

President's Message

Dear Orange Community Historical Society Members and Friends:

We know this last year was very different for many of us, and was probably quite different from what you had planned, but we hope you had a wonderful holiday despite everything. We are so sorry we have not been able to offer you the fun, meaningful, cultural and educational experiences we enjoy as members and fans of the Orange Community Historical Society. We never imagined that our meetings would be suspended for this period of time. Although the Covid-19 vaccine is becoming available for certain priority groups, I'm sorry to announce that our annual gala has once again been rescheduled. Pending state guidelines for large gatherings, the Board voted to move our gala from May 18, 2021 to January 2022 providing we can meet safely. There's nothing we enjoy more than bringing local history to life for our devoted members and guests and hope this is the last time we alter our plans.

This year we plan to up our social media game by practicing distance socializing and hope you continue to connect with us at: <https://www.historicalorange.org>.

Jane Owens

President



The Early Years and Bertha

If your inclined to refer to the area in the center of "Old Towne" Orange as the "Plaza", then you will probably recall the Orange Lionettes woman's softball team and maybe even a name or two of their players.

Carl Schroeder approached the Orange Lions Club to sponsor the new team in the Summer of 1936 and after they agreed he set about getting the word out on tryouts for the team. Katie Schroeder said her Grandmother didn't particularly like her husband always talking on the telephone with so many young girls that summer, but he

got enough quality players to form a pretty good team.

In those early years they played other women's teams sponsored by organizations or companies, such as Mark C. Bloom, Eastside Beer, Bank of America, Perfection Bread and a team from Columbia Pictures. In 1937 they acquired the services of pitcher Lois Terry, also nicknamed the Blonde Bomber or the Blond Terror. She had toured with a Hollywood all-star team and was nationally known. With her pitching the Lionettes were one of the best teams in Southern California. The team won the 1938 Southern California championship with Lois pitching.

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Under the Orange Peel

Rev. Nathan Riley

GEORGE LEICHTFUSS, LONGTIME SANTA FE EMPLOYEE, & THE TRAIN THROUGH ORANGE

In the late 1970's as a young pastor doing what the old Germans called seelsorge (pastoral care), I had occasion to pay several visits to George and Armilda Leichtfuss and found them to be a most delightful older couple. George had earlier played a significant role as stationmaster(?) at our Orange Santa Fe Depot. And, as it happens, on the night of our terribly strong Long Beach earthquake (March 10, 1933) George was on duty at the Orange Depot.

Orange historian , Phil Brigandi, tells us (Orange: the City 'Round the Plaza, p.109-110) that with the earthquake taking out the Long Beach and Santa Ana Western Union offices the Orange Depot was one of the few places that night where people could send telegrams to loved ones telling them that they were safe. George said, "That was the busiest night I ever experienced. I handled close to 900 telegrams that night." The messages came in so fast that George said he just threw the money on the table without counting it and just kept clicking away.

Well, our own family's connection to Mr. Leichtfuss was strongest, perhaps, with my recently deceased uncle, Al Bohner. I asked him once to share his own recollections of George and the Orange Depot...



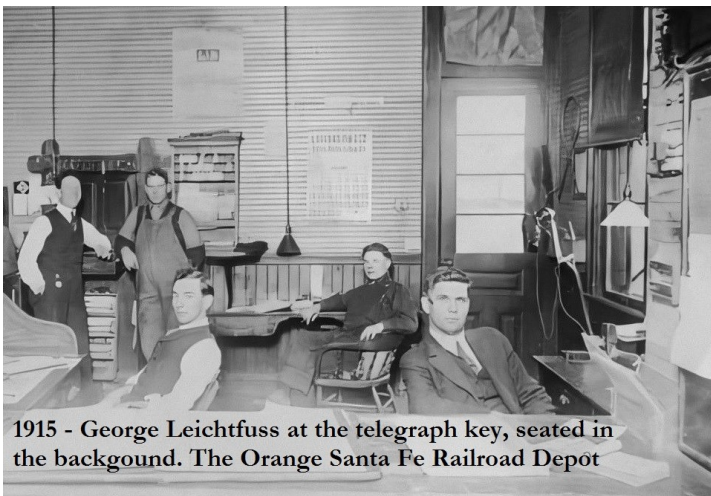
Mr. and Mrs. George Leichtfuss - 1960's

"Okay, I understand that George Leichtfuss had some job with the train depot there on N. Atchison St. in Orange. What was his job exactly and what do you remember about him?"

Uncle Alvin: Well, George did everything with the railroad. You know he was in World War I and as he told me he got blown out of a trench by an artillery shell or something. I guess that ended his Army career. (Brigandi: George Leichtfuss was the first local man to be wounded, on May 1, 1918, while serving on the Western Front in France. He recovered, and lived to the age of 90.) He came home and went to work for the Santa Fe Railroad at a place called Helendale. It's about 80 miles (ed. 93 mi from Orange) out there in the middle of nowhere in the desert near Palm Springs in a very deserted location. I got to know the Leichtfuss's because they had a daughter named Jean. Jean was in my class in high school and...(we) had a lot of fun doing things together. I used to go to their house all the time. Her mother thought I was the greatest thing that ever happened. Her name was Lighty or Armilda .

Nathan:Now when did George come to Orange and start working at that Orange station?

Uncle Alvin: Boy, I don't know.
Nathan:Was he there in the 40s?



1915 - George Leichtfuss at the telegraph key, seated in the background. The Orange Santa Fe Railroad Depot

They played their home games at Orange City Park. The soft-ball field was built by the Works Progress Administration in the mid-1930's along with the 40-acre park adjacent to it. The "Plunge", a cooking /picnic area and a small bandstand made this a popular local. The attraction of a good ballgame to boot made it all the better.



1939 Lionettes: L-R - Phyliss Tucker, Melba Estes Tatum, Mary Perkins, Wilma Potter, Bobbie Wakeham, Ruth Lee Sears, Betty Bickford, Mamie Bogetti, Pat Collins, Lois Terry and Phoebe Miller Smith

In the 1939 season, Terry had an old shoulder injury flair-up and was advised by her doctor to take the rest of the season off. The Lionettes needed to find a replacement for her. Manager Elwood Case heard about a 17-year-old high school girl pitching in Dinuba for the Alta Chevrolet Dealership Team, that sounded promising. He and some members of the Lions Club went to Dinuba in Tulare County to recruit this player. So it was that Bertha Petinak, came to Orange for the first time.

Bertha liked Orange because it was still a small town like Dinuba and far enough away from the big-city of Los Angeles. Bertha's parents had both passed away within a year of each other on their farm in 1936 and '37 and she had little to keep her up in the Central Valley. The first year she would stay with the Lionettes coach and his wife or whatever teammate had a couch available that week. The next year she rented an apartment overlooking the Plunge from Leo and Ollie Mathis. Mathis was the manager of the pool and got Bertha a job there as a lifeguard.

The Orange Daily News devoted several paragraphs to her first appearance with the team. "Out of the grape country will come a youngster who will be trying out in the fastest league in girls' softball to help the crippled Lionettes over the hump", it announced.

Miss Patinak's first outing pitching for her new team was a little less than stellar. Nervous to be sure, but also slight differences threw her game off. The ball the team played with was a quarter of an inch smaller than the 12-inch one that she was used to, and the distance to home plate was a foot further. She walked twelve batters and the Lionettes lost the game, 9-4, even though they outit the other team.

Her second game against the Optimist Doughnuts (Davis Perfection Bakery) went much better and Bertha threw several strikeouts with her pitching being hailed as brilliant in the Orange Daily News. She began pitching regularly for the team through the summer. She would graduate from high school in Dinuba the following Spring and then move to Orange. She knew she would be able to get a job once living in Orange. The team had no company sponsor to work for, Elwood Case often gave players jobs at the dry-cleaning business that he operated with his wife.

The Lionettes benefited from playing against strong local teams. The Southern California softball league was a stand-alone entity in the 1930s and early '40s. It held its end-of-the-season tournament at the same time the national tournament was taking place. The Lionettes had talked about skipping the Southern California tournament and playing the national one instead - just to see how they stacked up against such teams as Jax Maids and the Chicago Down Drafts - but hadn't done so yet. Traveling to the Midwest was expensive, the Los Angeles league was very competitive and many suspected it to be the strongest group of women's softball teams in the country.

Bertha began to develop new pitching tactics facing these tough teams. "She could throw hard, but not hard enough to regularly blow fastball past hitters. She needed a different approach, one that prized cunning over power."

"Slowly she began constructing her pitching persona. She learned to make slow pitches look fast and high ones look low. Then she further disguised them with the deceptive figure-eight windup, in which one swirled the ball behind one's back before flicking it forward with palm down. The finishing touch was her face, which made sure was calm and composed at all times.

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She wasn't physically imposing enough to intimidate on looks alone, especially when she was younger, but her relaxed yet otherwise unreadable face unnerved batters. One reporter took to calling her the 'poker-faced miss'. She always seemed to know what was going on in the opposing batters' heads, but they couldn't get into hers."

The Lionettes had won the 1938 Southern California championship, but in the 1939 tournament they were eliminated in the semifinals. Bertha felt responsible for the loss and was determined to win the title back for her team the next year.

The 1940 tournament was held in Long Beach. The Lionettes had to win three games to get to the tournament finals. Except for three runs that Bertha gave up in the first game versus Santa Barbara, she was flawless. In the final game, against Long Beach Woolworths, she gave up only two hits and got on base four times, helping her team win by ten runs. The victory earned the team a nearly four-foot-tall trophy that would go on display in Scotty's Malt Shop in downtown Orange.



Long Beach 1940 - SoCal Champs - Pitcher, Bertha Petinak, kneeling far left. Bat girl Mary Ann Lentz is kneeling far right.

"Lois Terry had joined another team for 1940 season and while the Lionettes didn't face her during the tournament, they did the night following. Bertha's arm was tired after pitching nearly every night for a week, but held Terry's team to one run and three hits. Bertha had nothing against Terry personally, but it felt good to go head-to-head and come out on top. The Lionettes had faced Terry's team two other time that season and had won those games too."

The 1941 season started in April and Bertha struggled with accuracy again. The Orange Daily News called her a "slow starter who had not yet rounded into shape." She was constantly practicing and towards the end of that Summer her constancy started to come back. But earlier in the season and not in form yet, the Lionettes new manager, Stewart (Shorty) Smith, made Bertha the backup pitcher behind Martha Cooper. He moved Bertha into right field. "She began to wonder if she would be asked to join the team the next year."

Bertha stayed on in Orange following the 1941 season, she liked the town, liked working at the Plunge and had acquired her first serious boyfriend, Jim Ragan. "Jim had grown up in Orange and his family was well-known in town. His father, John, was an insurance agent near the Plaza, and his Uncle James was a local deputy sheriff."

In December the United States entered World War 2 following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Jim Ragan enlisted in the army right away and in January, Bertha and Jim drove to Yuma, Arizona to avoid California's required waiting period and get married as quickly as possible. A few months later and Jim went to North Carolina for basic training. Bertha moved in with Jim's parents in Orange. "She pitched for the Lionettes in a shortened season that summer, but softball was hardly her focus."

By the fall of 1942, "every aspect of life in Orange seemed to revolve around the war effort." In August, the Huff Jewelry Store owner donated the 500-pound clock that stood outside the shop in the Plaza. Folks were encouraged to donate whatever metal objects they could find at home. The telephone company asked folks to refrain from making long-distance calls unless absolutely necessary to keep the lines clear for war messages. The First National Bank of Orange advertised that you should give War Bonds as gifts for Christmas. "War has made your Christmas shopping easy!" it declared.

Food and Gas rationing started. Women had to figure out how to cook with less sugar, dairy products and meat. Growing your own vegetables at home in "Victory Garden" was encouraged. Drivers were asked to limit travel as much as possible. Later that year, even taking the bus was discouraged. Streetlights and store signs went dark. People on the coast were asked to keep shades drawn at night. **-Continued Next Newsletter**

A History of the Orange Fire Department

- The First 75 Years -

By Battalion Chief Darell Verburg

On December 14, 1905, a group of concerned citizens, with the Orange Fire and Water Committee, met in the bank hall to form the Orange Volunteer Fire Department. Those who wished to become “volunteers” were required to buy a share in the “Company” for \$100. Twenty-nine men purchased shares and were placed on the rolls of the Orange Volunteer Fire Company. An organization was formed by the members on December 24, and named the “Orange Volunteer Fireman’s Mutual Association”, (a forerunner of today’s “Orange City Firefighters”). E.T. Parker was elected the first fire chief. Ed Cope was the first assistant chief and Hank Warner second assistant. Howard Williams was elected president of the fire company, Charles Heim, vice-president and Fred Grote, secretary.

The first fire station was located to the rear of the Bank of Orange (Wells Fargo Bank today). That is on the north side of East Chapman Avenue. It was a small wooden shack with a rope-operated bell. At first, they stored their two hose carts there.

Fire Department

N. E. Cor. Plaza Square. Phone Main 791

E. T. PARKER, CHIEF.

Ed. Cope, 1st assistant
K. E. Watson, president
G. L. Cosart, secretary

H. O. Warner, 2nd assistant.
C. O. Heim, vice president.
H. Moberly, treasurer

1907 Orange Directory Listing

On April 3, 1907, the Fire Company took delivery of its first “hook-and-ladder” wagon for the princely sum of \$235. The Santa Ana fire captain who manufactured it even included a ten-day trial guarantee. The ladder wagon had to be pulled by hand or whatever equipment was available.

In 1908, the Company members were paid \$1 per false alarm and \$2 for each fire.

By 1910 sufficient money was raised (\$220) to purchase lots at 122 South Olive Street where a 25-to-40-foot

firehall, complete with bell tower went up. Cost \$430.

The first few years of the Company’s history saw pitched battles over which of the local cowboys would pull the ladder wagon or hose cart to the fire. Hearing the fire alarm bell, the cowboys would race to the fire hall, fighting with each other on the way, wanting to be first and collect the coveted fifty cents pay. Sometimes none of them would reach the fire hall in time.

The mechanized era began in 1912, when a brand-new Seagrave pumper was delivered. This horseless carriage was the first motorized apparatus in Orange County. The hand-drawn ladder wagon was removed from first-run service at about the same time. On February 21, 1912, the Orange Volunteer Mutual Association was registered with and formally recognized by the State of California.



Circa 1912 - Orange’s 1912 Seagrave pumper in front of the fire station at 122 S. Olive Street. The first in Orange County

1912 could be called the beginning of the “progress years”. William Vickers was hired Oct. 8, 1914 as the first full-time fireman. Living upstairs at the fire hall for \$8 per month rent, he was on-duty around the clock, seven days a week, for five years until D.C. “Doc” Squires was hired to relieve him. (continued on page 6)

(Fire Department from page 5)

In November, 1913 the first fire alarm system was installed using 15 Gamewell telegraph boxes stationed throughout the town. This system remained in use until 1964. "The city is believed to be the only one, additional to the county seat, where fire alarm boxes have been installed", reported the Orange Daily News in May 1950.

In 1916 the town trustees approved payment of \$1 per man for each drill. May of 1917 saw the first, first-aid kit purchase for the apparatus and two squads of nine men were formed, each having a specific duty. A. L. Tomblin, who joined the department in 1911, was elected Chief; serving in that capacity from 1919 to 1951.

Around October of 1921, the Company took delivery of a 1921 American La France 1,000-gallon-per-minute pumper. The Fire Company, which by this time was using the word "Department", held a dance celebrating the arrival of its newest pumper. The entire town turned out for such an event as important as this. Shortly after this, the faithful, though temperamental 1912 Seagrave was sold to the City of San Marcos, California, (only to be destroyed in a fire at the firehouse a few years later) and the town trustees purchased the coats and caps for the men.

In January, 1922, fire alarm box cards were bought for the fifteen alarm boxes and in December, the Orange Volunteer Fire Department joined the California State Fireman's Association. Their 100 percent membership was a tradition carried through until 1979. In 1923 the volunteers were receiving \$4 per fire, day or night.

An excerpt from meeting minutes reads: "Aldreich was fined ten cents for allowing his car to catch fire and the First Assistant Chief ten cents for 'shooting ducks' while attending this department meeting". Fines were levied for anything and everything. Several times members were fined for smoking and a few minutes later against the only man present not smoking. Not showing up at the meeting wasn't a good way of evading the inevitable fines, because they were fined for that too.

An out-of-town fire alarm system was set up in 1927. It consisted of "three raps on the fire bell, a short pause

and then "three more raps on the fire bell." Sometime in 1928, another American La France pumper was purchased to replace the old hose carts still in use. This 750 gallon-per-minute pumper was in-service until 1964, when it finally threw a connecting rod through the motor block after appearing in the annual May Festival Parade. The department members had been required to buy their own uniforms, but in 1929, the trustees agreed to reimburse them for the uniforms and purchase them from then on.



Circa 1929 - L-R Chief Tomblin, standing by his car, Frank Bieraugle by the 1928 American La France, and William Hagan by the 1921 La France pumper. Seated in the '28 are Ed Higgins and Charlie Olds. In the '21 are William Vickers and Herbert Sisson.

The largest fire loss during this recorded time was in 1929 when 19 fire calls totaled \$15,000. The smallest fire loss recorded during this same was \$860 for 17 fire calls including the very first recorded false alarm .

Rescue service is mentioned for the first time in 1934, indicating seven inhalator calls. It was also about this time when the department's first rescue truck was built by Volunteers Charlie Olds and Ed Higgins (Floyd Higgins' uncle) and placed into service. A proposal had been in June of 1923 for a new fire headquarters, but it would eleven more years until the plans for a modern two-story station were utilized. When viewing the old wooden fire hall, the need was readily apparent. The old building had developed a twenty-degree list to one side and was kept from total collapse by numerous poles wedged against the wall.

In April, 1935, ground was broken across the street from the old fire station. In November, the new station was dedicated at 153 South Olive Street and served as fire headquarters until outgrown in 1968. An air-horn was installed atop a thirty-foot

(Continued on Page 7)



(George Leichtfuss - from Page 2)

Uncle Alvin: Yes, yes. See when he worked at the depot in Orange, he did everything...When (your uncle) Charles Loeffler came out here the first time he had stuff shipped by railway express and I remember the train stopped, and they unloaded the car on the dock at the Santa Fe Depot in Orange...George sold tickets on the train and he was a telegrapher and as a matter fact one time I got to be real good friends with George and I'd go down there and shoot the breeze with him in the evening you know. He was there alone. And nobody was there. So I'd come in and talk to him for maybe an hour or so many times - not just once or twice, and he thought that was neat. Anyway we got to talking and he told me which trains to take because I wanted to ride a freight train to Santa Ana. So he told us, and

there were two or three of us-Willis Krage, myself, Melvin Fitschen...We all hopped this freight and went to Santa Ana and somebody else picked us up when we got to the other end...We knew it was going to stop in Santa Ana...It was only 2 to 4 miles. It took about 15 minutes.

George was telling me that he went to work for the railroad about 1920...1918... somewhere around there. And he never got a vacation until 1946...and in 1946 it wasn't a paid vacation.

So that's the end of my uncle's story and that's the way it happened one night some 88 years ago at the railway depot in the then sleepy town of Orange.

Fire Department - from page 7

tower and connected to the alarm box system. When pulled, the box number was coded out on the horn notifying the volunteers (and the whole town) of the fire location. In later years the horn was used for air-raid warnings, calling off-duty personnel and notifying the town it was high-noon, with its two ear-shattering blasts; that is to say, when the fireman checked their watches on time and weren't trying to play practical jokes on someone with one or two extra blasts.

By 1946, wages had gone up for the volunteers who were receiving \$5 per drill and \$7 per fire.

- To Be Continued in the Next Newsletter

HELP URGENTLY NEEDED!!

Vacant Board Position

We are looking for a person to be in charge of the Historical Society marketing and promotion ventures.

This primarily involves implementing ideas to strengthen our media presence, promotional materials or activities, and assistance with annual events.

We need only a couple hours commitment each month for one virtual board meeting and projects.

Contact: Jane Owens at towens46@aol.com

NOTE: The O.C.H.S. Annual Dinner for **2021 has been canceled** because of COVID19 concerns. The Board of Directors thought it in the best interest of all concerned to postpone this year's event until January of **2022**. We hope things will be back to near normal then.

OCHS 2021 Boards of Directors

President - Jane Owens
towens46@aol.com (714) 281-1336

Vice President, A/V, Programs - Lyle Drinkgern
drinkgern@sbcglobal.net (714) 767-8549

Treasurer - Bill Utter
bill.utter@hotmail.com (714) 998-7428

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drinkgern@sbcglobal.net (714) 767-8526

Website - John Russo
russo@johnrusso.org

Newsletter—Roger Fitschen
fitschen@roadrunner.com (714) 628-9902

OCHS MEMBERSHIP

Application for Membership Year **2022** (Membership Year covers January-December)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Email _____



Please return application and check to:
Orange Community Historical Society
P.O. Box 5484, Orange, CA 92863-5484

OCHS is a 501(c)(3) organization, ID #33-0416234.
Contributions are tax deductible to
the fullest extent permitted by law.

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (check one)

NEW

~~RENEWAL~~

(See the mailing label for when
your membership expires)

Individual - \$20.00

Family - \$25.00

Life - \$300.00

Business/Organization - \$100.00

Donation - \$_____

Orange Community Historical Society Members enjoy: programs and newsletters, opportunities to support and contribute to the preservation of Orange history, contact with members of the community knowledgeable about Orange history, and discounts on OCHS merchandise.

Our Mission

The mission of OCHS is to commemorate the rich heritage of our community. Our purpose is to collect photographs, written materials and related ephemera, promote research, events, activities and programs celebrating Orange history, and sponsor local history endeavors. We remain self-supporting through memberships, donation bequests and special projects.

We welcome everyone.

LOCAL HISTORY QUESTIONS?

(714) 288-2465 | history@cityoforange.org

Check out the Orange Public Library's
Local History and 24/7 Reference Service
www.cityoforange.org/library

The City of Orange website provides a brief history of Orange, as well as demographics and contact information for schools, businesses and organizations in the area.

ORANGE HISTORIC AFGHANS

Red & White or Green & White Afgans:
\$45.00 with Membership, \$55 without

If undeliverable please return to:

ORANGE TRIBUNE
Orange Community Historical Society
P.O. Box 5484
Orange, CA 92863-5484