

## **CYPRESS. . . A Dairy City**

This summer marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of Cypress, a community with a long and interesting history.

The community of Cypress began to form in the 1890s, as more and more settlers moved into the area on the western edge of Orange County. By 1896 there were enough families to support a school district, so the Board of Supervisors formed the Cypress School District. Cypress trees were popular ornamental trees back then – they grew well in the dry climate here, and were green year-round – in fact, they used to use the green Cypress boughs for Christmas decorations back in the 1890s before we were shipping in Christmas trees from hundreds of miles away.

The town of Cypress itself was founded in 1905 by S.O. Walker, a big landowner in the area, and a major political player back in those days . . . in fact he was said to be the Southern Pacific's man in Orange County back when the railroads played a *major* role in our state politics.

Like a number of Orange County communities, the new Pacific Electric “red car” line was what prompted the founding of Cypress, and the town became one of the original stations on the line from Los Angeles to Santa Ana when it opened up in November of 1905.

But the town really didn't begin to grow until the 1920s, when the county began building a modern highway system through the area – in this case, extending Lincoln Avenue west towards Long Beach. In 1923 Cypress got a new schoolhouse and a newspaper, and in 1927 they got a post office and their first bank down on the southeast corner of Lincoln and Walker, in the heart of downtown.

But still, Cypress remained a pretty rural place on into the 1950s.

Like a lot of areas in western Orange County, a number of dairy farmers began moving down to Cypress from Los Angeles County in the 1940s, as they were being pushed out by new subdivisions up there. Cypress really encouraged the dairy farmers to settle there, and by 1954, nearly half of the county's 165 dairies were located in and around Cypress.

But of course, it wasn't long before the dairies started getting squeezed out down here as well, as Orange County began to grow.

So as we already talked about with La Palma when they had their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year, the local dairymen came up with this idea of incorporating as a city in order to stay rural.

And so, in 1955, you get the City of Dairyland – now La Palma. Then in April of 1956, you get the City of Dairy Valley, in what is now Cerritos, just over the line into Los Angeles County. And finally, in June of 1956, you get Dairy City – the place we know as Cypress today.

The incorporation drive for Dairy City actually followed an earlier plan to incorporate all the area around Los Alamitos, Cypress and Stanton into one big city.

That idea never got very far, so in 1955 the local ranchers went to the Board of Supervisors with a petition to form Dairy City. Pat Arnold – a longtime member of the County Planning Commission and an old time resident in the area, was one of the big boosters, and was elected to the first City Council – there's a school named for him today.

Now the curious thing about Dairy City is that even though it became the City of Cypress, the new city didn't originally include the old *town* of Cypress. Dairy City was actually south and west of Cypress, and didn't include the business district at Lincoln and Walker, or the residential neighborhoods north of there.

But Dairy City did take in most everything else – about four square miles all told. There weren't the sort of boundaries battles we've seen in the incorporation of some of the other West County cities.

When the incorporation finally came to a vote on June 26, 1956, the measure passed pretty easily – 217 to 73. They did have a tie in one race for city council, though. Jacob Van Leeuwen and Martin Olsthoorn both got 134 votes each. So the Board of Supervisors brought them both in and *flipped a coin* to decide the winner – and Van Leeuwen got the job.

They also took a straw vote about the name of the new city. They had been using the Dairy City name all through the incorporation process, but it had finally dawned on them that having Dairy City, Dairy Valley, and Dairyland all right next to each other might get a little confusing.

So they gave the residents four choices – Dairy City, Los Coyotes (after the old Mexican rancho), Lincoln City (after the street), or Cypress – and far and away, the people chose Cypress. Second, by the way, was Lincoln City, and only eight people voted for Dairy City.

But Dairy City remained the official name for more than year, until another election could be held in 1957, to rename the city Cypress.

About that same time they finally annexed old downtown Cypress – though it had lost a lot of its buildings a couple years before when they widened Lincoln Avenue. Not long after that, the city also annexed most of the residential neighborhoods.

Where Dairyland held out for ten years against the subdividers, Cypress only waited four before changing its zoning to allow new residential tracts in the city. Not everyone was happy about that, I might add.

Today, as they celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Cypress has grown from about 1,600 people to a city of nearly 50,000.

But I'm afraid the cows are long gone.