NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NP		

RECEIVED MAR I 1 1983

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DATE ENTERED

NAME	TYPE ALL ENTRIES COMPLETE APPI		DECEIVED		
			DECZI	1982	
HISTORIC IRVINE PAR	K				
AND/OR COMMON			OH	P	
Same.	·····				
LOCATION	I				
STREET & NUMBER					
21401 Chap	man Avenue		N/AOT FOR PUBLICATION		
CITY, TOWN	X		congressional distr 40th	ICT	
Orange n	<u>A</u>	VICINITY OF	COUNTY	CODE	
California		06	Orange	059	
CLASSIFIC	ATION				
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENTUSE	
DISTRICT			AGRICULTURE		
BUILDING(S)	PRIVATE		COMMERCIAL	KPARK	
STRUCTURE	вотн	XWORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDEN	
X_SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS	
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	X_YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC	
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATIO	
	$\underline{x}N/A$	N0	MILITARY	OTHER:	
OWNER OF	FPROPERTY				
NAME					
County of (Drange			•	
•	enter Drive Plaza				
CITY, TOWN			STATE		
Santa Ana	N <u>/A</u>	VICINITY OF		2701	
LOCATION	OF LEGAL DESCR	IPTION	<u>, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , </u>		
	01				
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS,	etc. Orange County Ha	ll of Records			
STREET & NUMBER	630 N. Broadway				
CITY, TOWN	050 N. Broadway		STATE		
	Santa Ana		CA 927	02	
REPRESEN	TATION IN EXIST	ING SURVEYS			
TÎTLE					
	f Historical Interest				
DATE		#148900900900900	······	······	
1977		FEDERAL XS	TATECOUNTYLOCAL		
DEPOSITORY FOR	State Office of Histor	ric Preservation, P.	0. Box 2390		
CITY TOWN				05911	
(Sacramento		CA	95811	

7 DESCRIPTION

C	CONDITION 959	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
EXCELLENT ¥GOOD	DETERIORATED RUINS	UNALTERED	XORIGINAL SITE MOVED DATEN/A
FAIR	UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

For more than 120 years Irvine Park has served as Orange County's unofficial "picnic grounds." In 1897 it became Orange County's first regional park. A peaceful canyon setting with magnificent live oaks, natural springs, a creek, a lake and intimate little hollows and gullies, it attracts thousands of county residents yearly. Craftsman style buildings with shingled siding, red-tiled roofs and multi-paned casement windows blend with the landscape. The lake and boat house have been popular attractions since 1913-14. A variety of artifacts including plaques, fountains, a cannon, a mortar stone, and rock walls and fireplaces dot the landscape. The original property comprises 160 acres.

Although the significance of the park spans its use from prehistoric times to the present, the period of development of the park emphasized here is from 1919-1936 when the park took on much of its present form. The Craftsman style buildings were built during that time and the lake, boat house and picnic areas had become well established by this time.

FLORA - Situated in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains, the area developed naturally into a Southern Oak Woodland plant community composed of several hundred examples of species, native black walnut, alder, and other vegetation such as squawbush and poison oak. Core samples indicate that some of the oldest live oaks are approximately 750 years old, and are exceedingly fine examples of these native species. Mature sycamores and live oaks bordering Santiago Creek represent the original inspiration and continuing focus for Irvine Park.

WATER - Santiago Creek begins near the summit of Santiago Canyon and flows Northwest through the park toward the Santa Ana River. Major floods in 1862, 1884, 1916, and 1938 had caused some damage to the creek bed. However, two dams now impound water on Santiago Creek and the creek bed is being restored within its original boundaries. The peaceful lake with its fleet of rowboats, has been a favorite of county residents since it was created from a natural spring and marshland in 1913. The many photographs taken by families and couples of the lake testify to its popularity. The lake is temporarily dry and restoration is under way.

THE BUILDINGS - The buildings listed below are in the process of being restored to their original appearance.

1. Boat house. The Boat house, oldest remaining building in the park, was built in 1914 to provide facilities for boating enthusiasts. It retains its original board and batten siding, doors, windows, concrete bulkheads, footings and trusses. A row of three windows with eight lights each, a lath ventilation grill at top of the gable and board and batten siding will remain as part of the restoration. The south side is entirely open from side to side and to the eaves. The concrete bulkheads and footings, visible through the opening, are the original boat moorings. The roof trusses are in good condition and will remain, but some of the rafters are rotted and are being replaced. The roof has been reroofed with new wood shingles. The bicycle shed, which is attached to the boat house, was built (see continuation sheet)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	А	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	HECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
X1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
X1 900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	\underline{X} _OTHER (SPECIFY)
	i -	INVENTION		Recreational Facility
SPECIFIC DAT		1859 BUILDER/ARCI 1897	HITECT Major Buildin Frederick Ele	-

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Irvine Regional Park is historically significant as Orange County's first regional park, located on land donated by the prominent Irvine family and still containing several fine 1930's era park buildings and structures. A popular picnic locale since the late 1850's, the site was officially donated to the County for use as a public park in 1897. The history and pleasant environment of the mature stands of native live oaks and sycamore which border Santiago Creek have contributed memorable experiences to millions of people who have enjoyed the park over eight decades of recreational use. Among those users have been many people significant in local history. The groves of oaks contain trees estimated at 700 years of age. Major development of the park in the 1930's resulted in the construction of park buildings designed by Frederick Eley, Santa Ana's first registered architect. Road improvements and the construction of riverstone fireplaces, sinks, and embankments were carried out in 1935 and 1936 by the Works Progress Administration. The park retains its wooded landscape, and is currently being rehabilitated in a program that is sensitive to the historical character of the park, its massive oaks, and the functional needs of the 400,000 persons who use the park yearly. The result is a useable, rural park in increasingly urbanized surroundings, but nearly fully retaining integrity of appearance, scale, and feeling to its historic origin.

The park is situated on land that was originally part of the Rancho Lomas de Santiago, a Mexican land grant to Don Teodesio Yorba. In 1860, the land was sold to William Wolfskill, one of California's first commercial orange ranchers. Wolfskill acquired extensive land and cattle during the period of the disintegration of the Mexican Ranchos. He herded the cattle up to the Lomas de Santiago where he built a ranch house for his foreman Joseph E. Pleasants. The oak grove at the time had a spring filled marsh with year-round water in Santiago Creek. The springs supported a varied wild life; grizzlies, brown bears, wolves, pumas.

In 1865 the oak gove was purchased by a consortium of Monterey sheep ranchers. Sole ownership passed to James Irvine three years later becoming a part of his 100,000+ acre spread, The Irvine Ranch. The Irvines and their land holdings have been key elements of Orange County history.

Even though throughout this period the park area was in private hands, the site was always a popular picnic site for the early pioneer families of Santa Ana, Tustin, Orange and Anaheim. The grove became popularly known as "the picnic grounds" and was the site of May Day and Fourth of July gatherings.

After the death of James Irvine, ownership of the huge ranch passed to his son, James Irvine, Jr., who acknowledged the popularity of the "picnic grounds" by giving the 160 acre grove site to the County, October 5, 1897. The Board of Supervisors accepted the donation with Irvine's stipulation that the area be kept

(Continued on continuation sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Archeological Research, Inc., <u>Archaeological and Historical Survey of The Irvine</u> <u>Regional Park</u>, prepared by Helen Smith, Jerry Howard and Marie Cottrell for the <u>Peridian Group - 4/4/77</u>.

County of Orange Environmental Management Agency, <u>Irvine Regional Park, General</u> <u>Development Plan</u> by Peridian Group - 5/1978.

(Continued on attached)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL D	ATA			
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPER	ry <u>160 acres</u>			
QUADRANGLE NAME Orange	and Black Star Cany	von	QUADRANGLE SCA	LE <u>1:24000</u>
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		нц		
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRI follows: Beginning a marked "R7" said "R7" of Subdivision of par LIST ALL STATES AND (t a stake marked "K being the south con	" 23760 feet ner of Lot 3	North, 40° Ea 33, as shown w	ast of a stake upon a certain plat
STATE N/A	CODE	COUNTY	N/A	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
11 FORM PREPARED NAME / TITLE Orange County Historic ORGANIZATION 811 N. Broadway STREET & NUMBER			December DATE (714) 83 TELEPHONE	- 10, 1982 34-5560
Santa Ana CITY OR TOWN			CA 92702 STATE	2
NATIONAL	ATED SIGNIFICANCE OF TH STATE	IS PROPERTY WIT	THIN THE STATE IS LOCAL X	
As the designated State Historic Pro hereby nominate this property for i criteria and procedures set forth by STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFF	nclusion in the National Reg the National Park Service.	ister and certify th		
TITLE State Histori	c Preservation Offic	er		2/1/83
FOR NPS USE ONLY I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS I Allere Contractory of the NATIONAL	PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN Enter		DATE	4/.7/83
ATTEST: CHIEF OF REGISTRATION			DATE	
UTIEF OF REUSIKATION				

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Description - (Continued)

in 1932. All of its existing features will remain, including the roll back doors which shelter the counter area.

2. To the north of the boat house and bicycle shed is a snack bar built in the 1950's. It will be completely remodeled to resemble the craftsman style exhibit hall and restaurant. This structure does not contribute historically to the nomination.

3. The Exhibit Hall (now being called The Pavilion) is a wood -sided, tiletopped, hexagon which started life in 1930 as a museum and, after restoration, will once again serve in that capacity. In each corner, large river rock piers support three wood pillars. Exposed beam ends ring the entire roof line. The shingle siding, casement windows and French doors add significantly to the craftsman style feeling. The cupola imitates the hexagonal shape of the building and sports a skylight at the top. The interior partitions, built in the '40's, have been removed and the red concrete floor is being cleaned.

4. The 30 x 88 foot restaurant is the largest building in the park. It was built in 1931. It, too, has a tile roof, shingle siding, casement windows, and French doors. The roof is a modified hip with exposed beam ends. Thirty inch rock piers supporting twin posts are located between the windows and shingle siding. The shingle siding is being replaced. Casement windows flank picture windows with transoms along the south (front) facade of the building. Two pairs of French doors lead into the restaurant. The east and west facade each feature a bank of casement windows and an exterior door. The north (rear) facade features two sets of five casement windows and an L-shaped kitchen area. The interior has an old-fashioned soda fountain in excellent condition with service bars in three U-shaped areas which form a continuous line. The original stools, once removed, have been re-purchased and will be reinstalled to return the interior almost entirely to its earlier appearance.

5. A covered drinking fountain built in 1931 is a 20 x 20 replica of the other buildings, with four 5-foot high slanted, river rock piers each supporting three heavy posts. The tile roof with exposed beam ends is topped with a metal finial. The sides are open and the river rock drinking fountain is placed in the center.

6. The stage, rebuilt in 1944 after a fire, is 52 feet across and 34 feet deep, having a three-sided rear elevation. It features board and batten siding, some shingle siding, and a red tile roof with boxed beam ends. The stage has a river rock base with a concrete overhang. Sets of five casement windows are placed between each set of river rock piers topped with twin posts. The interior behind the stage contains dressing rooms and rest rooms.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

<u>Description</u> (Continued)

7. A 20 x 35 foot rest room is built in the same style as the other major buildings. A hip roof with exposed beam ends is of red tile. Shingle siding, high casement windows, double hung windows with 4 over 2 arrangement, and transoms over doors contribute to the Craftsman look. The building is receiving new shingles and is being restored.

8. A large restroom was constructed in 1928 in the southern part of the park. It is Mission Revival in appearance, with stucco walls and a truncated hipped tile roof. The wall painting is of the Virgin of Guadalupe and dates from 1977.

9. A smaller (13 x 20 ft.) rest room, also in the process of being restored, is a replica of the building described above as #7.

10. The zoo will have two new buildings built in the style of the exhibit hall and restaurant. The emphasis will now be placed on animals natural to the local habitat.

A variety of smaller artifacts and objects of interest dot the park.

1. Mortar rock. The two-ton Indian mortar rock, approximately six feet across, has rested near the former children's playground since 1925. After being hauled from the Hidden Ranch area by a farmer who planned to display it as a curiosity, it was "rescued" in the middle of the night by county officials who thought it should be in the park. It is surrounded by a six-sided wrought iron fence.

2. Pleasants' Plaque. A plaque honoring Joseph Pleasants' first sighting of Irvine Park in 1859 is located to the east of the Exhibit Hall.

3. Cannon. The cannon, surrounded by a wrought iron fence, is located on the north side of the lake. It was moved from the lawn of the Old County Courthouse on November 5, 1926 in conjunction with the dedication of the Spanish-American War Memorial located behind it.

4. Spanish-American War Memorial. The face of this eleven-foot high monument bears a tablet cast in metal recovered from the U.S.S. Maine. It honors the memory of four Orange Countians who went down with the ship in Havana Harbor in 1898. On the other side of the memorial is a bronze plaque containing the Master Roll of Company L, 7th California Volunteer Infantry, listing every Spanish-American War veteran from Orange County.

5. Irvine Plaque. The plaque, dedicated in 1918 commemorating the gift of Irvine Park by James Irvine, says "Orange County Park/160 acres donated by/James Irvine/1897." It has had three locations and is now on display north of the exhibit hall.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

Description (Continued)

6. A graceful single tier fountain approximately five feet in diameter is located in the center of the park. It was built in the 1920's and is surrounded by a three foot high metal fence.

7. WPA Facilities. The two major picnic areas each contain rock fireplaces, sinks and barbecues, with 6 x 8 inch metal plaques declaring "Built by Works Progress Administration - 1935-1936." One picnic area is near the entrance to the park and the other one is adjacent to the stage.

8. Light standards. The circa 1920's light standards are being refurbished and will be reinstalled.

9. The circa 1930's picnic tables of concrete and wood are being refurbished or replicated and will be reinstalled in the same areas.

10. The rock retaining walls which line the park in several areas add much to the atmosphere. They range in height from eight inches to four feet.

Plans have recently been completed for the restoration of the lake. The perimeters will basically remain the same. A new concrete curb will replace the original one and the lake will be refilled.

Boundaries:

The original 160 acre quarter section which comprised the park is located in Section 18 of the Irvine subdivision. Santiago Creek flows in an easterly direction through the park.

Irvine Park is, for its modern-day visitors, a step back in time and offers a sharp contrast to our contemporary living environments. The huge oaks, large grassy areas, lake, and creek are a reminder of the County's former rural atmosphere. The Craftsman style buildings contribute much to the historic feeling of the park. Although several earlier features and buildings are no longer present, the setting, appearance, and feeling of the park clearly retain a strong measure of integrity to its pre-World War II historic era.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Significance: (Continued)

natural looking and that the oak trees have the fullest care. The spot was rechristened Orange County Park. A custodian, L. D. West, was appointed to ward off sheep herders who watered their flocks at many of the springs and to prevent woodchoppers from cutting down trees.

In an era long before other California counties assumed responsibility for providing for public parks, Orange County assumed responsibility for this large park and began to care for it and preserve it intact for future generations.

Many developments were at first hoped for, including an electric streetcar line to the park and a large tourist hotel at the site. Public funds, however, only covered the more limited improvements of a $1\frac{1}{2}$ story caretaker's cottage, a few outdoor stoves and a couple of "two holers." The park's primary entertainments were softball, strolling and horseshoes.

James Irvine's penchant for horses and hunting dogs led to the formation of the Santiago Hunt Club which frequently sponsored hunt breakfasts in the park. Their quarry, however, more often was coyote and possum than fox. Riding to the hounds in the park fizzled out in the mid 1920's.

A wooden open sided pavilion was constructed around the turn-of-the-century, which became the focal point of speeches and dances. The building stood for 30 years before being replaced.

By 1913, park visitors' demand for refreshments led to the construction of the park's first concession, dispensing coffee, lemonade, and ice cream. This year also saw the construction of the park's most loved amenity. The spring filled marsh was excavated and banked to create a lake. A year later a boathouse was built and eight redwood rowboats were purchased. The boathouse is one of the oldest structures still extant in the park. The lake is still popular for its casual boating.

In 1919, the park was the site of a large celebration honoring the returning war veterans of Orange County. The event brought an estimated 30,000 persons to the park, a little over half of the County's total population of 57,000.

In the same year, the Board of Supervisors engaged a landscape architect to improve the park. Florence Yoch, who had designed the grounds for the Santiago Canyon retreat of Madame Helena Modjeska, The Forest of Arden, was awarded the contract. Among the improvements made at this time were the removal of the "two holers" and the construction of lavatories, Wooden picnic tables were installed in the picnic area and strings of small decorative electric lights were strung over the tables. The lights were run by a small power plant, since commercial power was not brought into the park until the 1920's.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

Significance: (Continued)

The park's natural riparian habitat and winding roads made it a popular site for movie filming in the 20's and 30's. Location shots for <u>Lassie Come Home</u> were filmed there due to the park's resemblance to an English forest. <u>Topper</u> and many other films selected the park for the scenes of car chases on winding roads.

A Spanish-American War memorial, which still exists, was installed on the north side of the lake in 1926 containing a plaque listing all Orange County participants in the war. The plaque was made of salvaged metal from the USS Maine.

Orange County Park was renamed Irvine Park in 1928, and a building program began which set the theme for future construction in the park, structures which today make up the park's architectural character.

Frederick Eley, Santa Ana's first registered architect, was hired to design a complex of buildings in the core of the park. Eley was born and trained in England. He opened his Santa Ana office in 1911 and is remembered for designing many of Santa Ana's leading public buildings, among them the Santa Ana YMCA and Julia Lathrop School. Eley designed an exhibit building, concession store and a new pavilion. All were built with shingle siding, large exposed beams, natural riverstone, and tile roofs. The exhibit building was intended to display items of historical interest and was maintained by the Orange County Historical Society. During the Thirties the roads in the park were paved and riverstone curbs and retaining walls were built along the roads and around the picnic area. Natural riverstone fireplaces and barbeque pits were also constructed by the Works Progress Administration which also cleared the channel of Santiago Creek that passes through the park. A George Whitney was employed to build supports for many of the overweighted limbs of the old oaks. A number of these supports were constructed of riverstone.

The new pavilion which Eley designed was the pride of the County. It featured a $65' \times 90'$ dance floor and a huge riverstone fireplace with a 7 foot opening and an indoor-outdoor stage.

Just after Pearl Harbor, Irvine Park was closed to the public, and it became a military training camp designated as Camp Rathkey. The oaks became camouflage for war games between Camp Rathkey and another training camp in nearby Peters Canyon, Camp Commander. When the park reopened after the war, visitors were disappointed to find that the pavilion had burned down after a camp dance. It was never rebuilt although the outdoor stage has been restored.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

Significance: (Continued)

Since World War II, the park grounds have been impacted by increasing attendance. From 1950 to 1971 additional acreage was added to the park bringing the total acreage of Irvine Regional Park to 477 acres. The park offers a petting zoo, equestrian trails and stables, hiking trails, softball diamond, over 150 barbeque stoves and bicycle rental.

In 1978 the Board of Supervisors approved a park rehabilitation plan which called for a phased program of upgrading which is designed to restore the buildings and improve the park grounds in keeping with the park's historic theme. This development is currently in progress and is slated for completion in mid 1983.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Major Bibliographical References: (Continued)

Les, Kathleen, Santa Ana's Architectural Heritage produced by Santa Ana Historic Survey, 1980.

Men of California 1925/1926, p. 126.

Sleeper, James, <u>Bears to Briquets</u>: A History of Irvine Park 1897-1967. Published by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, 1967.

Newspaper and magazine articles, Santa Ana Register: October 5, 1897, January 15, 1913, May 7, 1913, June 9, 1913, October 21, 1913, October 12, 1967, April 14, 1976. Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer, 2/15/1913, 2/15/1922, 4/5/1913. Southwest Builder and Contractor 2/28/1930, 10/13/1922.

Other:

Orange County Environmental Management Agency, Plans for Construction of Irvine Regional Park Redevelopment prepared by Phillips Brandt Reddick, 1982.

Maps on file with Orange County Environmental Management Agency: Orange County Park Water System, January 1923. Irvine Park Topo Map, pre-1920 Map of Irvine Park, May 1936.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

Georgraphical Data: (Continued)

and Santiago de Santa Ana, recorded in Book 14 at page 17 of Miscellaneous Records of Los Angeles County, thence North 40° East 2640 feet to a stake marked "K6"; thence at right angles South, 50° East, 2640 feet to a stake marked "HCK"; thence at right angles South, 40° West 2640 feet to a stake marked "HCK"; thence at right angles N. 50° West 2640 feet to the point of beginning and containing 160 acres.



IRVINE PARK 21401 Chapman Avenue



