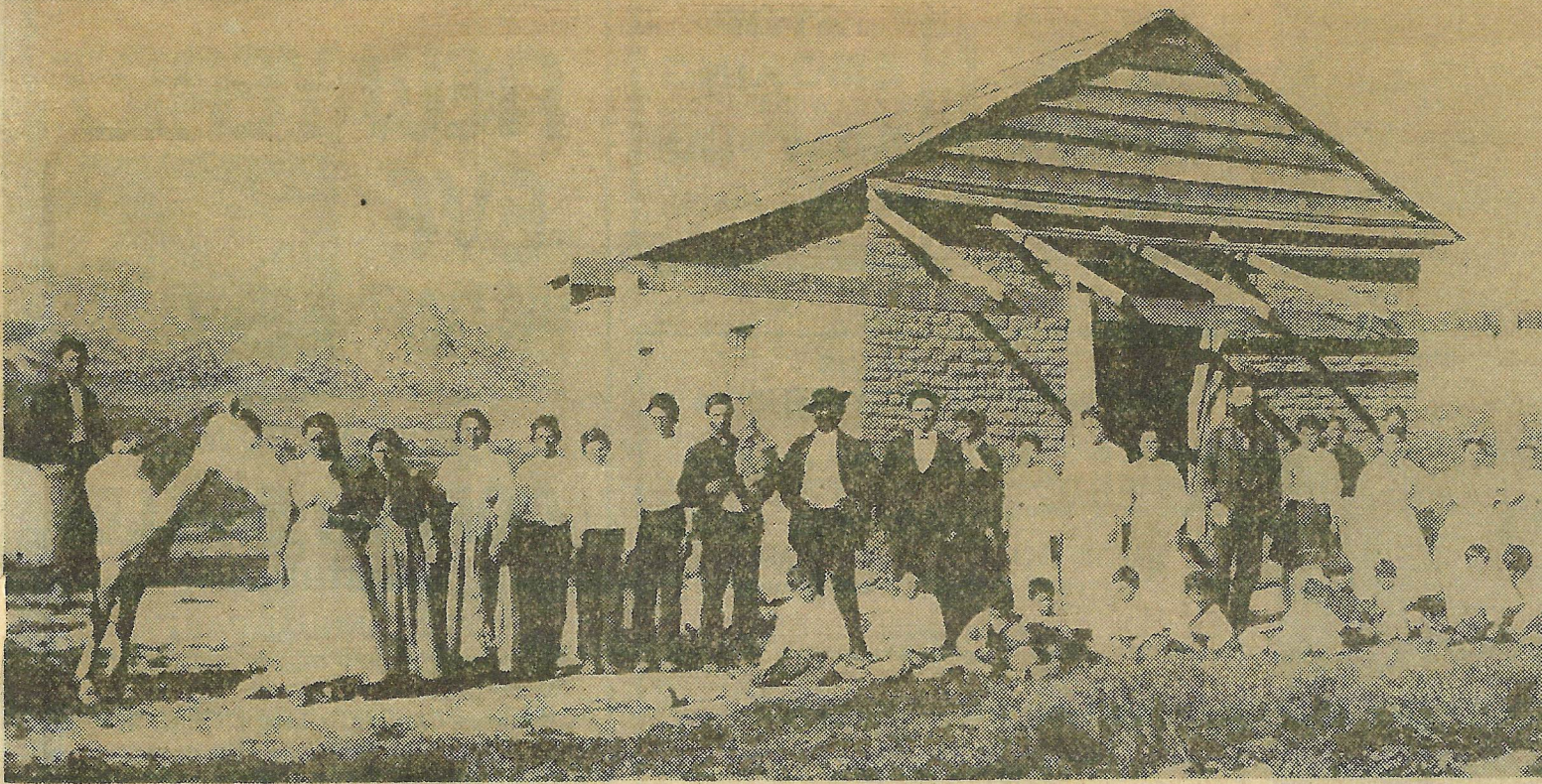


AGUA MANSA



Trujillo School in its opening year, 1875-76, with James Roe (bearded) as teacher. The conical hill in the background and the

top of the old Spanishtown Flume are the clues that the location.

Out of the county's past

HISTORY

# Cracking the mysteries posed by a 103-year-old Trujillo School photo

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There ought to be a law requiring the owner of every photograph to write on the back of it the date, location, occasion and names of persons pictured. It would make the job of museum people easier.

Take, for instance, the picture (reproduced above) that has been displayed in the Riverside Museum for several years, a gift of the late Mrs. Anna Bordwell. Beyond reasonable doubt it's a picture of the original building of the Trujillo School of the former community of La Placita, along north Orange Street in the vicinity of Highgrove's Center Street.

In the midst of a group of young people (possibly including some parents) is a man who must be James Roe. He was the teacher in the school's first year, 1875, and was also a Riverside druggist and founder in 1878 of the Riverside Press. This looks like other pictures of him.





But some aspects of the picture, plus what's written on the back of it, don't exactly fit the supposedly known facts.

Pasted on the back is a typed label of uncertain age, which says the picture is part of the Field collection and that it shows the old adobe Spanishtown school on north Main Street with James Rowe, teacher. The Field collection would be that of photographer Avery Field. He came to Riverside about 1900, but he obtained pictures from earlier residents for historical reasons.

The Main Street location must be a mistake. Main Street veers off to the west, away from La Placita.

Under the pasted-on label, Mrs. Bordwell has transcribed an excerpt from Roe's history of Riverside, which was never published but which is held in manuscript by the City-County Public Library. In the excerpt, Roe tells of being the school's first teacher, in an adobe building which at first had no window glass. He explains that the community was known to early Riverside as Spanishtown but called itself San Salvador.

In fact, the related communities of La Placita and Agua Mansa (on the west side of the river) were joined in the church parish of San Salvador and were sometimes known collectively by the parish name. However, Roe didn't say the school itself had either name.

There was a San Salvador Parish school as early as 1844, two years before California became part of the U.S. There was a San Salvador School District, formed in 1863. It had one school, named San Salvador School, but it included San Bernardino County territory all the way down to Chino and Temescal Canyon.

Trujillo School in 1911. At least 10 of the students are known to be living today: Grace Morales, Clarence Trujillo, Irene Baca, Marie

New populations within this large area formed new districts. For instance, Jurupa District split from San Salvador District in 1869 and Riverside District split from Jurupa District in 1871. Trujillo District split from San Salvador District in 1875.

The Trujillo district presumably took its name from the original patriarch of La Placita or from the numerous Trujillo families who descended from him. One Trujillo adobe home still stands, appropriately near the school location.

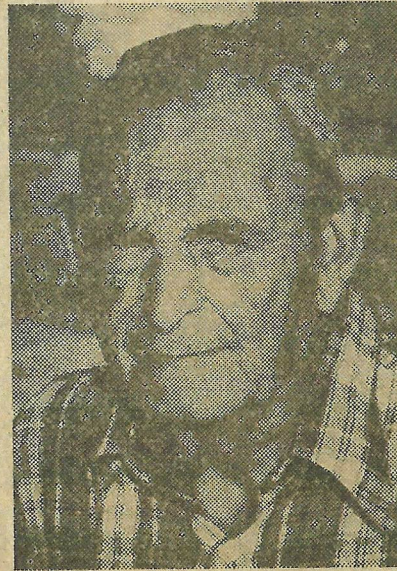
San Salvador District itself never had more than one school, and that's still in existence, in its fourth home, in South Colton, where it's now part of Colton Unified District.

Evidently because of Roe's wording, the picture in the museum has been labeled in recent years, "San Salvador School," but San Salvador School was never on the east side of the river and Roe never taught it.

But questions never end. Clarence Trujillo and Marie Wood, who are among the living Trujillo School alumni, remember distinctly that in their time the school was a one-room wooden structure in the southeast sector of the Orange-Center intersection. They point out a dead stump, still on the ground, and remember that it was the trunk of a living tree that grew next to the school house.

When you look at the 1875 picture and at the vicinity, you find that the initial adobe building couldn't have been where Marie and Clarence and others remember the school of their time.

(Espinosa) Wood, Millie Baca, Alex Ted Trujillo, Sam Espinosa, George and Percy Rubidoux.



Clarence Trujillo, who is giving the 1911 picture to the Riverside Museum.

In the background is a conical hill, which is still there — part of La Loma Hills. In the nearer background is the top of a water flume crossing an arroyo. Its top is approximately on the same level as the school. Indeed (Eureka!) it appears to be the only existing picture of the Spanishtown Flume, the longest flume on the original Riverside canal, dug in 1870-71 and later known as the Old Upper Canal. This particular part of the canal was abandoned in 1914, having been superseded by a new route from a higher intake.

The traces of the old canal along the slopes of La Loma Hills and the foundations of the flume can easily be identified today.

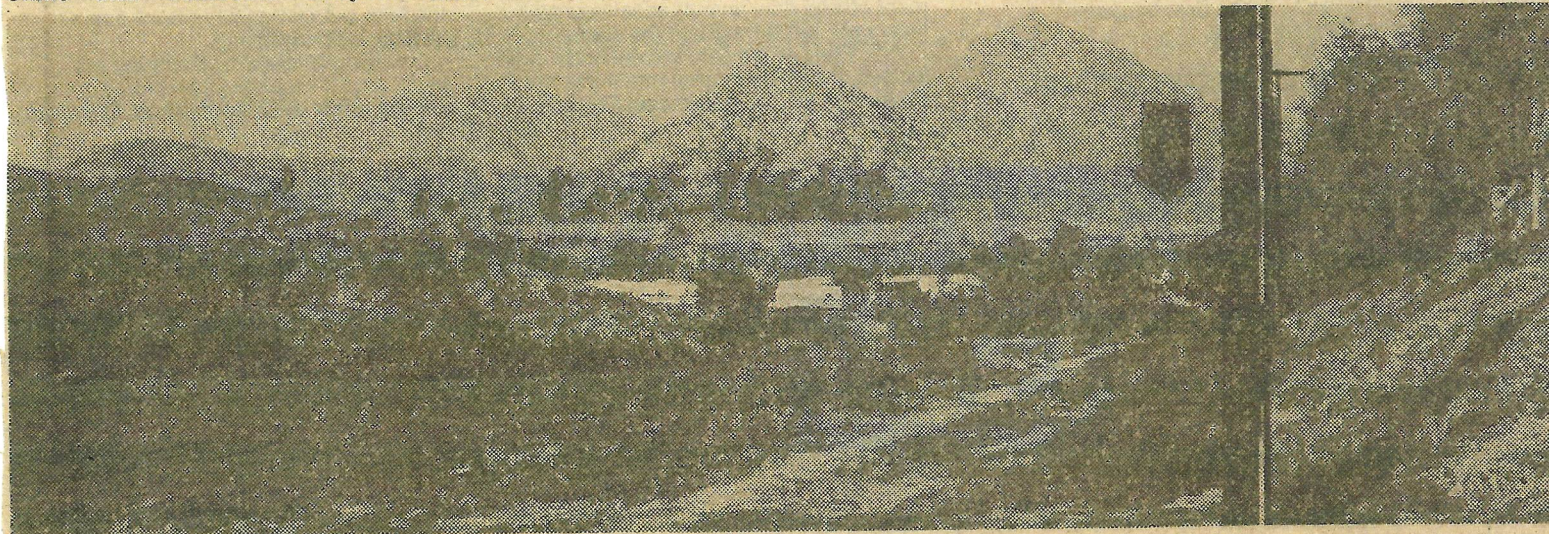
From their positions in the picture, it's apparent the school location was at level, on the mesa north of the Center-Orange intersection instead of below the southeast of the intersection.

This seems to clear the matter of location, but Director Raul Lopez gave another observation of the 1875 picture. He says the adobe building appears weather-worn, not new, an open beam in front of it, and a certain purpose, appearing to have been broken and tied with a rope.

Perhaps it was the building, but the record of Bernardino County shows the Trujillo District and the School began operating

In 1893 Riverside County was formed and new counties were provided the Trujillo District. The northern part became the Riverside District, with another school a block or so north of the line. The remainder of the Trujillo District functioned as a school district in Riverside County until 1914, when it became part of Riverside County.

Although local historians sometimes feel that they have solved a problem or two, they are confronted by others. In this instance, Clarence Trujillo and Marie Wood, late Salvador Alvarado, who was born in La Placita, began his formal education at the Loma School, are in agreement as to the exact location of that school. Their recollections of the school locations are a block north of the Center-Orange intersection on opposite sides of Center Street.



Houses on the mesa north of Center Street prevent photographing the site of the original school with the Spanishtown flume in the background. This photo from Center Street below the mesa

shows the conical hill. Location of the north end of the flume is marked by the arrow. The school location is off the mesa to the right.