

Tustin History

Interesting facts found in Old Tustin Area Newspapers, Circa 1900

It All Started With Columbus–Tustin, That Is!

Most people outside of Orange County (and perhaps many inside) have never heard of the place, but Tustin is over 100 years old, and its story is a good example of what went on in Orange County. It's a nice, quiet, politically conservative area right in the heart of the fastest growing county in the United States. Progress in Tustin has been like the ticking of a clock in a thunderstorm. It all started with Columbus Tustin who founded the city over a hundred years ago, and at that time he had to give the land away to get people to move in. Mr. Tustin was born in Pennsylvania in 1826, and he moved West a step at a time until he wound up in Oregon and eventually in California. For awhile he was a buggy builder in Petaluma. History then traces him to Orange County where he and Nelson Orange Stafford purchased 1,359 acres of undivided land in 1868. Legal battles raged as purchasers of rancho land sought formal division of the acreage so they could develop it. The court finally approved the divisions. Columbus Tustin ended up taking title to 839.9 acres bordered on the west by what is now known as Lyon Street and on the east by Newport Avenue. Columbus Tustin struggled to turn a plot of land populated

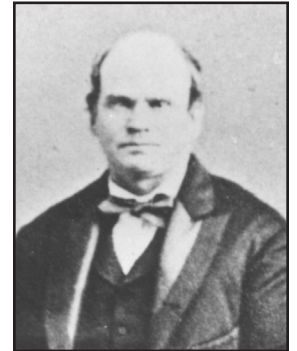
by Sycamore trees, rampant yellow mustard and wild flowers into the city of his dreams. The land was purchased from a Spanish land grant for \$2 an acre. Tustin set aside land for a school and soon his five children and others in the community called it Tustin City.

A post office was established with Tustin as postmaster. Several stores, a saloon and a blacksmith shop opened. Houses, mostly shacks, began to appear. Tustin offered a free lot to anyone who would build a house on it. By the following June he had sold 13 spacious lots and generously given away 12 others. This dizzying spiral of development was capped in 1872 with the opening of the school house, a post office, Columbus Tustin, postmaster, and the first store, C. Tustin, proprietor. The upstairs of this first commercial building (at Main and C Streets) provided for public gatherings, exhibitions and the Union Church Prayer Meetings. Appropriately, it was called "Tustin Hall".

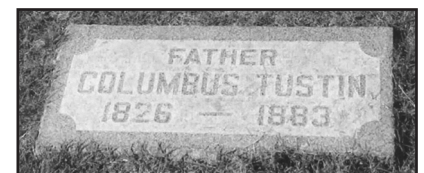
Tustin made its first bid to become a metropolis, and bring fame to its founder, in the land boom of the 1880's. Property values soared when the railroads came west, and Columbus Tustin was jubilant at the prospect of luring the Southern Pacific to

build a station in his city. Rivalry between Tustin and William Spurgeon, the developer of Santa Ana, was intense. They both wanted the railroad terminal extension from Anaheim. Unfortunately Spurgeon outmaneuvered Tustin and Santa Ana got the depot. Disheartened, Columbus Tustin fell into decline and died on July 27, 1883. Tustin's founder did not live to see his dream come to full fruition. But to his townfold he left a rich legacy. To his family he left: one horse, 7 years old; one horse, 30 years old; one new spring wagon, one cultivator, one plow, one cow and two dozen lots in Tustin City. We hope he knows his city finally achieved success.

Columbus Tustin, the founder of Tustin City, is buried in the Santa Ana Cemetery, off of Santa Clara and Tustin Avenue, Santa Ana.



Columbus Tustin
1826-1883



Busy downtown Tustin, circa 1900.

With exception of street railroad, discontinued some years ago, scene depicts Tustin's bustling Main and "D" Streets.

Climate & View

One cannot exaggerate the idyllic qualities of Tustin. Its weather is supreme—warm days, balmy nights. While the smell of burning bean straw may disturb the newcomer unaccustomed to the ways of citrus farming, E.R. Mauzy declares, "It is well known that in Tustin it has never been necessary to fire more than ten nights in a year."

Nestled in a lush valley whose vigorous growth of wild mustard attests its fertility, Tustin is protected by a bulwark of mountains. Indeed, rancher Mauzy points out, "From the elevation of Lemon Heights, one may see five large sugar beet factories—the only place in the United States where this feat can be accomplished."

Complementing this spectacular is a breath-taking view to the south of over 17,000 acres of lima bean fields!

Cox's Tustin Food Center



Corner of Main and "D" (El Camino Real). It is now called Cox's Tustin Plaza. The property is still owned by Phil and Linda Cox.



Did You Know?

Dr. W. B. Wall began citriculture here in 1876. And to be sure, oranges have reigned supreme ever since Tustin shipped the first car of county citrus to a foreign market (Des Moines, IA) in April of 1983. Last year, Queen Valencia accounted for 250 carloads, followed by her piquant hand-maiden, the lemon (116 cars) and prince consort, the English walnut (30 cars). But too few realize—

THAT the famous "Santa Ana Valley double-jointed hump-back peanut," hawked on railroad cars throughout the nation, is grown right here in Tustin (and NOT Santa Ana) by Mr. C.E. Utt.

THAT B.H. Sharpless, developer of the "Sharpless Avocado," recently sold fruit from his parent tree for ten dollars a dozen!

THAT J.H. Kellom of this city is the largest raiser of prunes in the county.

THAT Klondyke walnuts, whose nuts may reach 5 3/4 inches in circumference, do nicely in Tustin.

THAT Tustin, though unheralded, is the chili pepper capital of the world, a slight to be rectified as soon as we acquire a chamber of commerce.

THAT Tustin's ranchers pay top wages in the county: 5 cents a box for scrubbing oranges, 25 cents a day for pitting 'cots, and 35 cents a gunny sack for picking peanuts!

Finally, there is a resilience in our farmers not found elsewhere. A year after the disastrous fire of 1910 burned down the peanut house (next to the waterworks), roasting 16,000 sacks, goober pea plantings were up 10%. And, following the freeze of 1913, when the thermometer dipped to 22 degrees three nights straight running, scarcely a day went by that some citrus grower didn't detect a live shoot!

Back to School

Article by Carol Jordan, Editor, taken from the Tustin Area Historical Society (Heritage) newsletter dated September 1981.

87 years ago this month, Tustin High School opened its doors. The fact that those doors happened by be on the newly constructed Tustin Primary School made no difference: Tustin had its own high school at last. The next year, 1922, the doors at the present Tustin High campus opened and in the intervening years a few changes have taken place, including all new doors—complete with new buildings.

ERNEST BYRNE came to Tustin High in 1929 to teach business and commerce and stayed there for 30 years, becoming head of that department. The school's commercial building is named in his honor.

ESTHER BYRNE came to Tustin with her husband. Also a teacher, she spent 10 years off and on at Tustin High, substituting and teaching half days in the English department and library. During the war she taught at the Santa Ana Army Air Base in Costa Mesa.

JOHN SAUERS was born in Tustin, and graduated from Tustin High in 1934. He replaced Ernie Byrne as head of the department of business and commerce from 1959 to his retirement in 1971.

