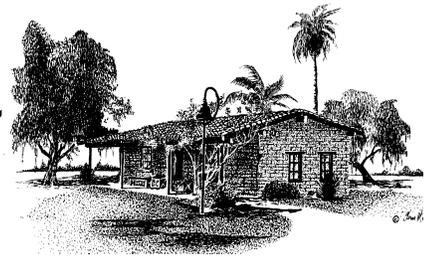


# Fairview Register

Monthly Publication of the Costa Mesa Historical Society  
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## President's Message

### Beat the Clock

**April is Volunteer Appreciation Month.** I want to thank those members who have helped us with our mission to promote and preserve the history of Costa Mesa. You have done it through your continued membership, support, contributions and donations. I owe a special thanks to those members who have volunteered at some of our events, especially those volunteers who have shown up week after week to assist with our many ongoing projects.

Although I am grateful for what has been done thus far, there is so much more to do. The fact is that there are more projects and tasks than our current volunteers can handle. As I have mentioned, on occasion in previous issues of the newsletter, time is not on our side. Costa Mesa's history is like a jigsaw puzzle. We have many of the pieces, but there are also blank spaces. Many of these blanks are the pieces, not yet researched, which may contain key information that would shed light on the city's unknown past. This key information can be a photo, an eye witness account or a document. However, much of this information may disappear if we do not get to it in time.

This is why we are always looking for additional volunteers. With more help, we can speed up our overall process. There are a number of areas where we can use your assistance. If you'd like to help, but are not sure how, please come and talk to us. Try to make it sooner rather than later, the clock is ticking.

Finally, I urge you to come out and show your community spirit for the **Costa Mesa 60th Anniversary Celebration Weekend, Fri. June 28 to Sun. June 30, at City Hall and on Fair Drive.** Many volunteers citywide have put in countless hours to ensure an entertaining and successful event. See you there!

*Bob Palazzola*

Costa Mesa Historical Society  
Presents

## *The Ocean Begins at Your Front Door*

**Speaker: Brian Lochrie,  
Orange County Stormwater Program**

Sunday, April 14, 2013  
Doors open 2pm  
Program at 2:30pm

Free Admission, Refreshments for All

Costa Mesa Historical Society  
Museum  
1870 Anaheim Avenue  
Northwest Corner of  
Lions Park Complex



The Orange County Stormwater Program, a collaborative effort between the County of Orange, the Orange County Flood Control District and all 34 cities in its efforts to protect our environment needs your assistance. Collectively we can make a difference – The Orange County Stormwater Program recognizes this and knows first-hand that a well-informed and active public is the front line in preventing pollution. More information can be found here: <http://ocwatersheds.com/publiced>

Brian Lochrie serves as President of Faubel Public Affairs and oversees the day-to-day operations of many top clients including the Orange County Stormwater Program.

Please join us for this public service program, one in an occasional series, to help you learn how to make our community a better and safer place to live for both you and your neighbors. *For event information, contact us at 949-631-5918, visit [www.costamesahistory.org](http://www.costamesahistory.org) or go to [facebook/costa mesa historical society](https://www.facebook.com/costa.mesa.historical.society)*

Promoting and preserving Costa Mesa's history is our mission.

## Bill St. Clair: From Barbershop Chair to City Council Seat

*Mr. William (Bill) Leander St. Clair, a third generation Costa Mesan, and his wife, Claudine, sat down with Mary Ellen Goddard in 1978 as part of the Silver Anniversary Oral History Project and talked about life in the Costa Mesa - Newport Harbor area. Mary Ellen's interview questions have been incorporated into Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair's responses.*

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Bill St. Clair was a barber and real estate investor who served on the Costa Mesa City Council from 1968 to 1972. Born in 1920, he was a native who remembered when the city was filled with apple and orange trees. As the third generation of his family to live here, he earned a reputation as a fiery and controversial City Hall watchdog. In fact in 1976 he started a weekly "personal editorial" ad on page 5 of the Ensign, a newspaper of the time. He was inspired, he explained, by his barbershop customers who talked about their town and its politics. The future of his city was of deep concern to him. His children and their families are the fourth and fifth generations of St. Clairs to live in the town where William Henry Harrison St. Clair arrived in 1910.

Mr. St. Clair begins: My grandfather moved to Costa Mesa in 1910. He purchased property at Twentieth and Santa Ana Avenue because it was one of the higher points on the mesa; it being a high point and he being a farmer, he knew you needed flow of irrigation water. From Twentieth and Santa Ana toward Tustin is downhill. He could irrigate from one corner; from Twentieth and Santa Ana, he could irrigate the whole five acres from one hydrant. It worked out

very well; he saved a lot of money on pipe. That is what they used to do. They would have an irrigation ditch. I often played in the irrigation ditches they used to water the ranch.

Basically they raised oranges and lemons and corn and sweet potatoes. Grandpa kept a horse, Old Bill. He was the one that did all the plowing. Grandpa also grew produce and melons. They would be ripe in the summer and we would take them down

to the beach and peddle them, usually in his Model-T Ford. I would ride in back, and we would go through the old city campground which was between Fifteenth and Nineteenth. People would come from all over the area. It is a modern trailer park now; it is still owned by the city, but they park trailers there so it is still being used for practically the same purpose. Later on I had a dog and a cart. We fixed a regular harness for him with shafts on the cart. We would sometimes pull a wagon behind that, and I would peddle melons and some lemons and oranges all over Costa Mesa.

Dad moved here in 1912. He was a barber at the time. Costa Mesa was very small. In fact, I understand Grandpa was the tenth



Courtesy William L. St. Clair

W. H. ST. CLAIR FAMILY

Front Row L to R—Mr. St. Clair, Zepher, Mrs. St. Clair  
Back Row L to R—Forrest, William, Henry

settler in Costa Mesa. There were the Joneses and the Boyds before him. And there were some others, but I have forgotten who they were. I am sure there were originally more families than ten, but by the time Grandpa moved here, there were only ten left of the originals.

My dad started barbering in Santa Ana and then later in Balboa where he worked in the Balboa Pavilion. He worked there prior to WWI until he went into the service. He came back in 1919 when he started barbering again in Balboa; he worked for a fellow called Billy Mills. I think the address was 305 Main Street, just up from the Balboa Pavilion. The building is still there. In fact, I dropped in and talked to a lady that had a dress shop there. He had a four-chair shop, and a room in the back where he had two colored people living. They were the porters, boot blacks as we called them in those days, and gave shoe-shines. They had a three-chair shoe-shine stand out front of the shop. I used to work the middle chair and the two colored fellows worked the outside chairs.

My dad bought that shop when he came back from WWI. The rent he paid in those days was \$60 a month during the three months of the summer and \$5.00 a month during the winter when there was no business. You could talk about shooting a cannon ball down the street in the winter time in Balboa – there just wasn't anything in the way. In those days, Dad traded haircuts for fish or lobster or clams or corn or potatoes or eggs or chickens – anything anybody had, you traded for. It was a barter system as much as for money. We continued to do that in our barbershop when we started barbering here in Costa Mesa. We would still trade for anything anybody had. We would trade people haircuts if they wanted to trade or give them a haircut if they needed it. During the Depression, a lot of times fellows wouldn't have the money for a haircut, and they would want to go out and look for a job. Back then, if you didn't look pretty close-shorn and neat there was no use looking for a job. I know many people used to come in and ask Dad if he would give them a haircut if they would pay him when they got a job. A lot of them paid him and a lot of them didn't. It didn't make a bit of difference, you know; you would give a man a haircut and if he got a job, fine. If he didn't – well, it was only a haircut. No big deal.

Dad worked there until 1927 when he bought Middough's Shoe Store at 1840 Newport Boulevard which is right next to Raciti's Jewelry. In fact, it now is part of Raciti's Jewelry Store because Raciti bought the property from Mother not too long back. Dad's barbershop had been there. It has been a shoe store – by that I mean it had been a cobbler's. He had all his machinery there and did all kinds of shoe repairing. He built shoes and resoled and half-soled. They used to do an awful lot more cobbler work than they do today. It is usually cheaper today to just buy new shoes rather than get a pair of half-soles or something put on. Dad moved there in 1933 – just about a week or so before the earthquake.

When the earthquake came, it broke both his main glass windows in that little piece of property. It was only sixteen feet long by 150 feet deep back to the alley. It was a very small lot. And I remember he was the only one that had glass insurance. I forget the name of the insurance company, but they came along and put a big banner on the front, "This glass insured by \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance Company." They were very proud of it and were trying to sell more insurance, of course. Dad wasn't able to go in his shop for two or three days until the tremors stopped. When he did go in, he found that a bowl of goldfish had broken, but some water had

been captured. One of those goldfish was still alive in a part of the bowl. That goldfish lived for a good many more years, which was rather interesting.

I remember the evening the earthquake came; I was just a boy. In those days, we had a back porch that had a door. We also had a service porch as you would call it today which had a door from the kitchen. My mother kept the ironing board behind the kitchen door. In those days, we also had plate rails all around the house filled with plates. When the earthquake came, plates were dropping all over the place. Our fireplace came down, and this crazy ironing board fell in front of the door. Every time Mother got the ironing board back up, we'd get another tremor and down would go the board. She had the dangdest time trying to get my sister and me out of the house with that earthquake going on. We finally got outside, and found there were cracks in the road, some of them half an inch to an inch wide. It was really quite an earthquake. Part of us slept that night in the car, and my dad slept in a swing that was mounted on springs – an old lawn swing. He slept on that and hardly felt the tremors. The rest of us did and would wake up. The earthquake continued for two or three days after that – just slight tremors.

Our old house wasn't built on a foundation. It was built on piles which was all they would use in those days. They didn't use two by fours in the original house for side walls. They used one by twelves, nailed them straight up, and put a lath over the outside. Our house was a very flexible house. The quake didn't do much damage to the houses themselves. The ones that were wrecked were the concrete structures and the brick structures that wouldn't give like the wood ones.

Most of the houses were just what we would call a shed-type construction. They don't allow it today. You have to have two by fours. In fact, our house was not paneled on the inside. It was a single wall construction. Later we got double-wall. But even then we just nailed the inside to the outside. There were still no two by fours in the wall. The two by fours we thought were there, it turned out, were actually two by sixes. They were rough. They were used for roof rafters and were not planed, but were rough-sawn. They were still in surprisingly good shape forty years or so afterwards, we found, when they tore the house down.

That house started out as a three-room house. When my dad first moved here, they added a bedroom, a living room and a kitchen. As the family grew, they added to it and they finally wound up with nine rooms. It just grew topsy-turvy. They could never stop my bedroom from leaking. I think they fixed the roof five or six times. And every time it rained, I could just plan on building a rubberized tent over my bed because the darned thing always leaked.

I was born in 1920. There wasn't a hospital here, so I was born in the Santa Ana Community Hospital. In those days they kept the women and the babies in the hospital for two weeks. When I was born, we didn't have electricity and we didn't have gas. We used kerosene for the lamps, and we also used kerosene for cooking. It was a little bit cooler to cook with kerosene than with wood. We also had a wood stove. We were going up in the world when we got the kerosene. The kerosene was in a glass container which we turned upside down into a font. It would go down from there to the three burners which all had wicks. As we turned the wick higher, we got a higher flame. Worked pretty well! It made the pans awfully black, and it was quite a bit of work cleaning them.

The thing that really got the development of Costa Mesa going was when the Newport Heights District started. I don't remember when that was. Mr. Coyner, who was one of the original members, lived right across the street from us at Twentieth and Santa Ana. When they put in the sewers in Costa Mesa, they started the sewers flowing from right in front of our ranch in both directions. It flows down toward the ocean, and inland, because that was the highest place. The whole sewer system was based on gravity flow at that time. In recent years they have added pumping stations, but in those days it was all gravity flow. They started the sewer quite high. Then when they wanted to drain the area around Orange and Twentieth which was lower than Twentieth and Santa Ana, they had to cut Twentieth and Santa Ana down about two to two and a half feet.

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*More from the Bill St. Clair interview in May's Fairview Register*

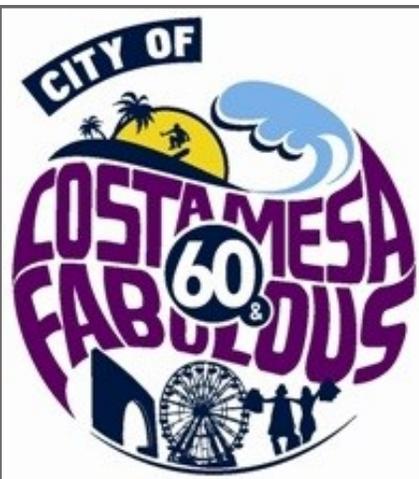
## What's Happening

**Battle of Costa Mesa:** Sat. April 20 & Sun. April 21— Civil War Reenactment at Fairview Park, 2525 Placentia Avenue. Sponsored by the American Civil War Society. For more info, go to [www.acws.net](http://www.acws.net)

**Arts in the Park:** Sat. May 11—Opens 10am at Estancia Park. Featuring multimedia works of local artists. Estancia Adobe will be open during the event, so stop in for a tour of the Adobe Museum.

**66th Annual Fish Fry and Carnival:** Fri. May 31 – Sun. June 2. Joined this year by the Community Run at 8am, 6/2/13. At Fairview Park.

**Like us on Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/costa\\_mesa\\_historical\\_society](http://www.facebook.com/costa_mesa_historical_society)



## Costa Mesa 60th Anniversary Weekend Celebration!

**COME TO THE BIGGEST BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION  
IN ORANGE COUNTY JUNE 28-30, 2013!**

The 60 & Fabulous Celebration will offer a unique array of food, art, and music events centrally located at City Hall and on Fair Drive.

**FRI JUNE 28** 5 PM - 11 PM  
**SAT JUNE 29** 3 PM - 11 PM  
**SUN JUNE 30** NOON - 8 PM

Visit [www.travelcostamesa.com/costa-mesa-60/](http://www.travelcostamesa.com/costa-mesa-60/) or [www.facebook.com/CostaMesaCityHall](http://www.facebook.com/CostaMesaCityHall)

COSTA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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COSTA MESA, CA. 92628  
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P.O. Box 1764  
Costa Mesa CA 92628**

**— *Membership Form* —**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Categories**

<b>Annual</b>		<b>Special</b>	
Individual	\$ 15.00	Historical Society Life Member	\$ 1000.00
Family	\$ 20.00	SAAAB Wing Annual Member	\$ 10.00
Student (under 16)	\$ 5.00	SAAAB Wing Life Member	\$ 50.00
Contributing	\$ 50.00		
Business & Professional	\$ 100.00		
Public Agency	\$ 100.00		
Benefactor	\$ 250.00		

Make your checks payable to the Costa Mesa Historical Society.  
The Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, operates under the Corporation Laws of the State of California.