

Ranch House has a History

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Bryant Ranch isn't another set of tract homes in a master-designed neighborhood.

The dwelling is one of Yorba Linda's most important historical landmarks, city officials and residents say, with a story dating back to the 1800s.

The land the home stands on once belonged to the city's namesake—Bernardo Yorba. In the 1870s Yorba's widow sold the land to a man named John Bixby, who built a ranching operation on it. Bixby used the ranch to raise cattle and grow wheat, hay and citrus trees, said Mary Ruth Erickson, president of the city's historical society.

According to the city records, the rest of the story goes like this:

Bixby died in 1891 and left a portion of the property to his daughter, Susanna Bixby-Bryant. She later acquired the remainder of the land and built what is now the Bryant Ranch House.

Actively involved in the operation of the ranch, Susanna Bixby-Bryant lived in the house periodically and later used it as the ranch headquarters. More buildings were built in the 1920s.

As the years went on, Susanna Bixby-Bryant founded a 200-acre botanic garden on the property for the study of native California plants. The garden received national recognition, with mention in such publications as *Sunset Magazine* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

When Susanna Bixby-Bryant died in 1952, the botanic garden was shut down and moved to Claremont, where it still exists.

Susanna Bixby-Bryant's nephew, Ernest Bryant III operated the ranch until 1978 when it sold. Since then, the Bryant Ranch House has remained vacant. Some of the other buildings on the property were destroyed by a fire in the 1980s, while others were demolished.

The Bryant Ranch is still considered an important historical element in the city because it is one of the last remaining examples of early California ranch houses, Erickson said.

"This is the last house standing from the ranch," she said. "And it's one of the oldest buildings in the area."

If the proposed development plan is approved, the society is going to apply for inclusion in the National Register of Historical Places.