

**Irvine Ranch Irrigation System – Local Historic Civil
Engineering Landmark Plaque Dedication Ceremony
9/15/11**

Welcome to Peters Canyon Regional Park – one of the wonderful parks in the County's system of regional recreation facilities.

Peters Canyon Regional Park was granted to the people of Orange County as the Irvine Ranch transitioned from farming and ranching to the residential development we see near us today.

The Irvine Ranch once occupied the geographic heart of Orange County. It's here that James Irvine II had the foresight to irrigate the San Joaquin Ranch and eventually began the planning of surface water conservation dams like Peters Canyon.

In the early days, pioneers were able to get their water from the Santa Ana River but after a few years of debilitating droughts, there was a desperate need for something more sustainable. James Irvine II came along, with several local business partners, with a need to keep his ranch efficient and his Valencia oranges growing, he soon developed the Irvine Ranch Irrigation System.

Ultimately, the expansion of the Irvine Ranch Irrigation System was necessary to sustain the growing agricultural enterprise of the citrus industry, an essential economic force in Orange County. Irrigation built Orange County.

In 1961, knowing that cities, not citrus, would soon be growing on the land, there was a new kind of water demand that everyone knew was coming; demands not for crops, but for dishwaters and backyard sprinklers and water that tastes good. The foundation laid out by the Irvine Ranch Irrigation System was to eventually benefit the people and growth of Orange County, culturally.

Because of these irrigation efforts in the past, the County continues to prosper and grow. The use of the land and its inhabitants has been a priority as Orange County and California move towards the future.

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, I am grateful for the efforts of the American Society of Civil Engineers Orange County Branch and, specifically those of its History and Heritage Committee for the recognition of this important part of Orange County's history

Thank you for being here today.