

# Orinda News

PUBLISHED BY THE PUBLICITY COMMITTEE OF THE ORINDA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Volume I

Orinda, California, July 7, 1937

Number 1

## Something New

A growing community sooner or later finds a need for public expression. We hope that this, the first issue of the Orinda Improvement Association's monthly news report, will prove to be the means for that expression in the Orinda District.

Both the Association and its paper are operated on a non-profit basis and are strictly for the purpose of promoting this community's general welfare. As a resident or property owner you are entitled and urged to participate in our endeavors.

In publishing this community paper each month it is our aim to print topics of general interest, notices of local projects, reports of the Improvement Association, local organization activities and any other items of importance that space will permit. We are working toward a greater community interest and invite your contributions, advertisements and constructive criticism. Your patronage of our advertisers will make it possible for us to carry on in the future and distribute this paper without charge.

## New Park Club Organized

ORINDA PARK, INC., a Community Club, is being organized by a group of Orinda Park Terrace property owners to control and operate as a private club, the picnic grounds and swimming pool now being conducted as a public enterprise and known as Lake Orinda Pool.

The new organization offers a limited number of memberships at \$20.00 per family per year to residents and property owners of the Orinda district.

Many property owners have previously enjoyed the quiet and seclusion of this five acre beauty spot consisting of a swimming pool, picnic grounds and club house.

To those interested in joining, it is suggested that you communicate with any of the following Membership Committee: Mr. Earl Norton, Mrs. Bert Dawson or Mrs. Warren Harrold, Chairman.

## El Toyonal Road Open

EL TOYONAL ROAD now connects directly with the WILD CAT CANYON ROAD to Berkeley. The old gates between the O'Brien and Sullivan Properties are now permanently open, thus making a through road.

## The Orinda Improvement Association

Two months ago the Association at its regular meeting at the School House adopted a revised Constitution and By-Laws, and elected the new officers for this year. Mr. Warren Harrold was given the post of President and under his enthusiastic leadership things are already commencing to hum. All the standing committees are now appointed and each one is working hard for definite results. Several of the new projects which Mr. Harrold has planned for are rapidly being developed by special committees and it is expected that at our meeting on Friday July 9, there will be reports on some unusually interesting accomplishments.

The Publicity Committee is bending every effort to place a copy of this first issue of the Orinda News in the hands of every property owner and resident of Orinda, and urges all readers to attend the coming monthly meetings and have a voice in the direction of our community welfare.

Any one desiring information regarding the Orinda Improvement Association or its activities will be gladly assisted by the President Mr. Harrold, or any of the committee chairmen.

### AUGUST MEETING NOTICE

The next regular meeting of the O. I. A. will be August 6, 1937, at 8:00 P. M. in the Orinda School Auditorium.

### Brief History of Orinda

By  
Delight (Mrs. Edw. I.) de Laveaga

NOTE: We feel fortunate in having secured the following articles through the collaboration of Mrs. E. I. de Laveaga and Miss Carmel Martinez, both of whom are members of pioneer families of this District. Some of the events related are stories in themselves but lack of space in this first issue does not permit our doing them justice. However, the authors have promised further material on interesting Orinda history for our coming editions.

I have been asked to write an article on the historical background of Orinda. My personal knowledge of Orinda Park (as it was known until 12 years ago) dates from 1906. I am prefacing my article, therefore, with one by Miss Carmel Martinez, whom I have asked to collaborate with me.

Miss Martinez, the young daughter of Mr. Woodward Martinez, is a direct descendant of one of the earliest and most important families associated with the history of Northern California as well as Orinda. Due to this fact and also that this is her particular line of work, I feel she is very aptly fitted to write with authority on this subject:

(Continued on page 2, col. 2)

## Orinda Residents to Have Natural Gas Service

It has recently been reported that Hacienda Homes, Inc., and the American Trust Company have granted rights of way to the Coast Counties Gas Company for the installation of natural gas mains in the Orinda District. It is believed that in four or five months some of our residents should have this fuel at their disposal. Experience in the past has shown that when work of this sort is once started it takes but a comparatively short time to completely service a community of this size.

## FLASH—

The Sacramento Northern Railway has received approval from the California Railroad Commission to inaugurate bus service from Orinda to Oakland and San Francisco on completion of the new low level tunnel.

The details of route through the city of Oakland have not yet been definitely decided, but will be announced shortly.

A temporary terminal in San Francisco at 4th and Mission Streets has been arranged until completion of the new Bay Bridge Terminal, which will be used as a permanent San Francisco terminal.

## O. I. A. Admits 50 Members

On May 1, 1937 our Association consisted of 45 paid Members, and on June 4, 1937 fifty new members were elected to membership.

Many more will be admitted in our July meeting. Our goal — 200 members.

### HAVE YOU JOINED?

Certainly your property investment is worth \$1.00 a year—the price of membership in the Association—in order to preserve and improve its value.

The Membership Committee wishes to thank Orinda residents and property owners for their enthusiastic cooperation in putting over this membership drive.

### MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

George H. Pitt, chairman, Capt. H. R. Oakley, Kenneth Allen, A. M. Sands, L. V. Dana.

NOTE: Family Memberships in our association have been done away with, the new By-Laws call for dues of \$1.00 per person.



## ORINDA NEWS

Official Publication of the  
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IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION  
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Vice President ..... Lowell Berry  
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Communications and news items for this paper will be accepted by any of the following Publicity Committee members: Mr. H. L. Ketcham, Miss Maurine Donaldson, R. M. Cross, W. J. McMillan, Mrs. Geo. H. Pitt, Willis J. O'Brien.  
Advertising rates available upon application to Mr. H. L. Ketcham.

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## NOTICE TO COMMITTEE HEADS

We all want to know how your committees are progressing. If possible send in a report to the Publicity Committee each month. The time deadline for same will be the 15th, until further notice. It will be appreciated if *all* contributions are typed and doubled spaced.

## TO OUR ADVERTISERS

The Publicity Committee wishes to extend its sincere thanks to those who have helped put this little publication over the top by purchasing advertising space.

## Do You Know . . . ?

That Fire Season is here, which makes it necessary to obtain permission from our Fire Chief before starting outdoor fires of any kind. The season this year lasts from May 15th to November 15th.

That in case of fire you should immediately call Fire Chief, P. R. Donaldson, at Berkeley 8807.

That if you need an officer of the law in an emergency, a phone call to Martinez 81 will send a radio message to our local deputy and bring him in answer to your call within a few minutes.

That there are three church organizations in Orinda; the Santa Maria Catholic Church, the Community Church and the Christian Science Society.

That there is a Branch County Library at the Orinda Fire House. Mrs. E. A. Dawson—Librarian. Open 2:00 to 5:00 P. M. MONDAYS AND FRIDAYS.

A monthly bulletin is published by the Better Books Committee to develop and maintain a year-round program for the promotion of the best reading among young people.

## Broadway Low Level Tunnel Open to Traffic Soon

Because of the extension of time granted some of the sub-contractors on the Tunnel, it is impossible to set an exact opening date. However, it has been authoritatively stated that traffic will be allowed through the tunnel either late in August or early September.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF ORINDA

(Continued from page 1)

Orinda was formerly part of the Sobrante Rancho, granted to Juan and Victor Castro. The grant was originally made to their father, Sergeant Francisco Castro, for his distinguished services in the Spanish Army. Included in the grant was all the vacant (sobrante) land lying between the Ranchos San Antonio, San Pablo, Pinole, Valencia and Moraga. This grant was later confirmed by the United States Government in 1853.

W. W. Cameron bought 3000 acres of the original grant. Old Orinda and now new Orinda stood on the Cameron purchase. Alice, daughter of Dr. John Marsh, and wife of W. W. Cameron, suggested the name ORINDA. Probably, she first heard of the name from her father, a scholar of the front rank. He may have read about Martin Orinda, a famous Spanish church architect who lived in Spain in the 17th century, or he may have known about the plant Orinda that grows in Ethiopia.

Cameron sold parcels of the land to General Wagner, former Surveyor General of California, and the families of Rowland, Minto, Sullivan, Minor, and de Laveaga, the pioneer families of Orinda. Others were those of Warnecke, Gray, and Brunkhorst. However, the first pioneer in the district was Don Rafael Martinez, grandson of Don Ignacio Martinez, long-time commandant of the San Francisco Presidio, and third Mayor of San Francisco, who owned Pinole Valley. Rafael's father, Lieutenant José Martinez, built for him about 1860 the Hacienda Santo Domingo, bordering on the Sobrante Rancho.

The old Orinda was located at the junction of the Berkeley Road, the San Pablo and the Bear Valley Roads. It consisted of the schoolhouse, blacksmith shop and the hotel operated by Mrs. Hopkins. For a time, the post office was located in the blacksmith's shop, then at the home of General Wagner, at John Hoyt's and abandoned in 1901.

The hotel was built about 1885. A few years later it was closed and rebuilt, but never reopened because it was refused a liquor license due to its proximity to the schoolhouse. After its abandonment, a dance was given once a month under the auspices of the Orinda Social Club, whose first president was Rafael Martinez Jr.

The Railroad came through Orinda about 1890, and was abandoned in 1900. It ran from the 16th St. Southern Pacific Depot, on the present site of the Sante Fe Railroad as far as San Pablo, up through San Pablo Valley through Orinda to the junction of the Orinda-Moraga-Walnut Creek Roads, then known as Bryant Junction.

Old Orinda declined for three reasons: the children left the ranches for the city, to be followed by the older folks; the Water Company bought up as much land as it could; and many ranches were lost in mortgages.

—CARMEL MARTINEZ.

An account of the new Orinda will be the subject of another article, for neither Miss Martinez nor I feel that we can do justice to the man who visualized, planned, and directed this colossal accomplishment, Mr. Edward I. de Laveaga.

Orinda! That magical name, elusive to all of us and explained for the first time! I am sure as anyone can be that Alice, daughter

of John Marsh, had in mind Martin Orinda, the great Spanish architect when she suggested the name. Surely, with its Spanish settlers already in predominance, would she have gone so far afield as Ethiopia for her inspiration for the name?

The little school house mentioned, which stood across the road from the ruins of the Orinda Park Hotel, was, incidentally, the scene of the first meeting of this Improvement Association. In fact it was there in the little one-room, frame building the Association took form and elected its first officers.

The Railroad Miss Martinez mentions was known as the California Nevada Line. It had been abandoned many years before I first saw Orinda. Like many developments it came too soon for its own good. We have a photo of the train on the longest trestle—across Laudervasser Creek—by the little Church. In the distance the picture shows the beautiful rolling hills up to the skyline and Orchard. This orchard (or what has survived the great changes in Orinda) is among the few remaining landmarks and was part of the great estate of Miguel de Laveaga, Senior.

Personal reminiscences crowd in upon my mind! 1906, my first glimpse of Orinda, of its marvelous natural beauty!

Did we reach it then by automobile over paved highways in twenty minutes? When I listen at our Improvement Club Meetings to the discussions of the present roads, I find myself mentally travelling the old route to Orinda which took so many hours to accomplish—the good old horse and buggy route, over roads dusty in summer and muddy in winter. In summer all the roads were dusty, and *thick* dust too; and in winter they were muddy, *thick* mud too; but somehow, like all things difficult to achieve, Orinda seemed the more beautiful when reached. Often the trip was made walking or on horseback, and finally in 1907 by automobile. Only I must admit one might start out in 1907 for Orinda by automobile but one arrived there by horse and buggy. Somewhere in the middle of the road the automobile would elect to sit down like a balky mule and refuse after all persuasion to move; or there might be a terrific grinding, a sudden stop, and there in the heavy dust lay all the vitals of the car. But an S. O. S. brought the horse and buggy after hours of waiting and we reached our goal, Orinda.

There was so much in the "horse and buggy days" of great value. It is with reverence not derision I refer to them. The present generation as they turn to this valley have all the modern roads, magnificent tunnels, miraculous bridges, but they have, too, a great heritage from the grand simplicity of their forbears and the "good old horse and buggy days".

## VINSON BROWN IS CAMP NATURALIST

Vinson Brown, Cubmaster of the Orinda Cub Pack B. S. A. is at Camp Wolfboro this summer acting as naturalist for the entire camp and also as Scoutmaster for a group of advanced scouts known as the 'Six Weekers'. This Scout Camp is a little over 20 miles beyond the Calaveras Big Trees in the High Sierras.



## The Little Church of Orinda

On the twentieth day of September, 1936, all Orinda heard a deep-throated bell ringing. It announced to all that the little Church was open again. And this first Mass was said in honor of her who had it built and of her daughter who had reconstructed it.

Forty-five years ago to the exact day of the opening the donor of the little Santa Maria Church died. She had given it to the Catholic Church so that her family and the other few families around her could have their Sunday Mass without taking the almost four hour trip to Oakland. She herself arranged to bring the priests out and back. She herself arranged to have the Church cleaned and the flowers fixed and the garden in order. She informed the Catholic families that they could have their Sunday Mass so near them. At her death her husband with their children followed her example until his death.

The little Church has been opened and closed several times since then, always by some devout Catholic who undertook all work entailed to have Sunday Mass again. But one person could not carry this big work alone, and the little Church finally was deserted and left to crumble away.

In the meantime the land around the little Church gradually populated and the town of Orinda came into being. A clubhouse was erected, a town-site established, and in the midst of it all—the very heart of Orinda—stood the little Church deserted and decaying. All asked about it—why shouldn't they?—for it was the first landmark of Orinda, the oldest building there, and a most perfect little piece of architecture.

In order that this growing community would have a Catholic Church and in memory of her mother, the daughter (although living far from Orinda) reconstructed the little Church, and, inspired by her, a little band of Catholics organized to re-establish it. By generous donations and volunteered labor the Dominican fathers were secured, the garden replanted and cared for, the church cleaned weekly and supplied with necessities, and a treasury commenced.

Now every Sunday at nine o'clock the bell rings out for all to come and adore and give thanks to God. And how happy she who gave it must be to hear the bell of the little Church also saying, "My doors will never be closed again."

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## NEW LANDS FOR FIRE DISTRICT

Mr. Fred T. Wood, owner and subdivider of Moraga Estates, at the Cross Roads, has requested the Fire Commissioner of the Orinda Fire Protection District to annex his lands to the Orinda Fire District. The necessary steps have already been taken by the Orinda Improvement Association.

## EPITAPH

To the Self-Confident Motorist

"He knew where every curve was but not always what was just around it."

## Orinda Women's Guild

The Women's Guild held its initial meeting last November at the home of Mrs. R. C. Sisson for the purpose of organizing an interdenominational group of Christian women of Orinda. Since then meetings have been held monthly and a Constitution adopted with objectives formulated and organization completed. At the March luncheon meeting in the home of Mrs. L. V. Dana the following officers were installed by Mrs. Marie Bennett: President, Mrs. Ralph C. Sisson; Vice-Pres., Mrs. J. J. McMillan; Rec. Sec'y, Mrs. Kenneth Gelwix; Cor. Sec'y, Mrs. R. E. Wilson; Treas., Mrs. W. B. Thomas; Program Ch'm'n, Mrs. A. W. Elkinton; Dorcas Chairman, Mrs. C. E. Jeffry.

A Community Sunday School is sponsored by the Guild. It closed for the summer with an annual picnic at the home of A. W. Elkinton, Superintendent, attended by sixty scholars and teachers. The Christian Endeavor Society will continue their meetings throughout the summer with Mrs. A. W. Elkinton, their Counselor.

A Chinese Tea was held on June 4th in the lovely garden patio of the home of Mrs. L. V. Dana on El Sereno Road. About 140 were present and enjoyed an unusual program.

The Orinda Women's Guild looks forward to an enthusiastic opening of activities this fall under the capable leadership of its president, Mrs. Sisson, and her fine set of officers.

## Boy Scout News

1937 will always stand out as the year of real accomplishment for Orinda in that the Scouting Program for boys and girls was firmly established.

A Cub Pack consisting of two Dens is now functioning following a Training course for the parents of boys between the ages of nine and eleven. Mr. Vinson Brown, writer and naturalist, is the Cubmaster. He is well qualified, having completed three advanced courses in Scouting. Dr. J. Cathcart is Chairman of the Cub Pack Committee consisting of Mr. H. Martin, L. V. Dana, T. Edson, and J. Schmelz.

The Orinda Scout Troop No. 1 sponsored by the Orinda Improvement Association is sending scouts Sheldon Kales and Donald Trucker to the National Jamboree held at Washington D. C. between June 30 and July 9. The troop has more than doubled and is drawing three boys from Moraga.

Mr. J. McNeill, the Scoutmaster, has given freely of his time in developing this organization. The chairman of the Scout Troop Committee is Dr. N. A. Cary. The men serving with him are Mr. D. Badgley, L. V. Dana, F. Kales, H. Martin, Geo. Pitt, A. Scott, G. Shepherd and J. Snook.

The activities of the troop have resulted in advancements to the individual scouts. A number of the scouts will participate in summer camping provided for by the Berkeley-Contra Costa Area Council at Camps Berkeley and Wolfboro.

The residents of this community should be well satisfied that the children are given the advantage of the character development made possible by Scouting.

## P. T. A. News

The past year in the history of Orinda Union P. T. A. may be considered one of transition; one in which it was to be determined whether or not the P. T. A. should live.

Interest being at a low ebb the officers have exerted every effort to interest the mothers of our children in the actual need of a P. T. A. Due to a variety of programs, and also to the rapid growth of Orinda we have had a larger average attendance than that of any previous year.

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Our three money-raising affairs, a Rummage Sale, in October, a Turkey Whist in December and an Heirloom Tea in April were financial successes which enabled us to meet, not only our P.T.A. obligations, but to give generously and graciously to other small causes, a Christmas party for the children, a theatre party for the graduates, a donation to the Cub Pack, and our outstanding "good deed" of the year—sponsoring of the Girl Scout Troop under the able leadership of Mrs. George Hickok.

The officers for the coming year are: Mrs. S. K. Rosenthal, President; Mrs. K. Gelwix, Vice Pres. and Program Chairman; Mrs. Geo. Shepherd, Treas.; Mrs. Walter Henderson, Sec'y; Mrs. W. Loughrey, Publicity.

These women will carry on. But there is a great issue at stake. Many parents feel that a Mother's Club would best fit the needs of this particular community. This question will be discussed at our first meeting in September—third Tuesday—September 21st.

Myrtle L. Rosenthal  
Pres. P. T. A.

## Girl Scout News

Having completed the training course recently given by Miss Barbara MacMillan, Director of the Berkeley Girl Scouts, Mrs. Lloyd Farrar was invested at a recent meeting of the Orinda Girl Scouts, Troop No. 26. Mrs. Farrar is the registered captain and the Troop Committee is composed of Mrs. G. F. Hickok, Chairman, Mrs. George Shepherd, and Mrs. John Jost. There are now ten registered girl scouts, Mary Bennett, Beatrice Clebourne, Lily Dorrington, Georgia Shepherd, Kathleen Sullivan, Carroll Kales, Vida Schwoer, Betty Lou Gunn, Connie Pearson and Harriett Morgan. The troop meets each Thursday afternoon at the school from 3:30 to 5:0 p.m. and any girl over ten years of age may join.

Troop meetings have been suspended for the summer, but Mrs. Hickok is planning to take any girls remaining in Orinda to the Berkeley Day Camp, where they will have the privilege of real camp life and meet with Scouts of Berkeley.

## TWELVE-FIFTEEN CLUB VISITS HOSPITAL

On June 16th a few members of the 12-15 Club, led by their secretary, Mrs. T. C. Kendall, visited the Veteran whom they sponsor at the Government hospital near Livermore.



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