

President's Message

Many of us are experiencing a “new normal” as we start to emerge from this terrible virus that has touched our lives. Thanks to our safety protocols and falling transmission rates, Orange County is finally reopened for business and entertainment. We are now starting to feel a lot like before COVID-19, but with precautions. While the Historical Society has striven to maintain a connection with our members and friends through our newsletters and social media connections, we are keeping fingers crossed we can hold our annual gala in January 2022. You can be assured that you will be first to get all the details once our plans are finalized.

Meanwhile, August might be a little early to start sorting through your Christmas present

list, but I have a shopping idea that is sure to be a winner. You can now purchase a beautiful afghan, that features historical landmarks in the City of Orange, from our website: www.historicalorange.org. This is a one-of-a-kind collection piece, introduced in 1996, that can only be purchased directly from the OCHS and is in constant demand. Place your order soon because our supply is very limited.

There's nothing we enjoy more than bringing Orange history to life for our members and friends and we can't wait until we see you again.

Jane Owens
President, 2021



Lionettes - The Early Years and Bertha

Excerpts from Erica Westley's book - FASTPITCH - Part 3

“In March of 1950, it was announced that the women's national softball tournament would be held in San Antonio, Texas that fall. It would be the week following the men's tournament held in the same city. It was an odd arrangement, especially for the women, as all of the past tournament hosts—Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and Portland had strong teams, but no competitive teams had come out of San Antonio. Still Bertha and her teammates were excited to go. To get there they chartered a Greyhound bus and rode across unpopulated desert landscapes for

three exhausting days. They passed time by taking naps and playing cards. Mostly though they discussed the upcoming tournament. They wondered what the field would be like and which of the other participating teams they would face first (the pairings were always decided by a random drawing the day before the tournament). Bertha resolved to beat the teams she had struggled with in the past: the Peoria Deselettes, the Portland Florists, and most of all, the Phoenix Ramblers.

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Under the Orange Peel

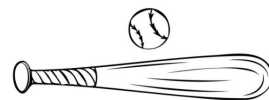
Rev. Nathan Riley



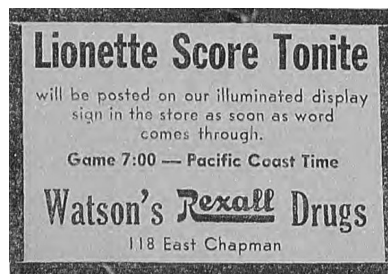
MEN'S SOFTBALL--Does anybody out there remember the Orange City League fast-pitch men's softball teams of the late 1950s? I, for one, do. I remember St. John's (Concordia Athletic Club or Concordia Men's Club) with their awesome pitcher, Glenn Liermann; Immanuel and their ace hurler, Walden Bruce--

struck out Hank, the barber, once when challenged on three eephus pitches (a very high-arching off-speed pitch). There was Buddy Shipman and the Silverado team, always good, teams like Los Vacitos (little wine glasses?). The Presbyterians had a commendable team. There was the always challenging Valentine Realty, etc., etc. Games were played mostly at what is now called Hart Park, though I do remember a few games being played out at Irvine Park. It was there, that our catcher, Bill Sievers, broke his humerus trying to throw out a runner stealing second. Much pain... ambulance called. At the Orange City Park it was lights out promptly at 10 PM regardless of the inning. The park night watchmen saw to that (Ross Harlan, a neighbor, was one). Each team reporting to play was required to bring two new softballs to the game. If those were lost on a foul ball — chased down, but never found— they went to the scuffed up used softballs in the bottom of their duffel-bags In that regard, I remember pitch-

ers trying to get a better grip on the softball by throwing an intentional pitch high and into the chicken wire screen behind the catcher to scuff up the ball. (1950's sticky stuff??) A high quality umpire with a bad leg was on to that ruse after a bit and made sure he closed that kind of stuff down right now! Anyone else recall the teams of the late 1950's? I didn't play. I just kept score and watched. Dad managed Immanuel's team and brother David played on it. Oh, yes, I remember Les Rodieck at batting practice once sending a scorching line drive to the shortstop position just as his son, Barry, was unfortunately running across the field—hit him in the head and knocked him flat. Everyone ran to help...in time all was OK. Those were nevertheless fun times and also for the community as a considerable number of fans came out to watch. There were trophies awarded and if you didn't finish where you wanted, near the top, well, there was always next year!



In September 1950, the scores of the Lionette's championship games, in San Antonio, Texas were posted each night on Watson's Drug Store illuminated display.



Editor - During that same year's regular season, at least one of the team's games was televised. My parent's had a new 16-inch-screen T.V. and with many family over to watch Aunt Marion Olson and Cousin "Girlie" Morner play on the team, the new set sadly caught fire before the first pitch.

The Lionettes first game was against a Denver team that they had defeated previously and had no trouble beating again. In their second game, they faced a team they hadn't played before and didn't know much about: the Raybestos Brakettes from Connecticut. Bertha was always apprehensive about playing unknown teams, but the Lionettes won the game easily. They scored five runs, while none of the Brakettes could even get a hit off Bertha.

"Next the Lionettes played the Deselettes. The Peoria team, led by a veteran pitcher named Marie Wardlow, had won its game against Fargo, North Dakota, Twinettes the day before by an intimidating fifteen runs. But Bertha didn't allow any of the Deselettes batters to score a run against her, and the Lionettes won the game, 4-0.

"The Florists had been eliminated early in the tournament, so the Lionettes didn't have to play them. They did have to go up against the Ramblers, though. Bertha knew they would be a challenge. They had two amazing pitchers--- Marie Law and Amy Peralta---and Dot Wilkinson, the team's catcher, seemed to get a hit every time she went up to bat.

"The Lionettes prevailed in the teams' first matchup at the tournament. Then, two nights later, they faced each other again in the finals. As the undefeated team going into the game, the Lionettes had the advantage: if they won, they would be the new national champions. Instead, they lost in a grueling eleven-inning battle (they play seven-inning games), during which a line drive hit Bertha in the stomach so hard that she collapsed. She was glad that her daughter Janice wasn't there to see her get injured, especially because she had twenty minutes to recover

before she had to be back on the field for the final game.

"As the night air in San Antonio finally began to cool, the Lionettes and the Ramblers faced each other one last time to determine which team would be the national title. At fifteen innings, this game went even longer than the first one had. With the two games, Bertha had been pitching for twenty-six innings and about five hours straight. Finally, the Lionettes caught a break and won 3-1. To some, their victory may have seemed like a fluke: this was only their second time competing in the tournament, and they hadn't done that well the first time. Bertha knew better, though. The capability had been there for years---it was just a matter of the timing and opportunity.

"The next morning, she and her teammates loaded their giant gold trophy onto the Greyhound bus and headed back to Orange, singing the 1920s song 'California, Here I Come' as they rode. Toward the end of their three-day return trip, the bus would be met in Corona by a motor escort bringing the team back to Orange.

The day before they arrived, The Orange Daily News ran a story under the heading, "Fire Whistle to Herald Lionettes Return". "We don't ordinarily do this ---except on special occasions---but if the Orange Lionettes winning the world's championship isn't 'special', then nothing is." That statement was made by Fire Chief A.L. Tomblin, who said the Orange City Fire whistle would blow in the afternoon, as the Lionettes entered town. He said he didn't want to alarm anybody, so he made the announcement in advance.

"No special series of blasts are planned"- (Page 4)

Tomblin said, “we’ll just blow it until it runs down.”

As they arrived home, Bertha and her teammates found themselves surrounded by thousands of cheering fans. The bus driver took them on a slow victory lap around the Plaza, and people ran up to touch the players’ hands through the open windows.



It was proud moment for the whole team, but it had special significance for Bertha and the handful of other players who had been with the Lionettes since before the war. They had known each other for more than a decade; a few of them had even grown up together. They had watched each other get married and have children and had endured being separated from one another during the war- years. Later, after they got off the bus and were walking through the crowd, Bertha looked behind her to see Ruth Sears, the first baseman, wiping tears from her eyes.” - END

Left - The Lionettes chartered bus arriving in the Plaza. - September 27, 1950

The Lionettes would win championships again in 1951, ‘52, and ‘55 with Bertha Ragan. Then 1956, ‘62, ‘65 (Joan Joyce), ‘69 and 1970.



Left - Lionettes team photo on the ball field at Orange City Park.. Left to right in back are: Verl Bright, Florence “Girlie” Morner, Marion Olson, Pat Collins, Audrey Stockwell. Elaine Oliver, Jo-Anne McLachlan and manager Leroy “Chubb” Sears. Left-right in front row: Jean Lie, Bev Connors, Bertha Ragan, Ruth Sears, Margie Bright and “Jo” Finnie.

W.O. Hart /Orange City Park by Chris Jepson

“If you don't count the **Plaza**, Hart Park was the **City of Orange's** first park. Originally called **Orange City Park**, it was created in the 1930s by the City, working in conjunction with the **State Emergency Relief Agency (SERA)** and the **Works Progress Administration (WPA)**. It was renamed in 1964 for long-time *Orange Daily News* editor **William O. Hart**.

In his book *Orange: The City 'Round the Plaza*, **Phil Brigandi** writes, "In 1927 the Chamber of Commerce led a major push to build a city park in Orange, but the proposed bond issue was defeated by local voters. In 1933, the city took up the challenge, acquiring 17 acres along the Santiago Creek east of Glassell Street."

After some serious cleanup of the area, construction began in 1935. Phil continues, "The biggest project was channeling the **Santiago Creek**. Arroyo stone retaining walls were built by hand on both sides of the creek .

The **Orange Plunge** was built jointly by the city and the WPA in 1935-1936 and was officially dedicated along with the rest of the park on May 1, 1937. A year later, the bandshell was added west of the Plunge and in 1949 the **National Guard Armory** was built at the East end of the park."

Prior to the park's construction, the area flanking Santiago Creek had been used as a trash dump. Homeless folks built shanties in the same area during The Depression years.



(Jim Sleeper, 1934 photo, along Santiago Creek and the Santa Fe rail bridge on the left)

Below - Orange City Park land prior to the start of construction, then ten years after dedication, and again in 1991 when it was 41.76 acres

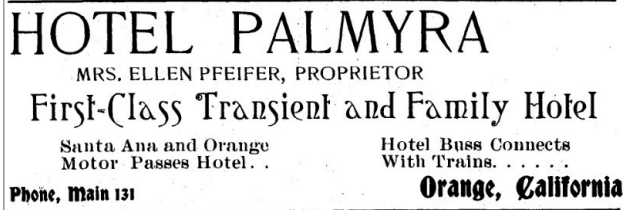


Parking in Hart Park for the 1954 Woman's Softball World Series. Hosted by the Lionettes.



Orange Street Naming

Palmyra Avenue was named by Charles Culver, who came from Palmyra N.Y. in 1883 and four years later built the Palmyra Hotel. This street was once Beach Street, after Joseph Beach.



Clark Street was named after A.B. Clark, who moved here with his family in 1875 and settled on 20 acres of land. Clark helped organize the S.A.V.I. Company and was its first president. He was also the first orange grower to ship wrapped oranges from the county.

Grand Street was once known as Grape. Changing of the name came about the time Pierce's Disease wiped out the grape industry.

Batavia Street was named by Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Burnham and Mr. and Mrs. W.S. Derby, who came out here from Batavia, Illinois. They bought the property where St. Joseph Hospital is located.

Harwood Street was named after N.D. Harwood.

La Veta Avenue is a Spanish name meaning vine. It was surveyed by William Bathgate in 1887 and ran from Glassell to Lemon Streets at that time.

Shaffer Street was named after Peter James Shaffer, an Orange pioneer.

Pixley Street was named after D.C. Pixley, who opened a tract of land in 1884, with the first street being called Pixley.

Walnut Avenue was named after Harry Adams walnut grove. Walnut was later renamed Maple Avenue and the name used again for its current location.

Eckhoff Street was a continuation of Flower Street until the county took it over in 1916. Fred and Henry Eckhoff have the honor of the street they lived on being named after them.

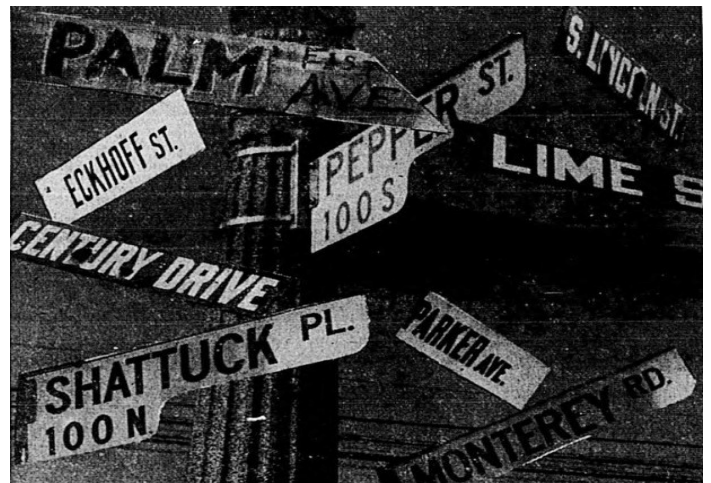
Water Street, which now runs along the water department, was installed next to a Santa Ana Valley Irrigation Company (S.A.V.I.) canal, long before the water department moved there.

Cleveland Street was named after an admirer of Grover Cleveland who built a subdivision during the president's administration.

Atchison Street next to the railroad, named, of course after the _____, Topeka and Santa Fe

For those poor souls who leave Tustin Street and come out on Tustin Avenue, it's the city ordinance requiring all roads running north and south in Orange to be "streets." Those running east and west are "avenues." But there are exceptions, with lanes, drives, places and ways.

The state and county, however maintain that Tustin is more important than merely a street and should be an "avenue."



On August 25th, 1947, Gene Pronk as Dr. Ogre Banshee performed his “*Chasm of Spasms*” show at the **Orange Theater**. “Don’t be a sissy, step right up nice people, Dr. Ogre Banshee desires to chill you.” the Orange Daily News ad read. The show had been purchased earlier that month from renowned magician John Calvert. Before being sold the show had been know as “*Dr. London’s Inner-Sanctum Hour.*” The show concluded with the screen showing of the film “*Blood and Thunder.*”

Mark Hannah of the Daily Citizen News in Dalton, Georgia wrote: “The Spook Shows had their heyday in the 1930s through the 1950s. There were precursors to the Spook Show in the 1920s and some of the traveling shows were performed as late as the 1960s and even into the 1970s. They were usually a one-night appearance, although the performer might put on more than one show on that day. The prices were generally a little higher, maybe a dollar per person and they sometimes did away with the kids' admission price. Theater owners liked the midnight performances as they were making money and packing the house at a time of day the theater would normally be empty. Sometimes the show would be presented in the afternoon or during regular evening hours depending on how the manager thought the show would go. Posters and advertising artwork were sent to the theater owners’ weeks in advance to bolster interest. The promises and challenges of what was on the posters were worthy of P.T. Barnum.”

“Phosphorescent or glow-in-the-dark paint was a new thing. When the lights went out fishing poles were used to fly painted black cloths with glowing spirits over the audience, along with popcorn *spiders* being thrown into the crowd by cast members.”



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.

2021 OCHS Board of Directors

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OCHS MEMBERSHIP

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

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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

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