

Fall 2009

The Echo

Volume 74

Altadena Historical Society Newsletter

Number 2

*“When Ray
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PROGRAM DETAILS

Monday, November 23, 2009

7:30 pm

Altadena Community Center
730 East Altadena Drive
Altadena, CA 91001

The program is free

More info: 626-797-8016

Don't Miss this Special Program

On Monday, November 23, 2009, railroad historian Brian Marcroft (photo right) will share rare, never before seen images, maps, photos and documents of the Pacific Electric Railroad from the Ray Younghans estate, courtesy of the Orange Empire Railway Museum. Ray Younghans, a Pacific Electric employee, was an obsessed life-long collector of everything having to do with the railroad. When he passed away he left multiple thousands of railroad memorabilia behind. So large is the collection that at one point it was stored in five different places. His heir recently asked Orange Empire Railway Museum to inventory the collection.

Speaker Brian Marcroft grew up in Norwalk, California. His boyhood fascination with the railroad (he could see the ruins on Mount Lowe on sunny clear days) led to his eventual founding of the non-profit Scenic Mount Lowe group. Since 1990 Brian has served as a Forest Service volunteer. He is also a volunteer at the Railway Museum and a member of the AHS board of directors.

To add to the evening's theme, railroad history expert and author Charles Seims, who has generously



donated numerous artifacts to our collection, will be honored. A Mount Lowe enthusiast since the age of 13, Charles published two books about the attraction: Mount Lowe, the Railway In the Clouds (1976), and its companion volume, Trolley Days in Pasadena (1982). An avid collector with one of the finest Mount Lowe collections in the world, Charles is a frequent contributor to publications dealing with history.

This event is jointly sponsored with the Altadena Library. We thank them for the preliminary publicity and posters.

Archives Notes *by Sherry Cavallo*

“Mr. L. T. Gotchy surprises us every once in a while with photos and ephemera of Altadena and Mount Lowe

Donations from our members and an on-line purchase have added to the archives over the summer months, many enriching our collections on Mt. Wilson and Mt. Lowe. Long time supporter, L.T. Gotchy sent clippings on Mt. Wilson, photo postcards of Altadena sites and a wealth of Mt. Lowe ephemera. One of the outstanding items is a 48”x30” mounted poster by the Automobile Club of Southern California giving tribute to the Mt. Wilson toll road. Ron Jasinski donated an exceptional set of blue prints of Mt. Wilson buildings along with a section of metal rail from the Mt. Lowe Railway. We purchased a copy of the “Mt. Lowe Daily News” (photo lower left) and a souvenir menu from the Alpine Tavern, as well as four black and white photos of the area.

Archives received quite a few Altadena-related items as well. Ephemera and news clippings about the history of Altadena’s post office were donated by Gloria Putnam via Michele Zack. A mint-condition copy of the 1926 Chamber of Commerce pamphlet “Altadena the Beautiful” was donated by Stanley Lokken. Jo and Frank Dupuy gave us nine milk bottles from surrounding foothill dairies. Joyce Hegeman dropped off several articles on artist Lillian Genth, a well known painter from the 1920s. (Her work can be seen at the Mountain View Mausoleum.) Five cookbooks produced by Altadena organizations were donated by Sara Carnahan. Camille Dudley gave us several color photographs of the

Cobb estate plaque dedication. A collection of news clippings on Eliot School were donated by Barbara Boekennoogen. Valerie Elachi who owns the Old Pueblo House (built by Zane Grey) donated material detailing information about her home.

Archives also received items related to surrounding Altadena. James Aguirre, a descendent of William K. Henninger (of Henninger Flats) donated a copy of his recently published book on the family’s history. Barbara Boekennoogen gave us a spectacular picture of the Rose Bowl when it was under construction.

And finally, our tireless longtime supporter and artifact donor Heinz Ellersieck. presented us with a wooden real estate sign featuring the Frank Meline Company, circa 1920s, and several newspaper clippings. Many of his donations are from the collection of his late wife, Astrid. We thank her too.



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Thurston City Directories - A Professional Reference Tool

by research volunteer Kathy Hoskins

Have you ever wondered who lived in your house before you? At Archives we have an easy way of finding out. We can also tell you what the homeowner did for a living. Or maybe you want to know more about someone who lived in the area but your information is sketchy. We can help with that too.

A lot of information awaits you in our collection of city directories (printed by the Thurston company) dating from 1911 to 1976. The reverse address listing is one of the most helpful features. If you know a particular address you can find out who lived there on any given year between 1911 and 1976 (with a few years missing). You can then look up the name in the regular listing and find out the individual's profession and place of employment.

Sometimes it's hard to pin down exact addresses. In the earlier directories there are listings for areas, especially in Altadena, that were rural, with no addresses. In this case the residence might be listed by location, for example, "nw corner of Holliston and Rubio."

During the 1940s a great number of homes were built in Altadena. Squeezing four houses in between two mansions meant street addresses frequently changed. When doing research in the reverse address section, noticing names of the adjoining neighbors can often help identify the new number of the residence you are researching. Also, addresses are organized giving the nearest cross streets so you can tell the location of any address more easily.

Listings are under male head-of-household. Unfortunately, this makes it

hard to trace women because they disappear into their husband's listing. If there is a wife, her name is in parenthesis. If she is a widow, she is listed as "Mrs. John Smith." A single unmarried woman will be listed by her own name.

You can use the directories if you're doing historical research as well. For instance, during the depression the directory listed many residences as vacant. In addition, a number of single family homes show two or more families living at the same address. This information suggests, for instance, which neighborhoods suffered the most from the economic downturn.

In one section, businesses as well as professional offices are listed by category. The ads provide a great deal of information about our community.

If you want to know who occupied your home prior to you or where your long lost ancestors lived in Pasadena or Altadena, come into the archives or phone/e-mail us and we'll help you find out.

"The reverse address listing is one of the most helpful features. If you know a particular address you can find out who lived there on any given year between 1911 and 1976."



Letter From the President

By Jane Brackman

*“Like a snapshot,
each natural
disaster tells a
detailed story of
Altadena at a
precise moment
in time.”*

Part of Altadena’s charm is attributed to its geologic location – gently tucked under a quiet fault line in the foothills of the majestic San Gabriel Mountain range. And what a range it is. With uplift accelerated by the San Andreas fault that defines the north side of the range, the San Gabriels are among the steepest, fastest growing mountains in the world. Moreover fire, floods, wind and earthquakes are eroding the mountains almost as fast as nature can push them up.

Last month we watched transfixed as firefighters waged war against yet another inferno raging across the foothills. Our homes were spared but our trails were not. The rains will come soon and the charred sandy soil will slough off, crash down the mountain-side to join rock-strewn muddy water raging through Rubio, Eaton, upper Arroyo Seco and Las Flores canyons.

At archives we have documentation on all of the floods and fires and some of the wind storms that have antagonized Altadena since the turn of the last century. Like a snapshot, each natural disaster tells a detailed story of Altadena at a precise moment in time. For instance, we know a lot about county budget issues and the growth of the fire department because of the 1934 Brown Mountain Fire. We also know that people didn’t understand ecosystems very well. Society ladies made a point of re-

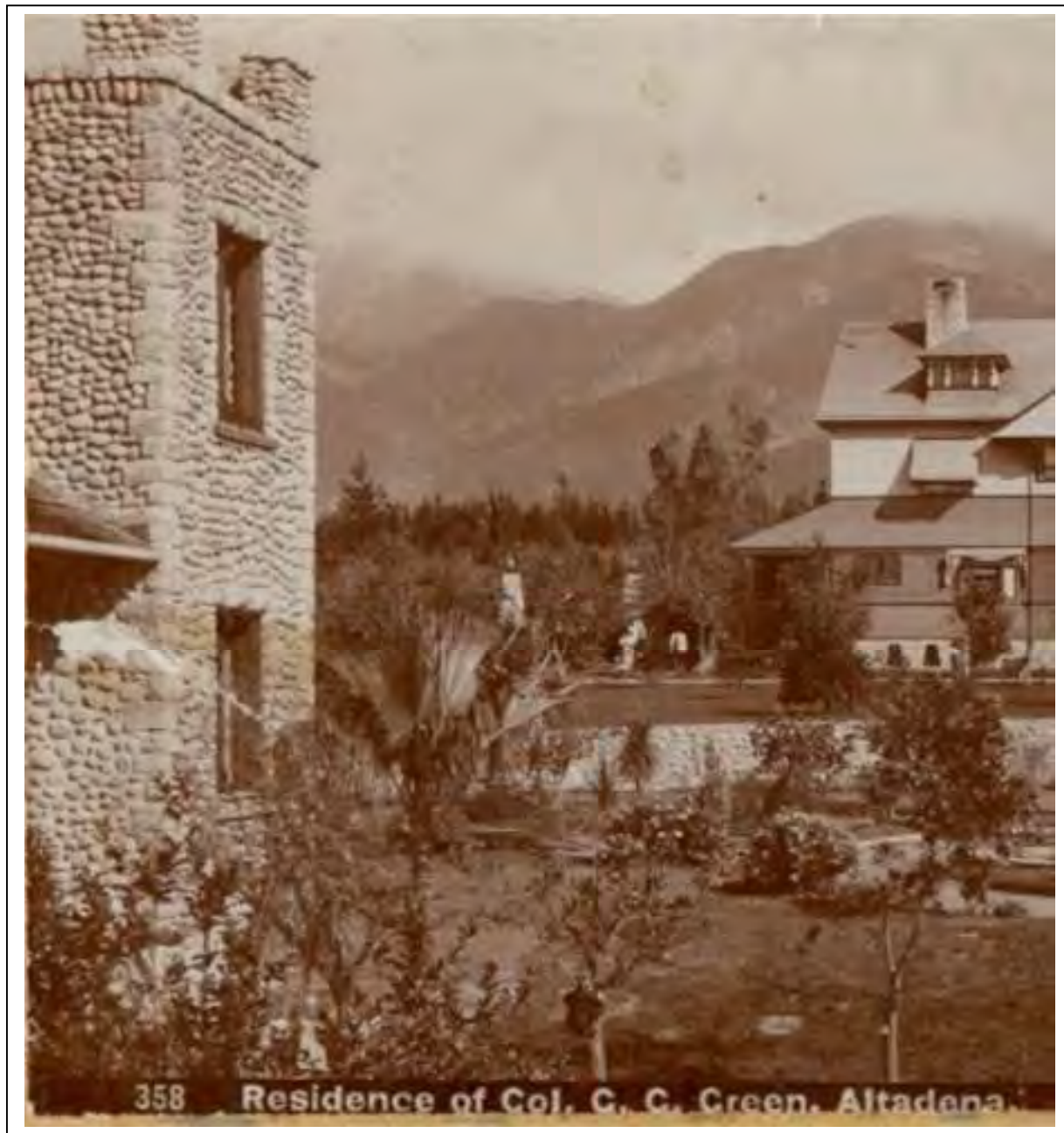


seeding burn areas. It was part of the Altadena Beautification movement.

Watershed problems were highlighted in newspaper articles for several months in the aftermath of the 1938 flood. We know a lot about 1949 Altadena -how people dressed, what they ate, what kind of cars they drove- simply because it snowed. A winter snow flurry in southern California brings out the photographer in all of us. Sixty years later those are the photographs that make their way into historical society collections.

Whatever the Station Fire says about us in years to come remains to be discovered by future historians.

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Colonel Green's Carriage House to be Open for Tour in April 2010

Where the library is located, on the corner of Santa Rosa and Mariposa, once stood Colonel Green's palatial estate. Designed by Frederick Roehrig, the luxurious home was appointed with elaborate gardens, ornamental trees and shrubs, a pond, and a swimming pool. Green built an elegant carriage house anchored by a cobble stone tower with stalls for nine horses. In the 1960s the house was torn down to make way for the Altadena library. However the carriage house had been purchased earlier by the Van Der Kar family. Mr. Van Der Kar turned the building into a lovely home where the family lived for many years. With children grown, the family moved away and rented the property out. After decades of wear and tear, the house fell into disrepair. A few years ago the Van Der Kar's granddaughter Brooke, her husband Jon and their three small children, moved in. They are in the process of restoring the home. Mark your calendars now. On Sunday April 25, 2010 you will have an opportunity to tour this spectacular Altadena landmark. Look for more information in our next newsletter.

(In the above photo the Green home is in the background to the right. This is now the location of the library. The cobble stone building to the left is the carriage house.)

We Love our Volunteers



We can't say thank you enough when it comes to our volunteers. We will miss our newsletter editor Deirdre Del Re who recently resigned due to an increasingly heavier work-load. Rose Eddy, Marlane Forsberg, Kathy Hoskins and Laurie Kinsinger help archivist Sherry Cavallo process research requests, organize files, and input records into the computer. We thank Paul Ayres for helping us out on occasion and also for everything else he does for Altadena. Our board members of course are always helpful. And all our members who helped at the Mausoleum Tour in June - thanks goes out to you as well. Thank you to our anonymous volunteers - you know who you are! We couldn't do any of this without their help. You can volunteer, too. Call us at (626) 797-8016.



Raffle Painting

Do you feel lucky? AHS is raffling off an oil painting of Altadena's beloved Cobb Estate by artist Lynne Fearman. Raffle Tickets are a dollar each. The drawing will be held at our November 23 general meeting. You can get tickets at the event (or anytime up to the event). Winner need not be present. For more information call archives at 626-797-8016

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An Altadena Icon

Although this little three cornered building (pictured below) on north Lake Avenue has served as a real estate office and seen its share of struggling restaurants, in the 1960s it was the successful "JR Coffee Shop." The diner was one of three restaurants that made up the small chain. "The Headliner" was on Colorado Street between the old Pasadena Star-News building and Pasadena Presbyterian Church. Another was on the

southeast corner of Altadena Drive and Washington where MacDonald's is currently located. And the smallest one was in Altadena - thus the Junior moniker. (Some locals refer to the diner by its initials, J. R.) A long time Altadena resident said, "It was a hamburger, fries and milk shake kind of place, much like Bob's Big Boy. I ate there often with my family. It was so nice to have a local diner."





Altadena Historical Society
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Altadena, CA 91001-2351

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SOCIETY

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UPCOMING AHS EVENTS

- November 23, 2009: AHS general meeting. Speaker Brian Marcroft showing selections from the Ray Younghans railroad collection. Special recognition of railroad history expert Charles Seims. Raffle drawing of Cobb estate oil painting.
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- January 24, 2010: General meeting, program topic to be announced.
- April 25, 2010: Colonel Green's carriage house tour. Look for more information in our next newsletter.

EVENTS AROUND TOWN

- October 24 & 25, 2009: If you missed our Mausoleum tour last June you'll have another chance to attend an event there. Heritage is holding a music and art fundraiser. For more information visit their website: www.altadenaheritage.org/or call 626-797-0054
- December 12, 2009: Christmas Tree Lane lighting festivities begin at 6:00 p.m. For more information go to their website: www.christmastreelane.net/ or send an email: christmastreelaneassociation@gmail.com

FIND US ON THE WEB:

abacus-es.com/altadena/history/
