

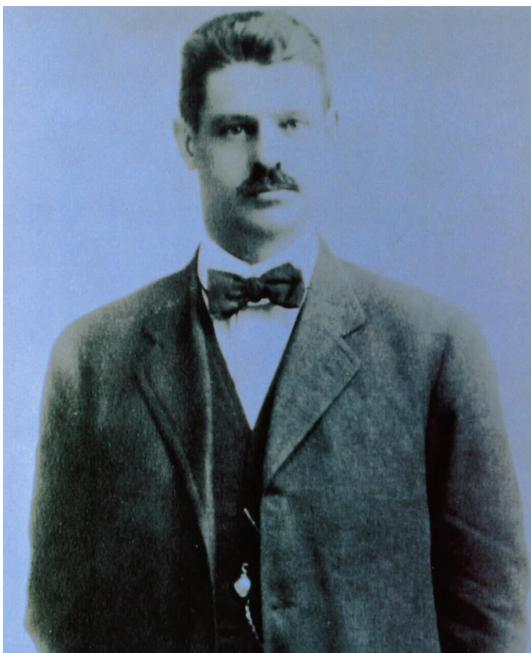


George Irvine made a number of improvements to the property during the time he managed the Irvine Ranch. He supervised the building of a "magnificent private avenue" that ran from Tustin City to the Irvine family home, the road now known as Irvine Boulevard. Eighty feet wide and four miles long, it extended one mile past the home. This avenue was laid out below and parallel with the foothills, and commanded "a grand view" of the whole district. By 1906, Myford Road, perpendicular to and south of the private avenue, was in place.

George Irvine made sure the house was set back a considerable distance from the new road. The Irvine gardens in front of the family home were probably started when construction of the house was first begun in the spring of 1876, and increased in size after the road was cut. The gardens were decorated with iron arbors, specimen trees, rose bushes and ornamental beds, all cared for by a full-time gardener. The wrought iron entrance gates facing Irvine Boulevard were built in San Francisco circa 1891.

While managing the ranch, Irvine lived in the family home begun by Charles French. Historian Jim Sleeper writes that the house began as a two-story Georgian country home, approximately one-half its finished size. Irvine enlarged the home during the time he occupied it. The home was remodeled three times after the initial construction, reaching its fullest size in 1908 as a rambling, 30-room mansion.

Until 1892, the ranch headquarters office was located in the ante room of the hallway of the family home. George Irvine decided to move the headquarters office out of the entryway, and had the first separate ranch office building constructed in December 1891. It faced the home's driveway. The original office in the house was retained as a separate office for James Harvey Irvine.



*James Harvey Irvine*

*James Harvey Irvine (left) inherited the Southern California properties on his 25th birthday, October 16, 1892. In 1894 he founded The Irvine Company. (Photo courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co.)*



*Irvine Ranch-House*

*The Irvine Ranch House (top, photo courtesy First American Title Insurance Co.) faced Irvine Boulevard, but was set back a considerable distance from the road. It became the family's primary residence after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. By 1908, the home, begun in 1876, had been enlarged to 30 rooms.. (Judy Liebeck photo.)*



*Agricultural Headquarters Aerial photo,*

*Many of the buildings in this 1962 aerial photo of the agricultural headquarters have been added to, and roads have been improved, since the given dates of initial construction:*

- Irvine Boulevard (1876)
- Myford Road (1906)
- Irvine Mansion (1876)
- Irvine Gardens (1876)
- Tennis Court (1897)
- Driveway planted with Washingtonia Palms (1906)
- Windmill (1888)
- Irvine Family Garage (1930)
- Charles Cogan Home (1920)
- Swimming Pool (1935)
- Bath House (1935)
- Garages (added by Myford Irvine in 1949)
- Site of original Blacksmith Shop 1888)
- Original section of Agricultural Headquarters Building (1929)
- Addition to Agricultural Headquarters Building (1959)
- Mess Hall (1906)
- Bunkhouse (1910)
- Original Agricultural Headquarters Building (1891)
- Krauss House (1897)
- Gates to Driveway (1891)
- Fire Station (1935)
- Tenant Housing (1905)

- Foreman's Row (1905)
- Dog Kennels (1910)
- Eucalyptus Trees (1890)
- Walnut Dehydrator (1921)
- Carriage Barn (1895)
- Garages
- Barn
- Barn
- Service Station (1962)
- Storage Shed
- Orange Orchard
- Walnut Grove
- Barn (1895)
- Field Homes - Temporary

## **James Harvey Irvine Inherits Ranch**

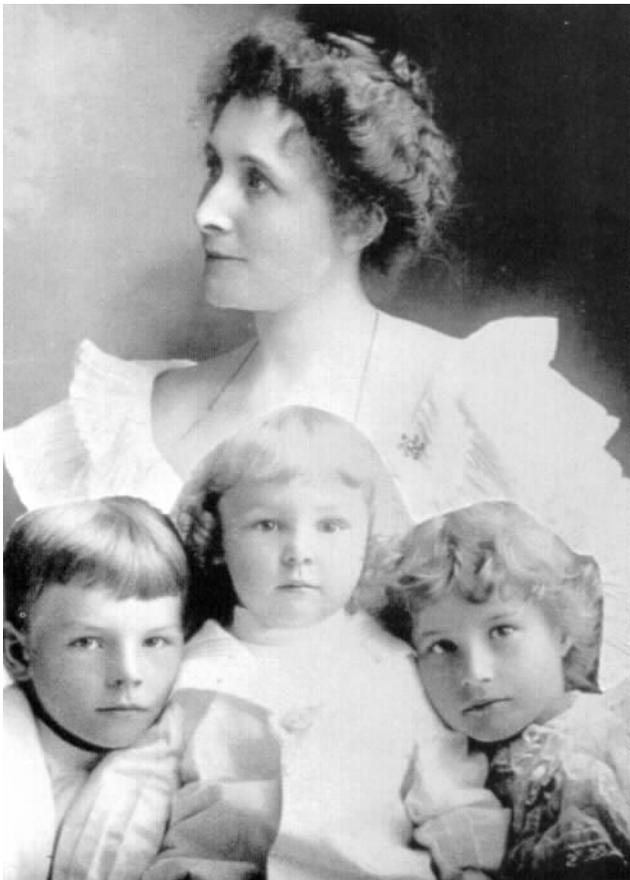
James Harvey Irvine inherited the Irvine Ranch upon his twenty-fifth birthday, October 16, 1892. The ranch, which in his father's day had been part of Los Angeles County, was now in Orange County, which had become a separate entity in 1889.

When James Harvey Irvine took over the ranch's operation, George Irvine decided to leave the ranch and return to Los Angeles. He later died of heart disease at the same time his son, a physician living in Edinburgh, Scotland, died.

James Harvey Irvine married San Francisco socialite Frances Anita Plum the same year he inherited the ranch. Their first child, James Harvey, Jr., was born on June 11, 1893. Exactly 51 weeks later, on June 4, 1894, The Irvine Company was incorporated under the laws of the State

of West Virginia. James Irvine, Sr. was the sole stockholder. All his life, James, Jr. would be groomed to take over The Irvine Company.

On September 29, 1894, a daughter, Kathryn Helena, was born. Kathryn's middle name was in honor of close family friend, Madame Helena Modjeska. Four years after the birth of Kathryn, on April 25, 1898, Myford Plum was born. Each child was born in the family's San Francisco home at 308 Page Street. It was only after the devastating 1906 earthquake that the Irvine Ranch became the family's principal home.



### *The Irvine Family*

*James Harvey Irvine married San Francisco socialite Francis Anita Plum in 1892. She is shown at right with their three children: from left, James, Jr., Kathryn, and Myford. (Photos courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co.) All three were born in the Irvine home on Page Street in San Francisco, top right. (Bill Cook photo.)*

James Harvey Irvine, Sr. was known as "Mr. Irvine" to his tenant farmers and ranch workers, and as "J.I." to his friends.

In 1893 Irvine hired his brother-in-law, C. F. Krauss, as ranch superintendent, a position Krauss held until 1915. A house was built for Krauss in 1897, directly across the street (Irvine Boulevard) from the wrought iron gates marking the Irvine family home's driveway. That same year, a clay tennis court was added to the mansion's large front yard.

The double row of Washingtonia palms that line the Irvine driveway were planted in 1906. By 1907 there was a tea house in the front yard. Irvine added to the collection of plants and flowers around the home, gathering specimens during his many working vacations in Australia, Africa, Europe, and Alaska.

Brad Hellis, one of Irvine's boyhood friends in San Francisco, came to work for the ranch in 1908. Irvine had another room built onto the headquarters building near the mansion's driveway as a small apartment for Hellis.

Hellis' first job was to make sure the farmers were plowing the fields five inches deep. If they went only four and one-half inches deep, the teams could plow a lot more land in the same amount of time. Plowing was hard going and the teams had to rest every two hours. Hellis would go out to all the lease holders and make sure they were maintaining the depth that had been determined best for maximum yield.



*Ranch Compound Grows...*

*From top, the C. F. Krauss house, enlarged since 1897; the original Irvine Ranch headquarters office (right half - left side added in 1908); the 1917 Cogan house (Judy Liebeck photos). Below: 1930 Eddie Martin aerial photo shows proximity of family home to the rest of the Irvine Ranch agricultural headquarters. The driveway, lined in Washingtonia palms, is off Irvine Boulevard. Myford Road, center, is perpendicular to Irvine Boulevard.*

By 1910 a home was built for Hellis south of the Irvine home. By 1917 this home had been moved to enable a

larger, two-story five-bedroom home to be built for The Irvine Company's purchasing agent, Charles J. Cogan.

Cogan's home faced Myford Road.

Across Myford Road from what became the Cogan home site was the first well dug at the headquarters. Historian Sleeper writes that this well, erected in August 1888, and other original wells "were surmounted by \$150 'Eclipse' windmills." These windmills were not only functional, but handsome as well. The water pumped from this well served the headquarters area until 1893, when Irvine first diverted water from Santiago Creek.

A blacksmith shop was built in 1888 near the southeast corner of Myford Road and Irvine Boulevard, across the street from the family home. The building was enlarged during the years as warranted by changes in ranch operations. The homes for the managers of the Irvine Ranch agricultural headquarters operations were situated in the same complex as the agricultural headquarters offices, barns, and the blacksmith shop.

Sleeper writes that the ranch staff originally ate in the Irvine family home's dining room and the workers ate on a screened porch at the south end of the home. In 1906 a two-story building containing a kitchen and dining room on the first floor and a dormitory for 40 ranch workers on the upper floor was constructed on the east side of Myford Road.

A two-story bunkhouse was built soon after, probably by Chris McNeill, close to the mess hall/dormitory building. This building was used to house laborers and maintenance men. By 1910, the ranch employed 50 men not directly connected with the care of crops.

The actual agricultural station itself was north of the office buildings and the Irvine family home, on the other side of Irvine Boulevard. It was sheltered to the north by acres of eucalyptus trees which served as windbreaks. The station consisted of barns, maintenance shops, a walnut dehydrator, warehouses, offices for foremen, and, after a few years, a service station and garage.

The barns protected farm implements and feed and grain for the horses and mules. Hundreds of company mules were housed and cared for at the agricultural headquarters. One barn was used to house family carriages and cars.

The agricultural headquarters was not moved across Myford Road from the Irvine family home until 1929, when Irvine was in Australia. While he was gone, the family had the white stucco, red-tiled roof structure built on the east side of Myford Road where it still stands. When Irvine returned home, he was quite upset and insisted that his roll-top desk be returned to the old office building, which was still next to the house. Both Irvine's desk and the old headquarters building beside the house were later moved across the street.



*... and Grows*

*From top, The Irvine Company blacksmith shop built in 1888, 22 years before the town of Myford had a shop (photo courtesy of Dave and Dale Smith); the mess hall/dormitory faced Myford Road until 1929 when the new agricultural headquarters was placed between it and the road; the bunkhouse housed labor and maintenance men, the "lowest strata of Irvine Company personnel"; and the carriage barn, which for many years also held feed for the mules kept at the complex and later garaged family cars. (Judy Liebeck photos.)*

## Hunting on the Irvine

James Harvey Irvine loved to hunt, and he loved dogs. A number of hunting dogs were kept on the ranch at the kennels near the home. Initially, the kennels were across Myford Road from the family home; later they were moved to the other side of Irvine Boulevard.

The Irvine Ranch was a veritable hunter's paradise. Many families had fresh meat for dinner by "opening up the back door and shooting." Besides the abundant game that could be found in the canyon areas, such as bear, deer, antelope, and mountain lion, there were so many rabbits, quail, and coyotes that they were considered pests. Wild pigs were numerous on the flatlands; hunters had to be careful not to run across their path. Ducks and geese were so plentiful that a decent aim with a shotgun could down a dozen at a time.

Irvine was most fond of hunting quail and doves. Orange County, located on the Pacific Fly-Way for migrating ducks, quail, and Canada geese, was a paradise for hunters during the early part of the century. Gun clubs were a tradition in Orange County. Some were grand estates with expensive memberships, but the Irvine Ranch clubs were simple and inexpensive: one shot by invitation only. Not a club in Orange County had better shooting than the Irvine Ranch.

There were dozens of gun clubs on the Irvine Ranch, one at almost every reservoir and marsh. The South Coast Gun Club attracted Canada geese to Quail Hill. The area around the San Joaquin Gun Club had so many ducks and geese that when they took wing, they would darken the sky.

Irvine took advantage of the hunting every duck season. He respected the law and never hunted out of season, and had no respect for people who didn't obey the law. When Irvine later received a ticket from the warden for fishing in his own lake in Peter's Canyon without a license, he felt he was within his rights and went to court to fight the ticket - and won.



### *Hunters Paradise*

*The Irvine Ranch (top) was a veritable hunters paradise. There were dozens of gun clubs, one at almost every reservoir and marsh. Left: the Val Verde Sportsman Club is based at Syphon*

*Canyon Reservoir. Right: James Irvine, Sr., with a close friend. An excellent hunter, Irvine respected the game warden's posted limit, never shooting more than his allotment of ducks. (Photos courtesy of Irvine Historical Society, Judy Liebeck, and First American Title Insurance Co.)*

Duck season lasted about three months. Newspapers tracked the migration of the birds. Opening day of duck season found every hunter in a blind. Ducks could be shot only two days a week, and guns could not shoot more than three times without being reloaded. Game limits, which varied with the availability of game, were strictly enforced. Some years hunters could shoot ten sprig ducks - the largest and best eating of the birds. Some years they could only take two.

Pharres Snavelly, who was known to all as "Dutch Bill," prided himself on being the "greatest poacher on the Irvine Ranch." He came to the Irvine Ranch in 1911 and poached continually. He wasn't caught for 45 years. Dutch Bill once shot 27 geese with two shots. "The geese were thick - 3,000 in one band," he said.

One of the best gun clubs was located where the Tustin Lighter Than Air Base is today. There was no club house. Members would arrive well before dawn and prepare by the light of the moon, sneaking into the blinds before daybreak.



*Farming on the Irvine*

*. James Irvine encouraged tenant farming on a large scale to help keep the land productive and homesteaders off.. The crop was brought to the agricultural headquarters area to be dried. Later, a warehouse was built for train shipment at the site where Culver Drive and Filare now meet in Northwood. Bottom, harvesting the barley crop. (Photos courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)*

## Tenant Farming Increases

During the six and one-half years the ranch was under the control of George Irvine, tenant farmers were encouraged to sharecrop to keep the land productive and prevent hopeful homesteaders from trying to claim title to pieces of the Irvine Ranch. These tenants averaged 700 acres of land each, on which they planted dry crops such as barley that required little water. Tenants supplied the seed and labor to farm the land, but were advanced money, initially at 10 percent per annum, according to historian Cleland. Forty years later, in the mid-1920s, James Harvey Irvine, Sr. charged only 4 percent per annum, and on loans where the tenant needed money for farming necessities, he often charged no interest at all.

Squatters were a constant problem on the ranch, especially before 1890. The California state legislature looked favorably upon the squatters, who worked and improved unused land that would otherwise be unproductive. After a set period of farming the land and building a home, the squatter, or homesteader, would be able to gain title to the property.

The Irvine Company could not allow any of these people to remain on the property and took immediate action to remove them. James Irvine I had suffered considerably at the hands of the press for not improving the land quickly enough. The risk of court battles to defend ownership and the likelihood that additional squatters would try homesteading made it necessary to keep constant vigil on every acre not already under lease by tenants.

Whenever a squatter was found, the local constable was called and he would deal with the trespassers. The constable would often confiscate some of the squatter's more valued possessions, such as horses or cattle, to force them to come to court.

One of the earliest tenant farmers on the Irvine Ranch was James Sleeper, grandfather of historian Jim Sleeper. He began farming on the Irvine in 1888, leasing 1400 acres. The lease was signed by James Irvine I's widow, Margaret. Sleeper's house and barns were located on the old Laguna Road (Highway 101) three miles southwest of Tustin (currently the intersection of Trabuco Road, Interstate 5 and Culver Drive). The corner, a local landmark, was known as Sleeper's Corner.

In the early 1890s, James Irvine II experimented with a walnut grove, irrigating the trees with water brought in by tank wagons. Under his direction, the ranch continued its evolution from the water-intensive sheep and cattle pasturing to mostly dry-crop farming. Barley was by far the biggest crop in the beginning - 31,000 acres were planted in barley by 1895. An average yield was eight to nine sacks an acre. One hundred pound sacks of barley sold for 57.5 cents. Chevalier barley, which many tenants planted, sold for 70 cents a sack.

By making leases on an annual basis, Irvine completely controlled the manner in which the land was worked. The terms of the lease in the 1890s were as follows:

THIS INDENTURE, Made this \_\_\_\_\_ th day of eighteen hundred and ninety-\_\_\_\_\_  
BETWEEN James Irvine, party of the first part, and \_\_\_\_\_, part  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the second part.

WITNESSETH, That the party of the first part, in consideration of the rent, covenants and  
agreements herein mentioned to be kept and performed by the part \_\_\_\_\_ of  
the second part, has

leased unto the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part, a tract of land in the County of  
Orange, State of California, described as follows, to wit:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

with the appurtenances thereunto belonging, for the term of \_\_\_\_\_ commencing  
on the-day of - 189\_\_ and ending on the day of \_\_\_\_\_ 189\_\_.

IN CONSIDERATION WHEREOF, the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part agree that  
\_\_\_\_\_ will occupy, till, plow and cultivate said land at the proper season, and in  
the proper manner, harvest, thresh and sack the grain, and gather the other growing crops  
thereon, according to the usual custom and practice in that neighborhood, and will not commence  
to thresh any grain until the expiration of thirty days from the time it is headed or cut (without the  
written consent of the party of the first part), and will fully complete the same by the day of  
September, 189\_\_, and if the part of the second part should fail, either to commence threshing  
or sacking said grain by the first day of September, 189\_\_, then in either event the party of the  
first part shall have the right to immediately re-enter upon said land, take possession of the whole  
thereof and of any such crop, and cause the same to be properly harvested, gathered, threshed,  
sacked and delivered, at the expense of the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part, at the  
time, place, and in accordance with the terms and conditions of this lease.

AND IN CONSIDERATION OF THE PREMISES, it is further mutually agreed by and between the parties hereto:

(1st) That the party of the first part will furnish to the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part all bags which may be required for the purpose of sacking that portion of grain or other crops which he may be entitled to receive as rent under the terms of this lease.

(2nd) That all grain, and other crops required to be sacked, under the terms and conditions hereof, shall be

put, by the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part, into new bags of Calcutta Standard, 22x36, and no part or portion of any grain or crop shall be removed from said land, or from any setting, until the party of the first part shall have counted the same and marked his share thereof, and that with all crops, except barley and wheat,

the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall notify the party of the first part when the setting or crop is complete and ready for distribution, and the title to all grain raised on said land shall be and remain in the party provided has been made.

(3rd) That said part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall haul and deliver to the party of the first part, either at \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ in the County of Orange aforesaid, as the party of the first part may designate, all such grain or crops as the party of the first part is entitled to receive as rent under the terms and conditions hereof, and it shall be delivered free and clear of any expense to him, and before any of the residue thereof shall be removed.

(4th) That the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part will pay to the party of the first part as rent, a full \_\_\_\_\_ share of all grain or other crops raised, grown or produced upon lots or portions of lots \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ share of all grain or other crops raised, grown or produced on lots \_\_\_\_\_ or portions of lots, on said land, during the term of this lease.

(5th) That all of the straw, grass, stubble, or other remnants of crops which may remain on said land after threshing of the grain or gathering the other crops produced thereon, shall belong to the party of the first part, and he shall have the right, either in person, or by his tenants, and is authorized to enter upon such land, grain, grass, or crops, at any time after harvest time, and graze the same, or otherwise.

(6th) That all volunteer crops are the property of the party of the first part and the part of the second part shall have no right to pasture or harvest the same for \_\_\_\_\_ use.

(7th) The part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part \_\_\_\_\_ absolutely prohibited from staking, pasturing or grazing any cattle, horses, hogs, or other stock, except two milch cows, upon said land.

(8 th ) That the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall only have the right to retain sufficient straw for \_\_\_\_\_ use on said land.

(9th) In case any of the crops on said land shall be eaten, destroyed, or damaged by animals, the party of the first part shall be entitled to receive the full value of his portion thereof, and the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall pay rent upon the land whereon the crop is eaten, destroyed, or damaged, in the same proportion as such land bears to the residue, considering the grain or other crops which shall be harvested on said residue.

(10 th ) If the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part elect to make hay from any grain growing on said land,

\_\_\_\_\_ may do so, by cutting in squares of not less than ten acres, and pay as rent therefor in grain in the same proportion as this ground bears to the residue in grain which shall be harvested, threshed, sacked and delivered, as above mentioned.

(11th) In no event shall the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part cut for hay more than one-fourth of the entire crop, without first having obtained the written consent of the party of the first part.

(12th) The said land shall be planted or sown in \_\_\_\_\_ and no other crops shall be raised thereon without the written consent of the party of the first part, and all seed used by the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part thereon shall be free and clear of the seed of noxious weeds or other impurities of every kind, character and description, the party of the first part reserving the right to be the judge.

(13th) If any part of the growing grain or crops upon said land shall be injured or destroyed by cattle or other animals, the party of the first part shall in no event be liable therefor, but the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall recover of the owner or owners of such cattle or other animals (if any one) all damages which may have sustained thereby.

(14th) The part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall be held individually liable for any and all survey posts erected upon said land, not in the center of a county road, which may be destroyed or badly damaged by being driven into or over, by any plow, wagon, header, or other farming implement, or in any other manner destroyed or removed, except by fire. For all such posts so damaged, destroyed, or removed, and not properly replaced, during the term hereby granted, the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall pay to the party of the first part ten dollars each, to cover surveyor's fees for relocating and resetting same, which shall become due and payable at the time the crop is ready to be harvested. All survey posts bounding on the northwest and southwest lines of the above described tract shall be considered as on and belonging to that tract for the purposes of this covenant.

(15th) That the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part, when threshing, shall have the grain piled according to instruction \_\_\_\_\_ may receive from the party of the first part.

That the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall not assign or transfer this lease, or sublet any part or portion of the demised premises, without the written consent of the party of the first part, and the party of the first part shall have the right to re-enter upon said land, or any party thereof, and remove all persons therefrom, without incurring any liability therefor, whenever the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part shall have made default in the payment of the rent as herein provided, or in the performance of any of the terms or conditions of this lease (time being the essence thereof), and in such event the part \_\_\_\_\_ of the second part will immediately, quietly, and peaceably quit and surrender all of said lands to the party of the first part, in as good state and condition as reasonable use and wear thereof will permit (damages by the elements only excepted), and that no agreement extending the term of this lease, or changing the terms and conditions thereof, shall be valid or binding unless the same is reduced to writing and endorsed on or attached to and made a part and portion thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals, in duplicate, the day and year first above written.

SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED IN THE PRESENCE OF:

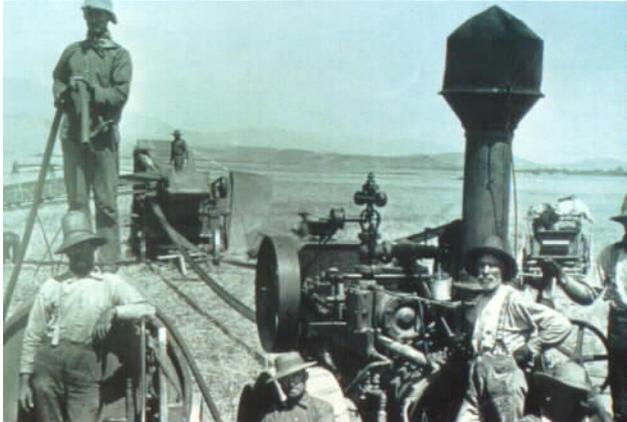
\_\_\_\_\_ seal

seal

\_\_\_\_\_ seal

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seal



### *Mules and Machinery*

*Ernie Lagier and team (top) tend to the lima bean crop in the early 1920s. Irvine's earliest attempts at planting lima beans were not successful. (Photo courtesy of Ernie and Anna Lagier.) Harvesting of barley and lima bean crops in the 1920s was done with stationary threshers like the one in the left background. (Photo courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co.)*

Irvine was always on the lookout for crops that could be grown without irrigation. By the late 1800s, Ventura was the lima bean capital of the world. Irvine decided in 1892 to plant lima beans on his ranch to see how they would fare, experimenting initially with 1800 acres. His tenant farmers were not happy to hear Mr. Irvine tell them they had to set aside a certain percentage of their fields for the lima beans.

During the first few years, the beans did not do as well as Irvine had hoped. In 1896, and again from 1898 to 1900, drought plagued the ranch. Irvine's bean and barley crops suffered extensive damage and the grazing land was greatly depleted. Many cattle and sheep were moved, first to other local pasturage and finally out by rail.

## **Irvine Gives Orange County Its First Regional Park**

In 1897, Irvine gave Orange County its first regional park, a 160-acre forested area that was originally part of Wolfskill's Rancho Lomas de Santiago. It was initially named Orange County Park. The area had long been a favorite picnic ground of the German colonists of Anaheim. They were enamored with the area's beauty; it was the closest thing to their homeland that they could find. Joseph Pleasants, who lived nearby, surely invited them to picnic. The Anaheim settlers quickly dubbed the site "the Picnic Grounds."

This first county park consisted of an ancient oak grove and a spring-filled marsh supplied year-round with water from nearby Santiago Creek. The area's oaks and sycamore were literally covered with wild grapevines.

Irvine was a tree lover, and the Picnic Grounds was a favorite personal retreat for him and his family. The oaks, hundreds of years old, were majestic.

When he gave the land to the county for a park, Irvine placed several conditions on his donation, including relocation of the entrance road, construction of a fence around the park's perimeter, and installation of a resident inspector to keep out sheepherders and wood choppers. His conditions also stated that there was to be absolutely no harvesting of trees, which instead were to receive good care, and the park was to be kept as natural as possible. Furthermore, admission was to be free, and absolutely no liquor sales were to be permitted.

The first summer the park was open, the good German folk from Anaheim showed up ready to party. They brought everything that was necessary, including a wagon load of beer. The party was almost canceled until the bartenders began giving away free beer. That was the end of liquor at the park, period.

On June 1, 1926, 29 years after Irvine donated the park, Orange County supervisors passed a resolution changing the name of the park to Irvine Park. The newspapers refused to print the new name, and the supervisors refused to rescind the resolution. A new sign was placed at the park entrance, the press was asked for their cooperation, and within three years, the name finally became official.



*Orange County Park*

*In 1897, James Irvine, Sr. gave 160 acres to Orange County for its first regional park. Visitors could rent rowboats at the small natural lake in the park (top). The sign went up in 1898, hence the date in the photo above. The county encircled the park with a seven-strand barbed wire fence and built a house for the caretaker, seen at left. The two-story, seven room lodge in "a rustic Swiss style" was built by the well known Orange County contractor Chris McNeill. " Photo courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co.)*



*Windmills*

*By the turn of the century, hundreds of windmills pumped water from the ground.*



*Cienega de las Ranas*

*The old Cienega de las Ranas stretched from Back Bay to the Fluor buildings, and up past the Lighter Than Air base on up to Red Hill in Tustin. The swamp was a giant peat bog and the noise from the frogs could be heard for miles (Judy Liebeck photo).*

## Dependable Water Supply Sought

There were few trees on the Irvine Ranch in the early years, other than the ones planted near the farm houses. But Irvine had thousands of eucalyptus trees planted annually on the barren hillsides to furnish wood and help conserve water.

Irvine knew that in order for the ranch to be successful, it had to have a dependable supply of water. He had inherited the land in the middle of a 13-year drought, when farming was restricted to field crops. From the 14 wells drilled before the turn of the century, he knew that a major source of water lay below the surface. The underground storage basin in the Santa Ana Valley had not then been drawn upon to any appreciable degree, and the water level was high.

There were areas on the ranch where the water was above the surface in marshes, such as the Cienega de las Ranas. The old Swamp of the Frogs included the current site of the Fluor Corporation headquarters, the villages of Culverdale and Westpark, and the Tustin helicopter station. The swamp reached all the way up to the Red Hill. It was a giant peat bog, and in the early days, the noise from the frogs was deafening.

During Don José Andrés Sepulveda's time, the Santa Ana River "was a foaming torrent so deep that even in August a horse had to swim across." By 1875, 40 years later, the mighty Santa Ana River was being tapped by outside sources to the point that very little water was left for downstream interests.

In 1879, the Carpenter and the Serrano Irrigation companies built a submerged dam of clay on bedrock at a narrow section of Santiago Canyon called Point of Rocks. This property was owned by the Jotham Bixby Company. The dam forced the underflow to the surface where it could be diverted. The water was then equally divided between the water interests of Carpenter and Serrano.

As a point of interest, it is thought that the Carpenter Serrano Dam was the first submerged dam ever built anywhere in the world. It was probably built with the help of Chinese laborers.

"Santiago Creek," William Hall wrote in 1888, "is a torrent in winter. Where it emerges upon the plain, its gravel and cobble channel is five hundred to eight hundred feet wide and several feet deep. It is often impossible to ford it for a week at a time. It drains a large water-shed extending up to the highest peaks of the Coast Range, and is the largest tributary of the Santa Ana below San Bernardino. In summer, flow dwindles ordinarily to about two hundred inches."

Irvine began diverting Santiago Creek water in 1893. He owned a large tract of land upstream from the diversion headings of the Carpenter-Serrano Dam, and he exercised his rights to the water of the Santa Ana River's largest tributary to convey water into the canal and pipeline to Peters Canyon Reservoir.

Carpenter and Serrano sued on the basis of prior water use. Under the settlement reached in December 1909, it was decided that Irvine could divert the flow between the 20th of November and the 20th of June when the flow was available. In return for this privilege, The Irvine

Company provided land for water spreading in the gravel deposits upstream from the submerged dam.

But the Santiago Creek water was not enough to maintain the ranch. To finance a much needed water system, Irvine sold parcels of his ranch lands near boundaries of Tustin, Newport Beach, and Laguna Beach. By the late 1890s, with the help of friends at Standard Oil, Irvine had 14 deep water wells drilled, each powered by a gasoline engine pump. The availability of water encouraged Irvine to enter a partnership in 1906 to plant a thousand acres of thirsty walnut, orange, and lemon trees. As the groves became productive, a severe drought hit during 1911 and 1912. This was the driest period in 35 years.

In 1910, The Irvine Company constructed and laid about 50,000 feet of concrete pipe lines and had a total of about 30 miles of pipeline and ditch for irrigation and drainage purposes. The water was pumped from company wells with gasoline engines and electric power. Many had excellent flow. Oil was found in several of the very deep wells, which ranged from 2,200 to 3,000 feet in depth.

Oil drilling equipment from Standard Oil was used to dig the deep wells. Over an 11-year period, 44 wells were dug, many 1,200 feet deep. Some of these wells pumped 250 inches of water.



### *Irrigation on the Irvine*

*The High Line Canal (top) was built to carry irrigation water from the reservoirs to the fields by gravity flow. Gates were used to divert the flow of water. (Photo courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co*



### *Poh Family Farm*

*After harrowing the field to prepare it for planting (top), the Poh family checks to make sure everything is in order to begin planting on their farm, which was located at the current site of Alton and Sand Canyon Avenue. Lima beans grew very well in the coastal climate. The Irvine Company share typically was one-fourth. The Poh's front yard, where this picture was taken, is now the site of the Irvine Hospital. Below, the family's tomato crop is ready to go to market. (Photos courtesy of Ethel and Johnny Poh.)*



### *Irvine Produce*

*The rich alluvial soil on the Irvine Ranch (right) produced excellent quality vegetables and fruit. Corn, strawberries, asparagus, and celery are among the many crops produced by Irvine farmers. (Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)*

## **Farm Production Increases with Water Supply**

According to Samuel Armor's 1911 *History of Orange County*, The Irvine Company farmed a large portion of the ranch. Part of the land was set out in walnut, olive, orange, and lemon trees. In 1898, due to the lack of water for irrigation, there were only 160 acres in olives and 160 acres in oranges. In 1904, after developing water sources -- a constant effort -- The Irvine Company began to set out additional orchards, bringing the total to 380 acres in lemons, from which a crop

was gathered 11 months of the year. The orange acreage had been increased to 300 acres, and there were 2,000 acres in walnut trees. From 100 acres of lemons set out in 1907, The Irvine Company harvested 1,400 boxes in 1910. As fast as water sources could be developed, orchards were set out. An additional 100 acres of lemons and 160 acres of walnuts were planted in the spring of 1911.

By 1911, 640 wells were producing 1,200 inches of water. New wells were constantly being sunk. Before water bearing stratas were located, many of the wells were unproductive.

The 160-acre olive grove that had been planted in 1889 was producing an annual yield approximating 100,000 pounds by 1907. Irvine and others incorporated under the name American Olive Company and gradually increased the selling price to the grower from \$20 per ton to \$40 per ton for oil olives, and \$60 to \$100 per ton for pickled olives, the way most of Irvine's olives were used. Irvine was not satisfied, however, and wrote to the chief of the General Appraisers of the United States Customs in New York complaining about the recent ruling admitting duty-free black or ripe olives in brine in barrels.

Irvine advised the chief appraiser that the very best olives produced in the United States came from California and that the competition set in place by such action as allowing foreign olives to enter the U.S. duty-free was causing many an olive orchard to be replaced with a different crop.

The year 1907 marked the 15th anniversary of Irvine's receiving title to the Irvine Ranch. Cleland writes that barley then brought from 75 cents to one dollar a sack, walnuts from nine to thirteen cents a pound, and blackeyed beans two and one-half to three cents a pound. Alfalfa averaged seven dollars a ton, steers sold for three to three and one-half cents a pound on the hoof, pasturage for horses and mules rented for one to one and one-half dollars a month per head, and sheep manure sold for a dollar a ton.

According to Cleland, the annual walnut crop was by now approximately 22 tons. The ranch began producing celery, and within a few years added rhubarb and artichokes to its existing vegetable crops of corn and potatoes. The 1907 peanut crop was valued at \$12,000.

Armor's 1911 description of the Irvine Ranch, written with the assistance of The Irvine Company, reads: "Part of the orchards recently set out have been placed in [the] charge of the tenants who are to care for them for a period of ten years, meanwhile farming the land between the trees. These tenants have the privilege of purchasing the orchard at a stated price at the end of that period. The company has about 700 acres in alfalfa, which is all sold in the field with the exception of what is used for their stock. There are also 160 acres in celery, this being raised upon low sedimentary and peat lands, and the yield is of an excellent grade, superior to that raised in any other part of the county."

All products grown on the Irvine Ranch were marketed through cooperatives. The lemons were handled by the Irvine Citrus Association, walnuts by the California Walnut Growers Association, persimmons by the California Persimmon Growers Association, avocados by Calavo Growers of California, and lima beans through the California Lima Bean Growers Association. Armor's book listed six warehouses for handling products from the ranch.

After the drought period ending in 1901, Irvine again had requested that each tenant plant 20 to 40 acres in limas and the remainder in grain. The farmers were unhappy with this arrangement, and according to Armor, approximately 60 percent of the tenants left after the first few years.

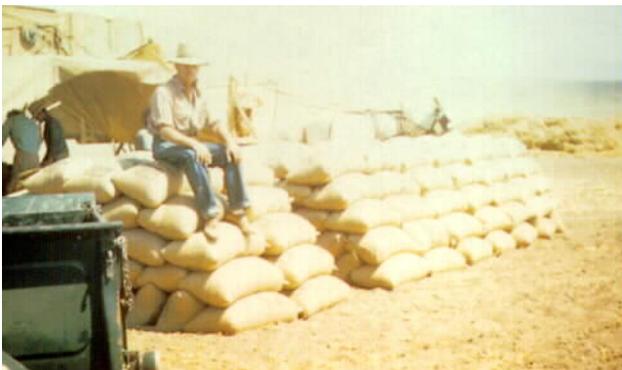
Believing that the farmers neglected their small bean acreage, consequently not making the crop a success, Irvine increased each tenant's bean acreage to 20 percent of the total land leased, thus forcing them to pay more attention to the bean crop. The poorer farmers dropped out during this experimental stage of growing beans, citing that their profits from the grain crop were supporting the bean crop which had not proven successful.

Due to the tenants' lack of success in raising lima beans, Irvine went to Ventura and offered a number of the major lima bean farmers excellent incentives for moving south. Several came, and Irvine began increasing the land devoted to the beans. The new tenants plowed the fields to a depth of ten to twelve inches, as opposed to five inches, and the deep plowing increased the yield from seven sacks per acre (maximum of ten: minimum of four) to seven and one-half per acre.

A letter sent from the ranch to the Chicago Produce News in October 1911, and reprinted from Cleland's book *The Irvine Ranch*, described the bean cultivation:

"We have in Limas about 14,000 acres, and in blackeyes about 4,000 acres, these acreages forming what is stated both here and in Ventura County to be the largest bean field, under the one management, in the world. This land is farmed partly by ourselves and in the greater part by tenants who rent on crop shares. The number of sacks raised on this ranch will approximate 145,000 sacks of Limas, and 36,000 blackeyes, or roughly 180,000 sacks of beans which will be worth about \$3.50 per sack of 80 lbs. when recleaned or say about \$630,000.00."

Lima bean harvesting left large quantities of bean straw which was sold to inland ranches for fertilizer. Bean straw and stable manure was the only fertilizer used to fertilize the citrus groves after their large scale introduction on the Irvine Ranch.



*Lima Bean Harvesting*

*To protect the crop from would-be thieves, the men slept on the sacks (right) at night.*

*Left-over bean straw was baled and fed to the cattle during the supplemental feeding periods, usually September and October.*

## Landmark: Culver's Corner

In 1902 Frederick Mead Culver took over James Sleeper's lease at Sleeper's Corner on old Laguna Road, and the intersection (where Trabuco Road, Highway 101 and Culver's Road came together) then became known as Culver's Corner, a landmark familiar to almost everyone in Orange County. Sleeper later became county assessor.

Culver was a pioneering lima bean grower and one of the first leasees to buy land from James Irvine. Besides the land he owned, Culver leased more than 1,200 acres from The Irvine Company.

In 1909 Culver, a frail but hard-working man, built a very large home on the corner. He also built a number of out buildings, including a water tank visible all the way from Tustin. Culver's Road, a one and one-half lane dirt road, began as the driveway to the family home off Highway 101 and extended to Lane Road (just north of the wash which now serves as the alignment of the San Diego Freeway).

Built at a cost of \$6,000, the Culver house, where Culver lived with his wife and daughter, was second in size and amenities only to the Irvine family home. Culver had spared no expense, building the house of center-cut redwood that had been shipped into McFadden's landing in Newport Beach where it was unloaded in the water and floated to shore. A 50-foot board could be carried with one finger by a man at each end.

The *Daily Evening Blade* described Culver's house in a January 22, 1910 article:

"The house consists of nine large rooms besides bath, trunk room, large halls and verandas and has all the modern conveniences of buffet, cooling closets, etc. Mr. Culver has his own lighting plant, using acetylene gas and a fine furnace heats the house throughout. The barn is one of the largest and best in this vicinity, being 52 x 80 feet and has stall room for thirty head of mules. It is first class in every respect, having a floor and built-in grain bins and harness rooms. They are now sinking a new well on the place and expect to set out about twenty acres of oranges."



### *Culver's Corner*

*The confluence of Culver Road (the one and one half lane dirt road leading off to the right) with Highway 101 (in foreground) and Trabuco Road (directly in front of the Culver home) made for one of the worst intersections (top photo) in Orange County. The well on the Culver property (bottom photo) measured 75*

*inches of water and greatly enhanced Frederick Culver's ability to grow 120 acres of citrus. The bunkhouse is behind the tank house, which could be seen from Tustin. (Photos courtesy of the late Mable Culver Cummings.)*



### *Frederick and Agnes Culver*

*Frederick Culver was one of the most prosperous ranchers in Orange County. His wife cared for the injured from collisions at the intersection in front of her home until they could be taken to a hospital.*

A hunchback, Fred Culver was probably the smallest man on the ranch. Local farmers called the well-respected farmer "Humpy." It was said that Culver could hitch up a team of mules faster than any man in the county. He was known as a tough businessman, and a good man.

Culver was one of the most prosperous ranchers in Orange County. When he died in 1918, he left an estate that made his wife and daughter two of the richest ladies in Southern California.

Culver's Corner became a landmark not only because of the Culver home, but also because the confluence of the three roads had a reputation of its own - as the deadliest intersection in the county. Many collisions occurred in front of the Culver house, and those injured often were taken inside until they could be transferred to the hospital. Culver's daughter Mable married a man whose mother had died in one of the many head-on collisions in front of her home.

## Good Times, Bad Times on the Irvine

Around the turn of the century, coal was being mined profitably on the Irvine Ranch from two mines near the Riverside County border. More than 20,000 tons of surface coal had been sold for mills and private customers in the populated areas of Orange County. A gypsum mine was also in operation, yielding clay to make pressed brick. The mine produced "large quantities" of gypsum which was used by the Los Angeles Pressed Brick Company.

In 1902, Irvine apparently entertained an inquiry from one J. A. Turner of Santa Ana regarding Irvine's interest in selling the ranch. Irvine wrote that he would, during the next six months, provide a four percent commission to Turner for selling the ranch or any portion thereof. The provision was that Irvine not be called upon to pay a commission to any other party. The ranch did not sell, and the absentee landowner lost all interest in selling after San Francisco's devastating earthquake in 1906.

Irvine was visiting the ranch when the earthquake destroyed much of his home town in April 1906. His office buildings and other valuable holdings there were either destroyed or badly damaged. Fortunately, Frances and the children were not harmed. He moved the family permanently to the ranch.

Irvine did sell 400 acres of Newport Beach land for \$200 an acre. It was too close to the ocean to raise crops, so as far as he was concerned, its value was insignificant. In 1904 the land that is now Corona del Mar was also sold.

In 1907 ranch manager C. F. Krauss wrote to a prospective buyer:

"We have about five miles around Newport Bay where we have made some sales in addition to about ten miles of direct ocean front. We have some land on either side of the bay which we could sell, and would probably be willing to sell from a mile to a mile and a half on the ocean front somewhere between the Bay and Laguna. The sales we have made east of the Bay have only run back half a mile more or less. The mile would face toward the ocean but carry you on pretty high ground. If you would take in the mile the price would be somewhat less than the half mile."

Krauss stated that the price of the land would range from \$200 to \$250 an acre.

As the owner of a vast tract of land upon which there were multitudinous activities, Irvine was beset by as many problems as would plague the ruler of a small kingdom. Cleland best describes the many troubles with which Irvine had to deal:

"The members of a boys' Y.M.C.A. camp defaced some of the beautiful oaks in Santiago Canyon, and campers started disastrous fires; the lessee of a prospective oil tract on the ranch had difficulty in fulfilling the terms of his drilling contract, and the hoped-for oil field failed to develop; morning-glory vines became a pest in the bean fields, ticks infested the pastures, and worms damaged the celery; nearly fifty head of cattle and a number of horses died of some unknown disease or diseases; several hunters, including two prominent citizens of Riverside,

were arrested for trespassing on pasture lands near Corona del Mar; the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company installed a telephone line on company property without the formality of obtaining a right of way; the ranch employees demanded butter with their meals; and a mad dog ran amuck and bit several other dogs on the ranch."



### *Ocean Front Property for Sale*

*In 1907, James Irvine was willing to sell up to a mile and one-half of ocean front property for \$200 to \$250 an acre. (Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)*

Irvine was never known for paying high wages. At the turn of the century, monthly wages for a permanent ranch hand was about \$28 plus board, a vaquero who furnished his own saddle and blankets received \$30, a blacksmith \$50, and a cattle foreman \$75 without board. Cooks were paid \$40 a month to cook for 18 employees and six members of the Irvine family. This position was apparently the most difficult to fill.

There were good times on the ranch for the Irvine family. There were picnics in Orange County Park, carriage rides, and visits with friends. One of those friends was Madame Helena Modjeska, who in 1906 sold her beloved Arden and moved to Tustin while her home on the exclusive Bay Island in Newport Bay was being built.

Madame Modjeska and her friend, Frances Irvine, both died unexpectedly in 1909.

Modjeska's body was returned to her native Poland where to this day she is a national hero, still considered the greatest lady of the theater. Modjeska is also the most famous woman in the history of Orange County, where the northern peak of Saddleback Mountain is named in her honor and her home still stands in Modjeska Canyon.

Frances Anita Plum Irvine was buried in the family gravesite in San Francisco. Her loss was devastating to James Irvine.

James and Frances Irvine had been married for 17 years. After Frances' death, Irvine spent a lot of time, with just his dogs for company, hunting and fishing on the many areas of the ranch rich with game and trout.



*Death Comes Unexpectedly*

*Close friends Frances Irvine (left) and Madame Modjeska both died unexpectedly in 1909. Frances Irvine was buried in the family plot in San Francisco; Modjeska's body was returned to her native Poland. (Photos courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co.)*



*Santa Ana Cooperative Sugar Company*

*James Irvine built the Santa Ana Cooperative Sugar Company in 1911. Two million bricks were used to construct the building. The street in front was named Dyer Road in honor of Ebenezer Dyer, the first successful American sugar beet grower. Sugar beets were difficult to grow, and Dyer's success was heralded as a major accomplishment. (Photo courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co.)*

## **Sugar Beets: New Irvine Crop**

Irvine spent more and more time on his agrarian pursuits, and the ranch responded with yields far in abundance of what anyone could have imagined.

Irvine began to experiment with sugar beets. Difficult to grow, they required deep plowing, soil near salt water and heavy fertilization. Thinning had to be done at exactly the right time.

By 1901, California was the nation's leader in sugar beet production. The success of sugar beets can be traced to Ebenezer H. Dyer, who built the first successful sugar beet factory near San Francisco in 1879. By 1911, Orange County was producing 100,000 tons of sugar beets per year. During World War I, Orange County's six sugar refineries produced one-fourth of the nation's sugar supply.

Armor's 1911 history states that The Irvine Company had 2,300 acres in sugar beets, most planted in 1911, with three to four thousand acres expected to be planted in sugar beets in 1912.

Sugar beets from the Irvine Ranch were marketed through the Southern California Sugar Company, a Santa Ana factory established in 1909. Many growers were less than pleased with this particular factory, and in 1911 they banded together to form the Santa Ana Cooperative Sugar Company. James Irvine provided the co-op a 23-acre site on the outskirts of his ranch along with considerable money to build the factory. He hired the well-known Orange County contractor Chris McNeill to build the sugar factory, the last one built in Orange County.

The cooperative bought thousands of acres around the factory and leased them out to sugar beet growers. At one time, the co-op owned or leased 50,000 acres. Growers carried the sugar beets to the factory in horse-drawn carts. Holly Sugar Company bought the plant in 1917, and handled the sugar beets from the Irvine Ranch from then on.

The Irvine Company experimented with using whole beet tops and processed beet pulp for cattle feed. The cowboys kept extra busy making sure the cattle didn't choke on the tops. Occasionally, they had to reach down an animal's throat to pull out an uncooperative beet.

According to Armor, in 1911 there were approximately 3,000 head of cattle and 7,000 head of sheep on the ranch, as well as horses and mules being raised for The Irvine Company's own use.

There were about 110 tenants on the ranch in 1911, almost all giving one quarter of their crop to the company. Some 34,000 acres of the ranch were under cultivation, and an additional 5,000 acres were to be put under cultivation "as soon as conditions warrant."



*Reservoirs Constructed  
photos*

*The Frances Mutual Water District (named in honor of Irvine's late wife) implemented an extensive reservoir and dam system beginning in 1929. The Sand Canyon Reservoir (top), built in 1942, is located between Turtle Rock and Quail Hill, just below the Turtle Rock Pointe development off Ridgeline Drive. Pilot Eddie Martin took progressive pictures of the construction of Santiago Canyon Dam (1931-32) for James Irvine. This is one of the last photographs taken before project completion. (Photos courtesy of Judy Liebeck and the late Eddie Martin.)*

## **More Water Sources Sought**

Half of the 21 years since Irvine had taken over the ranch had been drought years, so in 1913, he formed the Frances Mutual Water Company, named in honor of his late wife, to search for new ways to provide water for the ranch.

Irvine spent between three and four million dollars drilling 1,200 wells in the Santa Ana basin. They were equipped with electric pumps now that electric power was available from Southern California Edison Company.

The first reservoir project the Frances Mutual Water Company attempted was above the Back Bay area, what later became known as "the salt works." The earthen dam was to hold back the excess water and let the normal water level run off. Permits were granted by the local and state governments, but were rescinded because bedrock was never found. Officials feared that a dam built on unstable ground would break and that Newport Beach would be destroyed by the resulting flood. It was one of James Irvine's biggest disappointments that the government pulled the permit and he could not build the dam.

Irvine knew the wells were not an inexhaustible source. In less than a generation, the wells had to be deepened. The ranch was drawing the underground water faster than it was being replenished.

When the wells began to fail in the 1920s, the Frances Mutual Water District began to implement an extensive reservoir and dam system to capture the rainfall and the water runoff. The first reservoir to be built was Lambert Reservoir (1929). It was soon followed by the Santiago Canyon Dam (1931-32), Peters Canyon Dam Number 1, Laguna Dam and Bonita Dam (all between 1937 and 1938), Peters Canyon Dam Number 2 (1940), Sand Canyon Dam (1942), and Syphon Canyon Dam (1948-49) and Rattlesnake Canyon Dam (1960), both built after Irvine's death. Irvine built canals to deliver water to the reservoirs and more than 2,500 miles of gravity-fed irrigation pipeline to move it to the fields. The canals were patrolled to keep them free of debris that might stop the water from flowing.

In 1928 Carpenter, Serrano, and The Irvine Company agreed on the construction of Santiago Dam. Carpenter and Serrano paid half of the construction costs, The Irvine Company the other half. The water storage reservoir created would be called Santiago Reservoir, or as most people know it, Irvine Lake, and the water was equally divided between Carpenter and Serrano (one-half share) and The Irvine Company (one-half share). Santiago Canyon Reservoir holds 25,000 acre-feet; all the other reservoirs combined hold 6,500 acre-feet. (An acre-foot measures 325,851 gallons.)

A string of dry years followed 1943, and the water system could not keep up with the demand. It became apparent that all local sources of water combined were not enough for the booming Irvine Ranch. Importing water through the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) was the answer. Brad Hellis, general manager of The Irvine Company, negotiated the right-of-way with MWD. It was granted in 1955, and by December 1956, the first Colorado River water flowed into the Santiago Lake, assuring an ample supply.

The Frances Mutual Water District served the needs of the Irvine Ranch until January 23, 1961 when the Irvine Ranch Water District was formed.



### *Tenant Homes*

*Several of the tenant houses built by The Irvine Company between 1890 and 1934 have been renovated. The tenant home (left) which originally served as the post office, cafe and school marms' residence (rooms for teachers were rented at the house by the school district) today is leased to the U.S. Post Office in Old Town Irvine. Located in the original town of Irvine, this house (right) served as the home of the secretary of the bean and grain warehouse. It currently is used in the Irvine Temporary Housing program. (Photo courtesy of Judy Liebeck.)*

## Homes Provided for Tenant Farmers

Between 1890 and 1934, The Irvine Company built homes for its tenant farmers on the land each farmed. Garages were added as necessary, and often the style of the house - many reflecting Craftsman design influence - and garage were different, usually indicating that they were not built at the same time. Usually a shed or barn was built as well. Tenants were charged a very minimal rent for the house - about \$6.00 a month in the late 1920s. Until 1950, tenants did their own maintenance and repairs.

The houses were often single-wall construction, usually made of redwood, with either a board and bat or shiplap exterior. Many were built with no foundation. Tenants were not all of one class, though, and neither were the houses. Several lessees had double-wall or lath and plaster homes with hardwood floors and tile bathrooms.

During the Christmas holidays, James Irvine, Sr. hosted a holiday dinner for members of the Five-Year Club, those male employees who had worked for The Irvine Company at least five years. This annual event was held at the mess hall in the agricultural headquarters. Irvine personally conducted these programs. According to historian Sleeper, Irvine initiated new members; showed his home movies of travels to Australia, Europe, Africa and Alaska; commented on hard times and taxes, and awarded the invariable Christmas turkey and a month's wages as bonus.



*Christmas Club*

*The Christmas Club met yearly in the old mess hall. James Irvine, Sr. is seated in the center background. (Photo courtesy of First American Title Insurance Co.)*

The men would put on a suit - often borrowed - to go to Irvine's Christmas party. As the late Bill Cook recalled, "There would be a delicious dinner and kind words from Mr. Irvine. After dinner, the men politely watched the motion pictures of Mr. Irvine's most recent travels.

"Sometimes it was kind of boring. Mr. Irvine always asked two hired hands to run the projector. One year they had a great deal of trouble threading the film properly. Every time they put the film in, it would break. Mr. Irvine took this for a short while and then you could tell he was getting sort of irritated. He looked at me, snapped his fingers and pointed to the projector. I had never run a projector in my life, but I knew he meant for me to go fix it, and I sure as heck was going to try. I went over to the projector and looked at what they were doing and made a lucky guess. I said, 'Well, maybe if you threaded the film over this way and behind this, it would work better.' It worked, and I wasn't the only one relieved that it did!"

Members of the Irvine family were known for their artistic ability, and James Irvine, Sr. was no exception. He designed his own Christmas cards, which included a message from his heart. They were sent to close friends only. The avid hunter's message in his card one year reflected that no one could love the Irvine family without loving their dogs. The 1941 card showed sacks of lima beans stacked up to the rafters in the old warehouse at the shipping center. The message, which indicated there would never be another sight such as this because the government had just taken over the bean field and there would never again be such a harvest, said, "Goodbye forever? Buy war bonds!"

Goodbye forever? Twenty-five years earlier, San Diego County's Camp Kearny was selected for a U.S. government training center over the Irvine Ranch because the Irvine was "choice bean land." The Irvine Ranch made a major contribution to the First World War by feeding the troops and buying more than a million dollars worth of war bonds. Now, however, food production as an asset to World War II effort was being ignored. The writing was on the wall, and Irvine knew that it was only a matter of time before his beloved agricultural holding would fall apart. It was not a happy Christmas.

In 1942, Irvine Park was closed to the public and the picnic grounds were turned into an army camp. Camp Irvine became "Camp Rathke" within a year of its opening, and existed for an additional three years with a population ranging from 400 to 3,000 men.