

ASPECTS OF FRANCONIA

January 2019 - Erlangen's Twin City in the U.S.: Riverside, California

If you can name Erlangen's oldest twinning arrangement (*Eskilstuna since 1961*), its most active one (*Vladimir since 1983*), its British one (*Stoke-on-Trent since 1989*), you have done pretty well. However, can you also name its Californian one? Let me tell you. It's called Riverside, it's a hop and a skip from Hollywood, and has roughly three times as many inhabitants as our city. And it was started in 2013.

Riverside was founded in 1870 by a friend of Abraham Lincoln's and was soon famous for its orange plantations, especially navel oranges imported from Brazil. With the help of new farming technologies – irrigation systems for boosting the orange crop and cooling systems for improving transportation – Riverside folks were soon to have the highest per-capita-income in the USA. And, because they lived in a pretty nice place with a mild climate and nearby mountains, people came in ever greater numbers to relax and vacation. Apart from being the birthplace of the California citrus industry and home of the Mission Inn, the largest Mission Revival Style building in the United States, it's also home of the Riverside National Cemetery, the last resting place of hundreds of servicemen as well as many famous names associated with the US film industry. After all, it is part of the Greater Los Angeles area and quite close to Hollywood. This is where "Gone with the Wind" was premiered. And in 2012 Riverside was named Most Intelligent City in the World!

You may well be thinking, what have Riverside and Erlangen in common, apart from intelligent people? The short answer must be primarily science and technology, but it now seems to encompass far more than that. One lovely example of what I mean comes from our very active members, the Gutknechts, Sheila and Horst. Unlike myself, they have actually been to Riverside and Sheila has sent me the following description of what they did and saw:

In 2017 the Stad'l Harmonists were invited to Riverside to sing at a concert with a local male-voice choir, the Inland Sound Chorus. It was a great concert with each choir singing on their own and then the two choirs singing several songs together - these included "Surfer Girl" (the Beach Boys' hit) and the "Lorelei", although the Californians asked if they could just hum the tune of the Lorelei, as they found the German pronunciation challenging!



The Inland Sound Chorus

We spent a very pleasant week in the city, being shown round by our hosts there. One of the highlights included a visit to the California Citrus State Historic Park, where we learnt

all about the beginnings of California's navel orange industry and saw 75 different types of citrus.

One day we were invited to the home of Elke Sommer (the German Brigitte Bardot), who lives in Bel Air, about 2 hours from Riverside. She spends about 7 months there and the other 5 months in Marloffstein, where she grew up. It was an entertaining day and she certainly enjoyed singing with the men, plying us with Californian wine and showing us her garden, of which she is quite proud.



Horst Gutknecht 3rd from the right.

Elke Sommer is easier to spot.

Another highlight was a walk up Mount Rubidoux, which seems to be Riverside's "Walberla"! It is the site of the oldest outdoor non-denominational Easter Sunrise Service in the U.S. and the cross at the summit is dedicated to Father Junipera Serra, the founder of the Californian Missions. We walked up with Rusty Bailey, the mayor of Riverside and the Stad'l Harmonists gave a good rendering of "California Dreaming" at the top. At the foot of the hill there's a sign-post showing all Riverside's sister cities (as the Americans call twin cities) - it's interesting that Erlangen is the only one in Europe.



Frank Gillard

(with many thanks to Sheila and Horst)