

Winter 2010

# The Echo

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Altadena Historical Society Newsletter

Number 1

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### *January 25 Program*

*Michele Zack will discuss her new book about Sierra Madre. See page 5 for details.*

## Altadena's own *Castle* Open for Tour in April

Colonel G. G. Green was a flamboyant figure from New Jersey who made his immense fortune in patent medicines and remedies. His neighbor, Andrew McNally, made *part* of his immense fortune printing literature promoting Green's products. It's no wonder they became friends and eventually neighbors. McNally procured property for Green and in 1888 the Green family set down Altadena roots in their newly completed house on the southwest corner of Mariposa Street and Santa Rosa Avenue. Green spared no expense in landscaping the property. Decades later the home slipped into disrepair and was eventually razed to make way for the library. All that's left of the palatial estate is the lovely carriage house with cobble stone tower that Green built to take care of his nine horses, along with many of the plantings that have grown into beautiful specimens that today enhance the neighborhood. Mark your calendar for Sunday, April 25, 2010, when the carriage house will be open for touring. Our website has more information: <http://abacus-es.com/Altadena/history/>



## Volunteer Profiles *by Sherry Cavallo*



**Kathy Hoskins**



**Laurie Kinsinger**

**Marlane Forsberg**



**Eric Dreizen**



**Marc Striegel**

I want to sincerely thank our steadily growing group of diligent volunteers who help run the Archives deserve recognition. Their hard work has greatly improved the ability of our patrons to use this historical collection. Their camaraderie has helped the cross training process and makes for a pleasant environment in which to work, study and learn. AHS owes a debt to all present and previous volunteers who have also worked so hard to build our archives. Now at AHS we salute our current volunteers and here introduce them to you.

**Kathy Hoskins** has been with us since 2007 and is the primary person who answers our patrons' research requests. She has a background in teaching both in public and private schools. Her experience makes her an excellent researcher. "I am a second generation Pasadenan and moved to Altadena in 1950. I enjoy doing research at AHS because it is like working a giant jigsaw puzzle to find the answers in the files. Also it's fun to make connections with the memories I have of the area. Learning more and more about Altadena's history is a real bonus! To say nothing of working with nice people," says Kathy.

**Rose Eddy** came to the Archives two years ago and has been instrumental in cataloguing a majority of our new accessions and scanning in new images of objects, books and ephemera. She is particularly interested in art history. Rose recently completed a volunteer internship at Yale University and plans to go into Museum Archives work. Unfortunately, Rose was not available for a photograph at the time this was printed.

**Laurie Kinsinger** has been working toward completing a Master's of Library Science degree and has a strong interest in reading and books. She has also worked as a school teacher. Laurie has been very flexible in taking on various tasks such as inventorying our library and pamphlet files as well as learning to catalogue new accessions. Laurie has been serving the Archives

since early 2008.

**Marlane Forsberg** is a recent volunteer, but has already made herself an expert in the clippings file (our largest file in the archive) amending our finding guide and preserving clippings for eventual digitalization. Marlane recently retired from Bank of America and enjoys her time at the archives as well as volunteering at other organizations. Marlane comments, "I have loved learning about my community in the archives. I have started reading the history of Altadena and the Mount Lowe Railroad as homework for reorganizing all the various files of clippings on the railroad."

As a potential Master of Library of science student, **Eric Dreizen** is learning about the various tasks in an archive as he volunteers and gains experience to add to his masters' application. Eric has been serving for two months and already has made himself a very valuable worker. He has worked on preserving our clippings files and inputting information about the books in our library into the main database.

Our most recent volunteer, **Marc Striegel**, plunged right into the scanning of our photograph collection, and wrote up a standard procedure for teaching other volunteers this skill. "My real job is business process consultant", says Marc, "My hobby business is Present Past, a vintage postcard framing company." He likes to research, collect and frame vintage postcards of the Altadena and Pasadena areas and the San Gabriel mountains. . The website is <http://crownvalleypostcards.com/index.html>. Marc is thankful for the free time he is able to give to the Archives and the opportunity to learn more about Altadena's history.

The Archives also benefited from three temporary volunteers this past year, Dana Dunlap and Theresa Mancho and David Shin.

## Archives Notes

by Sherry Cavallo



We have a new look at the Archives with the hanging of several new posters, signs and photographs that were recently added to our collection.

Hanging from the overhead beams in the center of the room is the Scripps Home sign that once hung from a post on the northwest corner of the retirement home property at El Molina and Calaveras.

**Heinz Ellersieck** donated a spectacular two by three foot color photograph of JPL and surrounding mountains taken at night during the Station Fire in September 2009. The photo is mounted on the north wall of the Archives. We encourage our members to come by and view the new décor.

Three new additions include items having to do with railways: An El Monte Historical Society newsletter, containing an article on Mt. Lowe Railway, was donated by **Sid Gally** and a color photograph of a 100-year celebratory cake for the Pacific Electric Substation #8 donated by **Kathy Hoskins**. A pamphlet entitled "World Famous MT. Lowe" came from **Ron Jasinski**.

A very informative article on well-known architect Mary Elizabeth Coulter, who briefly lived in Altadena, was donated by **Nick Curry**.

Charles Cobb (Cobb Estate) was an active member of the Pasadena Scottish Rite Temple. Not only did he bequeath his Altadena property to the Temple in 1939, but he also funded the building their auditorium. The Temple recently donated their history book, "Seventy-Five Year History of Pasadena Scottish Rite Bodies," which mentions Cobb's involvement with the organization.

**L.T. Gotchy's** latest donation was an informative letter and a photo postcard. The **Theosophical Society** gave us current literature to update our files. When the Altadena hardware store was hit by a MTA bus earlier this year, a photo poster was made to commemorate the accident and is now in our collection courtesy of **M. J. Crunk**. **Janda Ferris** donated the latest addition to our objects collection: a statue of a bronze monkey cast by Altadena artist David Green.

*"We have a new look at the Archives with the hanging of several new posters, signs and photographs..."*




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*“The landmarks we fight to save tell our story. What we lose says something about us, too.”*

From the P&E substation to the Altadena Town and Country Club, the landmarks we fight to save tell our story. What we lose through neglect or disinterest, from the Cobb mansion to the Scripps Home say something about us as well. In between are the projects that due to a ground swell of community opposition, budget cuts, competition with other foothill communities, or just plain old disinterest never got off the ground.

When the trolley poles and street-car tracks were removed from Mariposa street in 1941, the L A County Road Department proposed a plan to redevelop the street with a pedestrian island. The plans and specifications for the project were published in a 1941 issue of the Altadenan (above). The caption read in part, “The above sketch shows a suggested way in which Mariposa Street in the business section may be developed on a split-grade roadway plan with center planting. I need not tell Altadenans that it never came to fruition.

Many projects, like Mariposa Street, were cosmetic and wouldn’t have changed the community much. However others, had they gone through, would have created an Altadena none of us would recognize

today.

In the 1920s Altadena boosters planned a road to La Canada. It was to be an extension of Foothill (now Altadena Drive) that was to climb down into the Arroyo wash (where JPL now stands) and make its way to La Canada. In addition, the master plan called for a road to go from Altadena through the Eaton Canyon wash to Sierra Madre, which of course was completed and is New York.


In 1955, a rubbish dump at Loma Alta, across from the park, in the county flood control area was nixed due to public outcry. In the 1940s the Loma Alta Expressway was on the drawing board, but due to homeowner resistance it was scrapped. (Yes, that Loma Alta.)

To be honest, these were projects with promises of jobs attached and as Altadena missed out on the commercial opportunities, local revenue was lost as well. Consequently, in many ways we live on roads to nowhere. The trade off is less traffic, less development, and less pollution. That’s not all bad, is it?

The Altadena Historical Society and  
The Friends of the Altadena Library Present:

# MICHELE ZACK

Author and Historian




Will discuss & sign  
her new book

## Southern California Story


Monday January 25

7:30 pm



at the  
Altadena Community Center  
730 E. Altadena Drive

Join Michele Zack for an illustrated talk that  
integrates aspects of Sierra Madre, Altadena,  
and Pasadena history into the broader  
Southern California story.



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*“An illustrated talk that integrates aspects of Altadena, Sierra Madre, and Pasadena histories into the broader Southern California story...”*

Why did the San Gabriel Valley Orange Association sell the future Altadena Land to the Woodbury Brothers for \$5 an acre, when the same year Lucky Baldwin was able to fetch \$40 an acre for the more remote tract that grew into Sierra Madre? Why did Sierra Madre initially lose out to Altadena in the race for tourists when the Mount

Wilson Toll Road was built? Sanitaria to house the region's growing sick population flourished in Altadena, but were banned in Sierra Madre. Michele Zack will discuss these issues and more, and sell and sign her new book, *"Southern California Story: Seeking the Better Life in Sierra Madre"* at the end of the program. This event is jointly sponsored with the Altadena Library.

### Theatre Americana is Back

Theatre Americana would like to extend an invitation to all directors and playwrights to be guests at a reception to celebrate Theatre Americana's return to the stage at the Davies Building at Farnsworth Park, Altadena, California. The Nationally Registered Davies building, built of native cobble stone in the rustic lodge-style is pictured below.

years ago. If you are a director or a playwright, please save the date of Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm for champagne and hors d'oeuvre reception that precedes an original play directed by Bill Shaw (director of Music Theatre of San Gabriel Valley). For more details, please respond to Donna Scarantino: Theatre Americana president: [donna8461@sbcglobal.net](mailto:donna8461@sbcglobal.net)

### Raffle Painting Winner

Congratulations to Roger Smith who won the plein-air painting of the Cobb Estate. It's apropos since his wife is a third generation Altadenan. Her family, (Lindquist) purchased property on Woodbury road near Santa Rosa in the 1920s. Roger said, "I'm thrilled to win a painting of a landmark in the town my wife's family grew up in." In addition he and his wife collect plein-air art, so the painting is especially welcome.

If you were not the winner this time, you'll have another chance. (The money goes to a good cause!) We will have another original painting of an Altadena landmark that we will feature in our next newsletter.



During the depression, President Roosevelt asked Congress to set aside funds to build theaters to assist in creating employment for writers, directors and actors - thus fulfilling the President and Eleanor's desire to provide support and opportunities in the theatrical community. Davies Hall was one of two theatres built at the end of the WPA program.

Theatre Americana became the resident theatre at Farnsworth Park Amphitheater and Davies hall, chartered with the commitment to produce original plays by American playwrights. The last play produced on the stage at Davies Hall was over 15



## Greene & Greene in Altadena

*By Kathy Hoskins*

Charles and Henry Greene are famous for the many beautiful homes they built in Pasadena including the Gamble and Blacker houses. Altadena has its own share of these wonderful buildings.

The Greene and Greene architectural offices opened in 1894. In 1898, after only four years in practice, they received a rather large commission to build a home for James Swan, a prominent Pasadena. The home was built at 515 E. Colorado in Pasadena and was an example of the Greene's early architectural style. Having received their architectural training at MIT, the Greene's were influenced by the east coast arts and crafts movement most notably with the shingle style that was popular at the time. The home, "Torrington Place", combined Georgian and classical elements with a shingle exterior. It was built with a budget of \$18,500.

In 1925 the home was moved to Altadena. Henry Greene designed the alterations (Mediterranean style) for the home. It now stands at 2162 N. Holliston near the corner of Boston and Holliston. It has a stucco exterior instead of shingles but the Georgian exterior elements can still be seen.

The William A. Bowen house stands at the northwest corner of Calaveras and Santa Anita. It was designed by the Greene brothers and built in 1903. It was built as a ranch house and included out buildings. It was called a "ranchita" and demonstrated the Greene's love of creating space that interacted with nature. Originally it was one story and was built around an inner courtyard or garden "living room". All but one bedroom had access only to the courtyard with not interior hallway. It was certainly the ultimate in indoor/outdoor living at the time. A second story was added in 1905. The home has been much altered and looks little like its original design but some of the Greene's style can be seen in the

overhangs and beam structure.

In 1905 a home for was designed and built for August Brandt on the northeast corner of Maiden Lane and Mariposa. The family of Iwan Serrurier, an inventor from Holland who developed the Ganesha Tract, first inhabited the house; at the time Mr. Brandt was serving as the contractor for the Pasadena home being built from the Greene's design for Mr. Serrurier. When the Altadena home was completed, the Serrurier family decided to live in it and rent the Pasadena home. The Altadena bungalow was later moved to the southeast corner of the same intersection where it can be seen today.

Charles and Henry Greene's architectural career boomed between 1903 and 1909 but declined sharply from 1910 to 1923 due to the loss of popularity of the bungalow style. Charles Greene moved to Carmel in 1916 to spend more time following his passion of studying art and Asian philosophy. Henry Greene remained in Pasadena to continue the work of the architectural firm.

The Dr. Nathan Williams home was built in 1913 and shows Henry Greene's more practical influence. It is unlike other Greene and Greene homes with a gunite-clad front elevation and a façade reminiscent of the recently relocated Herkimer Arms apartments in Pasadena. All of the large interior rooms are painted with little surface decoration. The built-in buffet in the dining room and the stairway show some of the Greene's signature details.

Wildwood Park is a newly discovered Henry Greene design. The cottages were designed in 1922 for Walter D. Valentine who wished to turn his property at the end of a cul-de-sac on Palm Street into a small compound. Two of the cottages survive today accessed by a private driveway with stone gate pillars marking the entrance. The oak shaded property lends itself to Henry Greene's architectural style.

Henry Greene lived the last years of his life in Altadena. In 1940, after the death of his wife Emmaline, Henry moved to the home of his son Henry Dart Greene. He lived with his son's family at 1405 La Solana until his death in 1954.

*"In 1898, after only four years in practice, they received a rather large commission to build a home for James Swan..."*





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# The Echo

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SOCIETY

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[abacus-es.com/altadena/history/](http://abacus-es.com/altadena/history/)

Altadena Historical Society (AHS), a non-profit organization, was founded to gather, preserve, and make available information about the people, places and events that have shaped the community in the past. The Altadena Historical Society is proud of its history. Founded in 1935, we are one of the oldest volunteer organizations in the community.

## Please join today!

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_Email\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Premium Membership includes a copy of Altadena Between Wilderness and City by Michele Zack.