



THE BENNETT RANCH HOUSE

Welcome to the ranch home of Harvey and Frances Bennett. The house was originally built in 1908 as a place for the caretakers to stay while maintaining the Charles Bennett Ranch. Harvey and Frances moved into the home upon their marriage in 1913 as Harvey had become foreman of the ranch. Here they raised their six children: Helen, Beverly, Evelyn, Bonnie, Harvey, and Richard.

The house was built in the American Craftsman bungalow style. The exterior is thrown stucco over chicken wire. The distinctive sloping roof line was known as an "airplane" roof. The house originally consisted of living room, dining room, kitchen, 2 bedrooms, and 3 rooms upstairs. A fruit cellar was built under the dining room area for fresh fruit and home canned goods. In 1928 the two back bedrooms, bathroom, and service porch were added along with electricity.

The home is furnished in the 1930's era. As you enter the living room, notice the coved ceilings and fireplace, added during the remodeling. The fireplace was originally in the corner but was moved to the center. Frances chose Pennsylvania glazed tile brick for the new fireplace.

The office was originally the parent's bedroom. In 1920 part of the front porch was screened in for their bedroom, leaving this room for the girls. Following the addition, it became the office. Note the railing along the upper wall for hanging pictures, a common practice in older homes with plaster walls.

The girls' bedroom floor is Douglas fir. The entire floor was painted a light oak color. A glaze was then applied to the border and a grain pattern brushed through the glaze with feathers to give the appearance of oak (faux painting). The floor in the center was left plain as it would be covered by the rug.

The bathroom displays many of the early necessities for a proper "toilet" including dad's shaving gear: mug, razor, and razor strap.

The boys' room displays many of the fun toys for a young boy, then and now, although made of different material. Please note the 1870's blue and white quilt belonging to the Bennetts, also the red and white 1880's quilt.

The guest room has a brass bed, similar to the one that was in the room. The appliquéd quilt on the bed is the Dolly Varden pattern: the same pattern Mrs. Bennett had in the room. Displayed on the right dress form is the original wedding dress worn by Frances Bennett's mother in the 1800's. A framed copy of Harvey and Frances' marriage license hangs on the wall over the bed.

The dining room displays some of Mrs. Bennett's fine serving pieces. Also note the grandmother clock and treadle sewing machine. The painting on the wall over the curio cabinet was done by Nellie Gail Moulton, another early resident of the valley.

The original kitchen had no cupboards. Mrs. Bennett's father, Thomas McDonnell, a carpenter, built wood cabinets along the two walls, the one side was changed for more modern steel cabinets in the 1940's. Note the two bins -- one to hold 100# of flour and one for 100# of sugar. Also note the slatted shelves and drawer of the cabinet nearest the icebox. This allowed for cool air to come from the cellar to keep some food items better.

Mrs. Bennett was a gracious hostess and spent much time in the kitchen cooking for her husband and growing family, the ranch hands and several guests. Originally, she had a wood burning stove but was delighted with her new electric range when electricity was finally added.

The service porch was the place for washing, ironing, and churning butter. Note the various homemaking "tools" of the day.

The ranch was pretty much self-sufficient; they raised their food and had a cow and horses as well as the citrus, fruit, and nut trees.

Harvey was a leader in the community, working with Raymond Prothero to bring water to the valley. He continually experimented in improving strains of citrus and served on citrus association boards in the county for several years. He also belonged to the Orange County Farm Bureau.

Frances taught Sunday School at the St. George's Episcopal Mission, was a member of the El Toro Women's Club, and the Santa Ana Ebell Club.