

# City of Chino ♦ Hall of Fame

presented on March 20, 2012 honoring

## *Ernest W. Soper*

Ernest (Ernie) W. Soper, devoted his life to serving the community. He was typical of the hardworking entrepreneurs who were the backbone of Chino during the 1930's and 1940's.

Born in Pomona, California, on August 13, 1889, Mr. Soper attended Richard Gird Elementary in the old brick school house located at Tenth and B Streets. A graduate of East Hollywood High, Mr. Soper returned to Chino in 1910 to join his brother, Arthur, in a blacksmith business on Sixth Street. The two brothers expanded into sales of hardware and farm implements; and in 1928, built a new store at 13139 Central Avenue. At the time of Mr. Soper's death in 1961, Soper Bros. was the oldest family business in Chino.

Mr. Soper was one of the prime movers behind the formation of the annual Chino Rancho Ride into the hills of Chino, which grew out of the community's 50th anniversary celebration in 1937. This event drew hundreds of riders throughout Southern California for the next four decades and enhanced Chino's reputation as horse country. He served as president of the Rancho Ride Association for most of the rest of his life.

Mr. Soper's interests extended to agriculture, water, and city government. He was first elected to the City Council in 1930 on a progressive slate, and served as Mayor for four of the next six years. He was elected again in 1940 and served as Mayor until he left the Council in 1952, during the post-war years when Chino was having a new spurt of growth. In all, Mr. Soper served 18 years on the City Council; 16 of those years, he served as Mayor.

His service to the community included membership in the Chino Recreation Association in its early days, Vice President of the Chino Basin Water District, Board Member of the Chino Basin Water Conservation District, Vice President of the Vegetable Department of the State Farm Bureau. In 1943, he was President of the Citrus Belt Division of the League of California Cities.

Locally, he was charter member and President of the Chino Rotary Club, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Chino Foresters, Odd Fellows, Ontario Elks, and the Chino First Methodist Church.

Mr. Soper was an active outdoorsman and sports booster. He and his wife Cornelia (Dossett) had three children. He died of cancer at the age of seventy-one.