

# Small Towne Short Stories

*A Letter From the Editor*

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Often history is tucked away on library shelves in the yellowed pages of books, newspaper clippings and in the memories of those who experienced it.

Through Small Towne Short Stories we are sharing a collaborative history of the oldest buildings and landmarks in the city of Orange.

Whether it's a fictional tale about a family working in the Villa Park Orchards Packinghouse or a personal story of an author's experiences at the Son Light Christian Center, we want to give each building a spotlight.

Our writers research each structure and seek out those in the community who remember the stories that live inside each building.

Perhaps when you walk by the old packinghouse during a farmer's market on Cypress Street you'll think about Mayor Tita Smith's mom packing oranges while she was in high school.

Or maybe ponder when you're grabbing a bite at Watson's that it had the city's first telephone switchboard.

Maybe even imagine that instead of plants and garden goods at The Potting Shed, the building once housed Mansur Motors and its 1930s-model Ford cars were on display.

The founders of the city have passed on but their families have often stayed in Orange, some of them with stories of their pioneering ancestors.

We want to find and tell those stories and give life to the buildings and the people of this beautiful city. We welcome your stories.

And please consider reading and sharing recent Small Towne Short Stories:

- Villa Park Orchards Packinghouse-The site for packing oranges during the boom of the citrus industry. Workers packaged navel and Valencia oranges for decades for the Sunkist company.
- Son Light Christian Center-The former movie theater dating back to the 1920s passed through different hands and makeovers. Since the mid-70s it's been a place of worship.
- Orange Daily News-The once-site of the dedicated local newspaper, it was later a successful architectural firm. Though currently a Starbucks coffee shop, it's old Orange Daily News lettering still graces the building.
- Watson's Soda Fountain & Café-The original drug store turned soda shop still stands but is now a completely updated eatery. Through decades it moved from the hands of original pharmacist Kellar Watson to other owners who kept it alive as a place to swap stories and grab a bite.
- Mansur Motors and The Potting Shed-Once a dealer of Ford automobiles in the 1930s the building still stands but now blooming with flowers and plants as a garden shop. But you can still find some nods to the old dealership inside.
- J.C. Penney Co. and Tiddlywinks-The department store that took the small town by storm when it opened in April 1959 is now a seller of toys and games, many of them classics like Raggedy Ann, Slinky and building blocks.
- Elks Lodge #1435 and the 1888 Cultural Center-The lodge is still in the same building and supporting the same mission since 1935. While the Elks occupy most of the building where they host community events and work to help the community, two storefronts on the first floor will be inhabited by the 1888 Cultural Center.



- Woman's Club of Orange-The building is still hosting the many local woman who strive to help the community by doing things like collecting needed goods for women's shelters and helping furnish homes for veterans.
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Alma Fausto is a reporter at the Orange County Register where she covers crime and breaking news. When not reporting on grisly crimes, Alma spends her time reading and visiting bookstores everywhere. She is also board member of the OC Press Club.

Alma has a Master's in journalism from Columbia University in New York City. Before city life, she studied and reported in California's rural Central Valley, receiving a bachelor's at UC Merced where she was editor of the student newspaper. And way before that she was born and raised in OC and now calls Costa Mesa home.

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Image credit: View from hill of orange groves in Orange, California in the 1930s. House and road at right, foothills in the distance. Courtesy of the Orange Community Historical Society Collection. Orange, California.