

## Historic Home Subject of City Excursion

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**EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article, labeled a commentary, is the first part of a series written by Janet Young and Dolly McKenna that will appear in three installments of the Yorba Linda Star. Next week an in-depth look will be taken at the history of the Bryant Ranch property, with the following article highlighting the botanic gardens planted on the property by its former owner Susana Bryant Bixby.**

As the OCYD Dial-A-Ride bus packed with members of the Yorba Linda City Council and city staff wound its way along the bank of the Santa Ana River on a unpaved, pomegranate tree-lined road, one passenger couldn't help but wonder what Susana Bixby Bryant would have thought of the procession making its way to her former home.

The main reason behind the informal city meeting on wheels that took place Saturday was Susana Bixby Bryant and the history she left behind on property now owned by C-W Associates.

The planned development of that property is important in several ways:

Purchased by C-W in 1978, the land is slated for development under the name Lomas de Yorba. Development fees from this Canadian-based company have and will fatten the city's coffer.

Fifty acres of the 3,500-acre-site will be dedicated to industrial development, with another 20 acres going toward commercial projects. These land dedications may mean jobs for Yorba Lindans, and some taxes from the companies that settle on the land will eventually be returned to the city.

Also planned for the land is the construction of nearly 4,000 homes for future Yorba Linda residents who will add to a thriving city.

These citizens and most of the city's current residents probably have never set foot on the privately-owned land that is the site of several historic structures and trees that are now under the city's scrutiny. But because of the land's development, this property will be opened up for exploration to Yorba Lindans and people of surrounding communities.

Phil Paxton, Yorba Linda's community development director, pointed out that C-W is developing only one-fourth of its Yorba Linda land holdings and dedicating more than 2,000 acres of the property to open space.

This means Orange County citizens will be able to walk along the bank of the Santa Ana River in an area abundant with wildlife and flora. The hills bordering the land also will be more accessible since they feature an extensive trail system the city plans to eventually hook up with its won trail system.

An environmental impact report on Bryant Ranch development required by the State Department of Fish and Game, the State Water Quality Control Board, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made the open space dedication necessary in an attempt by these agencies to prevent the disruption of animal migration from the hills and canyons to the river.

Eagles, deer, mountain lion, opossum and a variety of other small mammals and rodents are still roaming the Bryant Ranch property.

Besides being abundant with wildlife, the land recently annexed to Yorba Linda is resplendent with the history of the city, of Orange County, and, in fact, of all of Southern California. Much of that history was created by Susana Bixby Bryant.

Mrs. Bryant owned all or a portion of the land from 1907 until her death in 1946. The property, then called Rancho Santa Ana, was largely used for citrus cultivation and for raising stock.

It is the combination of citrus crops and cattle being raised on Bryant Ranch that makes it historically unique. According to an archaeologist on hand Saturday with Scientific Resource Surveys, a firm hired by C-W Associates to conduct a historic survey of its property, only the Irvine Ranch is functionally comparable to the Bryant Ranch. However, the Irvine Ranch is in a class by itself because of its immense size.

In that historic report principally authored by Dr. Roger Mason, it is stated that the Bryant Ranch had a total area of about 5,600 acres, with about 500 acres dedicated to citrus production. In comparison, the Irvine Ranch had almost 5,000 acres in citrus alone and a total area of more than 88,000 acres.

“Even in the past, the combination of citrus and cattle on a large scale was not common. Thus, the Bryant Ranch headquarters complex may be the only one of its kind in the Orange County area,” the report says.

Another uniqueness associated with the ranch is a home built on the property by Mrs. Bryant sometime between 1911 and 1916. The home was used by Bryant when she visited the ranch to supervise its operation.

The house is relatively simple with little in the way of decorative detail. It does, however, have several characteristics of the Craftsman style which was popular in Southern California between 1900 and 1920.

In his report, the archaeologist says the Bryant Ranch house is not a typical Craftsman house since it does not have an asymmetrical arrangement of gables on several levels nor does it have a gabled porch.

The plan of the house, located on the edge of a bluff overlooking the Santa Ana River canyon, is similar to a modern suburban ranch-style house where rooms are arranged along one long axis, all on one floor. So this house may be a rare example of a Craftsman influence large ranch house.

Several other structures remain on the land, but the ranch house is considered the most historically significant. Because of the uniqueness of the home and its attachment to Susana Bixby Bryant the residence will be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

Determining how to preserve this building and others on the land in a cost-effective manner has been looked at by the Planning Commission and is now being pondered by the city council and staff.

Some speculate that the ranch house will be converted to a eatery similar in flavor to the Yorba Linda Station Restaurant which was one a depot for the Pacific Electric Railroad.

The bus excursion was just a starting point in the process that will determine the ultimate destiny of the home, now occupied by workers who still ranch the land. Citizens can expect this property to be the subject of future city council meetings and public hearings.

A more in-depth look at the Bryant Ranch property and its history will be featured in next week's edition of the Yorba Linda Star.