

HERITAGE

Volume 38 No 1

A Publication of the Tustin Area Historical Society

January/February, 2013

HEY! DIDN'T YOU GROW UP THERE?

You know how, when you drive through an old neighborhood in Tustin, or pass a house that you just know was once nestled in an orange grove, you can't help but wonder what it was like to grow up there? Many homes in the Tustin area have been featured on the Historical Society's home tours, but not all. Some may have been featured years ago but aren't likely to be on the tour again soon. Yet there they sit, sparking the imagination. I decided to write this article about my own family's home in the hope that it might encourage others to share memories about theirs for inclusion in one of our newsletters.

The Charles Vance family bought both the First National Bank of Tustin and the Victorian house at 420 W. Main Street from Vinnie Cranston, the bank's Cashier, in 1917. My mother, who was raised in that wonderful old Victorian with its mysterious back staircase and dark hallways, is the source for some of my 'memories'; others are mine and my cousins', as we walked to it each afternoon from the old Tustin Grammar School.

In 1917, the house still retained its back staircase leading to what had once been maids' quarters. The two spacious front bedrooms were separated from that part of the house, but now maidless, the back staircase was sealed at the top and the space turned over to my mother and her big sister, Louise, for a playroom. My aunt regularly "taught school" to her pre-school-age sister and a gaggle

of her friends, writing lessons on the walls that came to light only after a new owner stripped the wallpaper from what had become my grandfather's bathroom in the '30s. With the advent of Prohibition, my grandfather used those stairs to store (?) his 'bathtub gin', a product of the dark basement, and they became the favorite Hide-and-Seek destination for my generation of friends.

Typical of Victorian homes, this one had both a front and back parlor. The back parlor was used by the family as a dining room, a fact memorable to my mother, a small child then, because of the evening they were all seated for dinner when my grandfather took his biscuit and threw it



Charlotte Vance Bixler ca 1920

up to the ceiling - where it stuck - remarking to my grandmother, "Lil, your biscuits seem a bit undercooked tonight." That room was soon merged with the front parlor, making a larger room for entertaining. New Year's, when my cousins and I got to stand on the stair landing and festoon the

entry hall chandelier with crepe paper for the party, was something we looked forward to yearly. The large pantry between the kitchen and living room became a full bar, while the dining room moved to the large room on the opposite side of the entry hall.

My cousins and I spent many Saturdays sleeping over in the house, probably on the theory that the closer we were to the churches on Sunday morning, the more likely we were to attend. For my cousin Bob and me, the most

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P.O. Box 185
Tustin, CA 92781

Tustin Area Museum
395 El Camino Real (at Main Street)
Tustin, CA 92780
(714) 731-5701

E-mail: tustinmuseum@att.net
Web Site: www.tustinhistory.com

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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

Our 2013 year is off to a great start. At our January board meeting we were pleased to welcome new directors Judy Kuykendall and Jeff Lyngaas, as well as our new treasurer Larry Friend. They join me and other current board members Pete Beatty, A.J. "Tony" Coco, Al Corfield, Wendy Greene, George Jeffries, Margaret Pottenger, Gary Siegel and David Smith. This team is the greatest group anyone could work with, and I look forward to another wonderful year!

New this year will be the location for our four general meetings (Tuesday, February 19, Monday, May 20, Monday, September 16, and Monday, November 18)—the conference room of the Tustin Library on Main Street, between Centennial Way and Prospect! Meetings at the Library will still begin at 7 p.m., are open to the public, and are free of charge. Bring a friend, and don't forget to sample the cookies, punch and coffee!

The Promenade committee, with Lindburgh McPherson at the helm, is already well into planning another fabulous home and garden tour. This year's theme is "A Day in Xanadu", so mark your calendars for Saturday, May 4, 2013—you will not want to miss this one!

Calling all members! It is time to renew your membership with TAHS! Now, I have to tell you a quick story. As you know, I wrote and signed the letter that went out in October or November to remind all of you to please renew your membership. Then the holidays came, etc. (you know what I mean!), and in the blink of an eye it was the New Year. And with it came my reminder letter to please renew. My own reminder letter arrived in my mailbox, and I let out a loud "OH!" because of course I had forgotten to renew! So, my dear fellow members, I can relate to some of you placing that initial letter aside—bet you don't even know where it is! Okay, but now you have the reminder letter (with the sketch on it of the string around the finger)—so won't you please do what I did last week, and send it back or take it in to the Museum in the next few days? The successful future of TAHS depends on it! And thank you in advance for taking those quick few minutes to do this.

See you at our General Meeting on Tuesday, February 19, at 7 p.m.—at the Tustin Library!

Gretchen Whisler

HEY! DIDN'T YOU GROW UP THERE?

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memorable sleepovers were when the Santa Ana winds howled, setting the branches of the avocado trees scraping against the siding, startling itinerant mice to scurrying inside the walls, their little toenails audible evidence of their presence. We'd sit in the dark with dishes of ice cream watching horror movies – our grandmother having long since retired upstairs – frightened but unwilling to give up the thrill of terror.

I hope these few memories from the life of the Vance house spark some of your own that you're willing to share with our members. As keepers of Tustin's history, we can never have too much information about Tustin's past, its wonderful homes and its families. Even if your home no longer exists (maybe especially if it no longer exists), we'd love to hear your story.

MASTER OF THE ARCHIVES

Orange County is filled with history, but have you ever wondered who the heck keeps track of all that stuff? Our own Historical Society sometimes struggles to put its fingers on information just for Tustin, but imagine doing that for the entire County. Whew!



Chris Jepsen at work in archives

Our Tuesday, February 19th meeting will feature the person who does just that – the amazing Chris Jepsen, Assistant Archivist since 2003 of the Orange County Archives. Every researcher of O.C.'s history has surely encountered Chris, a walking encyclopedia of often obscure information always at the tip of his fingers, and usually on the tip of his tongue.

Growing up in Orange County, its history has been a lifelong passion for him, his work in the field beginning while still in high school. He currently writes a fascinating blog, The O.C. History Roundup, along with the "Ask the O.C. Answer Man" column for Orange Coast magazine. He is president of the Orange County Historical Society, a much sought-after speaker, and in addition to those activities and all the hours spent at the Archives, manages to pursue a passion for Googie architecture, a space age architectural style commonly associated with the 1940s – 1960s which is quickly disappearing from the country's landscape.

Join us in the Community Room of the Tustin Library (can be entered from the front patio or from the Library) for this evening with Chris. His enthusiasm for O.C. history is sure to whet your own appetite!

HELP US HELP YOU. HOW? BY LETTING US KNOW YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS. NOT ONLY WILL YOU NEVER FORGET A GENERAL MEETING, YOU'LL RECEIVE UP-TO-THE-MINUTE INFORMATION ON HISTORICAL EVENTS IN ORANGE COUNTY, TUSTIN MUSEUM HAPPENINGS, AND UPCOMING HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS. DON'T BE THE LAST TO KNOW!

Accessions:	Pete Beatty	1887 California Textbook - Arithmetic
	John Aschieris	Rainbow Rexair Vaccum - circa 1940's
	H.Darlington	Vintage Newspapers & Calendar
	Del Pickney	Tustin PD Ephemera
	Don Ropele	Ephemera - Irvine Ranch Agriculture Reports
	Special Donation:	Elizabeth Pankey, Jeanne Siegel

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
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FEBRUARY MEETING

Tuesday, 19th at 7:00p.m.
Tustin Library's
Community Room
(345 E. Main Street)
SPEAKER – Chris Jepsen
“Backstage” At the
Orange County
Archives

AH-MAZIN'

I guess what would be truly ah-mazin' would be if any historical society in the state could resist the temptation to include an article about Huell Howser, whose loss we mourn, and to whom we will be forever grateful for the interest he sparked in California's history through his many series. Countless small towns and small museums owe him a debt of gratitude for bringing them to the public's attention, putting them on people's mental maps of places to visit.

Tustin was the lucky beneficiary of one of his visits, and it was a revelation to all involved. Both the Tustin Conservancy's Linda Jennings and our Museum staff were prepared for his arrival, well-armed with points of interest and answers to questions, but it was hard to be sufficiently prepared for Huell – he blew into town like a whirlwind, and set a pace few could keep up with, all the while noticing things which had long-since become invisible to us locals. The real benefit of his visit was what it did for all of us by making our town seem special, even to those who had become occasionally blind to its charms.



*l-r: Bill Finken, Huell, Linda Jennings,
Denny Hayden at Museum entrance*

The Museum has a DVD of his visit, which we frequently have playing on the Saturdays we're open. If you come in and it isn't on, be sure to ask, as we'll be more than willing to play it for you. Seeing Tustin through Huell's eyes is about taking a new look at Tustin, and his DVD never fails to remind us of how lucky we are to be part of a town someone so warm and full of wonder found interesting enough to visit.