

Note: When Ranger Jean Rhyne and the Save Saddleback Committee planned the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of Saddleback Butte State Park much work went into searching park archives. When the park was first dedicated, it was named *Joshua Trees State Park*. In the 1970s the name was changed to *Saddleback Butte State Park* to avoid confusion with the Joshua Tree National Monument (now Joshua Tree National Park). It is believed that the following was written by Jane Pinheiro circa 1960.

HISTORY OF 'STATE JOSHUA TREES PARK' PROJECT,  
ANTELOPE VALLEY

For many years various individuals and organizations dreamed and worked to establish a park or preserve to protect some fine stand of Joshua Trees or native flower area without too much success.

In late spring of 1954 Civic Groups Consolidated appointed a committee to see what might be accomplished. (B. P. Glenn, President, appointed Jane S. Pinheiro, Chairman, John Stebbins and Howard Harris to this committee). (From a news clipping 1954)

After some investigation, the committee reported back that the most feasible move would be for a State Park and that the committee should be expanded to include other interests in the Valley as some funds would be needed as well as a wider basis of support. Civic Groups Consolidated agreed to this move and contributed an initial fund of \$200.00 toward the cost of having brochures printed.

The Antelope Valley State Park Committee was formed and an organizational meeting was held in the courtroom at Lancaster in January 1955. (Jane S. Pinheiro, Chairman, Viola Gordon, Secretary, Harry Gauger, Treasurer, Judge Bill Keller, Sid Osheim, Mrs. John Brewer, John Gentry, Rev. Norvall Pickett, Mrs. Hobart Bosworth, Chairman at Large (these names taken from a News Release in Feb. 1955)

This committee sent letters to all then existing organizations in the Antelope Valley asking for expressions of endorsement of their project and small contributions (less than \$500.00 was raised including the initial \$200.00 from C.G.C.). The twenty-one member Chambers of Commerce and civic organizations of Civic Groups Consolidated, forty-three other local and two state organizations and many individuals responded with endorsements as well as excellent support from the Ledger-Gazette and the South Antelope Valley Press and several Los Angeles papers.

In the meantime Assemblyman Allen Miller, now Judge, was approached and became an enthusiastic supporter of the project. He introduced the necessary legislation and husbanded the measure through the long process of becoming a law and then a fact. Without his support and help our park would never have been established. As it was, the first try found the bill still on the agenda when the legislature adjourned in 1955. It was reintroduced in the budget session of 1956 and passed.

Much work went into the preparation of information and the accumulation of letters of endorsement, etc. which were presented to the various hearings before legislative committees and the Board of the Department of Beaches and Parks. These presentations required many trips by members of the Antelope Valley State Park Committee.

Although Assemblyman Miller, the Antelope Valley State Park Committee and local interest had all worked for the area to include the Antelope Valley Indian Museum, no specific area was specified in the establishing legislation and so when the State Department of Beaches and Parks surveyed the general area, it determined that the Saddleback Butte area better served the policy of the Department and the Indian Museum was not included.

In August of 1957 word was received that the Department of Beaches and Parks was at last ready to proceed with acquisitions. In August of 1959 the State took possession and sent Mr. Van Deusen, State Ranger, to take over and start on the ground survey for preliminary plans for development for use as a "passive" recreation area.

### SOME JOSHUA TREE FACTS & FANCIES

The Joshua Tree grows only on the Mojave Desert at an elevation between 3,000 to 4,000 feet where rainfall is five to ten inches a year. The trees extend from the Southern boundary of Joshua Tree National Monument, thence west to Antelope Valley and north to central Nevada and east into the Beaver Dam Mountains in southwest Utah and south into the Detrital Valley of northern Arizona.

The flower bud in the spring and the seed and pod in the summer were staple food source to the Indians.

There was a purported legend that the Indians of the Mojave believed that when a person died his soul entered into a Joshua tree and the tree's pattern became the record of the life of the person, the upturned branches representing good deeds, the down turning branches the evil deeds.

The name Joshua Tree is purported to have originated with the band of Mormon pioneers who settled in San Bernardino in 1846. In their trek across the desert to Cajon Pass an unidentified man in the group referred to these strange trees "as standing like giant Joshuas with their arms uplifted in prayer". Since there was no other name then used for them, the name Joshua tree stuck.

The plant was identified and given the botanical name *Yucca Brevifolio* by Dr. George Englemann in 1871.