

### 3. A School Among the Orange Groves

In the mid-1950s, the only state-run school for deaf students in California was in San Francisco, known as the California School for the Deaf. This institution became a vital center for Deaf Culture in the state, but for families living in Southern California, especially those near the Mexican border, getting to Berkeley was a daunting task. Post-World War II, as Los Angeles emerged as a major city, advocates successfully pushed for a second school in Southern California, culminating in the establishment of the California School for the Deaf in Riverside in 1946, under Governor Earl Warren.

Riverside, then a modest city of fifty thousand, was primarily known for its vast orange groves. The region's transformation was largely due to irrigation canals that turned the arid landscape fertile, particularly with the introduction of the sweet navel orange from Brazil in the 1870s. This fruit not only spurred local industry but also gave rise to the Sunkist brand, which propelled Riverside into recognition as the origin of California's citrus industry. By the late 19th century, its oranges were prized, winning accolades at events like the New Orleans World's Fair.

In 1948, a site for the new school was chosen amongst barley and orange trees. Advocates welcomed its distance from mental institutions, avoiding concomitant stigmas elsewhere. The land was purchased for a mere \$68,500, with hopes that this school would indeed be one of the finest in the nation. Although it wouldn't receive its first students until 1953, the anticipation for what the California School for the Deaf in Riverside would bring was palpable. The school boasted a picturesque location with views of the San Gabriel Mountains, spread out over generously landscaped grounds, a rarity among state institutions at the time.

As the years progressed, the landscape of Riverside drastically changed. The original orange orchards made way for suburban sprawl, and the population surged to 300,000 by 2022. Riverside became a significant player in the U.S. economy through its connection to freight and logistics, adapting to a car-centric culture alongside its burgeoning housing developments. Despite this transformation, echoes of its past remain, highlighted by a revitalized downtown and parks honoring its citrus heritage. Riverside historian Vincent Moses aptly captures the nostalgia of these changes, reflecting on the region's shift from a fertile paradise to urban development.