

California Citrus State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(951) 780-6222**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact interp@parks.ca.gov.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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California Citrus State Historic Park
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*Grassy, tree-shaded
areas evoke a quieter
time—an era when the
American dream might
be found in a leafy
evergreen grove, heavy
with golden fruit.*



Visitors to California Citrus State

Historic Park are greeted at the park entrance by a replica of an old-fashioned roadside fruit stand. This charming “big orange” structure, on the corner of Van Buren Boulevard and Dufferin Avenue in Riverside, recalls an era that forever changed the landscape of Southern California. The park dedicates over half of its 250 acres to what was once the universal symbol of California’s role in agriculture—the citrus groves.

Of all the crops that constitute California’s

agricultural legacy, juicy golden oranges conjured an image of romance, prosperity, and abundance. Warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters provide perfect growing conditions. Between the late 1800s and the early 1900s, the groves spread across Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange, Los Angeles, and Ventura counties, and into the Central Valley. This second California “gold rush,” combined with innovative methods of irrigation, fruit processing, advertising, cooperative marketing, and railroad transportation, helped establish California’s image as the land of sunshine and opportunity.



Old-fashioned orange stand replica

NATIVE PEOPLE

The area that is now Riverside County was inhabited for centuries by diverse native peoples, including Serrano, Luiseño, Gabrielino-Tongva, Cupeño, Chemehuevi, and Cahuilla. California Indians traveled seasonally from village to village, following their food sources and trade routes. They maintained reciprocal relationships with neighboring tribes that enabled them to trade foods and raw materials for tool making. Acorns, elderberries, yucca stalks, and agave roots were staples in diet.

Destructive policies by the U.S. government and public prejudice towards California

Indians led to a decline of Native Americans working in the citrus industry. However, the 1903 move of Sherman Indian Institute to Riverside reestablished a workforce of native people.

The school's "Outing System," a controversial program supposed to provide vocational training to California Indian students, essentially offered cheap labor to local businesses. Hundreds of these students at Sherman Indian Institute worked in the citrus industry until the end of the program in the 1930s.

Since then, California Indians have been recovering from their historical

trauma, honoring their cultural traditions, and contributing as vital community members.

CREATING THE CITRUS INDUSTRY

The mission padres planted the first Mediterranean varieties on the grounds of Mission San Gabriel around 1803. Emigrant Kentucky trapper William Wolfskill developed more acreage from seedlings he obtained in 1841. In the mid-to-late 1800s, lemon, lime, and orange trees grew in today's downtown Los Angeles.

Then, in 1873, Eliza Tibbets of Riverside obtained two young Bahia, or Washington navel orange trees, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Moro blood oranges



Harvesting oranges, ca. 1900

The Brazilian native orange was sweeter and more flavorful, had no seeds, and its thick, easily peeled skin protected it during shipping. Today nearly all of the Washington navel orange trees grown in California are descended from these two original trees, one of which still grows at the intersection of Riverside's Arlington and Magnolia Avenues.

THE WORKFORCE

In the late 1800s, Chinese labor contractors hired Chinese workers to replace the California Indian workers. By 1885 nearly 80 percent of the labor force was Chinese. Their considerable horticultural skills and knowledge made citriculture enormously successful. However, a climate of anti-Chinese sentiment, as well as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, caused their numbers to dwindle.

With fewer Chinese available, Japanese

immigrants moved in to fill the need. By 1900 Riverside's citrus industry employed about 3,000 Japanese workers, hired through Japanese labor contractors.

Between 1900 and 1920,

Japanese were the largest labor group in the citrus industry. However, anti-immigrant sentiment also drove them out. Around 1919, Hispanic workers began to arrive, along with other immigrant nationalities. They

came with their families and formed communities wherever they worked. By the mid-1940s, Hispanics constituted approximately two-thirds of the citrus industry's labor force. Women were the mainstay in the packing houses while men tended the citrus groves.

IRRIGATION—THE GAGE CANAL

Lured by land promoters and Southern California railroads, the dreams of large and small investors took root in the California soil. Riverside, a pioneer agricultural settlement, was established in 1870 by the Southern California Colony Association.



Restoring a citrus landscape



The Gage Canal

To quell conflicts over water, the newly formed Riverside Water Company began an irrigation canal between the Santa Ana River and Riverside. In order to gain title to 640 acres on which he had filed a claim, Canadian jeweler Matthew Gage was given three years to bring

water to the land.

Between 1885 and 1889, he built a canal 11.91 miles long from the Santa Ana River in San Bernardino and later extended it an additional 8.22 miles. The flume of the original canal (later replaced by the Mockingbird Canyon Dam) crossed Mockingbird Canyon. The canal doubled the citrus-producing

area of Riverside and still supplies water to local citrus ranches and the groves of California Citrus State Historic Park.

Between 1891 and 1893, growers united to form cooperative organizations for marketing citrus. By 1908 a partnership between the



Modern packing house



Packing house, ca. 1900



Artistic crate label

California Fruit Growers Exchange (later Sunkist) and the Southern Pacific Railroad launched advertising campaigns to promote the sale of citrus in the Midwest and Eastern U.S. markets. Among the most enduring creations of the citrus industry were crate labels.

Though packing companies introduced the labels to identify their particular products, buyers soon began ordering fruit by specific labels. The labels, designed by some of the era's best artists, became more and more ornate—reaching their peak between 1900 and 1930. Today these works are collectible, garnering top dollar for rare originals in prime condition.

TODAY AND BEYOND

California Citrus State Historic Park opened in August 1993 as a living historical museum reflecting the citrus industry heritage. Nearly 200 acres of citrus groves managed by the Friends of California Citrus Park produce navel and Valencia oranges, grapefruits, and lemons. Revenues generated under a nonprofit management agreement help fund new facilities and programs and maintain the citrus groves in the park.



Tour group at orange sizer

The income-producing groves also provide a backdrop for the palm-tree-lined trails, walkways, entryway, and picnic areas. The Varietal Grove features at least 75 varieties of citrus.

The Sunkist Visitor Center/Museum, open Fridays–Sundays, has exhibits on the significance of the citrus industry as well as a sales area. The park is open daily, with extended hours in summer. Visitors may take self-guided tours daily or a guided tour on weekends. Call (951) 780-6222 to schedule guided tours for schools or large groups.

This “park within a park” reflects typical building design and landscaping of the early 1900s, with Craftsman/California Bungalow-style structures. Grassy, tree-shaded areas evoke a quieter time in a leafy evergreen grove, heavy with golden fruit.

Future plans include re-creation of the key components of the historic citrus industry and expanded interpretive programs.



NATURAL FEATURES

The terrain is somewhat hilly, with elevations ranging from 920 to 1,060 feet above sea level. The Mockingbird Canyon arroyo—a drainage tributary to the Santa Ana River—bisects the park, abutting foothills to the south. Approximately one-third of the park remains in its natural state before the citrus boom.

The most common native growth along the river bottom wash of Mockingbird Canyon is willow and mule fat scrub. Non-native plant species such as eucalyptus and giant reed also exist here. Typical species in the upland portions of the canyon include



Visitor Center



Red-tailed hawk

California sagebrush, several species of buckwheat, blue elderberry, miner's lettuce, nightshade, and desert thorn.

WILDLIFE

Though the natural ecosystem has been affected by the citrus

industry, the reservoir and year-round irrigation water attract waterfowl and other species that would normally visit only seasonally. The dry wash in Mockingbird Canyon shelters brush rabbits and bobcats. Raccoons, striped skunks, kangaroo rats, and coyotes are also found here. Red-tailed hawks, California quail, hummingbirds, and roadrunners are common.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Sunkist Center is open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Visitors may also explore the trails, have a picnic, and attend a Junior Ranger program or an Urban Campfire.

The Sunkist Center, set in citrus groves and rose gardens next to a courtyard and gazebo, is also available for weddings, reunions, special events, and meetings.

The group picnic area typifies the look and ambience of the pre-World War II period—peaceful, natural, and conducive to family picnicking and strolling under the trees. An outdoor amphitheater and interpretive gazebo provide a backdrop for open-air presentations and special events. See www.parks.ca.gov/calcitrus for details.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- The Sunkist Center area and gazebo (approaches may require assistance)
 - The visitor center and back patio
 - Restrooms and drinking fountains
 - The stage area in the interpretive gazebo/ amphitheater
 - The concrete Knoll Trail and trail to viewpoint behind the visitor center
 - Decomposed granite walkways between points are from 200 to 400 feet long.
- Accessibility is continually improving.

For the latest updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Chino Hills State Park
4721 Sapphire Rd., Chino Hills 91709
(951) 780-6222
- Lake Perris State Recreation Area
17801 Lake Perris Drive, Perris 92571
(951) 940-5600/5603



Gazebo and rose garden

This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact:
Friends of California Citrus Park
P.O. Box 21292 • Riverside, CA 92516



California Citrus
State Historic Park



Legend

- Paved Road
- Accessible Paved Trail
- Trail
- No Public Access
- Accessible Feature
- Drinking Fountain
- Exhibits
- Gate
- Group Picnic Area
- Park Building
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Viewpoint

PLEASE REMEMBER

- The park is open daily, but park hours vary seasonally. For park and visitor center hours, see www.parks.ca.gov/calcitrus.
- All features of the park are protected by law. Visitors may sample citrus fruit only on interpretive tours; the taking of fruit, plants, or trees is prohibited.
- Stay on designated trails and paths at all times.
- Access to working citrus groves is prohibited. Please stay out of these work areas.
- Dogs must be on a leash no longer than six feet and must be under control at all times.
- Alcohol is not allowed in the park except by special-event permit.



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