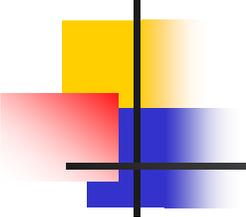


Santa Ana . . . The Birth of a City



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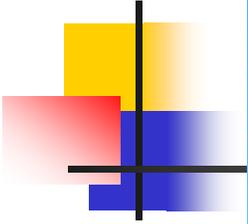
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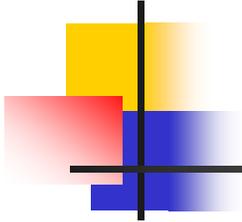
Presented by Archivist Phil Brigandi
to the Orange County Board of Supervisors
Dec. 6, 2005

The Orange County Archives

- William H. Spurgeon got his first good look at the spot where he would found the City of Santa Ana on October 23, 1869. Of course, the mustard grew so tall in those days that he had to climb a tree to do it!
- The original tree is long gone, but about 30 years later the city planted a replacement on the site along Fifth Street, just west of the street that Spurgeon later named "Sycamore."
- Four days later, on October 27, 1869, Spurgeon and his partner, Ward Bradford, bought 74 acres, and it's pretty clear that Spurgeon was already planning to start his own town. Bradford apparently was not. He and Spurgeon divided their property on April 16, 1870, and Spurgeon moved on with his plans for a new city.



William H.
Spurgeon
sycamore tree



- Another important date is July 5, 1870, when the Santa Ana Post Office was established – with Spurgeon as the first postmaster, of course.
- But if you want a real, solid, official date for the start of Santa Ana, there's a lot to be said for December 13, 1870 – 135 year ago next week – when William H. Spurgeon filed his tract map with Los Angeles County (remember – there was no Orange County in 1870) for the “Town of Santa Ana.”
- If you look close on the next slide, you'll see that the original town site ran from First Street up to Seventh Street – that would cut about right through the middle of the Civic Center today – between West Street and what would become Spurgeon Street. West Street is now Broadway, but you can see why it got its original name, since it was the western edge of town.

RECORDED IN BOOK 2 PAGE 51
 MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS OF
 LOS ANGELES COUNTY CAL.
 ON Dec 13, 1970

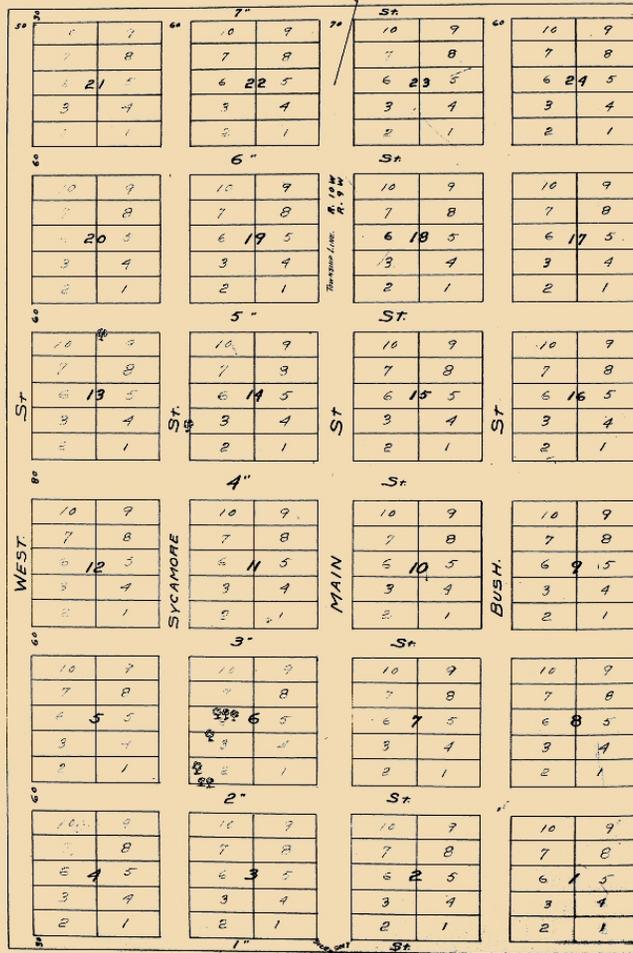
Plat
 of the Town of
SANTA ANA,

"Santiago de Santa Ana" Rancho Los Angeles Co. California

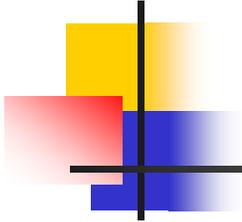
BLOCKS 250 ft N&S x 250 ft E&W

LOTS 125 ft E&W x 50 ft N&S.

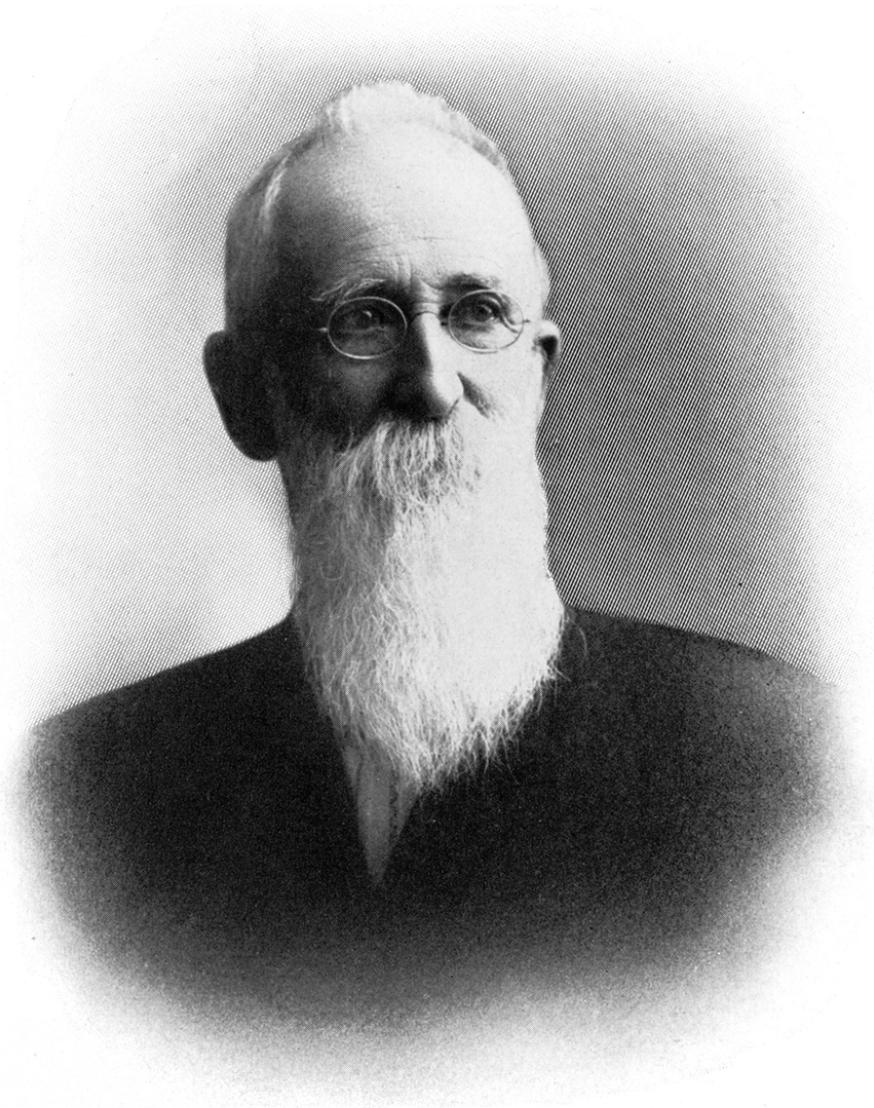
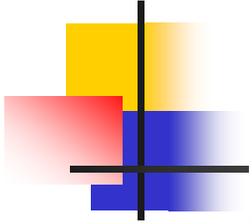
George Wright Sur



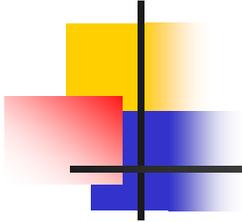
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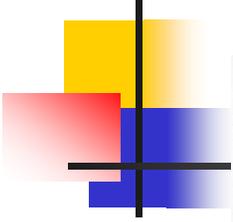
- William H. Spurgeon – the old timers called him “Uncle Billy” – was the founder of Santa Ana; the “town father” as they used to say. And that’s not a bad description. For more than 40 years, Spurgeon devoted himself to building up Santa Ana. In business, in banking, in transportation, in water – all the things a town needs to grow. That single-minded determination is part of what made Santa Ana prosper.
- Not that Spurgeon didn’t have other irons in the fire. He was a successful businessman here in town, promoted other real estate developments, and held several elective offices. He was a Los Angeles County Supervisor in the 1870s, the first Mayor of Santa Ana in 1886, then a member of the State Assembly, and finally – after he helped to create Orange County in 1889 – the first Chairman of our Board of Supervisors. He died in 1915, at the age of 85.

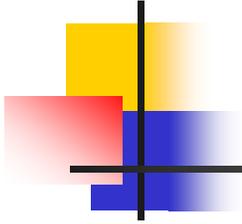


W. H. Spurgeon

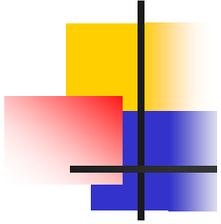


- Spurgeon had picked out a good, central location for the new city. There was good water here – both brought in by irrigation ditches and available from local wells.
- Transportation also played a major role. Spurgeon understood that from the beginning. As soon as he started Santa Ana, he paid to have a new road built and convinced the stage line to run through Santa Ana. Spurgeon and the other civic leaders also made sure the Southern Pacific came to town a few years later, by offering them cash and real estate.
- In 1905, Santa Ana got the Pacific Electric railway, and the “Big Red Cars” provided service to Los Angeles until 1950. Santa Ana was made it on the route of the first state highway through Orange County in 1914. And the Santa Ana Freeway was our first local freeway, built in the early 1950s.

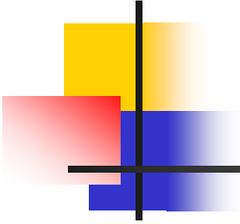




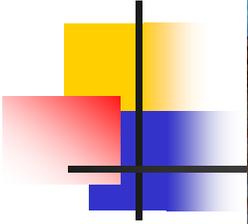
- Of course, being selected as the County Seat in 1889 didn't hurt either. Just look around the Civic Center area today to see the legacy of that decision.
- But there's something more than all those things. Call it – *desire*. Santa Ana became a big city in part because William H. Spurgeon and others *believed* it could become a big city. It's almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. The people of Santa Ana thought of themselves as a big town, and that helped them become a big town.

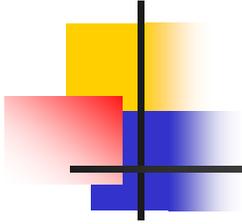


SANTA ANA—VIEW OF FOURTH STREET.

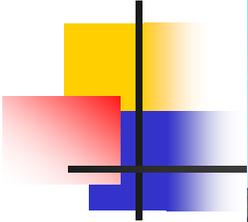


- When Spurgeon came here in 1869, there were only two towns in all of what became Orange County – San Juan Capistrano, and Anaheim. During the next two years, Santa Ana, Orange, Tustin, and Westminster were all founded.
- By 1880, Santa Ana had outstripped them all. The city incorporated in 1886, and remained the largest city in Orange County until the late 1950s, when Anaheim passed it up. But only for a while. By the 1980s, Santa Ana was back on top, and today the population is up over 350,000.





- If Uncle Billy Spurgeon were to climb his sycamore tree today, he'd see a few things he'd recognize – including the tower on the Spurgeon Building that he built in 1913 – but he'd also see a city that had grown beyond his wildest dreams. And I think he'd be proud.



Orange County Clerk-Recorder Dept.
Tom Daly, Clerk-Recorder

The Orange County Archives

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