

History of the Founding of Monte Vista Water District

From the days when the Serrano Indians witnessed the appearance of the first white men, water has played an important role in the growth and development of the Monte Vista Land Tract.

The Stream of the Sycamores

Captain Juan Bautista de Anza led a group of 34 men up the inland route from Tubac, Mexico on their way to the San Gabriel Mission in an attempt to blaze an overland trail. After crossing a desert area, they found a cool, crystal clear stream of water. After camping for the night, and prior to continuing on their long journey, de Anza carved some initials on a large sycamore tree and named the stream, "Arroya de los Alisos," which means "Stream of the Sycamores." Later it became known as the San Antonio Creek.

Two years later, he led a larger party of 240 settlers on the now-established Overland Route to their destination of San Francisco, the city which he founded. Again, the travelers camped at the Stream of the Sycamores.

The Overland Route, the same one used by the Southern Pacific Railroad, was active until 1781 when Indian uprisings deterred travel, but was re-activated in the early 1800's when priests began traveling from the San Gabriel Mission to the Chapel in Redlands. Once again, the Stream of Sycamores was a favorite camping site.

The Settlers Arrive

The first U.S. citizen to visit the area, now known as Montclair, was also the first American to travel overland to the Pacific Ocean. Twenty-eight-year-old Jedediah Strong Smith, carrying a Bible and a gun, headed a fur-trapping party of 18 men from Utah, including Kit Carson and Isaac Williams. Williams later married the daughter of Antonio Maria Lugo, the Don of Rancho Santa Ana del Chino.

During the gold rush of 1849, prospectors came through the Chino Rancho for rest and food. By the last quarter of the 18th century, the Indians were re-located to reservations, and the ranchos were divided. Homesteaders began to trickle into the valley.

The Stream of the Sycamores was reported to have flooded the area in 1894. Trees were uprooted and huge boulders rolled down from the mountains. The main course of the creek was near Mills Avenue, where the Flood Control Channel is now located.

In 1897, the township of Marquette was established with land open to the public. Pioneers came. Some did not succeed. Some stayed, others left. Marquette died out, but from the San Antonio Creek came life. Settlers found the area full of grey rock to build their homes.

In the early 1900's a Los Angeles land developer, Emil Ferth, named his land the Monte Vista Land Tract, (the Spanish words "Monte Vista" mean "mountain view"), which consisted of 1,000 acres, extending from the wash on the north to the railroad tracks to Phillips and State Streets.

The Settlement of Narod

A modern young settlement of 15 families was established that became known as Narod, in honor of the Sante Fe Railroad's superintendent, whose name was reversed to provide a distinctive moniker. Narod had a dry goods store, a hotel, a packing house and the Little White Church of Narod, built by Charles Wright, one of the original settlers. The railroad lines made Narod a stopping station because a water well had been developed. The settlers began to farm and supplied neighboring stores with vegetables, melons and sweet corn.

The Citrus Industry is Born

Around 1906, orange groves were created from seedlings and were budded, a process that took two years. Two pumping plants provided water along with cisterns. From 1911 on, the area began to grow with water aiding in development. One of the first things a homesteader had to do was to build a windmill to have fresh water. The wash tub and bath tub were installed in the windmill for washing clothes and taking baths. Farmers would build reservoirs on the high side of their groves to allow water to come into their homes by gravity. One farmer made all the cement pipe that extended from his reservoir to the house. He even had flush toilets. In the summer months, hot water came from a solar heater on the roof, and in winter, hot water came from coils of pipes in the fire box of the wood range.

Floods and Freezes Bring Challenges to the Citrus Industry

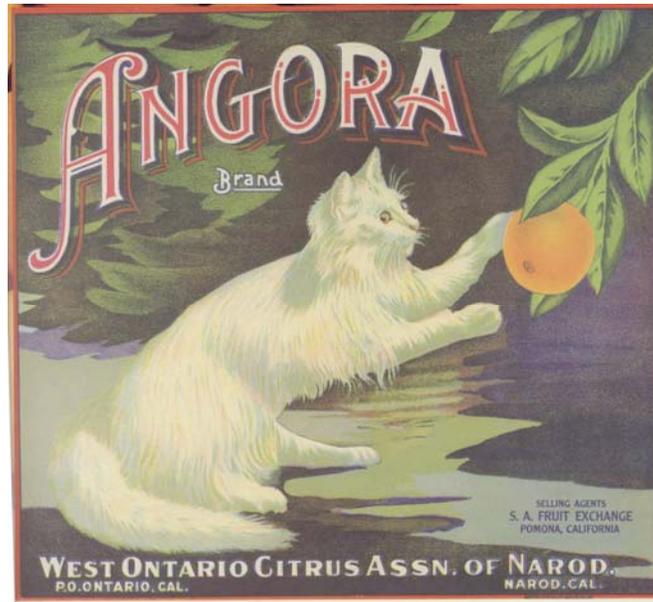
1913 was a disastrous year. A month of severe cold killed all the young orange trees. The larger ones survived, but the frozen oranges and leaves fell off. The following spring, the farmers had to borrow money and re-plant the young groves.

While the land tract grew, the area surrounding the creek remained sparse due to its constant flooding. A flood in 1916 was even more severe than the one in 1894. Fallen trees served as temporary dams and altered the course of the waters from the creek. It was reported that the San Antonio Creek was diverted and flowed down Monte Vista Avenue until summer.

Windmills with overhead tanks were common south of Holt Boulevard where shallow wells were prevalent. Cisterns filled from an irrigation supply provided water north of Holt Blvd.

By 1919 some water was provided by the Del Monte Water Company with users purchasing shares. Domestic water and telephone service came from Pomona. Electricity came from Ontario. Another big freeze occurred in 1922 and once again killed all the fruit in the area.

By 1927, the Monte Vista Land Tract was covered with beautiful orange and lemon groves. Homes were at least a half a mile from each other. Residents of the area were drinking irrigation water that was stored in their own cisterns located at the highest part of the groves. Water was run from small water lines to their homes, giving running water at about five pounds pressure.



The Need for a Domestic Water System

The residents of the Narod District, situated between the cities of Pomona and Ontario, from the Santa Fe Railway on the north and the Chino Ranch line on the south, were unhappy with the water supply and lack of fire protection. A group of men in the area came to the conclusion that the Limited Mutual Water Company, that delivered irrigation water to the groves, should also furnish domestic water. The group was led by Mr. C. Earl Wetherbee, secretary of the Limited Mutual Water Company which served an area from Eighth Street (Arrow Highway) on the North, Central Avenue on the West, Benson Avenue on the East and San Bernardino Avenue on the South.

Several irrigation companies, Palomares Water Company, the Monte Vista Water Company, the Century Water Company, Monte Vista Irrigation Company and several private wells, served an area bounded by the Santa Fe Railroad on the North, San Bernardino County line on the West, Benson Avenue on the Ontario city limits on the East and Francis Avenue on the South.

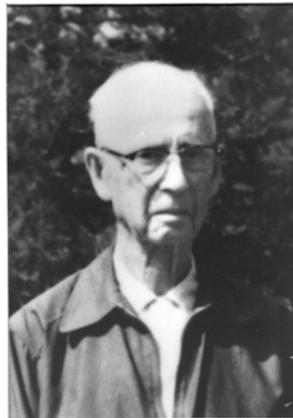
When the people in the area not served by the Limited Mutual Water Company heard about the idea of serving domestic water through regular domestic mains, they wanted to be included.

On March 28, 1927 in Narod, a meeting was attended by C. Earl Wetherbee, John Swenson, B. Bliss, O. Neer, G. Johnson and William Hartley, secretary of the West Ontario Citrus Association. Mr. Johnson outlined the plans for the proposed water system for the Narod District.

On April 4, 1927, 30 property owners attended a meeting where James E. Sellers of Sellers, Latker & Associates, consulting engineers and accountants of Los Angeles, presented his engineering data from his investigations. He envisioned a water system for an area of 3,400 acres that would cost about \$100,000.

The Narod Water Committee

The Narod Water Committee was formed to study the proposal and to see if the cost could be reduced. The Narod Water Committee was comprised of: R.K. Pitzer, George W. Naftel, C. Earl Wetherbee, George Patazin and William Hartley.



C. Earl Wetherbee

A meeting was conducted at the Narod Packing House with Mr. Wetherbee elected as chairman and Mr. Hartley as secretary. Mr. Sellers and Mr. Johnson presented an itemized outline of the cost of the items included in the domestic water system. The committee recommended that the plan as outlined be presented to the residents of Narod District.

Letters were sent announcing a May 12, 1927 meeting for interested residents to learn about the proposed water system and requesting the residents' position on obtaining service. The residents were also asked to provide information on where they received water (Ontario or Pomona) and how many members in their family unit.

Stating the Case for a New Water System

A letter announcing the meeting outlined the purpose of the water system, its cost (\$60,000) and its benefits:

- ◆ Unlimited supply of water at 40 to 60 pounds of pressure
- ◆ Fire hydrants with sufficient amount of water at high pressure to reach any fire
- ◆ Better domestic water supply throughout the entire District
- ◆ Better fire protection to your home and property
- ◆ The assurance of plenty of water, night and day, summer and winter without fear of any water shortage
- ◆ Absolute protection to your water rights for future development

“Under the present arrangements, we cannot hope for any improvement because we are situated between the cities of Pomona and Ontario, and we are too far from either city to expect better service without considerable expense to both cities,” the letter stated.

The cost of the system would be paid for out of earnings received from the sale of water to consumers within the District. “You do not pay one penny except for the amount of water you use,” the letter explained. Cost of water: 10 cent increase on 600 cubic feet used and 25 cent increase for 1,000 cubic feet used.

Albert E. Tate offered a motion to accept the presented proposal. Results of the standing vote: 70 yes; 0 no. Cards returned indicated 72 families yes; three no.

Monte Vista Water District is Chosen as Name for New Water District

Up until this time, the name of the new water district was the Narod Water District. Sometime between May 12 and June 1, the name Narod was changed to Monte Vista County Water District.

A letter and petitions were sent to the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors along with a map of the proposed water district, requesting permission for the establishment of the Monte Vista County Water District.

The County granted the holding of an election on August 11, 1927 at which time 122 supported the formation of the water district with three voting in the negative.

Incorporation and Early District Development

- August 22, 1927** Monte Vista County Water District declared duly incorporated.
- November 10, 1927** Board of Directors Election at the office of the West Ontario
Elected to serve were: C. Earl Wetherbee, George W. Naftel,
Owen V. Barr, Albert E. Tate and Victor C. Weeks
- December 19, 1927** First meeting of the Board of Directors of Monte Vista County
Water District was held at the office of the West Ontario Citrus
Association
First Action: Election of Officers:
C. Earl Wetherbee, Chairman
Appointed William Hartley as Secretary
Other Actions: Contracted a consulting engineer, James E. Sellers
Authorized the engineer to arrange for a public
hearing for the proposed bond election for \$75,000

Instructed Mr. Sellers to meet with the cities of
Ontario and Pomona to negotiate purchase of
pipelines, fittings, meters and services in use in the
new District and owned by the cities

Authorized placement of advertisements requesting
applications for workers.
- February 28, 1928** Election to authorize issuance of general obligation bonds for
\$75,000 at the interest rate of 5% per year, payable semi-
annually. Votes: 122 yes; 2 opposed.
- April 1928** Voted to purchase 60 shares in the Limited Mutual Water
Company at \$100 per share.

Lincoln Kreig hired as Board Secretary and Field Superintendent,
after resignation of William Hartley, at a salary of \$135 a month.

Bid accepted for construction of 250,000 gallon reservoir for
\$4,536.
- May 1928** Customers requested to sign an application for water service.
Meters installed free of charge.

Lines and services purchase from Consolidated Water Company of Pomona.

Office space leased in a storeroom under the Narod Apartments at the corner of State Street and Central Avenue.

November 1928

Sold 3, 510, 000 gallons of water for domestic use
West Coast Pipe and Steel Company completed work on main lines and service lines

October 1929

750,000 gallon reservoir constructed; total District storage capacity:
1 million gallons