

# Federation of Orange County Historical Organizations *Newsletter*

www.ocparks.com/historicalcommission

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## A VISUAL HISTORY OF FLIGHT HAS LANDED AT COURTHOUSE MUSEUM

Fly Now! Aviation Posters from the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum collection has landed in Orange County's Old Courthouse Museum. Forty colorful travel posters dating from 1860 to the present tell the dramatic history of aviation. They also offer a treasure trove of information about the evolution of advertising, business, cultural geography, technology, tourism and transportation. The free exhibit will be on view through April 28 of this year.

Beginning with the late 19th century, these posters herald aviation as a spectator sport featuring balloons, air show barnstormers and exotic performers. Posters from the 1920s highlight the dynamic interaction between people and the technological breakthroughs of early commercial air travel.

Speed, winning time and views unprecedented before aerial photography are the message of late 1930s' airline posters. Indicating acceptance of everyday air travel after aviation's amazing role in World War II, later posters feature destinations rather than airplanes themselves to sell the public on trying flying. These include brilliant vistas from North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

"We are pleased to share this unique and aesthetic angle of history  
*see "Flight" on page 5*

## COUNTY HISTORIAN ELLEN LEE LEFT PRICELESS MODJESKA RESEARCH

*By Doris Walker-Smith, OC Historical Commissioner*

Anyone with an interest in Orange County history is saddened by the January passing of Ellen Lee. Having already distinguished herself as the author of books about early Newport Beach, Ellen took as her special interest the life of Orange County's most famous woman, Polish-American actress Helena Modjeska.

When the home in the canyon named for the internationally acclaimed thespian was acquired by the County of Orange in 1986, Lee was instrumental in the devel-

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*"Ellen Lee was a consummate researcher who  
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until the day before she died."*

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opment of the historical site as a member of the park advisory board. She was also a founding member of the non-profit Helena Modjeska Foundation, formed to support the new Orange County Historical Park. Ellen participated in the successful nomination of the Modjeska House as a National Historical Landmark.

Over the following two decades, Ellen continued to offer her knowledge and historical research, acquiring archive photographs, creating interpretive exhibits and producing a video presentation about the illustrious woman and her home, benefiting visitors to the park and the entire county.

Even while dealing with physical injuries and illnesses, Lee continued to be the "backbone" of the Helena Modjeska Foundation. Her admirable dedication to the county's pioneer history is described by Patricia Plummer of South County Historical Facilities as "the mother lode of Modjeska information."

Ellen had visited Poland twice, as well as various theaters here and abroad where Modjeska had performed; she also interviewed actors with whom she had performed. Said Linda Plochock, president of the Helena Modjeska Foundation: "Ellen Lee was a consummate researcher who continued working with the foundation until the day before she died."

# SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 28TH – "FANDANGO DEL CAÑON"

## The Grand Opening of the Ramon Peralta Adobe Museum "The City of Anaheim - History in the Making"

by Sandra Day

After more than a decade of persevering hope and determination, the delighted members of the Santa Ana Canyon Historical Council will soon realize a long-awaited ambition, the grand opening of the Ramon Peralta Adobe Museum. Indeed, these are exciting times for this modest group of pioneer descendants and historical enthusiasts privileged to impart the story of Orange County's Santa Ana Canyon region in such permanent and significant way.

Built in 1871, this small adobe is the only surviving structure from the era of Spanish and Mexican land grants in the Santa Ana Canyon region and has eluded the destructive elements of various floods, fires, vandalism and even abandonment. Moreover, encroaching suburban developments and the commercial shopping center that now surrounds it has kept it hidden from local residents and hundreds of passing motorists each day for more than 20 years!

Although the historic ranch house will certainly be the most important "artifact" of the museum, collections will include objects and archival materials that are very specific to the region dating from the late 1700's through the 1970's. Also, a most magnificent mural is in process at this time and will be debuted at the museum's Grand Opening Gala.

"Fandango del Cañon," an out-of-doors affair celebrating this historical event is set for the evening of Friday, April 28th and will take place directly in front of the museum's main entrance at 6398 E. Santa Ana Canyon Road (at the corner of Fairmont Blvd in Anaheim Hills). The evening will feature Peralta Hills' very own Molly Mahoney, straight from New York as Mistress of Ceremonies, the dancers of Flamenco Bravo, an authentic Spanish menu, a live auction and a special awards moment for a local 3rd grade classroom. Attendees will also have an opportunity to meet and speak with the museum's artist and muralist, Matthew Southgate.

This is truly a 100% grassroots effort and indeed a monumental achievement of both cultural and historical significance. Indeed, the timing for such an event is most appropriate as the city of Anaheim commences celebratory preparations marking the anniversary of the original land grant 200 years ago and also the sesquicentennial celebration of the city's founding in 1857. I do hope you will join us for an unforgettable evening. Sponsorship opportunities are available. For more information please feel free to contact the undersigned directly.

**Mrs. Sandra A. Day, Museum Project Co-Chairman**  
**Santa Ana Canyon Historical Council**  
<http://www.ocparks.com/peraltaadobe/> • 714-476-2086

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## HISTORICAL COMMISSIONER CAROL JORDAN RECEIVES RECOGNITION FROM COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Carol Jordan received a resolution from the Board of Supervisors on January 31st, 2006 for her 25 years of service. She is one of 15 Board of Supervisors appointees, and has served as both Vice Chair and Chair of the Historical Commission.

Carol H. Jordan became actively involved in local history in 1972 when she researched the history of the Tustin School District. Realizing the need for a local organization to promote history, she helped to organize the Tustin Area Historical Society in 1976. Carol was a co-founder of the Tustin Art Museum, located in an old store building in downtown Tustin. She served as its volunteer curator from 1975 until 1985. She is still active in its operation. When the City of Tustin conducted its Historical Resource Survey, Ms Jordan served as a consultant.

Recognizing her broad interests in Orange County history, Supervisor Thomas Riley appointed Jordan to the Orange County Historical Commission in 1980. During her years of service, she was the chair of the commission in 1991 and 1992 and the long time chair of the education committee.

The Commission advises on matters pertaining to History, Archaeology, Paleontology, and Historic Preservation, including the eight historic parks, Archaeo/Paleo program and the Old Courthouse. She has helped with several history conferences, has chaired various committees.

Her writing credentials include: Tustin Heritage Walk, Tustin History, Faces and Folklore, Take Main Street to Tustin History, Tustin is my Hometown, and articles published in A Hundred Years of Yesterdays, Early Business in Orange County, the Tustin News. She is a frequent speaker for community organizations.

A former teacher, Mrs. Jordan is a native of Pasadena and a graduate of Occidental College. She and her husband, the late William C. Jordan, moved to the Tustin area in 1955. She has three children and five grandchildren. The Historical Commission thanks Carol for her long tenure with the Commission and will miss her at monthly Commission meetings.



## HERITAGE HILL PARK RANGER DAN THOMAS RETIRES

Dan Thomas, the Supervising Park Ranger at Heritage Hill Historical Park in Lake Forest, retired in January. Thomas was a park ranger at Heritage Hill since 1988 and was employed by the county since 1972. He was responsible for the operations at Heritage Hill where the popular Victorian Christmas and Candlelight Tours are held annually.

Thomas was known for making a number of cost effective improvements to resources and visitor services at Heritage Hill. He also made cost effective improvements at other facilities, which he managed including: The Arden-Helena Modjeska Historic House and Gardens — a National Historic Landmark in Modjeska Canyon; Irvine Ranch Headquarters in Irvine; and the Archaeo/Paleo Curation Warehouse in Santa Ana.

During his 34 year long career with the County, Thomas was recognized for his outstanding work and dedication to public service. In 2003, he was named Harbors, Beaches and Parks' employee of the month. The Modjeska Foundation and Amigos de la Colina recognized Thomas for his extraordinary work at a recent farewell gathering. The Orange County Historical Commission presented Thomas with an appreciation award for his work operating the County-owned historic sites in South Orange County.

Thomas and his wife, Veda, who reside in Laguna Canyon, look forward to the arrival of their first grandson and to the many traveling adventures that await them.



### A New Era

Although the staff at Heritage Hill is sad over the loss of their infamous leader, Dan Thomas, they are overjoyed with the promotion of Joannette Willert to this position as Supervising Park Ranger. Joannette brings a variety of outstanding skills to our Park. As the Senior Park Ranger at the Upper Newport Back Bay, Joannette worked hand-in-hand with State, Federal and volunteer agencies. In addition, she has vast experience in interpretive programs, events and exhibits. We welcome her to our historic parks and look forward to a new exciting year with her!

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## VISIT THE MADAME MODJESKA HOME

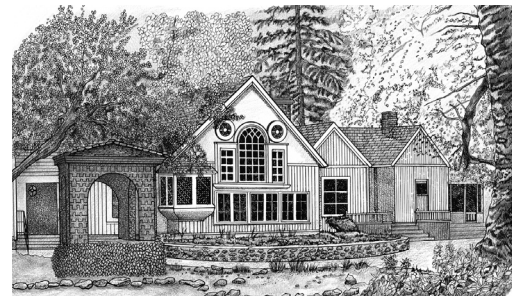
### Volunteers Awarded 2005 State Historic Preservation Award

In an area known for its expanse of new homes in gated communities, is anything still standing that's older than Disneyland?

You bet. But if you're thinking Mission San Juan Capistrano, here's something else to consider: the home of Madame Helena Modjeska. Most of us have heard of Modjeska canyon, and maybe Modjeska Peak which, along with Santiago Peak, create the blue silhouette of Saddleback Mountain. But just who was this Madame Modjeska, anyway?

She Chose America One hundred years ago, everyone knew the answer to that question: Madame Modjeska was one of world's greatest actress, her only rival being the publicity-hungry Madame Sarah Bernhardt. Modjeska, however, craved a peaceful life. After suffering many years of political pressures in her native Poland, Modjeska, her husband and son immigrated to the United States in 1876, eventually deciding on California and renting a house in the town of Anaheim. Once they had visited the eastern foothills, however, they decided to move once more. The white Elizabethan-style home which they occupied from 1888-1906 was built around an original homesteader's cabin and designed by their friend, famed architect Stanford White. Although much of Helena Modjeska's time was spent crisscrossing the United States to fulfill theater obligations, whenever possible she and her husband enjoyed life in the rustic canyon that now bears her name.

Sound like the sort of place you'd like to visit? Unlike Modjeska's friends and family who endured a four-hour buggy ride from the El Toro train station to her estate, you're less than half an hour's drive away. Moreover, tours of the county-owned house and grounds are given by docents four times a month, on alternating Tuesday and Saturday mornings, cost \$5 per person, and may be arranged by calling 949-923-2230.



# ITALIANATE VICTORIAN SEEKS COMMITTED OLD HOUSE LOVER

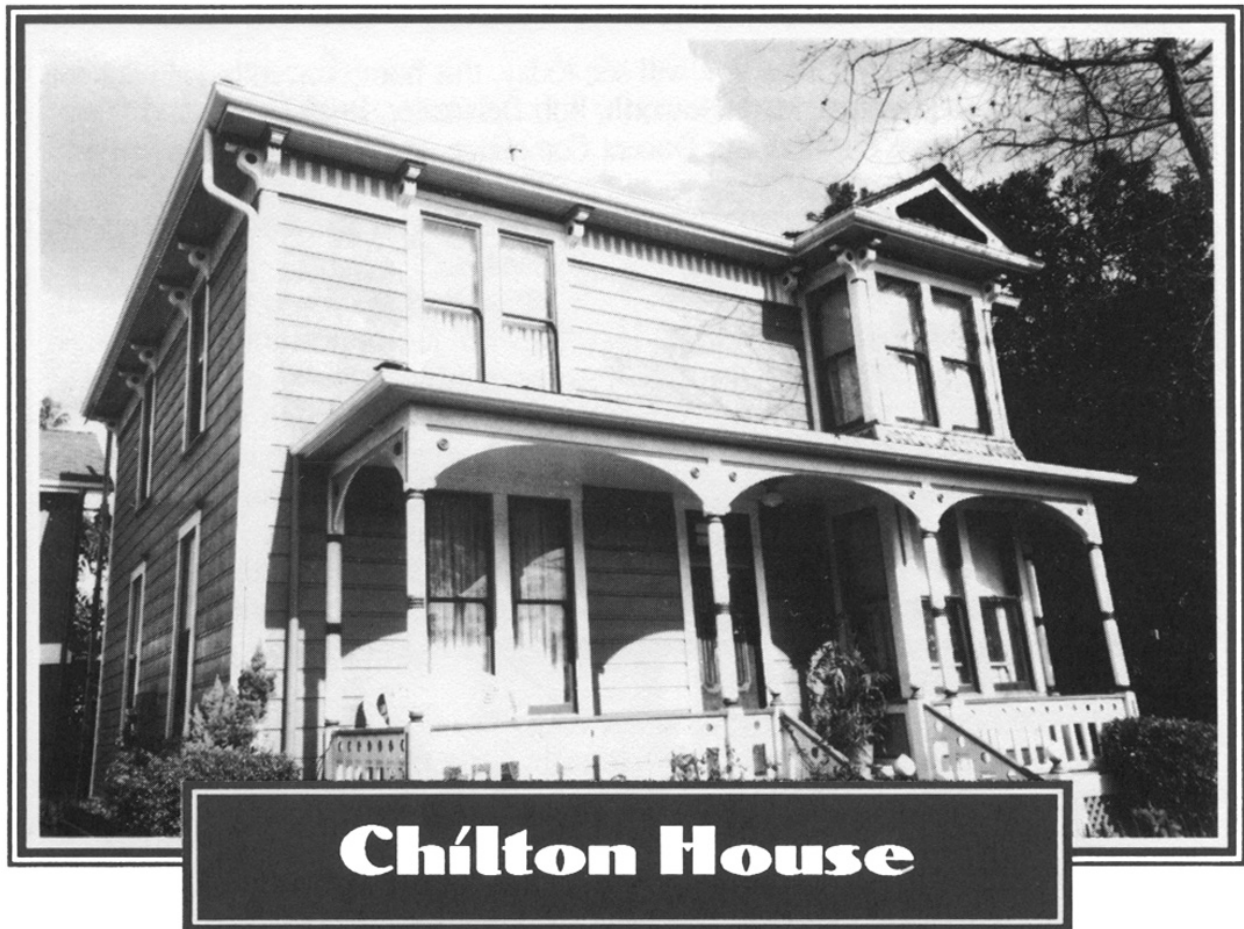
*By Marlene Brajdic*

Less than a dozen two-story Italianate homes remain in Orange County. The Italianate style was popular in the Victorian period between 1875 and 1888. This architectural trend predates the formation of Orange County, and would have been a luxury to the majority of the citizens of the predominantly agricultural community of the time. Robert Francis Chilton, a pioneer banker in Santa Ana, is one prominent citizen who could afford to build and live in a two-story Italianate in 1883.

The Chilton House was originally located at 612 East Sixth Street in Santa Ana. In 1985, Diann and Robert Marsh undertook the relocation of the house to the Historic French Park District at 321 East Eighth Street. The long process of restoration began there in order to bring the old house back to its former grandeur. Diann Marsh served as an Orange County Historical Commissioner during the many years she was involved with the restoration project. She was an artist and architectural historian, accomplished painter, wallpaper hanger and interior designer. Robert Marsh was a skilled sheet metal worker, carpenter, and versatile craftsman. Together, the Marshes saw the potential in the old house and the newly created historic district, where they believed the Chilton House would be protected for future generations.

The Marshes have since moved to an historic town in Illinois. The Santa Ana home that they saved from the wrecking ball and lovingly restored has faced several changes of ownership and the threat of being converted into a rooming house. The hand-painted lincrusta wainscoting, stenciled hardwood floors, Victorian fretwork, period Bradbury and Bradbury wallpaper and other ornamentation are special details of the house. The Marshes' dream of bringing the house back to life as a single family residence was realized, but is now in jeopardy as the house is back on the market.

Having brought the old house up to modern building code with all new systems and having added a basement and office above the garage, the improvements done by the Marshes' may be factors in the home's current appeal for investors. For sale once more, the future of the house is again in question. Let's hope, that Diann and Robert's good efforts lead to the right buyer that recognizes the value of the Victorian Italianate in both its original craftsmanship and in its skilled restoration. It is truly a unique home and deserves to be the center of an old-house lover's home.



*"Flight" from first page*

with the Orange County public and with school classes. For those who have not visited Washington, D.C., it showcases here at home one facet of National Air and Space Museum collections," Marshall Duell, curator of the Old Courthouse, stated.

The Museum is located at 211 West Santa Ana Boulevard in downtown Santa Ana. The courthouse, with its restored courtrooms and interior and museum, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is a facility of Orange County Harbors, Beaches and Parks, and admission is free. The museum can be contacted at (714) 973-6607. Visit its website at [www.ocparks/oldcourthouse](http://www.ocparks/oldcourthouse).



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

Did you know that last fall the California Governor's Award for 2005 was bestowed upon the Helena Modjeska Foundation for "its widely varied activities dedicated to preserving the colorful history of 19th century Shakespearean actress Helena Modjeska"?

If you'd like to be a part of this experience, the docents of the Modjeska House and Gardens will be holding a training session on Saturday, March 18.

Docents typically serve as guides but also may choose to serve on the garden committee or other volunteer projects. So if you enjoy "getting away from it all" and the opportunity to meet new friends and promote and preserve a celebrated historical site, please call 949-923-2230 for more information.

The Federation of Orange County Historical Organizations Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Orange County Historical Commission.

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## EXHIBITS

### Old Courthouse Museum-Exhibit

The Courthouse Museum is located in the landmark Old Orange County Courthouse at 211 W. Santa Ana Blvd., in downtown Santa Ana. The museum is normally open Monday through Friday 9am to 5 pm. For tours or further information, please call the museum at (714) 973-6607 or (714) 973-6610.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 31st Annual California Preservation Conference

Sacramento, CA, April 20-22

### Ramon Peralta Adobe Museum Fundraiser & Grand Opening

April 28 & 29, 2006

### A Hundred Years of Yesterdays

#### Second Edition

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<http://www.ocparks.com/historicalcommission/>  
(714) 973-6609

## IP PHONE SYSTEM

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