

Depending on how you look at it, 2006 is either the 50th anniversary of the City of Stanton, or its 95th anniversary.

You see, Stanton incorporated twice. The first time was clear back in 1911. Then they did it again in 1956. And both times it's an interesting story.

The story of the original City of Stanton starts early in 1911, when the City of Anaheim secretly obtained an option on the J.M. Gilbert Ranch, southwest of town along Cerritos Avenue. Anaheim was looking for a location for what was politely known as a "sewer farm" back in those days – an open-air spreading ground for the city's, er, ah, *outfall*.

Well, when the word got out, the folks who lived around the Gilbert Ranch weren't very happy (Mr. Gilbert didn't care, by the way – he had moved to Compton by then).

Anaheim said – well, with all our modern technology, septic tanks and all, a sewer farm won't be a menace at all.

Then why don't you have it in your town? The ranchers asked.

Well, it happened that one of the biggest landowners in the area was Phil Stanton. Stanton had just finished a term as Speaker of the California State Assembly, and had just lost the Republican nomination for Governor to Hiram Johnson.

Phil Stanton was one of our major developers in those days. He already had helped in the founding of both Seal Beach and Huntington Beach.

It was Phil Stanton who came to the ranchers' aid. He felt that no city had the right to impose something like a sewer farm on an area that didn't want it.

But what to do about it?

First, Stanton met with the Anaheim city officials and tried to talk them out of it. He even offered them part of his ranch up on Brookhurst as a site. He said he could handle the loss of property value it would bring, but these farmers couldn't.

But Anaheim was adamant. They wanted the Gilbert Ranch.

So Phil Stanton came up with another plan. If the area would incorporate as a city, they could block any sewer farm plans.

Now you have to understand there was no town of Stanton at the time – just a couple of small, crossroads communities. Places you've probably never heard

of like Benedict, Clair, and Magnolia. You see Benedict there, just west of Beach, and Clair over at Magnolia and Cerritos, and the Magnolia School up at Orange Avenue. And there's the Gilbert Ranch, right in the middle. At that time, there were no stores or businesses in the area, just a couple of churches, and a school or two. The area didn't even have a name.

So the ranchers had to pick one – and they decided to name their new city Stanton.

Interestingly at that time, the Board of Supervisors approached this like any other incorporation proposal. They didn't favor Anaheim or Stanton. The Board allowed the process to move along pretty much without much interference.

The City of Stanton's first incorporation election was held on May 23, 1911, with about a 90% turnout. And the measure passed – 76 to 65.

You can see the new city limits on the map here. At about 10 square miles, the new City of Stanton was the biggest city – in area – in all of Orange County . . . despite having a population of only about 750.

They held a big barbeque to celebrate – some sources say it was actually held on the Gilbert Ranch – and as one of their first acts, the new City Council passed a City Ordinance banning all sewer farms.

But Anaheim wouldn't give up. Mr. Gilbert had gotten cold feet in selling to Anaheim by then, but they forced him to complete the sale anyway. They also tried to have the incorporation election set aside by the courts. But it was all no use.

The Benedict townsite along the Pacific Electric tracks changed its name to Stanton, and they started to make some improvements in the area. They finally got a post office, and even a newspaper – the *Stanton Optimist*.

But once the threat of an Anaheim sewer farm had passed, there was little reason to remain a city, and the City of Stanton dis-incorporated in 1924.

Incidentally, this was not a unique story. In 1921, the City of Orangethorpe incorporated between Anaheim and Fullerton to block Fullerton's efforts to establish a sewer farm in the area. The City of Orangethorpe only existed for two years before dis-incorporating.

Now jump ahead to the mid-1950s . . . northwest Orange County was growing like mad, and annexation wars were breaking out all across the area. Incorporated cities like Buena Park and Anaheim were expanding rapidly, and

unincorporated communities like Garden Grove, Cypress, Stanton, Los Alamitos were feeling threatened.

Tract housing was beginning to move into Stanton, and the residents realized that if they didn't do something, they were just going to get swallowed up into one of the neighboring cities – or more likely, into *several* neighboring cities.

So in 1955, the residents of Stanton started circulating petitions for an incorporation election. The original proposal was for a six square mile city, to try and take in as much territory as they could. But the Board of Supervisors, in trying to balance all the different incorporation efforts in the area – this was before LAFCO, remember – cut down Stanton's request to about *one* square mile, an area with a population of about 1,300.

Stanton's second incorporation election was held on May 15, 1956, and it passed 185 to 126. Victor Zuniga, a longtime local businessman, became Stanton's first mayor (there's now a park named after him).

Like most of the rest of Orange County – like all of Southern California, for that matter, in the years after World War II – Stanton experienced rapid growth over the next few years. Here we are looking down around Orangewood and Magnolia, on the edge of town, in 1959.

By 1960, the city had tripled in size, and population had swelled by nearly 900% – from about 1,300 to over 12,000 people. Today, the city is about the same size, but its population has grown to over 38,000 people.

This year the City of Stanton is celebrating its 50th anniversary – and I'm happy to add that the Orange County Archives was able to provide them with photos and even the original incorporation documents to help them highlight their history during the city's anniversary celebration.