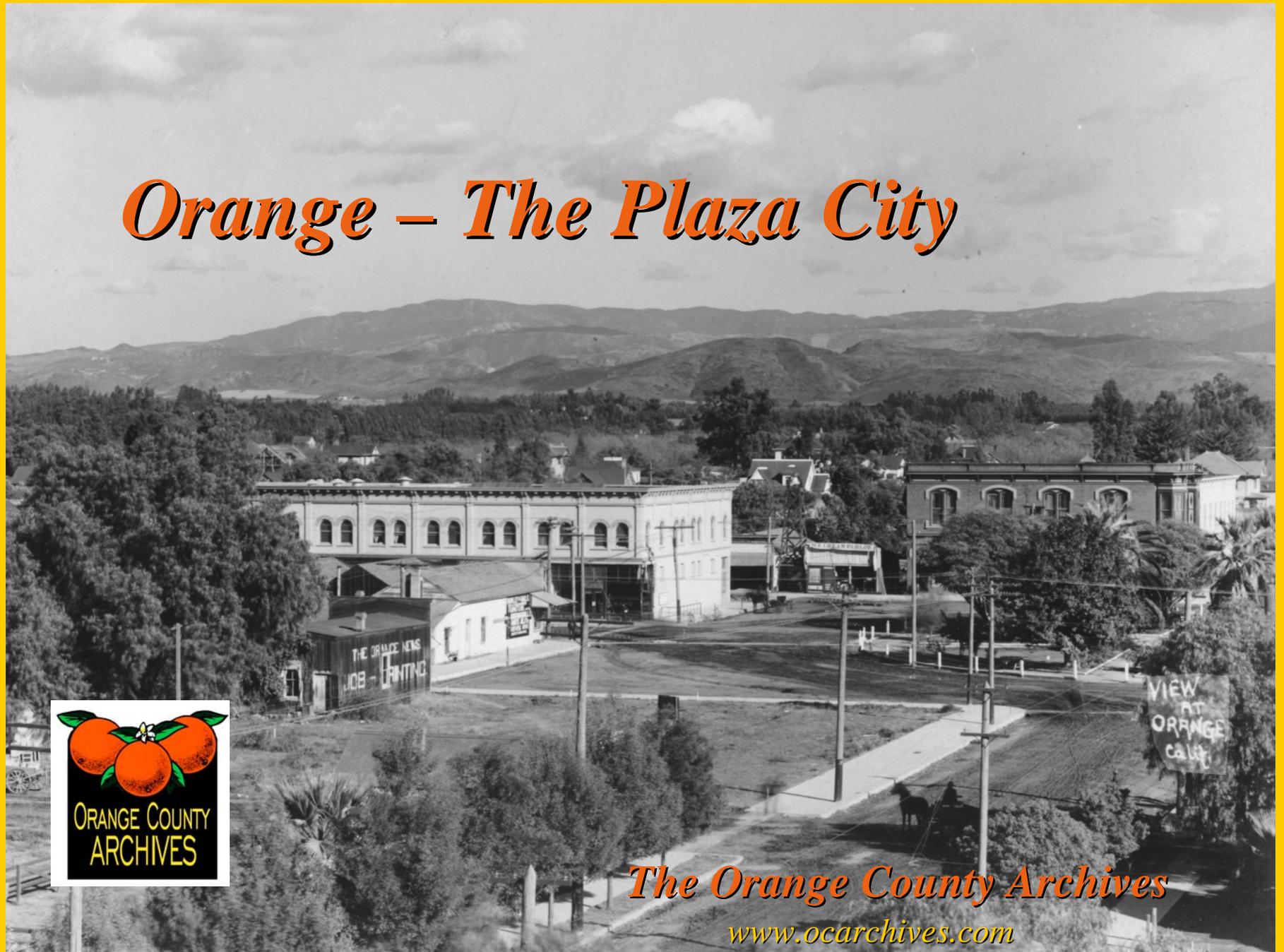


# *Orange – The Plaza City*



*The Orange County Archives*

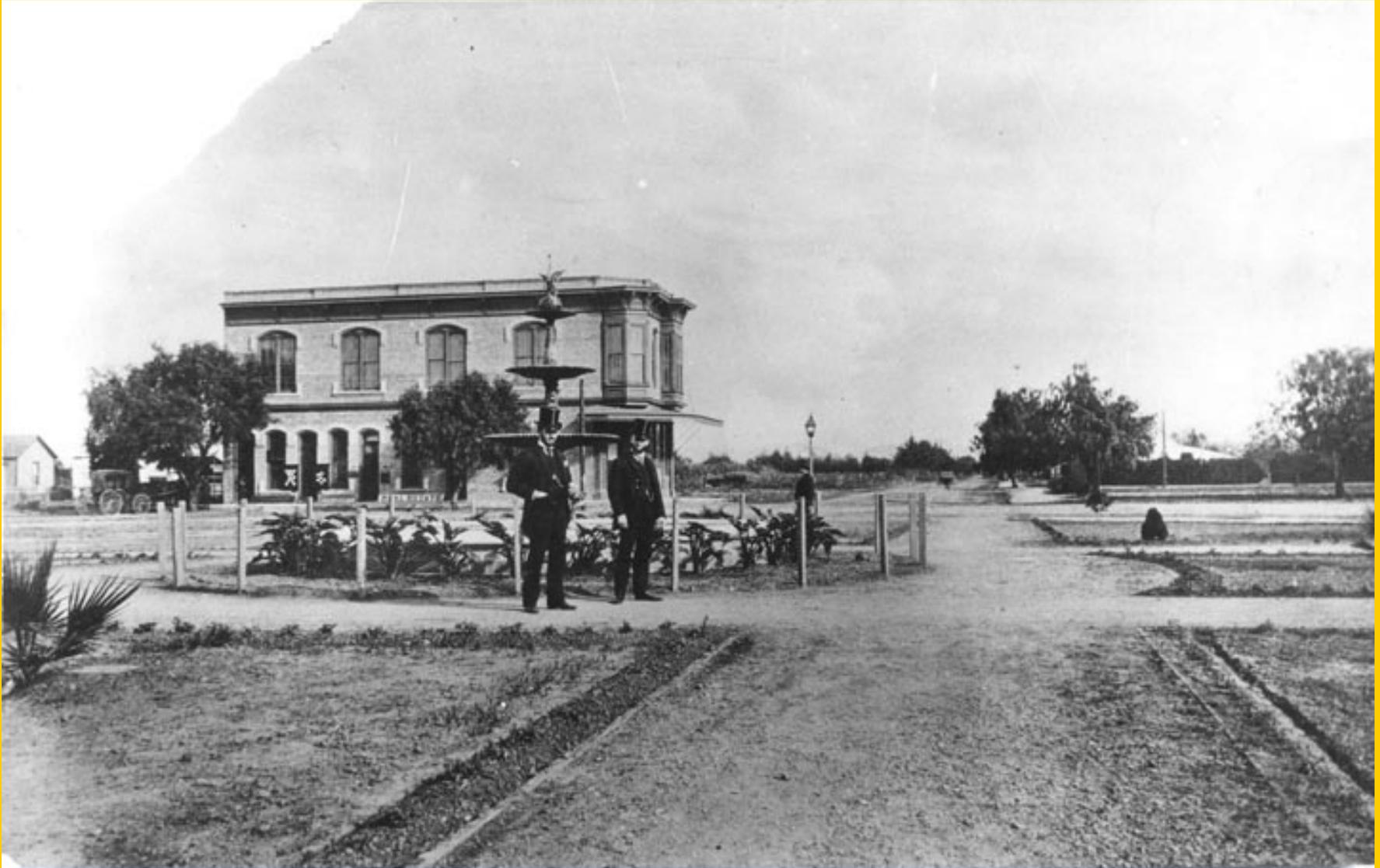
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Presented by Archivist Phil Brigandi  
To the Orange County Board of Supervisors  
April 25, 2006

## The Orange County Archives

- April 2006 marks the 118<sup>th</sup> birthday of the City of Orange
- Since Orange is my hometown, I could talk about it for hours. But I promise to be concise.
- To talk about the founding of Orange, you really have to go back to the end of the Rancho era. In 1868, the Old Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana was broken up and suddenly all this land was coming on the market all at once.
- Almost immediately, new towns began to appear. First Santa Ana, then Tustin, then in 1871 a town called Richland – the place we know today as Orange.
- Richland, or Orange rather, was founded by two Los Angeles attorneys, Alfred Beck Chapman and Andrew Glassell. You'll often hear that they got the land in-lieu of legal fess but that is only partly true. They did get some property that way, but most of it was bought as an investment.



The Founding Fathers of Orange?

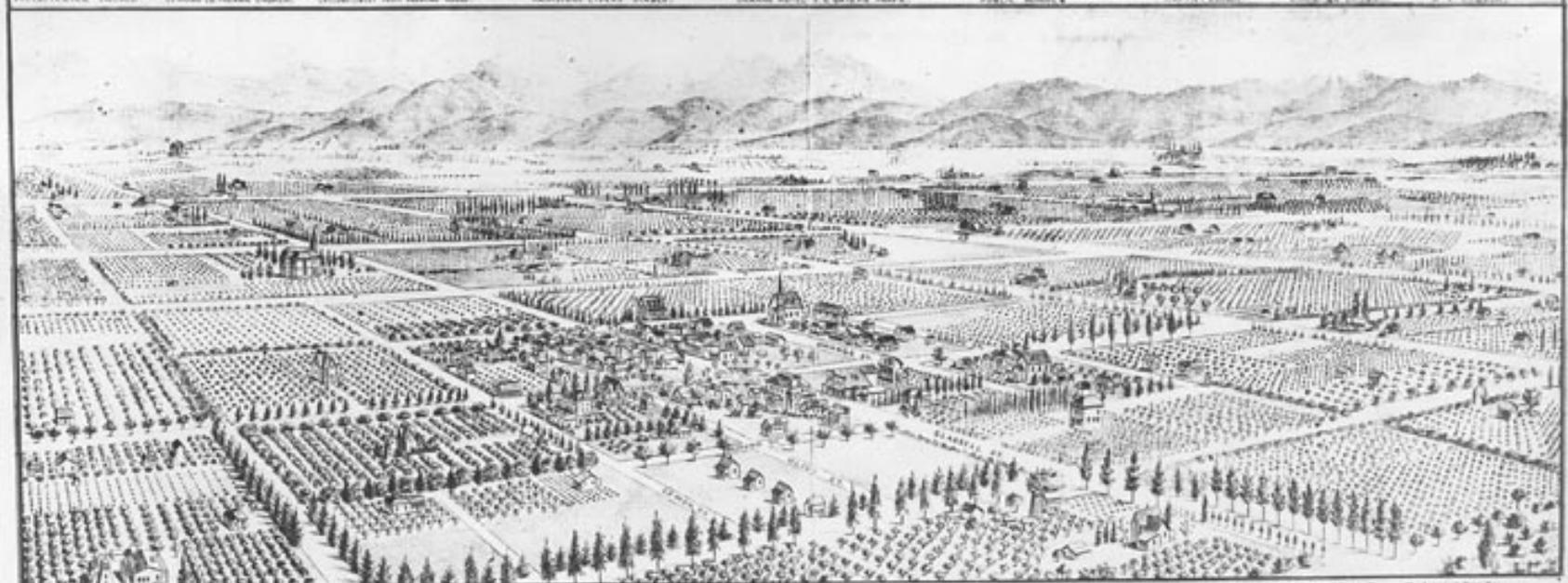
- Some say that the prior picture shows Chapman and Glassell visiting the town during the 1880s, but I don't believe so. One of the gentlemen may be Alfred Chapman, but I do not believe either is Andrew Glassell.
- Chapman and Glassell owned thousands of acres along the Santa Ana River stretching from Costa Mesa to Anaheim Hills. So how did they decide where to put a new town?
- There seem to be three main factors:
  - First, they could bring irrigation water down from the Santa Ana Canyon.
  - Second, it was near the stage lines that ran between Los Angeles and San Diego.
  - Third, there was good soil there.
- Since it was going to be a farming community, they decided to name the town Rich-land.
- It was only when they went to get a post office in 1873 that they discovered that there was already a Richland, up near Sacramento.



ORANGE CAL.

Construction on The Plaza

- I expect to go to my grave trying to debunk the story that Orange was named in a poker game. You may know the tale – Chapman, Glassell and two others who played poker decided to rename the town. One wanted Orange, one wanted Lemon, one wanted Olive and one wanted – I don't know Grape?!
- But it's just an old tale. In fact, the story didn't even surface until 1930, nearly 60 years after the fact. And it came from the daughter of a man who didn't even live here at the time.
- The fact is, they named the town Orange for the same reason we're called Orange County. Not because the area was full of orange groves, that came later, but because it sounded good. (The fact that the Glassell family had once lived in Orange County, Virginia probably didn't hurt either.)
- It was also Chapman and Glassell that gave Orange its best-known landmark, the Plaza. Please remember to never, *never*, call it the "Circle".
- Originally the plaza was just an open square in the center of town. In 1886, downtown businessmen campaigned to put a park there. Then, the townswomen raised money to build a beautiful fountain right in the center of town. The fountain you see today is from 1937 but the original was preserved and is going up at the new library.



- 4. Printing Mill.
- 5. Public Plaza.
- 6. Amuse Building.
- 7. Orange Hotel.
- 8. Florist Store.
- 9. Amuse Building.
- 10. Min. Clark Building.
- 11. W. A. Smith Building.
- 12. W. M. Reed Building.
- 13. School House.
- 14. Dr. J. H. Smith Building.
- 15. R. A. Snow Building.
- 16. P. J. Walker Building.
- 17. Police House.
- 18. Building Store.
- 19. C. W. Woodruff Store.

**ORANGE, Los Angeles Co., Cal.**

- 20. W. A. French Store.
- 21. J. H. Arnold Store.
- 22. Green Store.
- 23. Methodist Church.
- 24. Baptist Church.
- 25. St. M. Church.
- 26. Protestant Church.
- 27. Catholic Park & Green.
- 28. St. V. Ward Building.
- 29. St. Lucius Park & Green.
- 30. St. Mary Building.
- 31. L. H. Smith Building.
- 32. W. A. Smith Building.

- Orange was the third city in Orange County to incorporate. Actually, we weren't even officially Orange County yet. In 1887, when we were still a part of Los Angeles County, the drive to incorporate Orange began. It was in the middle of a big real estate boom and civic pride was running high. Incorporation seemed like the thing to do.
- But you need an issue if you're really going to get voters riled up, and Orange found theirs right downtown – the two saloons on North Glassell Street (both owned by people from Anaheim). So they made incorporation a temperance issue. If Orange became a city, they could vote out the demon rum.
- They circulated petitions and the election was set for April 6, 1888.
- There was just one problem: There were no registered voters. Just a couple of weeks before the April election, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors had voted to cancel every voter registration in the county since the county was so overwhelmed with new residents who moved there during the boom.
- So, they got busy and registered enough people to hold an election. In a town of about 1,500 residents, 116 votes were cast. But that was enough – incorporation passed 99 to 17.



- On April 6, 1888, Orange became a city. Before long, it was living up to its name as the City of Orange.
- There were miles of orange groves and about a dozen packing houses in the area.
- But the city itself remained small.
- As late as 1950, there were still only about 10,000 people in Orange.
- And in some ways, Orange is still a small town. Or at least, that's its reputation. Orange was never in a rush to be a big city and that is part of the reason why it has kept its reputation as a nice little town.
- People see Orange as a unique part of Orange County and I think that's something the city can be proud of.



## **The Orange County Archives**

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

