

Anaheim: Orange County's First City



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Presented by Archivist Phil Brigandi
to the Orange County Board of Supervisors
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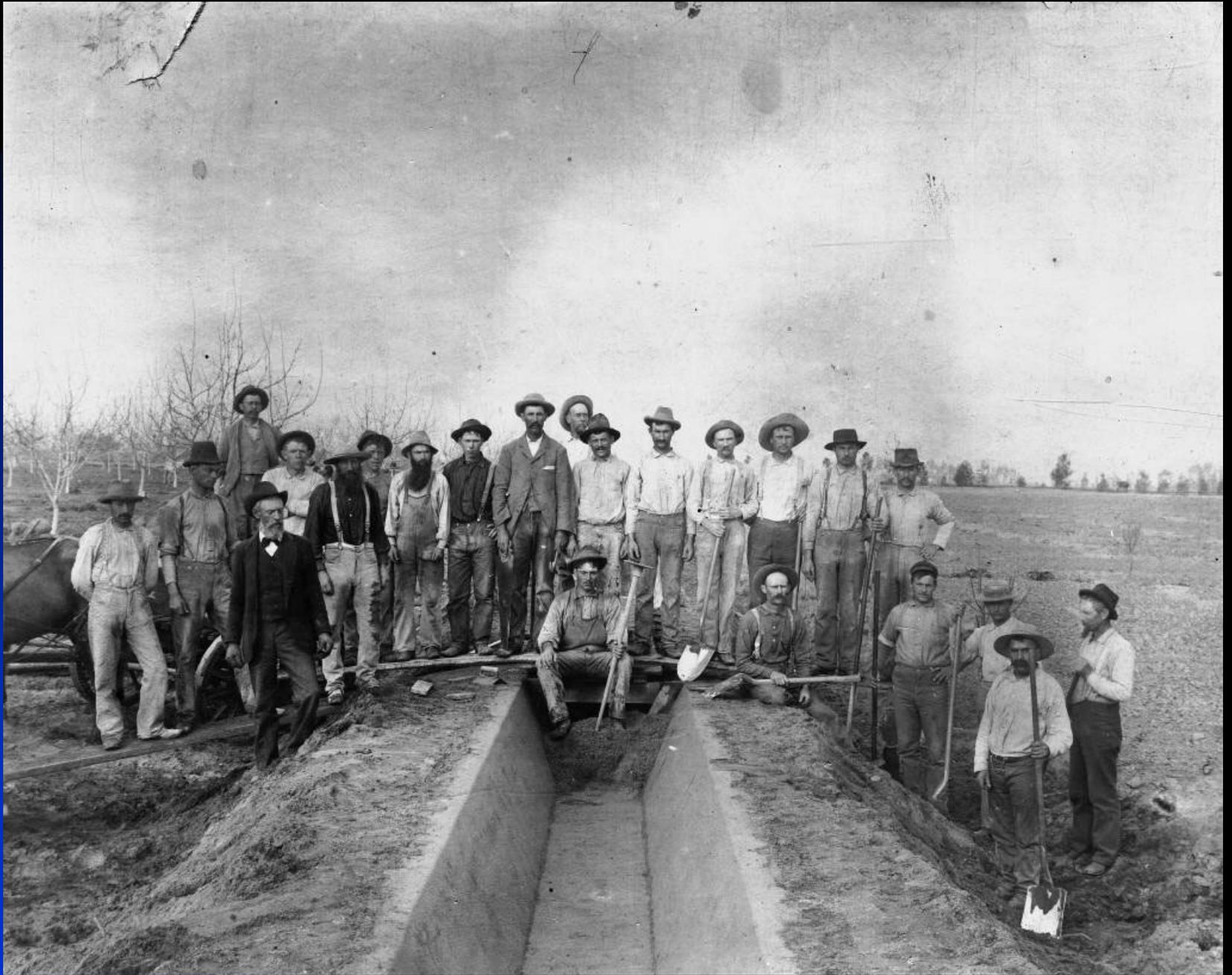
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- Anaheim is one of the oldest cities in Southern California. It was the second city founded in Southern California after statehood; the first was San Bernardino.
- Anaheim began as “planned community” built around winemaking. In 1857, a group of men—mostly German immigrants from San Francisco—decided to start a co-operative agricultural colony there. On Feb. 24, 1857, they met to organize the Los Angeles Vineyard Society.
- There would be 50 shareholders – each would get 20 acres, plus a lot in town.
- George Hansen, a surveyor, was hired to select a suitable site, build an irrigation system, plant the grape vines and prepare the town site for the colonists’ arrival.



- Hansen's original 1857 home has been preserved in Anaheim as the Mother Colony House Museum.

- After looking at several other sites, the Anaheim colonists decided to buy 1,165 acres of the old Rancho Cajon de Santa Ana – for \$2 an acre.
- The original town site as it was laid out is easy to describe – the outside streets were North, South, East, and West streets.
- If you look at a map, it shows the original town site was tilted to the west. That's because it was laid out along the irrigation ditch that ran down from the Santa Ana River, rather than along survey lines.
- In the next slide, you'll see the colonists preparing to replace one of the old dirt irrigation ditches with concrete in the 1890s.



- The colonists selected the name for their new town by vote, and **Anaheim** beat out Anagau (gau = region) and Wineheim. Roughly translated, Anaheim means their home on Santa Ana River.
- The first colonists didn't arrive until fall of 1859. The post office was established in 1861.
- The city was incorporated by an act of the California Legislature in 1870.
- The next slide shows what downtown looked like around that time, looking down W. Center Street – that's Lincoln Avenue today.



- 1870 was a big year for Anaheim. The first proposal for a new county south of Los Angeles called it Anaheim County. The *Anaheim Gazette* was founded that year, the first newspaper in what is now Orange County.
- But in 1872, the city disbanded.
- Anaheim was incorporated again by a vote of the people in 1878 and the city has functioned ever since – making it the oldest city in Orange County.
- Winemaking remained the backbone of the local economy until around 1886, when a phylloxera (plant lice) destroyed many of the vineyards. It was called Anaheim Vine Disease at the time (except by the Anaheim folks).





- A few winemakers replanted, but others began the switch to oranges, sugar beets, and other crops, as you can see in the earlier slide.
- Later, light industry began to move into the area. But as late as 1950, Anaheim's population was still less than 15,000.
- Then, in 1955, Disneyland opened, the same year Interstate 5 extended into Orange County. And the rest, as they say, is history.

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