

CALIFORNIA CITRUS STATE HISTORIC PARK

RIVERSIDE - Not many years ago, Citrus was King in California.

In the 1930s, huge plaster orange roadside stands sold fresh-squeezed juice along California's Highway 99, signifying the importance of citrus in the California economy. Citrus was brought to California in the 1700s by Spanish missionary fathers who planted Mediterranean-type sweet orange trees around the missions. In the early 1900s, an effort to promote citrus ranching in the state brought would-be citrus ranch barons flocking to California to cash in on the citrus industry and the "California Dream". The second "gold rush" began.

That era is being recaptured at California Citrus State Historic Park located in the Arlington Heights/Lake Matthews area of Riverside. This unique historic park tells the far-reaching story of the citrus industry and its role in the history of California.

The concept of a Citrus Park was created in 1982 when the State Park and Recreation Commission recommended funding. In 1987, cooperative planning for the park took place, involving the State, the City of Riverside and a team of consultants. Phase I of five planned construction phases was completed in 1993 and the park was open to the public.

The Riverside location was chosen because it has views of citrus groves in a historically significant location providing the ideal environment in which to interpret the nature and significance of California's citrus industry. Due to the rapid industrialization of Southern California, relatively few areas remain in citrus production. This area chosen for the park still continues to produce high-quality fruits.

The park is approximately one and one-half miles southeast of the 91 Freeway at Van Buren and Dufferin Avenues, encompassing Mockingbird Canyon reservoir, a portion of the historic Gage Canal, and some 180 acres of working citrus groves. The park contains approximately 377 acres.

Palm-lined streets in and around the park are a significant part of the cultural and esthetic resources of the site. A series of hillocks, or knolls, in the park are encircled by some of these palm-lined roadways from the 1920s, which had been planned to lead to home sites on top of the knolls. The homes of wealthy growers were never built on these knolls, but the roadways remain.

For more information, contact California Citrus State Historic Park at (909) 780-6222.

#