

# THE KU KLUX KLAN AND RACIAL TENSIONS BEFORE WWII

**ON AUGUST 1, 1889**, the California legislature passed a bill authorizing a portion of rural agricultural Los Angeles County to form a new county named "Orange." As the agricultural landscape shifted from grape growing and hog farming to citrus groves, the political landscape also shifted. During the first half of the 20th century, the Ku Klux Klan built a stronghold in the county, most notably in Anaheim. By the mid-1920s, racist and antisemitic sentiments increased with propaganda, and Klansmen were comprised of prominent members of the community. Klansmen often used the respect of their powerful positions to influence others to join their local Ku Klux Klan units, called Klaverns. In the 1930s, racial segregation and discrimination became visible in daily life activities including schools, public swimming pools, theaters, and restaurants. Multiracial tensions continued to heighten on the precipice of impending war to uphold racial hierarchies.

1. **MAP OF ORANGE COUNTY.** Hand colored map on 4 sheets. Finley, S. H. and H.S. Crocker & Co. San Francisco, 1889. Courtesy of Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington.

August 1, 1889, Orange County officially seceded from Los Angeles County. By World War II, the following Orange County cities had been incorporated: Brea, Fullerton, Huntington Beach, La Habra, Laguna Beach, Newport Beach, Placentia, San Clemente, Seal Beach, and Tustin.

2. **HARVESTING VALENCIA ORANGES.** Valencia, California. ca. 1930. Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. Security Pacific National Bank Collection. Courtesy of Los Angeles Public Library.

Orange County is said to have been named after the citrus fruit in an attempt to promote immigration from the East Coast, suggesting a semi-tropical paradise. Before World War II, Orange County had millions of orange trees and California citrus was considered the "second gold rush," though today only a few citrus trees remain.

3. **AERIAL VIEW OF ORANGE GROVES AND OIL FIELDS NORTH OF HUNTINGTON BEACH.** Huntington Beach, California. ca. 1920. California Historical Society Collection, 1860-1960. Courtesy of the USC Libraries Special Collections.

Orange County remained largely rural during the first half of the 20th century, with its economy rooted in agriculture, particularly citrus crops. The Hewes Ranch, for example, was located in the Foothill District of Orange County. Its crops included oranges, lemons, and avocados. The aerial view of Huntington Beach circa 1920 shows views of orange groves and oil fields.

4. **TABLES SHOWING THE RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND RACIAL COMPOSITION**

**OF ORANGE COUNTY AND CALIFORNIA BETWEEN 1890-1930.** Christopher N. Cocoltchos. *The Invisible Government and The Viable Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Orange County, California During The 1920's*. University of California, Los Angeles, 1979.

According to the decennial census in 1920, Orange County was an overwhelmingly White and Protestant population and Blacks, Japanese Americans, and Chinese Americans each made up a fraction of the overall population of the county. Note that Hispanics are not a racial category in the 1920 census, but instead were considered White. However, in 1930, following a rise in immigration dating back to the 1910 Mexican Revolution, the Census Bureau added a new "Mexican" race category. This new category resulted in a smaller number of Whites reflected in the 1930 census for Orange County.

**IN THE 1920S, GROUPS SUCH AS THE KU KLUX KLAN (KKK)** gained a foothold in Orange County cities, particularly in Anaheim. The Klan targeted not just Blacks, but also Jews, Catholics, and foreigners. They found a sympathetic audience as the United States shifted from a rural agricultural society to an urban industrial society.

In Anaheim, members of the Klan were elected to political office in 1924 and the Klan became more overt in announcing its presence and power in the city: "The Invisible Empire's increasingly overt involvement in the community was dramatically demonstrated at a mammoth open air rally and initiation ceremony at Anaheim City Park on July 29, 1924."

Anaheim was promoted as a model Klan city. 10,000 Klansmen from across Southern California attended the initiation ceremony for 1,000 new Klansmen at Anaheim City Park on July 29, 1924. Anaheimers, in reaction to this display, worked to destroy the Klan, leading to its political downfall in 1925.

Christopher N. Cocoltchos. "The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*. Edited by Shawn Lay. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

5. **NEWSPAPER CLIPPING.** Jess La Tour. "A Brief History of the Ku Klux Klan in Orange County: Notes on the Banality of Evil." *Fullerton Observer*. January 7, 2019.
6. **KU KLUX KLAN MEMBERS IN AUTOMOBILE ADVERTISING LECTURE AT ANAHEIM CHRISTIAN TABERNACLE.** Circa 1924-1925. Courtesy of the Anaheim Public Library.  
Lectures hosted by the Ku Klux Klan were open to the public and anyone could attend. The intent was to encourage people to join the Anaheim Klavern.
7. **ANTISEMITIC PROPAGANDA.**

- a. *Williams Intelligence Summary*. July 1949. Volume 1, Number 8.
- b. *Williams Intelligence Summary*. September 1949. Volume 1, Number 8.
- c. House Inquiry Asked Into Attacks on Jews. *New York Times*. August 18, 1951. Page 6.

“The Williams Intelligence Summary” was an antisemitic newsletter published by Major Robert H. Williams from December 1948 to March 1958 in Santa Ana, California. While the Ku Klux Klan’s presence in Orange County had diminished since the 1920s, racist and antisemitic propaganda continued to find avenues for expression. In 1951, Congressman Samuel Yorty of California asked the House Un-American Activities Committee to investigate Williams’ antisemitic propaganda.

**THOUGH OVERT KLAN ACTIVITIES WERE LESS PREVALENT** in Orange County than in other parts of the country, displays of power and racist statements were common.

**Allan Fainbarg**, a founder of the Jewish Community Foundation of Orange County who grew up in Orange County, remembers seeing a Klansman in 1929.

“I remember one time around 1929, there was a Ku Klux Klansman on horseback that came to downtown Santa Ana, right down Fourth Street, and I remember the chief of police went and grabbed the leader of the Ku Klux Klan and unveiled him and it was a prominent businessman in town here. I do not want to mention his name, but I recall it very vividly. Another example of antisemitism was a fellow named Williams who put out newsletters and pamphlets and was very well-known during the late 40s and 50s.”

In “An Interview with Allan Fainbarg,” *Jewish Pioneers of Orange County: The Jewish Community of Orange County, California from the 1850s-1970s*. Edited by Dalia Taft. Western States Jewish History, 2012.

8. **ALLAN FAINBARG**. Deepa Bharath. “Memorial on Thursday for Allan Fainbarg, ‘the most important Jewish citizen Orange County has ever had’” *Orange County Register*, March 4, 2015. Photo courtesy of the Fainbarg Family.
9. **THE FAINBARG FAMILY, SANTA ANA, 1921**. *Jewish Pioneers of Orange County: The Jewish Community of Orange County, California from the 1850s-1970s*. Edited by Dalia Taft. Western States Jewish History, 2012. Courtesy of the Orange County Jewish Historical Society.

Allan is seated on his father’s lap.

**Constance Farlice Duffy**, who was born in Santa Ana in 1922 and whose father was the first African American to purchase a home in Santa Ana, comments on a general awareness of

the Klan.

**"Your dad was aware of the Klan** because the Klan was very strong in the mid-1920s. Did he talk to you about the Klan?

**Nothing. I just knew that it was** something that hated us. The only people I might have known would be the fathers of some of my classmates, and naturally they're not going to say anything to me. So I never knew anybody that was a member. My dad knew the members and knew who they were."

*In "Growing Up in a Small Black Community," A Different Shade of Orange: Voices of Orange County, California, Black Pioneers. Edited by Robert A. Johnson and Charlene Riggins. Fullerton: California State University, 2009.*

10. **CONSTANCE FARLICE DUFFY.** Photo from *A Different Shade of Orange: Voices of Orange County, California, Black Pioneers*. Edited by Robert A. Johnson and Charlene Riggins. Fullerton: California State University, 2009.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**WINE MAKING WAS ANAHEIM'S ORIGINAL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY** with the formation of the Los Angeles Vineyard Society. Shares in the Society were sold to Germans living in the San Francisco area. By 1859 the land was ready for vineyards to thrive and the settlers arrived in Anaheim. In 1860 they produced 2,000 gallons of wine; four years later they were producing 300,000 gallons a year. In 1863 Anaheim became the location of the first large-scale production of kosher for Passover wine in the country. In 1884 they produced at least 1,250,000 gallons of wine, along with 100,000 gallons of brandy.

In 1883 a disease began rapidly killing the vineyards; by 1891 only 14 acres of vineyard remained in Anaheim. Originally called the "Anaheim disease" or the "California vine disease," it was renamed "Pierce's disease" in honor of Newton Pierce, who studied the mysterious ailment. Pierce had suspected an insect-carried bacteria caused the disease. Finally, in 1978, the bacterium causing the disease was identified as *Xylella fastidiosa*.

11. **DREYFUS WINERY, ANAHEIM.** 1885. Betzold Studio. Courtesy of Anaheim Public Library.

Benjamin Dreyfus & Co. Winery, built circa 1884-1885, located southwest of Anaheim near Ball and Manchester. By the time the winery was erected the Anaheim wine industry had been decimated by Pierce's disease. The building was later used as an orange juice cannery and was torn down in 1973; image shows vineyard in foreground, with two-story brick winery building in background; figure seated atop wine vat visible in center background.

12. **THE CALIFORNIA VINE DISEASE : A PRELIMINARY REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS.** Newton Barris Pierce. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892.

A plate from the report shows the effects of the disease on Berger grapes.

13. **NEWTON B. PIERCE, SPECIAL AGENT, APPOINTED, 1890.** Courtesy of Special Collections, USDA National Agricultural Library.

Newton B. Pierce was an agent with the U.S. Bureau of Agriculture. He researched and wrote about the disease which caused the crash of the grape industry in Orange County.

**WHILE WINE WAS NO LONGER A MAJOR PRODUCT** being produced in Anaheim, agriculture remained a vital industry throughout Orange County. In 1948, five million Valencia orange trees grew on 67,000 acres. Northern Orange County had dairy farms and

cattle grazed on the Irvine Ranch and Rancho Mission Viejo. Other crops included celery, walnuts, lima beans, and sugar beets. Berries were also common. Knott's Berry Farm amusement park began as a roadside fruit stand on the family's farm. By 2018, however, the Orange County Agricultural Commissioner's office logged only 40 commercial acres of oranges.

14. **KNOTT'S "ORIGINAL BERRY STAND."** Circa 1920. Photo courtesy of the Orange County Archives.

Walter and Cordelia Knott stand in front of their "original berry stand" at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park. In reality, several versions of the "original berry stand" were built over the decades. The license plates on the car in the foreground are from 1920, the year the Knott's came to Buena Park to grow berries.

15. **CAMP BONITA, IRVINE RANCH, 1937.** Photo courtesy of the Orange County Archives.

Several buildings from this cattle camp still exist today.

16. **PART OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST ORANGE GROVE, FULLERTON. CIRCA 1926.** Image donated to OCHS from the Tom Pulley Postcard Collection. Courtesy of Orange County Historical Society.

The Bastanchury Ranch in the Sunny Hills area of Fullerton was once considered the world's largest orange grove. The first Valencia oranges in the county were planted in 1875 on the Richard H. Gilman Ranch, now part of Cal State Fullerton. Soon, more farmers arrived. Valencia oranges quickly became a cash cow because they were available in the summer when Navel oranges were out of season. In 1893, the Fullerton Tribune reported that oranges from Fullerton and Placentia were commanding the highest prices in the county.

Laura Saari. April 16, 2018. *Orange Coast Magazine*.

## LIGHTER THAN AIR

**WORLD WAR II TRANSFORMED THE RURAL FARMLAND** area of Orange County with the development of three military installations: the Naval Air Station Santa Ana which housed the lighter-than-air airships to patrol the Pacific Ocean coastline; the Santa Ana Army Air Base which served as a cadet training center; and the Marine Corps Air Station El Toro which was designated a Master Jet Station in 1950.

In the weeks following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States was on high alert along both the East and West coasts. Defending the West coast was a Navy fleet of non-rigid lighter-than-air airships which patrolled the coastline 24 hours a day. The airships were capable of hovering and staying airborne for long periods of time, making them ideal for spotting enemy submarines along the U.S. coastline. The hangars built to house the large airships in the Naval Air Station Santa Ana were a major engineering achievement of World War II, impressive for both their timber structure and their speedy construction. The hangars built at the Naval Air Station Santa Ana are just two of seven hangars that remain as evidence of the defense of the home front.

**A LIGHTER-THAN-AIR AIRSHIP** is Navy terminology for a blimp. The non-rigid airships used during the war did not have an internal structural framework. Instead, the airship maintained its shape from the pressure of the helium used to lift it. Costing about \$300,000 (\$5,600,000 in 2021 dollars) each, the K-Class blimps of World War II carried a crew of eight, could reach speeds of more than 76 miles per hour and cover over 2,000 miles in a single flight. The United States airship fleet was used for scouting, escorting convoys, anti-submarine patrols, and search and rescue missions throughout World War II.

17. **ANATOMY OF A BLIMP.** Date unknown. Karsten Ivey and Belinda Long. *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*.
18. **HANGAR NUMBER ONE UNDER CONSTRUCTION, LIGHTER-THAN-AIR (LTA) BASE, TUSTIN, 1943.** Tustin Area Historical Society. Courtesy of the Orange County Public Library.

The War Department (renamed the Department of Defense in 1949) selected 1,600 acres of farmland in central Orange County as the site of one of the 10 airship facilities to be established around the country. The proposed Orange County site, which was being used to farm lima beans, bordered the City of Santa Ana on one side and the City of Tustin on the other.

19. **COMMISSIONING OF THE LIGHTER-THAN-AIR (LTA) BASE, TUSTIN, OCTOBER 1, 1942.** Tustin Area Historical Society. Courtesy of the Orange County Public Library.  
On October 1, 1942, the United States military commissioned the Naval Air Station Santa Ana. This image shows the commissioning ceremony of the Lighter-Than-Air (LTA) base.
20. **HANGAR CONSTRUCTION, LIGHTER-THAN-AIR (LTA) BASE, DECEMBER 1942.** Tustin Area Historical Society. Courtesy of the Orange County Public Library.

On April 1, 1942, the Navy broke ground on two of the largest wooden structures in the world to house the airships needed to patrol the West coast. The accelerated construction time of just over six months was typical for wartime projects. This image depicts one of the two hangars built on the Naval Air Station Santa Ana.

21. **HANGAR CONSTRUCTION WITH BLIMP IN THE AIR, LIGHTER-THAN-AIR (LTA) BASE, 1942.** Tustin, California. Tustin Area Historical Society. Courtesy of the Orange County Public Library.

Operations began with a simple airship on October 19, 1942, then a fleet of 12 airships by the end of the year, operating from circular concrete mats and mooring masts until the hangars were completed.

22. **U.S. NAVY BLIMP IN FRONT OF ONE OF THE MASSIVE AIRSHIP HANGARS AT THE NAVAL AIR STATION SANTA ANA (LATER MCAS TUSTIN).** Tustin, California. 1943. Official US Navy photo.

By the end of 1942, there were 12 K-Class blimps operating from Tustin as Airship Patrol Squadron ZP-31, for Zeppelin Patrol 31. Airship patrols along the California coast were conducted 24 hours a day from the airship bases in Santa Ana and Moffett Field in the bay area.

23. **INTERIOR VIEW OF A HANGAR SHOWING SIX AIRSHIPS (BLIMPS).** Lighter-Than-Air (LTA) Base, Tustin, California. Circa 1960. Tustin Area Historical Society. Courtesy of the Orange County Public Library.

Given the size of the airships, no ordinary hangar could house them. Each hangar was capable of sheltering an entire squadron of six airships.

24. **BLIMP HANGAR AT THE FORMER NAVAL AIR STATION MARINE CORPS AIR STATION TUSTIN, NORTHERN LIGHTER-THAN-AIR SHIP HANGAR, MEFFETT (SIC) AVENUE & MAXFIELD STREET.** Tustin, California. June 30, 1949. Photography by Brian Grogan. Historic American Buildings Survey Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Note, the citation lists "Meffett," but the name of the street is actually "Moffett."

Each hangar measured 1,088 feet in length and 297 feet in width, with timber arches set on 20-foot centers. The hangars were 178 feet or over 17 stories tall. The all-wood design was a direct result of the realities of war. While 33 tons of structural steel was used in building the hangars, traditional construction would have required over 4,000 tons of steel.

25. **LIGHTER-THAN-AIR HANGAR ROOF TRUSS DETAILS.** Drawing no. 212817. Tustin, California. Circa 1942. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.