange County was a vast orchard, dotted with little towns like Santa Ana, Tustin, Anaheim, and, of course, Orange. The crop fueled the local economy for decades, creating an Easterner's image of paradise: a sunny, fertile land, where health grew on trees.

The first small seedling groves were planted here in the early 1870s, at a time when scores of new crops were being tried—most unsuccessfully. In 1875, the first commercial grove of hearty, spring-ripening Valencia oranges was planted by R. H. Gilman on what is now the Cal State Fullerton campus.

In those days, the biggest crop in the area was grapes, grown for wine or raisins. But in the 1880s, local vineyards were ravaged by a mysterious blight, clearing the way for thousands of new citrus plantings.

“Very naturally,” wrote Fullerton grower C. C. Chapman in 1911, “an occupation which is so attractive as citrus culture soon interested many enterprising men.” And among the enterprising men it interested was C. C. Chapman himself, who grew rich growing and packing his Old Mission brand oranges. But for every large operation like Chapman's, there were dozens of other local ranchers with five-, 10- and 20-acre groves of their own.

And the groves meant work for more than just the growers. There were fumigators, pickers, teamsters, packers and sundry other tradesmen living on the wealth of the groves. For example, the Orange City Directory for 1919 shows perhaps one-third of the local workforce employed in some aspect of the citrus industry.

By 1915, there were over 20,000 acres of orange groves in

Col. Finley—continued from previous page.

Mr. Spurgeon was glad to be relieved of the responsibility which he had taken on, of providing water for the community. However, in the gradual transfer of the services to the municipal system, numerous difficulties were encountered by a double hook on some of the older lines, and consequent breaking of old pipes.

Soon, however, all services were connected directly with the city system and old pipes abandoned. The location of some of them was unknown. A. Best was manager and the only record kept was in his memory.

Gradual extensions of pipe lines and installation of new pumps and drilling of new wells have continued to the present time, when the investment in our water system has increased from \$60,000 to \$1,243,000.

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the underground basin from which we have been securing our water supply would no longer meet our needs and in 1928 Santa Ana, by a vote of five to one, united with 12 other cities in organizing the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the purpose of which was to transport water from the Colorado river to supplement our present supply and provide against any shortage in the future. The plans of this district are so familiar to all of us that it is unnecessary to recount them here.

Visit the [OCHS website](#), click on **Learn>Orange County History Articles** for more local history featured on our website.

Orange County. By 1936, when Orange County supplied one-sixth of the nation's Valencia crop, there were 64,000 acres, and the citrus industry was generating two-thirds of the county's agricultural income. As late as 1948 there were still 67,263 acres of Valencias—more than five million trees. And that didn't even include other citrus crops, such as navel oranges, limes, grapefruit and lemons.

But in 1949, nearly 7,000 acres of orange trees disappeared. The post-war migration to Southern California had begun in earnest, and each year more and more trees fell as housing tracts began to blanket Orange County. By 1985, there were less than 4,000 acres of Valencias in the county, primarily on the Irvine Ranch. Twenty years later, less than 100 acres survived.

Beginning in 1881, when the first local packing house opened in Orange, more than 60 packing houses served local growers. In the early years, many of them were owned by individuals, but later the growers formed their own cooperative associations to handle the packing of their produce.

At their peak, in the early 1940s, 45 packing houses were operating in Orange County. There was the Anaheim Orange and Lemon Association, the Garden Grove Citrus Association, the Bradford Brothers in Placentia, Goldenwest Citrus in Tustin, the Olive Hillside Growers, McPherson Heights and dozens of other plants. These packing houses handled millions of pounds of fruit. In 1929, for example, Santiago Orange Growers in Orange handled some 60 million pounds of fruit—2,000 railroad cars full—making it one of the largest packing houses in the country.

Today, the old packing houses are best known for their colorful and distinctive advertising labels that were pasted on the ends of each wooden crate of fruit until the introduction of the cardboard box in the mid-'50s. Many featured idyllic scenes or lovely maidens, or promoted their place of origin. There were brands like Rooster, and Bird Rocks, and Cleopatra, and Atlas, and Jim Dandy, and any of a hundred others. Each was unique. They had to be, for their main purpose was to make each packing houses' fruit instantly recognizable to wholesale buyers at Eastern auction markets.

The real marketing, though, was carried on by the old Southern California Fruit Exchange, which after several name changes finally became Sunkist Growers in 1952. Over the years, Sunkist launched vast national marketing campaigns, which promoted Southern California almost as much as they touted its golden fruit.



The Villa Park Orchards Association was the last of Orange County's packing houses to go. Founded by local growers in 1912, they moved their operation to the old Santiago Orange Growers packing house in Orange in 1978, and operated there until 2006, when they moved to Ventura County.

The key to Villa Park's success has been expansion. As other packing associations closed, Villa Park Orchards began enlisting the remaining growers. As early as 1959, they absorbed the Escondido Co-Operative Citrus Association, bringing in important San Diego County acreage. In 1962, they added their first grapefruit and tangerine growers in the Coachella Valley, allowing the packing house to remain active between orange packing seasons.

Villa Park also helped open important new markets around the Pacific Rim, and their fruit can be found in markets and street stalls in Malaysia, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Korea.

Harold Brewer (1891-1990) was active with Villa Park Orchards for decades. He became a member in the early 1920s, when he established his orchard up on the Cerro Villa Tract; joined the Board of Directors in 1930, and served as president of the Association from 1959 to 1970.

A nephew of pioneer Valencia grower R. H. Gilman, Brewer came to Villa Park in 1923. "As far as the area was concerned," Brewer recalled in 1985, "almost all of it was in citrus. A widow down here on Center Street had about 20 acres in walnuts, and outside of that, this whole area was in either oranges or lemons."

“You’d drive along the streets and about all you’d see was a citrus grove and maybe a house on the corner or maybe long driveways leading back into a home. There were windbreaks to protect the orchards from the Santa Ana winds—the ‘Devil Winds’ they called them. You could drive to town and meet maybe one or two horse-and-buggies, or automobiles. Villa Park had no ‘town,’ except there was a little store at Villa Park Road and Wanda.”

Brewer recalled the growth of the cooperative packing houses: “In the early days, packing and shipping was all [done by] independents. “They would come and either buy your fruit for so much a box – estimating it on the trees—or they would pick it and pack it and pay you so much, with them keeping a commission. And it got to be—if you want it politely—so many robbers. So the growers had to seek a way to defend themselves. That’s what started the co-ops back years before Villa Park Orchards was started....

“Just like any other business,” he said, “a group can do business cheaper than a single individual. The picking was cooperatively done. The hauling was done by the packing houses—they were still hauling with teams of horses when I came over here. All of these [things]—and the packing—were much cheaper than having somebody in the business to make a profit to do it. That profit was divided back to the growers.”

But first the growers needed trees old enough to bear a crop. After all, it takes an orange tree about seven years to reach fruit-bearing maturity, a span of time that conjured up a lot of make-do business, as would-be growers sought to make a living any way they could.

When Brewer bought his grove in 1923, the trees were only a year old. For the next half-dozen years, he raised tomatoes and corn, often picking and selling them himself. He also did orchard work for other ranchers, while still tending his own young trees. When they finally came into full bearing, he began a pattern that continued for more than 40 years:

“The blooming was in the spring—April, May—and you did your irrigation and cultivation. Valencias were a crop that had ripe fruit and blossoms for the next year’s crop at the same time, so that in this season you would have the picking of the crop that

was formed the season before. Along in the fall, then, you would either fumigate or spray—fumigating for red scale [a parasite] and spiders, or spraying with oil sprays.

“Then by the middle of fall your crop was all picked and you mostly irrigated, cultivated it up and sowed a cover crop, either clover or mustard or something to grow in the winter to make a mulch for the spring to work into the soil to help build it up.

“Then during the winter, if you were in an area like I had in my lower acres here when it got cold, you had to watch the thermometer and maybe once in a while light up some smudge pots. In later years, the smudge pots went out and wind machines went in.

“Then in the spring, you disked up [the soil] with a tractor and worked in this cover crop you’d grown through the winter.”

The picking was done by a variety of workers. Local Mexican-Americans made up much of the work force, but, as Brewer noted, “there weren’t enough to do the job.” During World War II, even German POWs were sometimes used. And the Bracero program (1943-64) allowed migrant workers to come north to add to the local labor force.

Once the fruit was packed in field boxes, it went to the packing house, where it went through a process that remained virtually unchanged for more than a half century. As Brewer explained:

“It went down into the basement of the packing house. They had rooms in there where it was stored for anywhere from a week to two weeks. If it was a season of greenish fruit, ethylene gas was released into these rooms to ripen the fruit.

“Then, when the fruit was to be packed, it was raised on an elevator upstairs and dumped into a washing container. [Then] it was elevated out onto a belt and it was air-dried. In later years, it ran through a machine that put on the waxing and polishing.

“And then it was dumped out onto tables in front of the graders, who put number one fruit and number two fruit onto different belts... Then it went down to the packer’s bins.” There the fruit was sorted according to size, wrapped in tissue paper and boxed. “In later years,” Brewer concluded, “the fruit went out to the pre-cooler and was stored in the cooling rooms before it was loaded into the freight cars to be sent east.”

Do you love Orange County history?



Support the Orange County Historical Society

**Renew or Become a
Member Today!**

[Click Here to Sign Up Online!](#)

OCHS MEMBERSHIP

Students ♦ with ID	\$20.00
Seniors (65+)	\$25.00
Individuals	\$30.00
Family (at same address)	\$45.00
Institutions ♦	\$50.00
Sponsors	\$60.00
Patrons	\$100.00
Corporate/Companies ♦	\$200.00
Life Member	\$500.00

♦ Non-voting member

If you join after the 20th day of the month
Your newsletter will arrive in 6 weeks

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

OCHS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Spring 2020

NAME/S _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

☐

-Send meeting and special event notices to my email.

Phil Brigandi Memorial \$ _____
(Optional additional donation)

AMT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Please make check payable to OCHS

MAIL TO: OCHS, c/o Kathy Pacaud
1011 North Cypress
La Habra, CA 90631



ORANGE COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY