

Victoria Avenue

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The Parent Navel Orange Tree

A brief history of a remarkable tree.

By Dr. Chester N. Roistacher



Fig. 1. The 136 year old parent Washington navel orange tree, located in a special park at the corner of Arlington and Magnolia avenues in Riverside, California. The tree is alive and healthy and still bearing fruit. This historic tree has to be one of the most important, if not the most important plant introduction ever made into the United States of America. Possibly all Washington navel orange trees throughout the world are derived from this one parent tree.

The threat of greening disease to all California citrus

California is now threatened with the most serious disease of citrus known as the greening disease (huang long bing). This disease has dramatically reduced the life of citrus trees in many parts of the world and is currently devastating the citrus industries of Brazil and Florida, two of the worlds largest citrus producers. The disease is present in Mexico and its psyllid vector *Diaphorina citri* is present in Texas and California. Our current situation in California may be compared to a dry forest waiting for a match to ignite it - the match being the bacterial organism responsible for the disease. There is currently a tremendous effort to keep this bacteria from entering California. Should this bacteria enter, the disease will spread rapidly as it has in other countries, our citrus and citrus industry in California would be at risk!

Can a citrus tree live for more than 12 years?

In 1995 during a consultancy visit to Thailand, I was asked to lecture to the staff of Kasetsart University located in Bangkok. The lecture was on the problems of the greening disease in their country where their citrus trees lived for only 4 to 8 years and rarely reach 12 years of age. The lecture was well attended by many young staff scientists. During the lecture I showed them a picture of a large citrus tree dying with the greening disease (Fig.2). While showing this picture, almost half the audience raised their hands and one by

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Early History of Victoria Avenue Forever

By Hal Synder, First VAF President

For several months in the summer of 1990, a group of friends had been meeting to discuss the maintenance of Victoria Avenue. This group consisted of Pati Weir, Mary Humbolt, Rosanna Scott, Earl Shade and I. On November 10, 1990 the Press- Enterprise ran a color picture of a Eucalyptus tree on the Avenue with the shocking caption, "Dead trees marked for removal." The group was stunned by this news and decided to organize, and named itself "Victoria Avenue Forever" (VAF). The aim of VAF was to raise funds to supplement the city budget for planting trees, to organize volunteers to plant them and them to care for them.

Special events were used to get out the word about VAF and its objectives. One of these events was the celebration of the centennial of the Victoria Avenue Bridge in November 1991. With the traffic rerouted, an

Continued on page 5

Join
the
fun on
Work
Days!

See page
2 for
details.



This is my first newsletter. I have been a Board member for a number of years and I have a deep personal commitment to this group and this Avenue. For my "day job" I am a Professor of Botany at UCR and this year will be my 34th (and last!) year. As editor, I am hoping to have several regular features in every newsletter: a landscape feature, a historical perspective, a letter from our President, Frank Heyming and recent and upcoming Avenews. In this issue we have the first of a two part article on the intimate history of the Navel Orange and Riverside by a local expert, Dr. Chester N. Roistacher. This is because navel orange trees have always been a part of Victoria Avenue and because the City of Riverside, as part of the Renaissance projects, has recently added many new trees to the Avenue from end to end. The historical perspective is an article written by Hal Snyder, who has always been a source of inspiration for me on the early history of Victoria Avenue Forever. And our President has written an article about plant names or, as we say in the trade, botanical nomenclature. We also have some work days and some exciting projects planned for this year. And, as always, we want to recognize everyone who has donated to VAF and the Avenue since the last newsletter.

If there are topics or information you want to see in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me. I'd love to hear from you.

Darleen DeMason, Editor • demason@victoriaavenue.org • (951) 398-1032

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Victoria Avenue Forever is a public benefit nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation Tax ID 33-0571694 dedicated to the preservation and beautification of Victoria Avenue.

Contributions are 100% tax deductible.

The VAF board meets at 6:30 on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (except August).

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News Along the Avenue

Upkeep in the Snyder and Dr. Lewis Gardens

Beginning last summer VAF hired Ed's Yard Care to do routine weeding, minor pruning and irrigation checks weekly. The gardens have never looked better and this liberates us to use work days to do more substantive projects on the Avenue.

Facelift for the Lorraine Small Rose Garden

We are planning to prune, replace plants, fix irrigation and mulch the Lorraine Small Rose Garden, which is in the median on Victoria Avenue near Ivy. This effort is being led by Kathy Swanson and Jim Montgomery. Jim did the original design for that Garden. The planting is planned for the February work day.

Updates on the Victoria Avenue/ Myrtle Avenue Memorial Orange Grove & Trailhead Project

The Board has been providing feedback on this exciting new future addition to the parks on the Avenue. It will be located on the westerly side of Victoria Avenue between Myrtle Avenue and Rumsey Drive. The City has been working on the designs for some time. A neighborhood meeting took place in November and the Cultural Heritage Board will discuss the plans at an upcoming meeting. The Board is very enthusiastic about the project.



Saturday, January 21, 2012

9:00 to 11:30

Corner of Adams and Victoria Avenue
Bring shovels.

Saturday, February 18, 2012

9:00 to 11:30

Lorraine Small Rose Garden
Myrtle and Victoria
Bring shovels, pruners and rakes.

one, said that the picture of this tree could not have been taken in Thailand for they had never seen a tree of this size. In truth, the picture was taken in Thailand by Dr. E.C. Calavan who visited Thailand in 1975 and gave me this slide. All of these younger scientists assumed that citrus trees lived a short period of time and were replaced when they were dying or had died of greening disease as was the standard in Thailand. I then showed them the picture of the Parent navel orange tree which was 120 years old at the time of my lecture and they could not grasp that a citrus tree could live that long. Today, this historical parent navel orange tree located at the corner of Arlington and Magnolia Avenues in Riverside is 138 years old (Fig. 1). It is still bearing large beautiful fruit and is in good health. In this first of two articles I wish to relate a little of the early history of this very important tree.

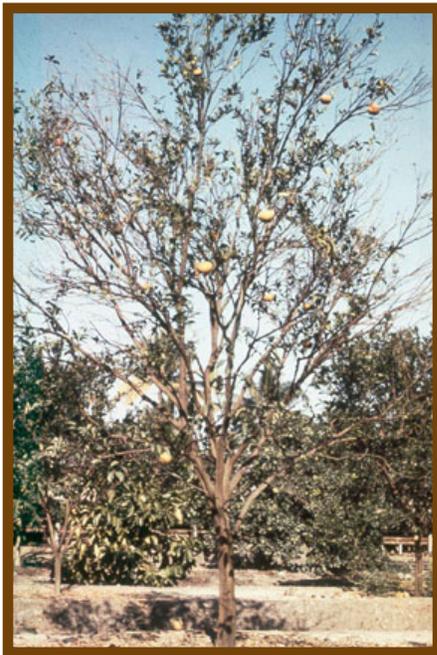


Fig. 2. This photo of a dying citrus was taken by Dr. E.C. Calavan in 1975 near Bangkok,



Fig. 3. Luther and Eliza Tibbets.

A brief history of the navel orange

Historically, an orange containing navel like protrusion at the bottom of the fruit had been known for centuries and illustrated in old books. The sweet orange was introduced into Bahia, Brazil around 1530 but no mention was made of the navel orange until 1802 where Vilhena (1921) wrote in his letters to Portugal “de `umbigo’ (navel) in Bahia is bigger and juicier than fruit in Portugal and has different qualities.” The introduction of the navel orange into Bahia was thought to be at the end of the 18th century. The first recorded shipment of budwood and trees of the navel orange into the United States was made in 1871 from Bahia, Brazil to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Washington, D.C. William Saunders who was then Superintendent of the Gardens and Grounds of the USDA received budwood which arrived dry and dead. He then sent a letter requesting that someone be employed to graft a few trees on young rootstocks and that all expenses would be paid by the Department. Ultimately a box arrived containing 12 newly budded trees which were in fairly good condition.

In an excellent and recently published book (Ortlieb and Economy, 2011) on the life of Eliza Tibbets and her part in bringing the Washington navel orange to Riverside, the authors relate how Eliza and Luther Tibbets (Fig. 3) had been living in Washington D.C. from 1868 to 1870 when they were attracted by a broadside entitled, “A New Colony for California” published by John Wesley North. They were among the first group of pioneer settlers to move to the new colony which was named Riverside by a vote of the new settlers. Luther Tibbets went to this new colony to establish a home while Eliza remained in Washington. Patricia Ortlieb, a great-great-granddaughter of Eliza Tibbets relates in her book of the fortuitous family relationship of Eliza Tibbets to the Civil War General Benjamin Franklin Butler who introduced Eliza to William Saunders. Learning that Eliza Tibbets was going to Riverside to join her husband in this new colony, Saunders suggested shipping two of the budded navel orange trees to her in Riverside.

The new colony of Riverside was only about 4 years old when the trees arrived. Esther Klotz, a renowned historian and authority on the Washington navel, cited evidence for the arrival of the two trees on December 10th 1873 after being a month on the way (Klotz, 1972).

The trees had been shipped by rail to Gilroy via San Francisco and then by stage coach from San Francisco to Los Angeles, taking 3 days for the stage trip. Luther and Eliza Tibbets drove 65 miles in their buckboard wagon from Riverside to Los Angeles to pick up the precious package. The fact that the trees had arrived safe and sound was truly a small miracle. In their new book, Ortlieb and Economy (2011) wrote: “When the trees arrived in Riverside Mr. and Mrs. Tibbets – together – drove into the yard of Mr. G. Garcelon with the package containing them in the back of their wagon. Mr. Garcelon was acknowledged to be our leading Horticulturalist and they came to ask his advice. He told them that as they had had such a very long journey, they were probably very dry. He directed them to immerse them in a tub of water, let them remain in the water over night, and in the morning he would come and personally supervise the planting of them”

Shown in Fig. 4 are the two parent Washington navel orange trees at the Tibbets' home in Riverside about 1877. It is widely accepted that Eliza Tibbets took care of these trees and used her dishwater to keep them alive, since they were not connected to the canal water due to the contentious behavior of Mr. Tibbets who refused to pay for water rights. The first oranges were not produced on the trees at the Tibbets' home, but rather from that of their neighbors McCoy and Cover who had budded existing seedling trees with budwood from the Tibbets' trees after they had first arrived. Commercial exposure came with the areas first citrus fair in 1879 where the seedless navel oranges won first prize over all competition. This created a demand for budwood and a fence had to be erected around the two original trees at the Tibbets' home to prevent theft. It is said that \$1.00 a bud was paid by people anxious to get buds.

On April 23rd 1902, one of the two parent navel orange trees was transplanted from the Tibbets' homestead to its present location in a small fenced park at the corner of Arlington and Magnolia Avenues. The other parent navel orange tree was transplanted on May 8th, 1903 to the courtyard of the Glenwood Tavern now known as the Mission Inn. Shown in Fig. 5 is President Theodore Roosevelt assisting in the planting ceremony. The fact that a President of the United States would



Fig.4. Showing the two parent navel orange trees at the Tibbets' home about 1877.



Fig. 5. President Theodore Roosevelt assisted in the planting of one of the two Washington navel orange tree at the Mission Inn (then known as the Glenwood Tavern).

transplant this historic tree was testimony to its importance and significance.

On December 4th, 1922 the Riverside Daily Press reported that the parent Washington navel orange tree, which had been replanted to the Mission Inn patio in 1903, had been removed following its death. It was noted by local townspeople that the tree had begun to fail rapidly after the death of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1919 who they remembered had assisted in the transplanting ceremony.

The remaining parent Washington navel orange tree in its small park at Magnolia and Arlington avenues in Riverside began to show decline about 1920. This decline was due to *Phytophthora*, the same family of fungi which had been responsible for the destruction of potatoes in Ireland resulting the great Irish famine of the 1840's. The loss of this historic tree would have been tragic, since it was one of the two original parent trees still surviving from the first shipment to California in 1873. In the next issue I will relate how this dying historical tree was saved from the *Phytophthora* root rot fungus that had killed its sister tree at the Mission Inn. Saving this tree was a remarkable achievement.

References:

Klotz, Esther 1972. *Riverside and the Day the Bank Broke*. Source Reprinted in Klotz, Esther. Riverside: Rubidoux Press, 1972. From the *Riverside Enterprise*, April 20, 1900.

Ortlieb, Patricia and P. Economy 2011. *Creating an Orange Utopia – Eliza Lovell Tibbets and the Birth of California's Citrus Industry*. Swedenborg Foundation. 320 North Church Street, West Chester PA 19380. www.swedenborg.com

Vilhena, Luis dos Santos. *Cartas de Velhena. Bahia*. Imprensa Oficial do Estado. v.3 93 p.

The second installment of the history of the Parent Navel Orange tree will be published in the next newsletter.

old-fashioned celebration was held with a concert band, balloons, popcorn, speeches, and an open-air carriage for Mayor Teri Frizzell. Posters of Martin Tobias' drawings of the bridge with an insert photo of the original wooden trestle bridge were sold.

Our first tree planting effort in March 1991 had such a large, enthusiastic turnout that another tree planting was scheduled in October 1991. For this planting people were invited to contribute \$40 for a 15 gallon tree. The tree plantings have become a fixture of VAF activities for over 20 years.

Donors of commemorative trees receive an attractive certificate with a copy of a Martin Tobias drawing. The certificate designates the kind of tree, when it was planted and in which block. The donors also receive a map showing the location of the donated commemorative tree so that they can identify it.

Very early on, it became clear that to guide the work of VAF, there needed to be agreement on a number of matters relating to the preservation and enhancement of the Avenue. In March 1991 the Riverside City Council approved the formation of a committee to examine these issues. The ad hoc committee consisted of three members each from the Cultural Heritage Board, The Park and Recreation Commission and VAF. Their findings, approved by the city council as city policy in the spring of 1992, comprised a number of areas.



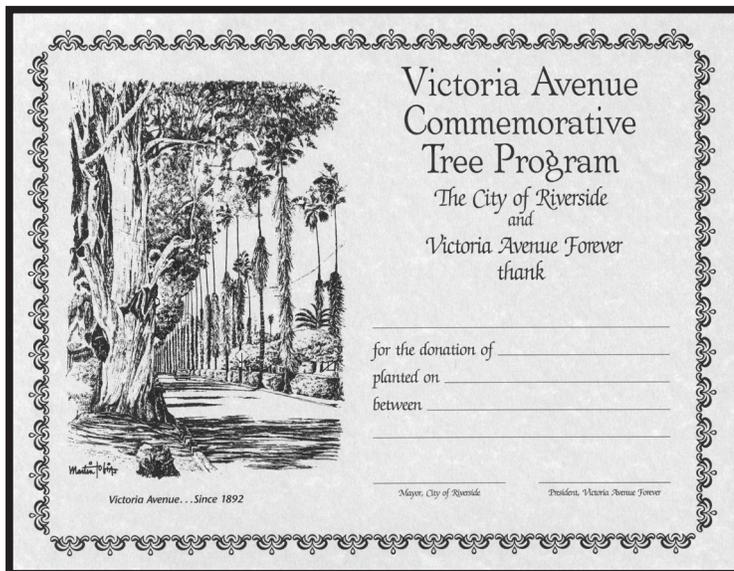
Irrigation was a very important topic. Since the beginning of the median plantings, furrows brought water to the plants. However, the system needed constant attention to insure that water reached the plants, flooding did not occur, or water was not diverted.

Weeds were also a problem. For years discing the median had controlled the weeds, but often the tractor-drawn discs hit the tree trunks and did damage. Drip irrigation and spraying herbicides were an obvious solution.

Traffic on the Avenue was also a concern. The street was almost wide enough to allow two lanes in each direction. The solution was to paint a bike lane next to the traffic lanes making one wide lane for traffic.

Not all concerns were so easily addressed. The ad hoc report called for the undergrounding of all overhead wires in the median, but it was not until many years later when Dan Hayes began "Victoria Avenue Without Wires" that funds were raised to complete the undergrounding on some blocks. There are still many wires that need to be undergrounded.

While many of the concerns of the founders of VAF have been resolved, new issues related to Victoria Avenue continue to arise and the VAF board needs to be ever vigilant.



Endowment Fund Contributions

July 2011 - October 2011

Thank you to all who contribute to Victoria Avenue in memory of, or in honor of, your loved ones. Your gift will be used to help protect and care for Riverside's living legacy. Recently the late Art Miller, who was widely known and respected, was acknowledged with an outpouring of memorial gifts to Victoria Avenue Forever. We want to be sure to acknowledge every one. If your gift is not acknowledged in this issue of *Avenews*, it will be in the next issue.

William Heeres	In Memory of Linda Yriarte Brow
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Dwane Mickelson	In Memory of Nancy L. Jones-Howitt
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Leonard Dixon	In Memory of Barbara Beal
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Victoria Hodgen	In Memory of Florence Lorenz
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Marion Russell	In Memory of Florence Lorenz
Imy Tilton	In Memory of Sherwin Tilton
Don Bell	In Memory of Art Miller
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Michael Rafferty	In Memory of Arthur Miller
Mary Barnett,	In Memory of George Carlson
Jack Cutting	In Memory of Arthur Miller
Diane Plumlee	In Memory of Florence Lorenz

Commemorative Trees

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Brenna Perry
Patrick Lazo
Geraldine Davidson
Neighbors of Barbara Whiteman

For

In memory of Arthur Miller
In memory of Eileen Shamel
In memory of Barbara Whiteman



VAF, wanting to be green, would encourage you to opt to receive your "Avenews" issues by email. This saves paper and money. This means more beautification of the Avenue. And you get your copy sooner! This also allows us to keep you up to date on Avenue happenings.

So please send your email address to demason@victoriaavenue.org

Thank you very much.

Tree Name Changes

By Frank Heyming, VAF President

So you think that the Floss Silk Tree is *Cieiba speciosa*.
Well, think again. It is *Chorisia speciosa*



My wife Lucy and I attended the California State Master Gardener conference in Santa Rosa earlier this year. At the conference I met Dr. Matthew Ritter a professor of Botany at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and author of the book, *A California Guide to the Trees Among Us*. This book presents the full set of California's cultivated trees. Needless to say, almost all the trees found on Victoria Avenue are represented in the book.

At the back of the book I was shocked to read in Appendix A that several of the trees found on Victoria Avenue had had a name change. What? How could this be? Why? Hal Snyder one of the founders of Victoria Avenue Forever provided me with a copy of the spring 2011 edition of *Pacific Horticulture*. In the magazine was an article by Dr. Ritter entitled "Why Plant Names Change." Below is a summary of that article.

There are three basic reasons for plant name changes:

- 1) Nomenclature – the rule of priority in botanical nomenclature states that if a species has been named more than once, the first correctly published name is the one that must be used. As an example: the London Plane Tree (related to the California Sycamore) was named *Platanus x acerifolia* (the x denotes hybrid origin) after an 1805 publication. Recently however a 1770 publication came to light where the name used was *Platanus x hispanica* – hence the older name will now be used.
- 2) Misidentification - the second reason for a name change is misidentification. Plants are sometimes propagated and distributed under an incorrect name. An example cited by Dr. Ritter is the King Palm, *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*. It was originally sold as *Seaforthia elegans* which is an altogether different species of palm.
3. Advances in botanical knowledge –is the third and most common reason for name changes. Plants were originally named based on perceived evolutionary relationships among them. Today however, using DNA sequencing, scientists are finding that some trees are in fact in different families. For example *Eucalyptus* is in the myrtle family (*Myrtaceae*). Recent DNA studies have found that certain *Eucalyptus* are in fact more closely related to *Corymbia*. For that reason two trees that we are all familiar with, Lemon Scented Gum, and Red Flowering gum have been renamed from *Eucalyptus citriodora* and *Eucalyptus ficifolia* to *Corymbia citriodora* and *Corymbia ficifolia*.

Below is a summary of some recent name changes of trees found on Victoria Avenue.

Common Name	New Name	Old Name
Floss Silk Tree	<i>Cieiba speciosa</i>	<i>Chorisia speciosa</i>
Lemon Scented Gum	<i>Corymbia citriodora</i>	<i>Eucalyptus citriodora</i>
Red Flowering Gum	<i>Corymbia ficifolia</i>	<i>Eucalyptus ficifolia</i>
Trumpet Trees	<i>Handroanthus spp.</i>	<i>Tabebuia spp.</i>
Brisbane Box	<i>Lophostemon confertus</i>	<i>Tristania Conferta</i>
Chinese Tallow Tree	<i>Triadica sebifera</i>	<i>Sapium sebiferum</i>



So remember *Ceiba*, *Handroanthus* and *Corymbia*.
If you slip up and use the old name we will understand.



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Work Days

Saturday, January 21, 2012
Adams & Victoria

Saturday, February 18, 2012
Myrtle & Victoria

Please see page 2 for details.

JOIN VICTORIA AVENUE FOREVER

(Current members will be notified when their membership expires)

Victoria Avenue Forever (VAF) is a non-profit organization founded in 1990, dedicated to the preservation and beautification of Victoria Avenue. Through fund raisers and membership support, VAF has purchased plants and trees, organized tree planting parties, planted over 600 trees, organized tree care activities, and informed our members about the history and value of the plantings on the avenue. Present goal is to take cuttings and fill in missing 'Ragged Robin' roses which frame the trees and larger plants in the medians.

To find out more about the history of Victoria Avenue, to find out how you can become a member, and to volunteer for activities, please fill in the form below and mail today. We'd love to have you join us!

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS _____

Make your tax-deductible checks payable to Victoria Avenue Forever
and mail to PO Box 4152 • Riverside, CA 92514

- \$20.00 Individual \$35.00 Family
- \$75.00 Sustaining I would like to volunteer

\$ _____ for VAF Endowment Fund in honor/memory of _____

Please mail to Victoria Avenue Forever • P O Box 4152 • Riverside, CA 92514